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The Boston Children's Chorus: a case study in culturally responsive teaching

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS

Dissertation

**THE BOSTON CHILDREN'S CHORUS:
A CASE STUDY IN CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING**

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this case study was to explore and analyze the practices of the Boston Children’s Chorus (BCC) in relation to culturally responsive pedagogy. The intent was to explore how the conductor, his staff, and the support staff (including the administrative team and Board of Directors) considered the issues of cultural relevancy as they programed and rehearsed music, selected concert venues, recruited singers, and marketed the organization. The study also reflected the perspectives of the stakeholders, particularly the parents and singers.

The findings reported in this chapter are in narrative form and include the results from interviews, observations, and questionnaires arranged by common themes. The approaches developed at the BCC were congruent with culturally responsive teaching and tied to the mission of social change. The overarching concept of social change mission-oriented planning shaped its curriculum, instruction, and perceptions of staff, students, and parents as well as framed the development of the community of singers at the BCC. The findings indicated that in attempting to achieve more progress with the social change mission it was critically important to further develop a detailed strategic plan for all BCC choirs and staff members.

The implications of this research study are that a better understanding of the successful practices of the BCC would help to identify key factors that contribute to teachers' willingness to implement culturally responsive teaching in music and choral education and would serve as inspiration and an outline for other music teachers and conductors by helping them to overcome problems that might prevent others from succeeding.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Responding to rapidly changing demographics throughout the United States presents a challenge to teachers who strive to meet the needs of a diverse population (Carlow, 2006; Cochran-Smith, Davis, & Fries, 2003). When making decisions regarding what to teach and how to present curricular content, teachers have to consider the students' diversity. Students come with different backgrounds and cultural contexts resulting from their racially, ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse families, as well as from communities of lower socioeconomic status (Saravia-Shore, 2008). Such adaptations create culturally responsive, caring environments (Gay, 2002). For music educators, the charge to provide quality, relevant, and value-added musical experiences for each student means connecting repertoire and programming to honor the different backgrounds and diversity of the students (Abrahams, 2005).

One avenue for teachers, including music teachers, to meet these challenges is to consider culturally responsive pedagogy, a student-centered approach in which teachers include the students' culture in all aspects of teaching and learning decisions (Gay, 2000). Culturally responsive teaching also prepares students to live in a pluralistic society (G. R. Howard, 2007).

Statement of the Problem

Johnson and Lichter (2010) posited that the recent increase in the racial and ethnic mix of America's youth has led to a growing diversity in American classrooms. About one third of the U.S. population, including children in school, consists of racial and ethnic

minorities for whom English is not a native language. Further, United States Census Bureau (2010) projections show that by the year 2050 there will be no racial or ethnic majority in the United States. The population of non-Hispanic White people will drop from 67% to 46% while the population of Black people will remain at 13%, and the populations of Hispanic and Asian people will rise to roughly 30% and 8%, respectively. Between 2010 and 2050, one in three children in the United States (34%) will have been born outside the United States or will be the native-born children of immigrants. In addition to the growth of the Hispanic and Asian populations, the new demographic shifts include a rapidly growing mixed-race population. The percentage of Americans of mixed race under the age of 18 is growing significantly as well, with some projections suggesting as many as one in five Americans (20%) may identify with two or more races between 2010 and 2050 (Passel & Cohn, 2008; Perez & Hirschman, 2009).

According to Martinez-Brawley & Brawley (1999), the idea of a pluralistic society relying “on the recognition of differences rather than on assimilation” (p. 19) is past. Americans are moving toward the reconciliation of differences and focusing on similarities that can help to unite diverse groups (Gans, 1997; Martinez-Brawley & Brawley, 1999; Ravitch, 1991; Stanfield, 1994). This position is a particular concern for educators striving for success in diverse classrooms.

Preparing teachers to develop schema appropriate to the realities of diversity in schools is problematic. For example, 76% of new teachers in a study by Rochkind, Ott, Doble, and Johnson (2008) said they were trained to teach an ethnically diverse student body, but only 39% admitted their training helped them to deal with the challenges of

doing so. Frankenberg and Siegel-Hawley (2008) also recognized that teachers who worked in suburban school settings were not prepared for the diversity encountered in their classrooms. Rochkind et al. (2008) reported that among 641 new teachers from different parts of the U.S., 52% felt that training did not prepare them to deal with the social issues and poverty rates they encountered.

Although most music education professionals have formally recognized the importance of including multicultural perspectives in music curricula at all levels (Anderson & Campbell, 2010; Elliot, 1995), music teacher training programs tend to be ineffective at preparing preservice teachers for culturally diverse schools (Ballantyne, 2006; Benham, 2003; Emmanuel, 2002; Legette, 2013; Petersen, 2005). The aspect that needed most improvement in preservice music teacher education, beginning teachers indicated, was training in the practical skills needed to effectively communicate with diverse learners (Legette, 2013). In order to recognize and respond to student diversity, preservice teachers need to become more culturally aware and gain new perceptions regarding pluralism (Banks, 2006; Sleeter, 2001). Connecting to cultural context is one of the most essential aspects of successful implementation of world music programs (Campbell, 2002; Rohan, 2011; Shaw, 2012). Miralis (2003) believed that neglecting the cultural context of world music is a serious obstacle in the process of implementing world music courses into curricula, because music is becoming culturally irrelevant for preservice teachers, who most likely will not make further commitment to world music education and will feel reluctant to include music from other cultures in their teaching.

Only 43% of the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) accredited

music schools and colleges had at least one multicultural music course, and of those courses only 10% were required for the completion of an undergraduate degree in music education (Koster & Gratto, 2001). In fact, according to Miralis (2003), in a study of 10 universities, only 16% of the world music courses for preservice music teachers were focused on pedagogy, and only 2% of these courses were available for undergraduate students.

Another factor affecting teacher preparation is the increasing homogeneity of the preservice teachers. This indicates a lack of diversity among students and faculty that could potentially lead to a lack of interest in music from other cultures (Cochran-Smith et al., 2003). Miralis (2003) and Petersen (2005) noted that the lack of cultural competence among teachers and students stems from students' limited exposure to people of cultures other than their own and often results in artificial applications of world music in music curricula. In addition, many preservice teachers are anxious about interacting with students of another race because they lack experiences with other cultures (Benham, 2003; Lee & Dallman, 2008). Only acknowledging and understanding students' cultures can help a teacher develop the successful instructional strategies and individualized approaches necessary in a transcultural classroom, particularly in urban settings (Benedict, 2006).

The findings of several research studies (Ballantyne & Mills, 2008; Milner, 2010; Sleeter, 2001) concluded that it is necessary to focus on methodologies vital to preservice teachers and pointed to positive outcomes from hands-on experience with diverse music (see also Belz, 2006; Ilari, 2010; Veblen, Beynon, & Odom, 2005). Both Ballantyne and

Mills (2008) and Wang and Humphreys (2009) expressed concerns over the current state of teacher education—music teacher education in particular. Wang and Humphreys stated that the progress toward diverse music teacher education continues to be slow and noted the need to move beyond a superficial treatment of diversity. This means that core courses for music teachers should introduce diversity within a cultural context so that students are able to make connections to the music and its relationship to the culture it represents (Ballantyne & Mills, 2008).

According to Dunbar-Hall (2005), inclusion of world music into school curricula is no longer a matter of whether to do so, but how. Dunbar-Hall used the universalist-pluralistic paradigm to argue this point. He basically said that to learn how to teach music from different cultures one has to immerse oneself in learning how to play that particular music. This is in opposition to most music education teacher preparation programs that use a “one size fits all” approach. For example, music education students will take a choral methods course that typically prepares them to go direct a choir based in the Western art paradigm. This makes it difficult to learn how to teach “world music” choral music. Including music from non-Western cultures into school curricula remains a real concern for music educators (Figgers, 2003). The process of repertoire selection becomes complicated when choral directors feel a responsibility to accommodate diverse groups of students. Abril (2006) argued for a well-developed cultural competence as an essential prerequisite for successful repertoire selection. Although many choral directors might acknowledge the importance of including music from other cultures into their curricula, they are concerned that they may not be able to present this music in a manner authentic

to the culture it represents (Campbell, 2002; Rohan, 2011; Shaw, 2012). Consequently, some choral directors may shy away from music in languages they cannot pronounce or music that has a harmonic language or rhythmic structure with which they are unfamiliar (Figgers, 2003; Palmer, 1999). Cash (2012) argued that directors rarely include choral selections from South and Southeastern Asia and Oceania in their repertoire for the same reasons. As Benedict (2006) noted, only acknowledging and understanding students' cultures can help a teacher develop the successful instructional strategies and individualized approaches necessary in a transcultural classroom, particularly in urban settings. The issue may, however, be more complex than Benedict suggested.

Some choral music educators (Armetta, 1994; Carlow, 2006; Chinn, 1997; D'Amato, 1986; Lind, 1999) have found ways to make music classrooms more culturally supportive. For example, Armetta (1994) and Chinn (1997) detailed the vocal challenges of teaching Black and Mexican students: Armetta described the vocal characterization in Black and Mexican cultures as having "[a] nasal quality, volume, energy and emotionalism" (p. 265). In order to acknowledge the importance of each individual's culture, Armetta recommended including styles of music representing a variety of cultures in the choral repertoire and instructing choristers in the vocal production appropriate for these different musical styles.

Considering the growing diversity in American public schools, national educators are advocating a shift toward a pedagogy that requires teachers to be interculturally competent in order to be able to use those skills in their classrooms and create an atmosphere for the students that will be physically and culturally inviting. One of the

most prominent practices in preparing teachers for diverse classrooms is introducing them to culturally responsive pedagogy, defined by Gay (2010) as “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant and effective for them” (p. 31). Whereas the vast body of literature on culturally responsive teaching described the positive impacts on academic achievements of diverse students (Gay, 2010; T. C. Howard, 2001), there are few published scholarly studies that demonstrated how to develop culturally responsive approaches to music instruction (Aceves, Banks, Han, Rao, Diliberto & Shepherd, 2014; Lind & McKoy, 2016). Hence there is a need for further research on the successful use of culturally responsive approach in music education and on how educators can improve cultural responsiveness through music instruction.

Theoretical Framework

Culturally responsive pedagogy emerged from the critical assessment of research findings and the practical experiences of teachers (Gay, 2002). For Gay (2010), culturally responsive pedagogy “validates, facilitates, liberates, and empowers ethnically diverse students by simultaneously cultivating their cultural integrity, individual abilities, and academic success” (p. 46). Further, Gay (2002) posited that students obtain academic knowledge easier when it is tied to their lived experiences and culture. The ideas from writings by Gay (2002, 2010) provided an appropriate theoretical framework for this study. Five essential elements of culturally responsive teaching defined and examined by Gay (2002) guided the present study: “developing a knowledge base about cultural diversity, including ethnic and cultural diversity content in the curriculum, demonstrating

caring and building learning communities, communicating with ethnically diverse students, and responding to ethnic diversity in the delivery of instruction” (p.106).

Developing a Knowledge Base About Cultural Diversity

Many teachers enter diverse classrooms with limited understanding of their students’ cultures, which negatively affects students’ abilities to learn (Szymanski & Shaff, 2013). Culturally responsive teachers develop a knowledge base about cultural diversity when they critically assess their relationships with students and improve their understanding of students’ cultures by acquiring detailed information about particular ethnic groups (Gay, 2002). Cochran-Smith (2003) questioned the role that knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes play in teacher learning and evaluated the available avenues for teacher learning. Villegas and Lucas (2002) and Hernández-Sheets (2005) suggested that teachers develop positive attitudes toward diverse cultures when they reflect on their own cultures. Lehmberg (2008) suggested that music teachers develop cultural knowledge through personal practical experiences rather than from preservice teacher programs. Gay (2002) listed requirements for developing a knowledge base about cultural diversity that included understanding cultural values, traditions, and the contributions of different ethnic groups; learning about cultural characteristics of specific ethnic groups; and “acquiring more knowledge about the contributions of different ethnic groups to a wide variety of disciplines and a deeper understanding of multicultural education theory, research, and scholarship” (p. 107).

Including Ethnic and Cultural Diversity Content in the Curriculum

In addition to knowledge development, culturally responsive teachers should be able to apply their cultural expertise in developing curriculum, another essential element of culturally responsive teaching. The content of the curriculum is important, because it supports students' achievement (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Hence, culturally responsive educators have to critically examine the curriculum to find out whether they replicate all demographic, social, and cultural characteristics of the diverse students' groups (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Gay (2002) identified three types of curricula: formal (government-approved policies), symbolic (teaching using images, symbols, and artifacts), and societal (teaching using knowledge, ideas, and impressions of ethnic groups portrayed in mass media). Gay insisted that culturally responsive teachers be aware of the power of a curriculum "as an instrument of culturally responsive teaching and use it to convey important values information, values, and actions about ethnic and cultural diversity" (p. 59).

Demonstrating Caring and Building Learning Communities

When teachers create an environment based on caring and treat students as capable learners, their relationships improve (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Gay (2002) advised that teachers use students' own cultures "to expand their intellectual horizons and academic achievement" (p. 109). Culturally responsive teachers create a learning community where teachers use students' culture and experiences as a teaching base for academic achievement (Gay, 2002). Burnard (2008) examined the approaches of the music teachers who committed themselves to connect with their students and created an

environment in which disengaged students felt respected and recognized.

Communicating with Ethnically Diverse Students

In order to effectively teach diverse students, educators should be able to crack cultural codes and establish cross-cultural communications (Gay, 2002; Gollnick & Chinn, 2009). Styles of communication differ among different ethnic groups (Gay, 2002). Carlow (2006) described the musical experiences of the high school choral students who had recently immigrated. Carlow found that a lack of cultural and linguistic understanding created tensions between a teacher and the students and that those practices were viewed as culturally incongruent.

Responding to Ethnic Diversity in the Delivery of Instruction

Researchers asserted that using the cultural knowledge to choose appropriate strategies for teaching various ethnic groups can result in better student achievement (Au & Mason, 1981; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Au and Mason (1981) described the successful practices of the teachers who used traditional Hawaiian talk-story teaching. In turn, Gay (2002) suggested that using an interactive, call and response style could be effective with African American students. Cammarota and Romero (2009) studied low-income Latino students who outscored their White peers when taught using culturally congruent instructional strategies.

This theoretical framework utilized the theory of culturally responsive pedagogy to justify the importance of using culturally responsive teaching to improve the performance of culturally diverse students. Chapter Two contains further discussion of culturally responsive teaching and its application to music education.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore the practices of the Boston Children's Chorus, a multiethnic and multiracial children's choir in Boston, Massachusetts, in relation to culturally responsive teaching. The following questions framed this research:

1. Which factors do the conductor of the Boston Children's Chorus consider when he selects repertoire, scaffolds rehearsal strategies, and develops learning schema?
2. Which factors do the administrative team for the Boston Children's Chorus consider when developing a mission statement, creating a long-range plan, strategizing for fund raising, recruiting singers, and building audiences?
3. Which factors are considered in the artistic and fiscal development of the Boston Children's Chorus?

Organization of the Study

Five chapters comprise this dissertation. Chapter one is an introduction to and description of the study. A survey and review of literature, including research on culturally responsive teaching diversity, multiculturalism, and repertoire selection, shall be included in chapter two. Chapter three describes and explains the methodology. The description includes a rationale for a qualitative design, a discussion of the types of data, data collection protocol, ethical considerations, and validity or trustworthiness. A presentation and analysis of the data appears in chapter four. Finally, chapter five contains discussion of findings and implications for music educators, and suggestions about possible directions for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter includes a survey of literature that provided a context for the ways culturally responsive pedagogy informs the operations of the Boston Children's Chorus. I included studies that discuss this pedagogy through lenses of multiculturalism, transculturalism, and interculturalism. The chapter also refers to studies that examined the impact of culturally responsive pedagogy in music education and how music educators applied this pedagogy in their teaching. Finally, because this dissertation addresses the topic of cultural relevance inside the Boston Children's Chorus, I reviewed literature that focused on how conductors choose choral repertoire that honors the diversity inherent among the singers they conduct.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Culturally responsive pedagogy is rooted in a set of five distinct concepts: cultural relevance, sensitivity, congruence, reflection, and appropriateness (Hanley & Noblit, 2009). After reviewing the research on culturally responsive teaching, Gay (2000) concluded that:

Although called by many different names including culturally relevant, sensitive, centered, congruent, reflective, mediated, contextualized, synchronized, and responsive, the ideas about why it is important to make classroom instruction more consistent with the cultural orientations of ethnically diverse students, and how this can be done, are virtually identical. (p. 29)

Educators developed the theory of culturally responsive pedagogy over the last three decades in the United States to address the needs of students from diverse cultural backgrounds. This theory incorporated the cultural attributes of the students as a means to engage student interest, develop ownership of learning, and inspire achievement. Utilization of cultural elements helps to create a healthy and safe learning environment for students and enhances their academic success (Gay, 2000; Hanley & Noblit, 2009; T. C. Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Ladson-Billings (1994) first introduced the concept of culturally relevant teaching as a way to provide for the academic success of those she identified as African American children; she urged teachers to recognize and consider the cultural identities of students in all aspects of learning when planning instruction. She provided teachers with a theoretical framework upon which to develop teaching strategies to link home and school cultures and to make school feel like an extended family for students—assistive, supportive, and encouraging. Ladson-Billings believed that such an approach would help to ensure the success of students whom she identified as being marginalized in traditional schooling. This was one of the first effective attempts to find links between students' home and school cultures.

Ladson-Billings (1994) was one of several scholars (Allen & Boykin, 1991; Au & Mason, 1981; Delpit, 1992) who contributed to the construction of the theory of culturally responsive pedagogy, which was later further expended and defined by Gay (2000). Au and Mason (1981) studied teachers who incorporated traditional Hawaiian “talk story-like participation structures” (p. 125) that encouraged collective responses by

children in the reading lesson. The results of this exploratory study showed that a teacher who integrated those structures in the reading lesson was more successful than a teacher who did not. In 1992, Delpit highlighted the importance of teachers learning about and sharing in the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of their students and expanding beyond the Eurocentric curriculum. She identified five conditions teachers should address when considering culturally responsive pedagogy: students' cultures and a school's culture clashing; stereotyping; presuming the intellectual limitations of a child, diminishing the child's potentials; ignoring community cultural norms; and ignoring cultural differences. Allen and Boykin (1991) concluded that the cultural experiences of students inside and outside the classroom could influence their abilities to perform various learning tasks. For example, their study showed that when music was playing Black children had higher scores on tests, while many White children seemed distracted by the music and scored lower. Allen and Boykin, Au and Mason, and Delpit gradually added to the creation of a theory of culturally responsive teaching that included guidelines for educators to improve the academic performance of students who come from a diversity of racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and social groups. The theory is based on the premise that discord between the school, home, and community cultures of low-income and ethnically-diverse students is an important factor in the low academic achievement of students.

Gay (2000), one of the key educational researchers of culturally responsive pedagogy, contributed considerably to the development of a theory of culturally responsive teaching. The scholar expanded the traditional view of culture beyond race and ethnicity and suggested that students' cultures consist of their beliefs, motivations,

social groups, and conventions. Culturally responsive teachers, she believed, could develop cultural competence by learning about their own culture first, and using that knowledge to better understand the cultures of their students. The goal of culturally responsive pedagogy is to support and improve the academic achievement of all students by identifying their unique cultural strengths. Gay's (2010) theory of culturally responsive pedagogy comprises six tenets: (1) Validation and affirmation: Culturally responsive teaching is validating and affirming because it acknowledges the strengths of students' diverse heritages, such as the values, prior experiences, and cultural knowledge of students; makes meaningful connections between home, school and community; and expands the possibility of using a wide variety of teaching strategies connected to different learning styles. (2) Comprehensiveness: Culturally responsive teaching is comprehensive because it uses "cultural resources to teach knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes" (Gay, 2010, p. 32). (3) Multidimensionality: Culturally responsive teaching encompasses many areas and applies multicultural theory to the classroom environment, teaching methods, and evaluation. (4) Empowerment: Culturally responsive teaching empowers students, giving them opportunities to excel in the classroom and beyond. "Empowerment translates into academic competence, personal confidence, courage, and the will to act" (Gay, 2010, p. 34). (5) Transformation: Culturally responsive teaching is transformative because educators and their students must often defy educational traditions and the status quo. It challenges the current curriculum content and classroom instruction based on cultural domination. (6) Emancipation: Culturally responsive teachers liberate students psychologically and intellectually. They teach students "no

single version of ‘truth’ is total and permanent” (Gay, 2010, p. 38). Hence, students are involved in a much deeper thinking, analyzing, and learning process.

Incorporating Gay’s (2000) framework for culturally responsive teaching, Villegas and Lucas (2002) discussed the main concepts that should be included in a culturally responsive education curriculum for preservice teachers. These concepts contain the main characteristics of culturally responsive teachers: Teachers should understand their own sociocultural identity and be able to identify the complex connection between schools and society. Culturally conscious teachers should have an affirming attitude toward students from culturally diverse backgrounds by setting high performance expectations for student learning and acting as agents of change by developing their own vision of education. Villegas and Lucas suggested that the foundation of the learning process should be based on students’ personal and cultural experiences to better facilitate their learning. Lastly, teachers should develop the characteristics of a culturally responsive teacher by reading about and analyzing successful practices in diverse classrooms.

Conflicting Terms: Multiculturalism, Transculturalism, and Interculturalism

The concepts of *multiculturalism*, *interculturalism*, and *transculturalism* developed as a response to rising cultural diversity. Whether these concepts can fulfill the demands of modern education remains questionable. In the following sections, I analyze each of the concepts to determine whether it can serve as the perfect answer to cultural diversity.

Multiculturalism

Martinez-Brawley and Brawley (1999) traced the historical roots of multiculturalism. They explored the concept with an assimilationist perspective, which focuses on accepting and tolerating differences, and a pluralist perspective, which focuses on recognizing and appreciating differences between various cultures within the society. While multiculturalism continues to be a major philosophical concept for many music educators, its effectiveness is questionable and its limitations are becoming more obvious (Martinez-Brawley & Brawley, 1999).

Sleeter and Grant (1987) and Nieto (1992) defined multicultural education from a sociopolitical point of view, linking together issues such as race, language, social class, and culture, while Banks (2006) and Gollnick and Chinn (2009) defined multicultural education as a strategy in which educators value and use the cultural background of each student to develop effective instruction. According to Gould (1995), the complexity of multiculturalism has been lost in the ideological dispute surrounding the term. Gould suggested that learning about other cultures is a necessary step toward achieving a multicultural worldview, but it is insufficient because it does not foster intercultural learning.

Özturgut (2011) echoed Gould's (1995) concern for the failure of the multicultural approach and described the current status of multicultural education as "a shallow application of a bicultural education" (p. 3). To achieve multiculturalism in education, Özturgut proposed acquiring a clear definition of multiculturalism, developing cultural sensitivity through understanding and respecting other cultures, and bringing in

strong leaders with intercultural skills.

Drummond (2005) provided a historical overview of changing attitudes toward multicultural education and defined three reasons for multicultural education: First, we live in a culturally plural world, which means the general understanding of the various cultural traditions of a diverse population determines the wellbeing of a society. Second, minority groups become disadvantaged unless education includes their cultures because understanding one's own cultural traditions strengthens one's own cultural roots. Lastly, the majority can learn from the minority. Drummond believed that a diverse musical education has the power to change people's attitudes toward various cultures and to prepare them for a culturally plural world. With these three justifications, he provided a valuable philosophical rationale for current music education practices.

In the field of music education, researchers (W. M. Anderson & Campbell, 2010; Drummond, 2005; Mas & Gomez, 2012; Schippers, 2010) have examined the effects of diversity on multicultural music education. Schippers (2010) identified major shifts in universal views on cultural diversity and included broadening spectrums of world music studies. The scholar suggested that notions about music education "may be much more culture-specific than we often assumed them to be" (p. 39): He pointed out the complexity of the issue of cultural diversity and subsequently proposed 12 ways to deal with the above shifts. The Twelve Continuum Transmission Framework included issues of context, transmission, interaction, and tolerance for cultural diversity, and Schippers intended it to provide a better understanding of how to incorporate world music into Western music education. Schippers suggested viewing the framework from four

perspectives: the tradition, the institution, the teacher, and the learner. For example, outlining the first continuum, Schippers demonstrated how musicians who come from the same tradition can have different views on their culture. Schippers emphasized that curriculum makers should view the provided framework not as a prescribed solution, but as a way to increase awareness of conscious and subconscious choices made by music educators.

W. M. Anderson and Campbell (2010) investigated the benefits of a multicultural approach to music education from a social perspective. They determined that a multicultural approach improved intercultural and interracial understanding and enabled a musical perspective that expanded musical experiences. In addition, it increased musical flexibility and appreciation, enabled the discovery of different ways to construct music, and facilitated the recognition of sophisticated music cultures beyond western Europe. The researchers provided suggestions for curricula development, such as creating study units around cultures students could experience in nonmusic classes. They recommended strategies for teaching music concepts through performance experiences and directed listening that could provide music teachers with practical applications.

Drummond (2005) questioned whether participation in the cultural practices of others could also have a positive effect on attitudes and understanding. He concluded the positive social changes that may occur in the process might be a better rationale for multicultural music education than the musical benefits. Drummond identified the various factors and stages of identity formation, among which he especially acknowledged the influence of media. His research supported Mas and Gomez (2012),

who investigated the issue of identity formation in a diverse society while looking for practical implications in the improvement of interpersonal relationships at primary and secondary music education levels in Spain. They examined the role of music teachers in recognizing students' identities and developing positive musical experiences in the classroom. The researchers conducted a qualitative study of 25 music educators from 12 countries. They asked the educators how music teachers could promote integration and recognition of identities while acknowledging the diversity of students. The findings of the study revealed that no universal educational method was available for conveying musical knowledge and that the passive inclusion of world music did not assure the reconciliation of different musical identities. Using dynamic and varied educational activities in which students' cultural identities are incorporated may enhance students' integration in the educational process and lead to better relationships between students and their teachers.

Transculturalism

Although Ortiz (1995) first defined the theory of transculturalism, or transculturality, in 1940, Welsch (1999) further developed it by comparing the concept of transculturalism to the traditional idea of individual cultures and to the more recent views of interculturality and multiculturalism. Each of these models depicted cultures as self-contained, homogeneous entities with rigid boundaries: While people from two cultures may exchange information, no cultural change takes place as a result. According to Welsch, cultures today cannot be both separate and homogeneous because their values and behaviors are intertwined with each other—cultures are spheres that must inevitably

clash. At a microlevel, individuals are cultural mixtures because cultures no longer restrict or outline lifestyles.

Martinez-Brawley and Brawley (1999) further extended the multicultural teaching debate and advocated the concept of transculturalism that they thought reflected the needs of contemporary American society. These scholars envisioned people going beyond cultural sensitivity and growing transculturally through interactions that provide an opportunity to gain knowledge about different cultures. The principle of transculturality is built on exceeding cultural boundaries and enriching citizens by the scope of other cultures.

Interculturalism

Whereas multiculturalism emphasizes the diversity of cultures and thereby reinforces distinctions between cultures, the concept of interculturalism refers to the ways in which people from different cultures could appreciate and identify with one another and flourish only in contact with other cultures (Trujillo Sáez, 2002; Welsch, 1999). According to Welsch, the deficiency of interculturality is in viewing cultures as separate entities, which inevitably leads to a clash of cultures and intercultural conflict that can be resolved only superficially. Nevertheless, many world music educators and theorists (Määttänen & Westerlund, 2001; O’Flynn, 2005; Schippers, 2010) consider this approach and propose that by combining elements of different cultures with one’s own, one will develop a deeper understanding of the particular performing styles of those cultures.

In summary, the concept of multiculturalism relies on the pluralistic vision of society that is based on the acknowledgement and appreciation of differences rather than

on assimilation (Martinez-Brawley & Brawley, 1999), whereas the concept of transculturalism encourages not only interactions between various cultures, but also penetration of cultures. This shapes a new type of diversity: “the diversity of different cultures and life-forms” (Welsch, 1999, p. 202). The concept of interculturalism (Trujillo Sáez, 2002) revolves around the reconciliation of differences. I believe that tolerating the differences between cultures is not enough to develop one’s deep understanding of various cultures. Theories of transculturality (Welsch, 1999) and culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000) do not promote separation, but cultural exchange and interaction. Given the diversity encountered in American public schools, both theories potentially present a better opportunity for understanding diverse cultures in a globalized, contemporary society. However, the theory of culturally responsive pedagogy provides teaching guidelines and puts emphases on creating learning environments that honor student diversity to enrich their schooling experience and academic success. Thus, the theory of culturally responsive pedagogy can provide a valid theoretical framework for this study.

Applying Culturally Responsive Pedagogy for Music Education

With an increasingly diverse student population and a demonstrated need for a culturally competent workforce, music educators should learn to adopt culturally responsive teaching strategies (Gay, 2002). Abril (2009), Lehmberg (2008), Rohan (2011), Shaw (2014), and Tuncer (2008) applied Gay’s (2002) framework for improving the academic success of an ethnically diverse student population through culturally responsive pedagogy to music teaching.

Abril (2009) portrayed the journey of one teacher who responded to the cultural backgrounds of her students by starting an afterschool mariachi band. Abril (2009) described the struggles of the White, non-Hispanic teacher as she tried to apply culturally responsive instruction into her instrumental teaching. In the beginning the teacher experienced a lot of tension in her relationship with the students that related to the teacher's and students' ethnic identities. Gradually the teacher was able to open a dialogue about music and culture with her students and "began to see herself as much a learner as a teacher" (Abril, 2009, p. 89).

As Lehmborg (2008) examined the effectiveness of elementary general music teaching in urban areas through the lens of culturally responsive pedagogy, he identified four critical components that formed a model of effective urban elementary music teaching: (a) flexibility, (b) cultural knowledge and skills, (c) caring and responsive attitude, and (d) musical knowledge and music teaching skills. Lehmborg's findings directly replicated Gay's (2002) essential elements, and therefore the researcher concluded that culturally responsive teaching is critical to teaching music in urban schools.

Rohan (2011) investigated how cultural diversity influenced teacher practice in music education. The research study was a collective case study involving teachers and students from secondary schools in New Zealand, Australia, and the United States. The settings represented three distinctive stories that reflected cultural diversity in music education. Rohan selected three schools in Auckland, New Zealand; three in Sydney, Australia; and six in Seattle (Washington) and Cleveland (Ohio) in the U.S. The

participants in the study were music teachers and 12- to 13-year-old students. Rohan conducted semistructured interviews with the participants in the schools and then analyzed and coded the data. She then triangulated the coded data with interview transcripts, analysis, and feedback from participants. The findings revealed more commonalities than differences among the three case studies and identified key challenges: Despite expressing their beliefs that cultural diversity adds a positive contribution to the educational settings, in practice teachers rarely met their inclusive goals. Rohan determined that all teachers viewed cultural diversity as a desirable but challenging goal. She found the majority of interviewed students expressed their interest in world music but were unable to identify ways in which music programs in their schools were culturally responsive and inclusive. The study identified some barriers to culturally responsive and inclusive music education: a lack of confidence among Australian and American teachers in teaching non-Western music and a lack of resources available to New Zealand teachers. American students expressed concern about teachers' lack of non-Western musical knowledge and asserted that the repertoire of performing choirs and instrumental ensembles did not reflect the diversity of the students. Furthermore, the researcher indicated that American teachers and students viewed competitions as a barrier to a culturally diverse and responsive musical education because judges expect a specific repertoire. The results also highlighted the challenge of incorporating indigenous music, which Australian teachers especially found to be difficult to utilize. Rohan concluded that only culturally informed and responsive teachers could offer quality music education to students.

In a multiple case study, Shaw (2014) explored adolescent choral students' perceptions of culturally responsive teaching in an urban community children's choir organization. Although in two out of three choirs students identified choral instruction as culturally responsive, they also named three deficiencies related to culturally responsive practices: Teachers were uncomfortable with music that came from outside of their own cultures, instructional time when implementing culturally responsive practices was limited, and some students were not ready to determine what music was culturally relevant for them. Shaw found that culturally responsive teaching expanded students' cultural and musical identities and suggested that when teachers systematically applied culturally responsive teaching to their choral instruction, students would develop "transcultural identities" (p. 306) that would allow them to navigate between two or more cultures easily. This is the only research study I found that examined the application of culturally responsive teaching into choral practices.

Tuncer (2008) utilized Gay's (2002) framework for examining the experiences of Black students learning violin in Florida and tried to define the relationship between students' individual perceptions of the violin program and their sociocultural musical backgrounds. The study included five third grade participants and showed how the participants connected their musical experiences from the school violin class to their daily lives. Tuncer found that the students preferred hip-hop, R&B, and gospel music, but they also showed an appreciation for the classical, jazz, and folk music introduced to them in school. She concluded that students' musical lives and perceptions of violin playing were interrelated: For example, students attempted to make their experiences

personal and meaningful by trying to play songs in their preferred styles on the violins, though the school repertoire consisted of traditional songs such as “Lightly Row” and “Go Tell Aunt Rhodie.” The study indicated that including songs in the violin repertoire that were culturally relevant to the children helped to increase their motivation to participate in the violin program.

A number of music education researchers investigated the essential elements of culturally responsive pedagogy: developing a cultural knowledge base (Benham, 2003; Bruenger, 2010; Emmanuel, 2002; McKoy, 2006; Robinson, 2016), including ethnic and cultural diversity content in the curriculum (Campbell, 2004; Delpit, 1992; Dunbar-Hall, 2005; Goetze, 2000; Heimonen & Hebert, 2010), demonstrating caring and building learning communities (Burnard, 2008; Rusinek, 2008; Temmerman, 2005), communicating with ethnically diverse students (L. L. Anderson, 2013; Kelly-McHale, 2011), and responding to diversity in delivery of instruction (Carlow, 2004; Delpit, 2006; Joyce, 2003; Temmerman, 2005). While these studies are not directly associated with culturally responsive pedagogy, the issues they discussed help to establish a deeper understanding of the principles of culturally responsive teaching.

Developing a Knowledge Base About Cultural Diversity

According to Gay (2003), “teachers knowing who they are as people, understanding the contexts in which they teach, and questioning their knowledge and assumptions are as important as the mastery of techniques for instructional effectiveness” (p. 181). Understanding that preparing teachers capable of providing culturally responsive instructions is important for multicultural education, Bruenger (2010),

Emmanuel (2002), McKoy (2006), and Robinson (2016) explored the effectiveness of preservice teacher and music teacher preparation programs. Benham (2003) elaborated on the challenges of teaching in diverse classrooms and the importance of confronting teachers' personal views about other people's cultures in order to establish successful relationships with ethnically diverse students and to build a learning community.

In order to address the need for developing intercultural competence in preservice music teachers, Emmanuel (2002) designed a course for preservice music teachers that would help them become "competent and effective in a culturally diverse classroom" (p. 77). He stated that the inclusion of more multicultural coursework in preservice teacher preparation programs does not guarantee the effectiveness of these programs. The course Emmanuel designed combined both academic coursework and immersion experiences (e.g., observations, team teaching, and individual teaching). The five participants reflected on their experiences in daily written reflections. Emmanuel collected and coded the qualitative data that consisted of interview transcripts and participant journals. The findings of the study confirmed previous research by Aaronsohn, Carter, and Howell (1995), Doyle (1997), and Xu (2000) that posited the most effective way to change the attitudes and beliefs of preservice teachers is to provide experiences that combine coursework with immersion experience (Emmanuel, 2002). According to Emmanuel, when preservice music educators become aware of their own cultural backgrounds and the cultural backgrounds of their students, they begin to develop intercultural competence.

In order to further explore the issues related to music teaching in urban schools,

Robinson (2016) designed a three-part diversity training series for preservice music educators in a major research university in the southeastern United States. The purpose of the sessions was “to increase a degree of critical consciousness for diversity and equity among preservice music teachers” (Robinson, 2016, p. 6). The three sessions included the exploration of theoretical principles related to urban music teaching and practical activities that allowed preservice teachers to critically reflect on the issues discussed. Robinson created games for the students to investigate the sociopolitical concepts of access and intersectionality. In addition, preservice teachers had an opportunity to analyze the factors that led to “massive school dropout and push-out populations, cultural testing bias, and contributing factors to the academic achievement gap between white and non-white students in the United States” (Robinson, 2016, p. 10). Based on feedback from the participants regarding their experiences in the seminars Robinson concluded that most of the preservice music teachers were not prepared to teach in a diverse classroom. Further, Robinson stated that although the preservice music teachers might have had sufficient skills to teach the content and concepts of music, the majority of the preservice teachers were lacking skills in navigating the culturally diverse music classrooms.

Emmanuel (2002) and Robinson (2016) conducted their studies 14 years apart but came to a similar conclusion: Teachers should have comprehensive preservice diversity training to be the most effective for their students. Likewise, McKoy (2006) investigated the nature and extent of the cross-cultural experiences and knowledge of 19 music education majors enrolled in student teaching and taking courses on teaching diverse groups of students at a southeastern university. The online survey measured preservice

teachers' attitudes "toward and awareness of diverse student populations" (McKoy, 2006, p. 81). The survey included four sections that measured "(a) cross-cultural friendships, (b) attitudes about multicultural music education, (c) beliefs about the influence of race/ethnicity on music and learning style preferences, (d) preferences for and comfort with teaching in multicultural educational environments" (McKoy, 2006, p. 81). The results of the survey indicated that the attitudes of the student teachers about where they prefer to teach and whether they would feel confident teaching diverse groups of students contradicted each other: The majority of the respondents would choose to teach students sharing the same race as the teacher, although they would be comfortable teaching diverse groups as well (McKoy, 2006). McKoy concluded that preservice teachers, while learning about diversity within the cultural tradition, develop a basis for cross-cultural competence in music teaching that not only expands students' knowledge of other cultures, but can also help to better understand the input of various ethnic and racial groups into music. The author suggested the development of cross-cultural competence could be better achieved by changing the instructional strategies of the existing courses for preservice teachers (McKoy, 2006).

Bruenger (2010) investigated why preservice music teachers who received cultural diversity training from a Hispanic-serving institution and had extensive field experience in an urban environment chose not to apply for jobs in urban areas. The 11 participants in this study responded to a brief questionnaire and interview (Bruenger, 2010). Bruenger then triangulated and analyzed the data from the responses and concluded that although diversity training can broaden some perceptions for preservice

teachers, it does not influence their future employment decisions. Moreover, the participants expressed discouragement with urban schools because the principals in those schools tended to not support music programs (Bruenger, 2010). Bruenger addressed the importance of committing to teaching in urban districts and thus indirectly revealed the insufficiency of the preservice teacher training programs.

In 2003, Benham studied and described the experience of teaching music in an elementary school in the community with the highest rates of drug use, teenage pregnancy, crime, unemployment, and poverty in the country. Benham, himself a racial minority at this school, realized that in order to be an effective teacher, it was necessary to deepen his cultural awareness and to learn about the cultural norms and expectations of the students he was teaching. He designed a field study to analyze and better understand the perceptions of students from other cultures, to identify problems, and to revise classroom instruction that addressed the needs of the students. Although Benham supported the view that teaching in diverse settings can be overwhelming and challenging, he pointed out the importance of confronting teachers' personal views about other people's cultures in order to establish successful relationships with ethnically diverse students.

Including Ethnic and Cultural Diversity Content in the Curriculum

In 1992, Delpit highlighted the importance of teachers learning about and sharing in the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of their students and therefore be able to expand their teaching beyond the Eurocentric curriculum. She identified five conditions teachers should address when considering culturally responsive pedagogy: students' cultures and a

school's culture clashing, stereotyping, presuming the intellectual limitations of a child and thereby diminishing the child's potential, ignoring community cultural norms, and ignoring cultural differences.

Changing demographics require music educators to become more competent with world music (Goetze, 2000). Consequently, music educators should understand cultural context in order to select multicultural music. Dunbar-Hall (2005) proposed a new model for music education, which he called *cultural studies*, that would uncover “the differences and power relationships among groups of people and their culture” (p. 33). When music teachers do not recognize the cultural context of music, they create “a superficial application of multiculturalism” (Dunbar-Hall, 2005, p. 34). Dunbar-Hall argued that teaching music of different cultures demands the cultural context of that music: It is imperative to adopt teaching approaches that are appropriate for that culture. Goetze (2000) wrote that to achieve a true representation of the cultures found in schools “we need to do more than sing a song or play a composition based on a non-Western melody or text” (p. 23).

Campbell (2004), whose research is not directly affiliated with the theory of culturally responsive pedagogy, developed a scholarly manual with curricula and lesson plans for band, choir, general music, and orchestra as an alternative way to help students improve their global music understanding. According to Campbell, the well-known phrase “thinking globally, acting locally” can be used as a standard for modern music teaching. People have more connections to world cultures than ever, and the internet provides easy access to world music. Modern classrooms include students representing

various cultures teachers should know about and consider in their practices. Campbell responded to the many cultural values and musical expressions by recognizing each musical culture in context, intensely studying unfamiliar music cultures, immersing in music and its cultural meanings during teaching, and respecting the techniques (*viz.*, oral, or rote, teaching) that are traditional to the musical culture. In her book *Teaching Music Globally*, Campbell suggested how to approach world music cultures by discussing the important roles of musical instruments, examining the elements of music, and exploring the roles these have in traditional music. She outlines curricula for teaching global music for students from the elementary to the university level through real experiences with cultures and traditions.

In 2010, Heimonen and Hebert discussed the multiple political and religious tensions that occur in the process of implementing minority music of peoples such as the Maori and Pacific Islanders in New Zealand, Zainichi Koreans and Okinawans in Japan, and Native Americans in the United States. They asserted that implementing the music of minority cultures into a multicultural curriculum continues to be a challenge despite the emphasis on cultural pluralism at the national level. Moreover, the efforts aimed at incorporating the music of minority cultures sometimes conflict with the general musical culture. Heimonen and Hebert proposed the Information-Sharing, Research and Music Education Strategy (IRME Strategy). The purpose of the IRME Strategy is to increase research efforts to investigate minority cultures' musical practices, to have systematic updates for policy-makers and the public regarding guidelines and declarations, and to provide detailed information to teachers about important international treaties to

implement that knowledge in practice (e.g., United Nations and UNESCO conventions and declarations and charters on the rights of the child).

Demonstrating Caring and Building Learning Communities

Burnard (2008) examined the approaches of three music teachers to inclusive teaching in “under-achieving” (p. 59), low socioeconomic schools in England. She found the teachers were committed to connecting with their students, they set their own goals and expectations in order to meet school and national standards, and they created an environment in which students felt respected and recognized while developing students’ musical identities. In conclusion, Burnard noted that in the process of engaging “disaffected youth” (p. 59), the music teachers should extend their role beyond the use of effective instructional strategies and strike a goal to connect students and build a community in and out of the classroom.

Temmerman (2005) tried to find a solution to connecting the three cultural contexts of school, home, and community to enhance positive attitudes toward music making. Analyzing the music education situation in Australian music schools, the researcher concluded that students were neither learning the skills nor enjoying music making in school. There is a shortage of musical specialists in Australia, and the classroom teachers who teach music lack the necessary skills. In addition, Temmerman pointed out the need for family support to encourage children’s participation in arts programs. The scholar analyzed proposals to coordinate efforts for planning, managing, and implementing school and community partnerships through the school music programs. The results concluded there was no mechanism to bring together the wealth of

expertise, skills, and good music practice at the school level, in arts organizations, or with individual artists. Yet according to Temmerman, there are some successful programs such as the Australian Business Arts Foundation Mentorship Program and the Young Artists Mentoring Program for the building and bridging of school–community partnerships.

In contrast, Rusinek (2008) investigated why a group of disaffected students who rejected academic culture made efforts to achieve musically. In the study, the teacher based his approach on the well-established traditions of the local wind band that students considered an important part of social and cultural life in the school. The teacher gave the students a goal: If they could learn to play the assigned percussion instruments, they could perform in the concert. For the students, who had never played in a band or orchestra and had disengaged themselves from other activities, performing with a percussion group in a school concert became an opportunity to be a part of the school culture. Both Burnard (2008) and Rusinek demonstrated that successfully teaching disengaged students requires considering cultural context, learning outcomes, home–school–community collaboration, and empowerment.

Communicating With Ethnically Diverse Students

The research studies by L. L. Anderson (2013) and Kelly-McHale (2011) explored the relationship between a conductor and the singers. Kelly-McHale examined the relationships between four Mexican students whose families had immigrated to the United States and their music teacher at an elementary school in the Midwest. The purpose of the study was to find in what ways a general music curriculum affected those

students' identity construction. Findings from the study revealed that while the students demonstrated progress in musical literacy and singing skills, their musical experiences were isolated from their cultural practices because of the instructional approach (Kelly-McHale, 2011). Anderson (2013) examined the correlation between the teaching styles of high school choir directors and the sense of community of high school choristers by using two online surveys she sent to the high school choristers and their high school directors. Contrary to Kelly-McHale's position, Anderson found that teaching style did not significantly influence the sense of connectedness of the students. However, the choirs in which conductors used a variety of teaching styles demonstrated a higher level of student learning outcomes (Anderson, 2013). The two studies by Kelly-McHale and Anderson revealed the complexity of the relationship between a conductor and the singers that should be explored further.

Responding to Ethnic Diversity in the Delivery of Instruction

Carlow (2004) studied the issues of culturally congruent teaching and developmental appropriateness in a high school choral program by exploring the acculturation process of immigrant students from four countries. The findings of the study suggested that the use of culturally relevant strategies was essential for understanding between the predominant and minority cultures. Nevertheless, the assimilationist approach, "based on a belief that immigrant students needed to 'fit in'" (Carlow, 2004, p. 321) prevailed in the school. The essential parts of the choral curriculum such as vocal warm-ups, musical notation, sight-reading requirements, repertoire, and choral festivals reflected the tastes and preferences of the teacher and were

culturally unrelated to the students' previous musical experiences (Carlow, 2004).

According to Delpit (2006), the “progressive methods” (p. xxvi) used by educators did not work for Black students. Delpit referred to her own teaching, research, and living experiences in Papua New Guinea and Alaska that allowed her to work toward education that could help to liberate students psychologically and intellectually. She insisted that cultural boundaries should not separate children in the classroom, and teachers should provide the opportunity to all children to learn about each other without being prejudiced toward a specific culture. Joyce (2003) highlighted inappropriate approaches to choral teaching that could result “in practices of exclusion and subordination” (p. ii). While singing could positively influence social relations between individuals, it could also create tensions (Joyce, 2003). Joyce investigated self-labeled *non-singers*. Social and pedagogical practices shaped the negative experiences these individuals had with singing. In the study, some participants described feelings of anxiety and vulnerability while others attributed their bad experiences to singing culturally irrelevant music (Joyce, 2003). Joyce tried to understand how to generate approaches that could confront the tension and could help educators approach singing as a transformative and liberating practice. As a result, she offered a thorough analysis of several prominent choral directors whose strategies built on critical reflections incorporated into their teaching; the creation of visual and theatrical exercises; the use of playful activities to fight anxieties; and the liberation of socially, culturally, and politically silenced people by promoting singing as a communal activity.

Selecting Choral Repertoire

Because this dissertation studied the Boston Children's Chorus, a community-based choral ensemble, it was appropriate to review literature that addressed the challenges choral conductors face when choosing repertoire. According to Apfelstadt (2000), repertoire selection is "the single most important task that music educators face before entering the classroom or rehearsal room" (p. 19). Selecting multicultural repertoire can be challenging for choral educators (Abril, 2006). Though there are ongoing discussions among scholars and practicing music educators about the various guiding principles for choosing repertoire (Canfield, 2009; Forbes, 2001; Hunsaker, 2007; Williams, 2011), all agree that choosing high quality repertoire is a challenging process that requires special skills (Abril, 2006; Cash, 2012; Dean, 2011; Diddle, 2005; Dunbar-Hall, 2005). Increasingly, scholars refer to the repertoire-based approach to teaching instrumental and vocal music. Standerfer and Hunter (2010), who developed a repertoire-based model connected to the National Standards, claimed that this model allows educators to teach all music concepts more consistently and progressively when they carefully and thoughtfully consider repertoire selection.

The aforementioned studies required deep repertoire knowledge and skills based on the pedagogic knowledge of the music educator and the relative aptitude of the students. Not surprisingly, the vast majority of scholarly works related to repertoire deal with criteria for selecting repertoire (Apfelstadt, 2000; Canfield, 2009; Dean, 2011; Diddle, 2005; Forbes, 2001; Hunsaker, 2007; Reames, 2001).

Defining Important Criteria in Choosing Choral Repertoire

Apfelstadt proposed three criteria for choosing repertoire: quality, teachability, and appropriate context. All three are interconnected: Quality music provides a basis for good teaching and careful consideration of context that includes text appropriateness, difficulty level, program-fitting, and cultural aspects, which may influence the quality and teaching. Apfelstadt stated that it is necessary to align the selection of repertoire with the National Standards, which provide a conceptual framework for music educators.

Multiple researchers have established criteria for selecting choral literature. Canfield (2009) and Williams (2011) tried to determine criteria middle school choral directors could use for selecting repertoire. Forbes (2001), Hunsaker (2007), Reames (2001) examined the repertoire selection practices of high school choral directors.

Canfield's (2009) purpose was to determine criteria used by middle school choral directors when selecting choral repertoire. She designed a questionnaire to be distributed to 301 choral directors from three different states; 26% of the choral directors responded to [what kind of criteria?] 20 criteria [it sounds like music, given the rest of your sentence] that they later classified under two categories, appropriate literature and quality literature. The researcher admitted that this categorization led to confusion among the participants because they had not provided a definition of *appropriate* or *quality*. The most important criteria were a variety of styles and difficulty levels and suitability for the students' musical skills. Sixty-seven percent of the choral educators pointed to the importance of the vocal ability and maturity of the singers and 53% indicated the technical difficulty of chosen choral music. Fifty percent indicated the most important

criteria for choosing a choral piece were the appeal to the students and the inclusion of teachable musical concepts in a particular piece. The results of the study revealed that although 44% of directors considered pop music appropriate for inclusion in choral repertoire, they did not accept it as quality choral literature. In addition, Canfield found that 69% of middle and high school choral directors included multicultural pieces in other languages, but English remained the preferred language.

Williams (2011) executed a smaller scale study of middle school choral directors' beliefs about selecting choral repertoire. The researcher wanted to examine potential contradictions between what choral educators believe and what they practice. An online survey included 14 statements about repertoire selection and was administered to 70 middle school choral directors in Texas. The results showed that 45.7% gave a neutral reply to whether pop music should be included in concert programs. Responses from 98.5% of the participants were negative for the statement suggesting that music should be "chosen from the director's favorite genre" (p. 41). The consideration of students' vocal range received a 100% approval from the participants. The importance of the text that for students received approval from 71.4%, but 60% disagreed with the statement that "all music should be chosen for student enjoyment." Also, 45.7% disagreed that students should be a part of the repertoire selection process. Lastly, 50% of choral directors agreed that the chosen music should provide the basis for teaching chromatic solfège tones.

The research studies by Forbes (2001), Reames (2001), and Hunsaker (2007) focused on repertoire selection of high school choral directors. Forbes selected 104 directors from a group comprised of outstanding directors—identified by university

choral directors—and choral music education faculty from accredited by NASM institutions, as well as directors not nominated by any institutions. Forbes collected data through written surveys and telephone interviews. In addition, all the directors submitted copies of their fall and spring concert programs. The results of the study revealed that participants chose the following as the top seven criteria of the 26 listed criteria: (a) quality, (b) vocal skills that could be taught through the composition, (c) technical difficulty of the work, (d) potential of the work to provide an aesthetic experience, (e) musical elements that could be taught through the work, (f) vocal maturity of the singers, and (g) artistic demands of the composition. Among the preferred styles, classical music was selected by 85% of the outstanding choral directors, who specified that it should comprise 45% of the high school choral repertoire. More than half of the directors from the second group suggested that classical music should be occupy less than 45% of programs. Forbes concluded that more experienced directors tend to choose more music from a variety of classical styles and more multicultural pieces for educational and aesthetic content compared with the less experienced choral educators, who included a smaller variety of classical styles and more popular music in the programs. While all directors considered a wide variety of criteria in the selection of repertoire, the findings of the study showed that they did not apply these criteria in a structured way and, at most, used one or two criteria. The majority of the participants expressed their satisfaction with “such an unstructured approach” (p. 118), justifying that repertoire selection should be viewed as an inspirational process.

In a similar study, Reames (2001) examined criteria, sources, and types of chosen

choral literature for beginning high school choirs. The participants were high school choir directors in Virginia. The researcher distributed surveys that included structured questions to 263 directors and received responses from 214 of them. The findings of the study were similar to Forbes's (2001), revealing that more experienced teachers more frequently included classical style literature in repertoire for beginning high school choirs. Technical and aesthetic criteria were the primary considerations of the directors. Among the most popular sources for choosing repertoire, respondents ranked the compositions heard in concerts and on recordings as primary sources. In addition, Virginia choral directors gave a low evaluation to college method classes as a reliable source for finding choral literature for beginning high school choirs.

When Hunsaker (2007) studied the repertoire of 11 high school choral directors whose groups performed at an American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) convention, the researcher sought the directors' specific selection criteria, sources used, and concert programming processes. Hunsaker recorded, transcribed, and analyzed interviews, which comprised the data for the study. The majority of directors selected the following criteria for finding performance literature: quality, that is, well-written choral works; variety, which includes various styles, periods, composers, textures, and tempi; and personal appeal to conductors. The findings suggested that successful directors learned about repertoire selection from their own experiences. Many directors indicated ACDA conventions, conferences, reading sessions, festivals, other choral performances, listening to CDs, reading repertoire lists, and speaking with other choral directors as main sources for finding repertoire. The directors' opinions differed over whether students

enjoy the music is important. Some conductors considered this to be decisive criteria, while others believed in the choice they made.

Diddle (2005) and Dean (2011) presented studies that addressed the repertoire selection needs of preservice and beginning choral conductors. Diddle examined the repertoire selection of beginning choral directors. He distributed a survey to 181 choral directors who had fewer than five years of experience in the field. The findings of the study revealed that personal performance experience along with any teaching experience had a more substantial influence on repertoire selection skills than method courses. The participants identified the three most important criteria for them when choosing repertoire: number of voice parts, range and tessitura, and overall musical quality.

Dean (2011) investigated methods for evaluating choral literature available for preservice and beginning choral directors and generated a rubric to determine the quality of choral pieces from an aesthetic and pedagogical perspective. The following criteria related to aesthetic merit: textual integrity, craftsmanship, predictability, consistency, originality, and validity (Dean, 2011). Dean also defined the criteria of pedagogical merit, which included fundamental concepts of choral singing such as breath, tone, intonation, rhythm, diction, and literacy.

Selecting Culturally Diverse Choral Repertoire

Selecting multicultural repertoire can be challenging for choral educators (Abril, 2006; Shaw, 2012). Abril (2006) developed guidelines for selecting multicultural repertoire and emphasized on two criteria as the most effective: authenticity and cultural validity. Authenticity is reached through an understanding of how music is placed within

a cultural context (Abril, 2006). In turn, understanding derives from immersion in the music, a process of discovery. Only with adequate background knowledge is it possible to judge how authentic a piece of music is to its culture (Abril, 2006). Abril (2006) recommends approaching cultural validity by three steps: checking the reliability and reputability of publishers; ensuring a deep understanding of the cultures represented by the music; and providing context including history, politics, dance, and language. The combination of these approaches ensures a culturally valid performance (Abril, 2006).

Palmer (1992) defined *absolute authenticity* as performance by the culture practitioners with the instruments, language, and setting specified by those culture members, and he pointed out that compromise always accompanies the process of teaching multicultural music. “Compromise with Absolute Authenticity begins as soon as music is removed from its original setting and from its original intentions” (Palmer, 1992, p. 38). Palmer (1992) described five factors that can negatively affect authenticity: (a) recorded music versus live music, (b) translations that do not fully grasp the precise meanings of the language, (c) changes from the original media, (d) simplified versions, and (e) performers who lack an understanding of “foreign cultural structures” (p. 39). While Palmer (1992) pointed out many problems in maintaining authenticity, he argued that the “qualifications and sensitivities of the teacher” (p. 40) are the solution. The music educator with an extensive understanding of and qualifications in world music cultures can be more successful at introducing multicultural music to students.

Knapp (2012) analyzed the effects of multicultural music instruction on the perceptions of authenticity of undergraduate music education majors. Seventy-one

student participants listened to 16 excerpts of multicultural music and rated their perception of each excerpt's authenticity on a 4-point scale and their preference for teaching this type of music on a 7-point scale. The participants also wrote their thoughts about the authenticity of each excerpt, teaching multicultural music, and the questionnaire itself. The results of the quantitative aspect of the study showed no difference in perceptions of authenticity or preferences for teaching multicultural music between the students who took a world music class and those who did not. The qualitative data analysis showed that students lacked multicultural music and authenticity knowledge and their interpretations of excerpts' authenticity differed from the excerpts' authenticity categories. Despite a lack of knowledge or proper training, the students expressed a willingness to teach multicultural music in an authentic way.

To assist high school choral directors, Baker (2010) detailed a comprehensive approach for programming a theme-based performance. Among other factors that contribute to this programming, Baker specifically indicated the importance of balancing a performance of multicultural music with authenticity. Baker insisted that music educators must know the population of students they teach in terms of traditions, values, and communities, and they must design concert programs to replicate those values. It is imperative to present music from various cultural perspectives to respect the ethnic roots of singers and to educate students and the community about the musical cultures of ethnic groups (Baker, 2010).

Summary

Music educators—and choral directors in particular—will have to meet the

challenges of educating ethnically and culturally diverse students and will have to find meaningful ways of connecting with their students. I examined the concepts of multiculturalism, transculturalism, and interculturalism as the three main approaches to public policies and education regarding ethnocultural diversity. The analyses of these models demonstrated that each one has its limitations and that only transculturally oriented concepts and practices can enable a strategic way of thinking and constructing successful cultural relations.

Culturally responsive pedagogy facilitates transcultural attitudes in many ways. Before learning about the diverse cultures of the students, culturally responsive teachers should explore their own culture, legacy, and racial biases. Culturally responsive pedagogy has many advantages in teaching diverse students and seems to be an effective approach that is substantiated by successful educational practices. It appears, however, there is little research describing culturally responsive practices in music education and choral practices. Thus, research that illustrated the effective practices of those choral directors making an effort to satisfy the needs of ethnically diverse students through choral education would add significantly to the field of music education.

CHAPTER THREE

METHOD AND PROCEDURES

Rationale for a Qualitative Design

The purpose of this study was to explore how culturally responsive teaching impacts repertoire selection, rehearsal strategies, marketing, selecting concert venues, and recruiting for a choir of students diverse in background (Saravia-Shore, 2008). As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, the goal was to apply the theory of culturally responsive teaching developed by Gay (2002, 2010) as a framework to answer research questions stated in Chapter 1.

I conducted this study and wrote this research paper using a qualitative approach that supports the exploratory and descriptive nature of this study. According to Merriam (2009), “qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (p. 13). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) wrote that qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the subject matter, and therefore it takes place in natural settings. This chapter provides details on the overall design, the data collection methods, and the data analysis strategies utilized to answer the research questions.

In his discussion of qualitative research strategies, Yin (2009) suggested that the research design is connected to the type of research questions. Because the questions in this study require an in-depth examination of social phenomenon Yin’s suggestions indicated a case study design, which he described as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the

boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 13).

Many prominent researchers (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009) referred to a case as a bounded system. Stake (1995) explained further, “The case is an integrated system. The parts do not have to be working well, the purposes may be irrational, but it is a system. Thus people and programs clearly are prospective cases” (p. 2). The bounded system for this dissertation’s case study was the Boston Children’s Chorus. Its artistic team, administrative team, Board of Directors, children and their parents were the relevant constituencies.

In addition, the case study design allowed me to analyze the issues from multiple perspectives that included not only the viewpoints of the participants, but also those of the related groups of participants, as well as the interaction between them (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991). The use of a case study allowed the investigation of events in their natural settings and helped introduce the details from the participants’ perspectives by using multiple sources of data including interviews, observations, documentation, and artifacts (Yin, 2009).

In case study research, themes emerged from the data that informed the answers to the research questions. Generalizations made from this case study were analytical and corresponded with a model developed by Yin (2009) that includes a two-step process: Step one involves developing a conceptual statement that is based on a certain theory, and step two follows by applying this theory into situations that can produce similar events. The findings of the study allowed for the generalization of a particular set of results to develop some broader theoretical propositions.

To summarize, the case study organization not only fit the needs of this research, but also seemed to be the most appropriate method for investigating the practices of the BCC in relation to culturally responsive teaching for the following reasons. First, the practices of the BCC were studied as a bounded system. Second, the researcher served as an instrument for collecting data. Third, the rich description of the findings allowed multiple interpretations that do not occur in quantitative or experimental strategies (Yin, 2009). Finally, the presentation of the results benefits the further development of the BCC as it continues improving strategic planning to meet the needs of all stakeholders.

Site

I chose to explore cultural relevancy in the BCC. Using a purposive sampling technique (Patton, 2002), I determined the BCC would provide an “information-rich case . . . from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research” (Patton, 2002, p. 169). Highly cultural and economically diverse groups comprise the population of the BCC and therefore present a great interest for this study. Founded by civic leader Hubie Jones in October of 2003, the BCC has expanded from a pilot program that included 20 children to a program involving almost 500 singers and representing over 50 of the urban and suburban communities of the Boston region. The following factors influenced the site selection: The site presented an established choral program, participants represented the culturally and ethnically diverse population of the Boston area, and the site and subjects were accessible to the researcher.

Population and Sampling

The BCC is a multicultural choral education organization that includes over 450

singers. In the 2014–2015 season the demographic makeup of the singer population was 39% White, 26% Black, 15% Hispanics, 11% Asian, 8% multiracial, and 1% other. Seventy-six percent of singers were females and 24% were males (Boston Children’s Chorus, 2015). The race categories and ethnicities of the BCC staff included White, Black, Asian, and Hispanics.

Currently the BCC serves over 50 communities in the Boston area. In the period from 2012 through 2015, 55% of enrolled students came from urban areas and 45% were from the suburbs. In 2015, however, urban students represented 48% of enrolled students while suburban students’ representation increased to 52%, which did not change representation of singers by race and ethnicity. Out of 425 families whose children attended the chorus, 84 were single-parent families (Boston Children’s Chorus, 2015).

In the 2014–2015 school year, 33% of the BCC students came from families with household incomes of \$45,000 or less. Although the BCC’s expenditures at the time of this study amounted to \$5,000 per student, none of the children paid this amount. The tuition fee was on a sliding scale and varied between \$25 and \$1,100 per year based on the family income and which ensembles the singer was in. Tuition assistance was available to all qualified participants. Furthermore, 80% of the singers received financial aid. The BCC did not turn children away because their families were unable to pay.

I used purposeful sampling techniques to select participants. In qualitative research, purposeful sampling identifies information-rich sources for in-depth data collection (Patton, 2002). The director and artistic director of the BCC were the key participants for this study. In order to achieve a thick, rich description for the case

(Esterberg, 2002; Merriam, 2002), it was important to include the executive director, the director of programs, the conductors for non-advanced BCC choirs, the BCC singers, and the singers' parents. Thick description has always been connected with narrative process to accurately interpret the experiences and perceptions of research participants (Geertz, 1973).

Data Sources and Instrumentation

The primary data sources for this study were semistructured, in-depth interviews with the conductors of the advanced choirs, members of the administrative team, children and parents. Secondary data sources consisted of a questionnaire sent to all the participating conductors of the training choirs, public documents, artifacts, audiovisual materials, and observations of choir rehearsals and performances.

Procedures

I contacted the management of the BCC to ask if they would be interested in participating in this study. I explained the purpose of the study and described what participation would entail. After I received an authorization from BCC management, I obtained approval from Boston University's Institutional Review Board. Upon receiving the Board's endorsement, I contacted the participants to schedule interview sessions in locations of their choice to ensure participants' comfort during the interviews. I used a digital data recorder to ensure the accuracy of data collection. I collected data during the five-month period from the beginning of February 2015 until the end of June 2015.

Interview Protocol

Yin (2009) perceived interviews as guided conversations to be one of the important sources of case study evidence. This method enabled the collection of participants' viewpoints regarding the BCC's culturally responsive practices. According to Yin (2009), the interview method's strength is that it is highly revealing and has clear focus on the researched topic. Furthermore, Patton (2002) stated that a researcher interviews people to find out things that cannot be acquired easily, such as feelings, thoughts, and intentions. Yin (2009) suggested the researcher must possess the abilities to (a) ask good questions and interpret the responses, (b) be a good listener, (c) be adaptive and flexible in various situations, (d) have a firm grasp of issues being studied, and (e) be unbiased by preconceived notions. The investigator must be able to function as a senior investigator (Feagin et al., 1991). Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) emphasized, "central to the interview is the issue of asking questions" (p. 79). In order to obtain quality data, I used the questioning techniques summarized by Briggs (1986), Esterberg (2002), Patton (2002), and Roulston (2010). Esterberg and Patton provided specific guidelines for constructing interview questions and conducting interviews, detailing which questions to ask, how to phrase questions, and how to record responses. Briggs stated, "communicative underpinnings of the interview are tied to basic theoretical as well as methodological issues" (p. 4). In addition, Roulston outlined the three issues that could balance the theory and practice of interviewing: "The researcher's theoretical conception of the research interview; the researcher's subject positions in relation to the project and participants; and methodological examinations of interview interaction to inform research

design” (p. 1).

To achieve freer communication with the participants, I used semi-structured interviews (Esterberg, 2002). Open-ended questions helped to encourage interviewees “to speak freely and comfortably” (Esterberg, 2002, p. 243). Prior to an interview, participants signed a letter of consent. I recorded the interviews, which took place at a location convenient to the participants, and transcribed each within 48 hours. In each interview (Appendix A), I asked open-ended questions regarding participants’ unique expertise teaching diverse student populations. Open-ended questions provided greater flexibility for responses and allowed participants to express their thoughts in a natural way. In addition, the open-ended format provided an opportunity to ask follow-up questions to encourage participants to elaborate on or clarify a response (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). I checked the accuracy of the interviewees’ perceptions through member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Specifically, I sent each interview transcript back to the participants, so they could verify accuracy, correct errors, and provide clarifications.

I conducted two interviews each with the artistic director and the director of the BCC. In addition, I interviewed the executive director, the director of programs, 11 children, and 13 parents. My face-to-face interviews varied in length from 50 minutes to over an hour. The artistic director and the director of the BCC were interviewed twice. The other participants had only one interview session, which was complemented by informal conversations, most of which took place in various corners of the main site of the BCC located in South Boston. I recorded the interviews, transcribed them verbatim, and sent them back to the participants as a member check, which helped to increase the

trustworthiness of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Interviews with the leading conductors. I attempted to schedule three interviews with each of the leading conductors; however, I had to reduce the number to only two interviews to accommodate their full schedules. The two extensive interview sessions with each of the conductors left enough time to ask all my questions. In the first interview I asked questions focused on the participants' backgrounds, experiences with selecting repertoire, and rehearsal strategies for their choirs. During the second session, I questioned them about teaching approaches they used and the selection of the choral repertoire. Toward the end of the interview, I asked participants to reflect on their experiences working in the BCC organization.

Interviews with the members of the administrative team. Effective performance of a culturally responsive educational organization depends on at least three key elements: the people, the practices, and the policies (Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2007). In order to understand the organizational structure, planning, and marketing of the organization, I interviewed the executive director and director of programs at the BCC. I scheduled the interviews with each of the participants. These interviews ranged from 45 minutes to an hour. The one-on-one interviews included open-ended questions and provided more substantive information concerning the development of a long-term strategic plan, fund raising, recruitment of singers, and building audiences at the BCC.

Interviews with parents and children. The interviews with the 13 parents and 11 students all took place at the main site of the BCC in South of Boston before or after the rehearsals. I interviewed each of the contributors once. The interviews with the

children were no longer than 20 minutes, and interviews with the parents ranged from 10 to 40 minutes. The open-ended questions, targeted at gathering information about participants' experiences with the BCC, gave enough flexibility to engage in further inquiry.

Conversation Protocol

Conversations occurred in person and via e-mail. Spontaneous questions and a lack of structure characterized conversations, differentiating them from interviews. Conversations provided an opportunity to ask questions as they arose during the data collection process and to ask follow-up questions of the formal subjects.

Punch (2002) and Mayall (2012) discussed the use of conversation as a data source for children. Mayall pointed out that children can control the pace and direction of the conversation; children demonstrate social skills while talking with each other. Perhaps the biggest challenge for researchers, according to Punch, is “[understanding] the world from a child’s point of view” (p. 324) and not imposing interpretations upon that point of view. Both Punch and Mayall suggested that establishing a trusting relationship with the subjects is important for ensuring the validity of the data. Campbell’s (2010) detailed notes outlined systematic instructions for observing and interacting with children. He stressed that preliminary actions should include arranging the meetings and distributing permission forms. In addition, the researcher should carefully consider clarity of language while preparing research questions (Campbell, 2010). Campbell further discussed what researchers should be aware of during a visit and which actions to take following a visit, such as transcribing notes into tales. The informal conversations with

the conductors and singers that usually occurred before or after the rehearsals or the concerts helped to clarify certain issues and served as a good source of supplemental data.

Questionnaires

I administered a questionnaire to gather data related to the perceptions of the conductors of the training choirs (Appendix C), which I distributed to each of the four conductors. The participants completed a questionnaire on which they reported perceptions regarding strategies associated with culturally responsive teaching, and its application in the choral teaching practices (see Appendix C). The questions were grouped under two categories: choosing teaching approaches and repertoire for culturally and ethnically diverse groups of singers. I distributed the questionnaire and a prepaid postage return envelope to each training choir conductor. In addition, I sent a cover letter (Appendix B) with instructions for completing and returning the questionnaire.

Artifact Collection

Artifacts such as official BCC records, newspapers, newsletters, magazines, public artifacts (e.g., concert programs), and audiovisual materials (recordings of the BCC concerts) served as other sources of data. Reviewing documents helped to substantiate participants' statements and provided additional information (Esterberg, 2002; Merriam, 2002). Artifacts helped to enhance data accuracy and presented additional facts about the singers and the repertoire chosen for the ethnically and culturally diverse choral groups. This became helpful in triangulating data when considering trustworthiness.

Observation Protocol

I observed the BCC conductors to determine how they interacted and communicated with students in rehearsal and performance settings. The purpose of these observations was to find evidence of culturally responsive pedagogical choral practices. I explored how each conductor develops and reinforces rules to keep students safe and respected both emotionally and physically. In addition, I monitored how the conductors promoted positive peer relationships. Observations occurred during the BCC rehearsals and concerts and helped to confirm and substantiate interview data.

I drew on a vast body of nonparticipant observations collected during the rehearsals of the four main choirs at the main site of the BCC. I observed two leading conductors and fellow conductors of the BCC during rehearsals and attended BCC concerts in different locations while taking field notes. In my notes, I focused on providing detailed descriptions of the tasks performed, recording the interactions and dialogues between the conductors and the singers during the rehearsals, and capturing the singers' communications with each other. My observations included rehearsals, concerts, and other performances in various locations. I started recording my observations first as the researcher, sitting in the corner of the room, but as I gained the confidence of the singers, students often asked me to join them in singing while they were working on a piece. This experience allowed me to capture the rehearsals from a different perspective.

Field Notes

As recommended by Geertz (1973), Patton (2002), Stake (1995), and Yin (2009), I kept field notes throughout the process of data collection. Writing field notes is a

process of interpretation in which a researcher decides what, why, and how to describe events (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). Geertz pointed out that researchers' interpretations should be thick and rich in context because the collected observational material represents "our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to" (p. 9). My field notes included descriptions of activities, conversations with participants, and the physical rehearsal and performance environment and reflective notes, which included my thoughts, opinions, and analysis of the fieldwork experience.

Data Analysis

The data analysis procedure was consistent with the recommendations of Esterberg (2002). I employed a process that included open coding to organize, summarize, and identify themes that emerged from the information collected (Esterberg, 2002). Next, I applied focused coding to refine broad ideas (Esterberg, 2002). Finally, I developed an analysis of the coded data (Esterberg, 2002).

Open Coding

During the open coding stage, Esterberg (2002) suggested that the researcher "work intensively with [the] data, line by line, identifying themes and categories that seem of interest" (p. 158). I applied Esterberg's suggestion to this study by writing a two- or three-letter code for each theme identified in the transcripts of interviews and conversations and data from questionnaires.

Miles and Huberman (1994) described the next step in the analysis process as *memoing*, which involves writing reflective notes about particular data. Esterberg (2002)

identified two main types of memos: procedural memos, which focus on the research process and help the researcher keep track of what has been done, and analytic memos, which focus on the subject matter and what the data mean. The purpose of memoing is to “move from the empirical to the conceptual level” (Punch, 2005, p. 202). After reading transcripts and notes of the interviews, I wrote analytic and reflective memos (Creswell, 2007) to summarize what I observed. The following is an example of an analytic memo: “Participants tended to feel strongly about the social change mission. This idea was described in many ways, but the theme remained the same” (July 15, 2015). In another memo I reflected over the singers’ responses about the repertoire selections: “I have to say that I’m very surprised to hear that the majority of the interviewed singers so passionately spoke about the importance of including in the repertoire the songs with strong social messages that they related to their everyday lives. Interestingly enough the majority of the interviewed students from Premier Choir and Young Men’s Ensemble mentioned one of the most challenging songs in the current repertoire—“Home” by S. Feigenbaum—among their favorites. This fact is very important because children relate to the songs that describe the real-life situations (e.g., drugs, depression), which they believe can positively impact social change” (June 20, 2015). Some of my memos I wrote on the fields of the interview transcripts as short remarks “found a link” or “consider this as a theme”. Writing memos helped to record and clarify ideas and move to the next stage of analysis. When I was writing the findings these memos became extremely helpful. I coded and stored my memos as additional data. The open coding process continued until I had segmented and organized all data.

Focused Coding

The focused coding (Esterberg, 2002) stage helped me to identify key themes and create theme clusters. These led to theme categories (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2007; Esterberg, 2002); it was necessary to eliminate some codes and combine smaller categories into larger ones (Hays & Singh, 2012). During this stage I tabulated and categorized the data to find related themes. By analyzing the data line-by-line I was able to construct themes established around participants' personal backgrounds, teaching instruction, and the selection of repertoire. The commonly repeated themes led to the creation of larger categories, which I then compared with the main principles of culturally responsive teaching.

Developing an Analysis

At this stage in the analysis, the researcher chooses one core category to which all other categories can relate (Creswell, 2007; Esterberg, 2002). This step is the most complex stage, and it is during this stage that I had to look for similar patterns, compare cases of individual interviewees, find similar categories, and conduct content analysis, the counting of the frequency of specific themes and words in the text (Esterberg, 2002).

At the final stage of analysis, I was able to identify four main categories and an overarching theme. Based on the shared views from the participants, the findings revealed social change mission-oriented planning as the overarching theme. Participants' views also revealed four frequently occurring characteristics that helped to determine the culturally responsive practices of the BCC: personal development, instructional strategies, choral repertoire-based curriculum, and building a community of singers. I

analyzed each characteristic from the perspectives of conductors, members of administrative team students, and parents.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness, sometimes called validity, ensures that what the researcher found actually happened (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For this study, thick and rich description, and member checks were the most appropriate procedures (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009). I triangulated data to ensure the validity of the study through the use of a variety of data collecting methods such as interviews, observations, questionnaires, and artifacts.

Confirmation of the accuracy and completeness of the transcribed data by the participants ensures the credibility of a study (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checks allow the participants to verify that I reported all the ideas they communicated during the interview precisely. To perform member checks, I sent the transcribed interviews to the participants to verify the content. This gave participants an opportunity to edit, clarify, elaborate, and delete their own words from the narratives. I also asked the participants whether they agreed or disagreed with the summaries that reflected their views and experiences. These procedures ensured that I accurately transcribed participants' words and described the events and therefore improved the validity of the study (Barbour, 2001).

In order to develop a strong body of evidence, I collected data during a five-month period. During that time, I attended the rehearsals, concerts, and workshops of the BCC, interviewed participants, and searched for artifacts. As a researcher, I attempted to

give detailed descriptions of settings, participants, and data collection to make the findings more credible and to demonstrate my diligent effort to conduct a respectable research study (Creswell 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009).

Researcher Bias

In qualitative inquiry, the researcher has the challenging task of making sense of data by interpreting, analyzing, and eventually presenting findings. Moreover, the nature of this study required personal contact with the participants (Patton, 2002). Researchers must consider their own biases, limitations, and views throughout data collection, analysis, and interpretation. According to Curtin and Fossey (2007), researchers have a substantial influence on participants' performance and on the development of the research. As a White female music educator, I was aware of my potential cultural biases while recording interviews or field notes and while interpreting the collected data. For example, I found it hard to maintain neutrality during the interviews. Occasionally I felt tempted to steer participants in a certain direction to receive a desired response. I had to constantly remind myself that my goal as a researcher was to get the participants to tell their perspectives and not to influence them in any possible way. Cognizant of my own professional and cultural assumptions, I regularly evaluated my own position as an educator and used appropriate methods to avoid being biased toward other culturally diverse populations. To monitor biases, I continually reevaluated impressions of the participants and confronted preexisting assumptions and hypotheses. Furthermore, to ensure high qualitative standards I focused on asking quality questions and avoided elaborating on respondents' thoughts and answers during the interviews.

I spent enough time observing the singers and conductors that eventually my presence was not intrusive and I became part of the process. In addition, while interviewing the participants, I did not ask them direct questions about culturally responsive teaching so the participants would not try to consciously align and relate their practices to that concept. In addition, I had to constantly evaluate and reflect on my assumptions about each respondent. As I progressed with the study, my researcher skills gradually improved and my questions became better formulated.

I also used a technique called reflexivity: I recorded thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and assumptions that occurred during the course of the study as well as conclusions about what went well and what researchers could avoid or modify in future research attempts. Reflective writing became part of my field notes and helped me differentiate between subjectivity and observable phenomena (Borg, 2001; Watt, 2007). Thus I performed a trustworthy research study and was sincere and honest with my research participants about my identity and my social position.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

The purpose of this qualitative research case study was to explore and analyze the practices of the Boston Children's Chorus (BCC) to see whether those practices were congruent with the principles of culturally responsive pedagogy. My intent was to explore how the main conductor, his staff, and the support staff (including the administrative board) considered issues of cultural relevancy as they programmed and rehearsed music, selected concert venues, recruited singers, and marketed the organization. I also considered the perspectives of the stakeholders (the parents and singers).

The line-by-line analysis of the data allowed me to construct themes established around participants' personal backgrounds, teaching instruction, and the selection of repertoire. The commonly repeated themes led to the creation of larger categories, which I compared with the main principles of culturally responsive teaching. At the final stage of analysis, I was able to identify four main categories and an overarching theme. Based on the shared views from the participants, the findings revealed social change mission-oriented planning as the overarching theme. Participants' views also revealed four frequent characteristics that helped to determine the culturally responsive practices of the BCC: personal development, instructional strategies, choral repertoire-based curriculum, and building a community of singers. I analyzed each characteristic from the perspectives of conductors, administrative members, students, and parents.

The findings reported in this chapter are analytical and include the results from

interviews, observations, and questionnaires arranged by common themes. I included data from documents and artifacts where pertinent to the results. The chapter begins with a description of the BCC followed by a biographical outline of the chorus leader Anthony Trecek-King, the BCC president and artistic director. A brief sketch of the BCC staff members and reflections of my first acquaintance with the chorus complete the introductory section. In order to provide a deep analysis of the practices of the BCC in relation to culturally responsive teaching, I constructed the data around the five emerged themes, presented in the Emerging Themes section.

Boston Children's Chorus

The civic leader Hubie Jones founded the Boston Children's Chorus (BCC) in October 2003. Between 2003 and 2015, the BCC expanded from a pilot program that included 20 children to almost 500 singers representing over 50 of Boston's urban and suburban neighborhoods participating in 13 different choirs in five Boston locations: the South End, Allston-Brighton, South Boston (main site), Dorchester, and the Lower Roxbury section of the South End.

The four chorus levels of the BCC include training, intermediate, concert, and premier. Training choruses comprise beginning level singers ages 7 to 12 and provide a musical foundation for the intermediate level. In turn, the intermediate level choirs feed the Concert Choir, Young Men's Ensemble, Choral Union, and Premier Choir. Children who demonstrate adequate skills and knowledge in music theory, interval training, rhythm, and sight-singing techniques receive invitations to proceed to the next level or join the Advanced Chorus. Each chorus has a different conductor and accompanist. All

choristers attend a two-hour rehearsal each week that includes a required weekly half hour music education program called Rapid Achievement Practice (RAP) designed for all levels of singers to help advance sight-reading and musicianship skills. The singers from the upper level choirs also receive individual vocal instruction. All of the Boston Children's Chorus choirs have a rigorous concert schedule and perform at total of over 70 concerts each year in a wide range of public and private events across the city of Boston and beyond. The choristers gain experience by performing for different audiences. The members of the BCC become deeply involved in the life of the Boston community and engaged in various community-service projects such as holiday concerts, festivals, ceremonies, and concerts at local shelters, senior housing, and religious institutions. The BCC collaborates closely with many prominent musicians and organizations that provide inspiration and great musical experiences for all members. The concerts of the BCC have appeared on local and national television as well as radio broadcasts. Young people of the Premium Choir have an opportunity for international performing experience by touring with the choir to destinations around the world. The BCC programs are made possible through funding provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, a grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, various organizations, and individual donors.

In addition to the choirs, the BCC included artistic and administrative teams and a Board of Directors. Among the artistic team members were the president and artistic director of the BCC, 12 teaching conductors, and three accompanists. Twelve people worked on the administrative team and the Board of Directors had 17 members.

The BCC's staff has designed the programs to develop students' music

comprehension, including sight-reading, ear-training, and extensive vocal skills. An important component of the BCC model is the development of leadership and life-skills training. The BCC leaders and staff encourage singers to take ownership of their participation in the chorus through activities that include mentoring, holding leadership positions within the choir structure, hosting workshops, and giving back to the community through charity work (Boston Children's Chorus, n.d.-c).

I first became acquainted with the BCC in 2010 when I attended a professional development workshop for music teachers organized by the BCC's staff. I spent a day with the BCC watching choir rehearsals and learning the teaching techniques the conductors used with their ensembles. At the end of the day, the training and intermediate choirs performed a program called "Songs My Mother Taught Me," which featured the songs from different cultures combined with children's personal stories and memories. That concert served as inspiration for my research. I had some informal conversations with the conductors about a potential study of the BCC, and soon after I began informal observations of the BCC in order to learn more about the organization and to establish connections with the conductors. That year, I attended the BCC rehearsals and concerts and observed the guest conductors working with the singers. Not until 2015, however, did I return to formally continue with my study.

Personnel Profiles

Anthony Trecek-King

Anthony Trecek-King, the president and artistic director of the BCC, was born, raised, and educated in the United States and are part of the same generation.

Nevertheless, all people, in addition to their national identities and ages, are tied to personal experiences and cultural traditions. Our individual cultural identities connect us to various parts of the world, languages, and family histories (Hernández-Sheets, 2005).

Trecek-King identified himself as African American and said that he grew up in a family with strong cultural roots:

Both of my parents are descendants of slaves and, therefore, I am. There are certain cultural aspects that are attached to that. Both from the stereotype standpoint, which I don't buy it, but also from a reality standpoint, which is true. (personal interview, April 23, 2015)

Born into an Air Force family, Trecek-King spent a few years in Germany as a child where he not only learned to speak fluent German at a young age but also became captivated with the cultural climate of that country. His first musical experiences were associated with “attending church services in the South [in the U.S.A.] and hearing spiritual song in the church” (Trecek-King, interview, April 23, 2015), but music was always a part of his life from kindergarten on. Trecek-King spent most of his childhood in North Dakota and Nebraska. He participated in his school's string program and sang in its choirs. Still, he had no plans to pursue a music career; rather, he wanted to become an engineer. When he received a music scholarship from the University of Nebraska, he decided to double major in engineering and cello performance. Eventually, he stopped studying engineering and dedicated all his time to music studies and conducting. Trecek-

King earned a bachelor's degree in cello performance from the University of Nebraska at Omaha and a master's degree in orchestral conducting from Florida State University. Recently, he completed a Doctor of Musical Arts program in choral conducting at Boston University (Boston Children's Chorus, n.d.-a).

While a student at Florida State University, Trecek-King and his friends created a student orchestra that performed at the local summer music festival. After he graduated with the master's degree in conducting from Florida State University he moved back to Omaha, Nebraska, where he got a job at the church directing a choir. Shortly after, he decided to enroll in a master's program for computer science at the same university where he pursued a double major in computer science and conducting. When the opportunity arose, Trecek-King applied for and received a faculty position in the department of music at Florida State University and moved back to Tallahassee. He held a faculty position and worked for both the computer science and music departments simultaneously. This unique position led him to create a new major in music technology while he continued directing one of the choruses on campus. He balanced both jobs until the year 2005. A year later, Trecek-King started working at the Nebraska Choral Art Society where he conducted an adult chorus and later worked with the children's chorus. That year, Trecek-King took a master class with the famous Swedish choral conductor Eric Ericson and was inspired by the chorus and choral sound versus orchestral sound: "It was the first time I worked with the chorus that felt like an orchestra" (Trecek-King, personal interview, April 23, 2015). Furthermore, when he heard Netherlands' Children's Chorus he felt encouraged to try a different approach to teaching with his own choir in

Nebraska. While building his program with the Nebraska Children's Chorus, Trecek-King attempted to diversify the choir by bringing in children of various ethnic backgrounds, but his efforts were not supported by the organization's administration, therefore when he got an offer from the BCC he accepted it. The diversity of the chorus became one of the critical points that helped him make the decision to take the BCC job.

Trecek-King is an accomplished conductor and clinician, who has earned international acclaim working with choirs and orchestras throughout the Americas, Europe, and the Middle East, including the University of Cologne Chamber Choir, the National Youth Choir of Great Britain, members of the Schola Cantorum de Venezuela, the Juvenil Schola Cantorum, the University Simón Bolívar; Omaha Symphony Chamber Orchestra, and Polifonija, a state chorus of Lithuania. He spent a semester in residence at the Technische Universität Braunschweig in Germany as a guest conductor of both the choir and orchestra. In 2005 and 2006, Trecek-King was the only American selected to participate in the Eric Ericson masterclass in the Netherlands, and he received the Eric Ericson Award by winning an international conducting competition in Sweden. He directed the American Choral Directors Association National Junior High/Middle School Honor Choir in Dallas, Texas, and conducted many other All State and festival choirs (in Germany, Alabama, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Massachusetts, Nebraska, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Texas, and Vermont). In addition, he played a host on the new choral music television series "Sing That Thing" aired on WGBH-TV in 2015. Under his leadership the BCC has established a distinctive choral education curriculum.

Michelle Adams

Adams grew up in a White, conservative Christian Evangelical community in rural South Carolina. Her first musical experiences were also connected to attending church services and singing in the church choir. When Adams started attending a public school, her environment became more diverse. She actively participated in school bands and choruses and learned how to better relate to people around her: “I got more interactive with my peers in high school through band, chorus and clubs” (Adams, personal interview, April 8, 2015). Adams referred to her high school band and chorus teacher as one of the most influential musicians in her life, as someone who helped her to discover a bigger world of music. Adams said that she did not remember wanting to pursue anything else other than music at the college level. After one semester in college, she realized that she did not want to continue her studies as a voice performance major; instead, she turned to music education. She graduated with a bachelor’s degree in music education from the University of South Carolina. Adams then continued her education at Florida State University from which she earned a Master of Music in Choral Conducting. At the time, Adams’s husband was a trombone player in the Air Force band, and the family frequently relocated. Adams worked as a music educator mostly in the urban schools in South Carolina, Florida, New York, and Nebraska. She taught chorus in addition to general music classes. Although Adams taught students of various ages, she ended up working mostly with middle school-aged students. She said that she had always been teaching chorus in addition to general music classes. At some schools, she created the choral program. When she started teaching music and chorus in urban schools in

Nebraska, she met Trecek-King. Together they worked with the Nebraska Children's Chorus. Soon after Trecek-King accepted a job with the BCC, he invited Adams to become an assistant director. She recently became a director of the BCC. Together they continue their professional collaboration at the BCC. I also interviewed the executive director, the director of programs of the BCC in order to understand the factors that shaped their personal views on choral education.

David Howse

My first interview was with the executive director of the BCC, David Howse, who spent 11 years with the organization helping to build it from its start. Howse, who is African American, came from a family of educators and always wanted to become a teacher. He graduated with a master's degree in vocal performance from New England Conservatory of Music and taught voice lessons at the University of New Hampshire. In addition, he graduated from Harvard Business School's Next Generation Executive Leadership Program. As a member of the National Arts Strategies Chief Executive Program, a consortium of 100 of the world's top cultural leaders, he is involved in addressing the critical issues that face the arts and cultural sector worldwide. Howse received numerous awards for his innovative leadership and was recognized by *Boston Business Journal* as one of Boston's best young executives. He sees diversity as a tool for bridging social divides. Howse has a diverse group of friends and working in a diverse community was one of his targets. That was one of the reasons he joined the BCC team.

Ben Hires

Ben Hires, Director of Programs at BCC, is Asian American. His formal

education was not related to music: He studied philosophy and political science and received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Boston University. Later, Hires continued his studies at Boston University where he focused on comparative religion, literature, and ethics and earned a master's degree in theology and a Master of Science in Arts Administration. He managed Boston Youth Symphony Orchestra and then became their director of programs. That was his first experience working with the music organization, but not the last one. Over a period of time, Hires became an executive director of the New England String Ensemble at the same time the group started collaborating with the BCC. When the BCC offered him the position of director of programs in 2009, Hires already knew Howse and Trecek-King; he readily accepted the offer. Hires communicates with many people inside and outside the country and in the music world. Currently he also serves on the Board of Urbanity Dance, the Board of the Allston Brighton Community Development Corporation, and as president of the Boston University Arts Administration Alumni Association and is a College Access Mentor at the Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center.

Getting to know both leading conductors as well as the interviewed members from the administrative team allowed me to understand the ways in which their personal values, beliefs, and experiences are connected to culture, one of the essential features of a culturally responsive practice. Recognizing people's unique traditions and values, including ethnic identity, language, religion, community, and family, helps them to see how everyone is connected. According to Hoelscher (1999), teachers and students who openly share their lives, cultural identities, and life experiences build trust and develop

stronger relationships with each other and also create a better learning environment in the classroom.

Emerging Themes

While analyzing and deconstructing the data, I used the main principles of culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000) as a theoretical framework. I identified four essential elements of culturally responsive teaching in the process, and four additional characteristics emerged from the data. During the last coding stages I defined emerging themes, those themes shared by the majority of the participants during the interviews and in questionnaires. While I identified all characteristics of culturally responsive teaching throughout the process, the deconstruction and analysis of the data revealed the overarching theme that in turn helped to develop the following categories to assess the culturally responsive practices of the BCC (see Figure 1).

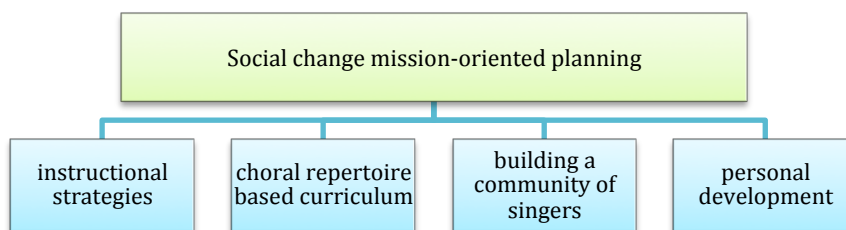


Figure 1. Main conceptual themes developed during data analysis.

I classified and divided the findings and interpretation of the research data into five parts to answer the three research questions. In the first section, Personal Development, I present the data that emerged from personal interviews with conductors and members of administration; this data helped me to understand how the interviewees' beliefs, experiences, values, and assumptions are linked to culture. In the second section,

Instructional Strategies, I include data pertinent to instructional strategies that mainly came from the interviews and questionnaires of the conductors. I also consider the results that came from my observations and from the interviews with the parents and students. The analyses of interviews with the conductors, parents, and students, along with findings from the questionnaires, comprise the main data of the third section, Choral Repertoire-Based Curriculum. In section four, Building a Community of Singers, I include data that described structures and activities relevant to that topic. Finally, in the fifth section I summarize data dedicated to the overarching theme of social change mission-oriented planning.

Instructional Strategies

The essential elements of culturally responsive teaching defined by Gay (2002) served as a guide to narrow the instructional focus. While examining the data from this study pertinent to instructional strategies, I analyzed them in relation to culturally responsive teaching methods. Instructional methods for culturally responsive teaching include cooperative learning, differentiated instruction, peer teaching, and reciprocal teaching that enable participants to share and learn from their collective experiences and challenges (Gay, 2002; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Collaborative learning methods are a key component to culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2002; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). It is not unusual to see singers working in groups at the BCC. I observed singers from varying levels of choirs, including Central Intermediate Advanced Chorus, Concert Chorus, and Premier Chorus, divided by sections (e.g., first sopranos or second altos working with their section leaders), I noticed

that all singers were actively involved in sharing and learning from their collective experiences. The students were collectively searching for the ways to fix their mistakes and to achieve better results in singing. In the process, the singers were challenged both socially and emotionally as they listened to other perspectives and tried to defend their ideas. Some students experienced challenges. For example, in one group, while singing through difficult spots in the vocal parts, the students ended up analyzing the intervals, but could not agree on the best way to improve intonation. In another instance, some of the section leaders had difficulties supervising their sections and they reported their problems to the conductor. The conductor worked as a facilitator walking from one group to another checking the progress and helping out. Overall, these collaborative approaches to learning seemed to help reinforce choristers' background knowledge such as interdependence, sharing, and teamwork and to improve student music literacy engagement and motivation.

In order to use collaborative approaches, it is necessary to create a successful, caring environment in which students feel safe and teachers expect them to achieve to the best of their abilities (Gay, 2002). The interviews with the conductors showed that they stressed the significance of creating a safe space during the rehearsals. During one of the interviews, Trecek-King emphasized the importance of making each singer of the chorus feel comfortable expressing himself or herself. He spoke of one boy who was exploring changing his gender. While he experienced confrontations and bullying at school, the boy did not have to worry about being himself in the choir. "He fits in because everybody fits" (Trecek-King, personal interview, April 23, 2015). Trecek-King expressed his

concern about the issue of segregated communities in Massachusetts reported by Ayscue and Greenberg (2013). Many schools replicate the populations of their communities, and therefore many become homogeneous environments. The BCC, however, offers “an opportunity to be around others” (Trecek-King, personal interview, April 23, 2015).

According to Gay (2002), creating a safe learning environment is one of the critical factors in culturally responsive teaching. Some staff members believe their responsibility is to create a safe learning environment by being sensitive to students’ cultural and ethnic backgrounds. During my observations of the various choir levels’ rehearsals, I saw children who felt they had come to a safe environment where they were not afraid to make mistakes, asked for help from the conductors and peers, and never hesitated to ask questions. These interpretations were supported by data from the interviews with parents and students. During the interviews with the parents, many admitted that at the BCC, children feel mutual respect, they initiate conversations about differences and develop positive attitudes about themselves and others, and they feel safe to ask questions and contribute to discussions. The parent who had two children attending the BCC for eight consecutive years said, “When you come here, you feel happy because you feel that you are in a safe place” (Tamara, personal interview, June 16, 2015). Gloria, who was a senior student from the Premier Chorus, said she felt comfortable coming to the BCC and explained further, “I feel very safe making mistakes. I know if my voice cracks, or if I have difficulty sight-reading I can get help, and I can ask questions. It’s really a space that I feel very safe in” (personal interview, June 18, 2015).

As the senior conductors of the BCC suggested, adjusting instruction to the needs

and capabilities of the group requires certain flexibility in the rehearsal structures and the element of improvisation while experimenting with various instructional approaches.

They also pointed out that a search for better teaching approaches is an ongoing process.

The findings from the questionnaires confirmed that all the conductors of the training choirs, without exception, stressed the importance of knowing the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of their students. One questionnaire response indicated that:

Knowing the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the students brings a unique experience to the learning process: (a) each of them learns and process information differently; (b) teacher should be prepared to present material in a variety of ways; and (c) students give and respond to feedback in a variety of ways.

While all the teaching conductors acknowledged the importance of considering the students' ethnic and cultural backgrounds, they also indicated that this knowledge did not always have a significant influence on planning their teaching instruction. Instead, they used that information when it was relevant to the repertoire or when planning activities for a group. One of the conductors of the training choirs stated that knowing students' cultural backgrounds helps to shape the ensemble. Another asked younger students to create visual representations of cultural identities to better understand the aspects of identity. All the participants agreed that the BCC as an organization is highly effective in uniting diverse communities by generating conversations and friendships across boundaries of race, gender, and socioeconomic status.

The findings from the interview data confirmed that both leading conductors believed it is important to know the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of their students. Trecek-King stated, "I absolutely adjust how I teach knowing who is in front of me, and

knowing there are certain kids who need certain things to help them through the process” (personal interview, April 23, 2015).

While both of the interviewed conductors agreed that knowing the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the students is part of finding successful teaching approaches, Adams also pointed out that achieving high professional choral standards guides the choice of instructional strategies. She explained that, although the teaching approaches can be slightly different, the expectations remain the same for all children. Adams clarified that knowing her students’ ethnic and cultural backgrounds becomes helpful during the rehearsals when kids are able to act like “experts in the room helping along with language . . . of the pieces or religious contexts” and also when she is organizing and arranging choir trips. Trecek-King shared his view:

I’m trying to figure out what each individual needs to become better versus treating them the same. And you have to consider their racial or ethnic background, everything what makes them a whole person. We too often judge people on our own criteria of whatever it is and this is wrong. (personal interview, April 23, 2015)

When it comes to instruction, Adams said she is always trying to keep it plain, using simple terms for explanation and providing an opportunity for children to give feedback and to “have more of a democratic process in a classroom to feel like they can push back, to feel like they have input, to feel like they can challenge ideas or offer their own spin on how to explain things” (personal interview, April 8, 2015). This philosophy led to her discovery that planning instructional strategies around repertoire and making cultural connections through music analysis of the text, harmony, meter, and structure of the piece can be more effective in choral teaching. Yet, such planning required finding a

balance in teaching elements of musical literacy and the context of music and being able to see a bigger picture while teaching steps and elements of music.

According to the conductors of the training choirs, knowing their students' cultural backgrounds and developing emotional ties with the singers are two of the many factors that contribute to student engagement. It is important to leave time for social activities with students. One of the conductors mentioned an activity called "Roses and Thorns" that allows students to share highlights and struggles they have had to deal with outside of BCC during the week. Another conductor explained in a questionnaire response that one concern is avoiding thinking of singers "as a vehicle to create a musical product."

The conductors of the BCC emphasized the importance of involving students in the decision-making process. One conductor's description follows.

The one thing I admire the most about BCC is how the [leading] conductors do a great job of finding ways to get the singers to connect to what they're singing. For myself, I know that I try and find ways to get the singers to think about the text (the 'what') and connect it to something personal, or at least think about the words they are singing and let that drive how they are making music with each other. I've also been part of discussions in Premier Chorus and Young Men's Ensemble where the singers spend time discussing what a particular text means to them and how that connects to a larger social justice issue, or part of their personal identity; the discussions around music and identity tend to crystalize their focus as they continue to rehearse the piece of music.

The following excerpt from an observation captured the atmosphere as well as my interpretation of students' engagement during a typical rehearsal:

As I entered the room, the rehearsal of the Premier Choir was about to start. While some students were still arriving and finding their seats, others were socializing in small groups. From time to time, I heard some cheering sounds as friends were meeting friends. All of a sudden, the large room seemed overcrowded and the energetic noise started to decline quickly. There were about

50 choristers in the room when the conductor came in. He greeted the singers and immediately engaged them in a vigorous warm up. After finishing the first exercise, the conductor asked students to take a lead. Many singers enthusiastically raised their hands and the conductor pointed to one boy asking him to continue with the warm up exercises. The boy started leading the choir in an intensive body shake out that they were doing in mixed meters: 1,2,1,2 . . . 1,2,3, 1,2,3 . . . 1,2,3,4,1,2,3,4 . . . The exercise was not a new one for the students; it seemed to be a part of the routine, but all the singers quickly got involved and did it with excitement and enjoyment. (excerpt from rehearsal observation notes, April 2, 2015)

This is just one of many examples of how to immediately involve singers in the rehearsal process. During my observations of the five choruses at the BCC, all the participating conductors were using rehearsal time to engage students in discussing issues of identity, power, privilege, and bias, where deep understanding relies on multiple perspectives. These discussions were dialogues between conductors and singers in which the young individuals learned how to find their voices and how to use their knowledge in the service of their academic, personal, and social lives.

Culturally responsive pedagogy is highly interactive and requires frequent feedback from students. One of the most popular techniques among the BCC conductors was the question-and-answer technique that helped students keep engaged and created a dialogue about which strategies were most successful for the group. All the BCC conductors collectively agreed that students' opinions matter and that it is vital to listen to what they have to say about learning and instruction.

During one of the rehearsals of the Premier Chorus and the Young Men's Ensemble that I observed, the conductor continually encouraged the students to actively reflect on, create, and communicate their musical ideas. The singers responded with enthusiasm. They decided where to make crescendos or suggested when to change

phrasing or add a specific gesture for clarity. As the conductor masterfully adjusted the flow of the creative process, the students did most of work.

In the Intermediate Chorus, the younger singers also had an opportunity to give their input into the musical interpretation of the pieces they worked on. For example, the choir was working on the song “Like a Singing Bird,” based on the poem by Burns. The conductor explained the importance of transferring the meaning of the words through music to the listener and asked students to give their understanding of the words going line by line through the poem: “My heart is like a singing bird whose nest is in a watered shoot...” The children became very excited while trying to find out, explain, and learn the meanings of the words. From all the corners of the room I heard exclamations: “Oh, that’s what it means! Now I understand.” For those children who loved to draw and liked to visualize, the conductor offered the opportunity to create a picture of the song. On the big sheet of paper, the students took turns drawing the visual interpretation of the poem that helped them to better understand the meanings of the words. These are just two examples of how the conductors worked on developing responsive feedback from the students.

Benedict (2006) emphasized the value of the discussions that should take place in a rehearsal room to clarify and better understand diverse musical cultures:

Students can certainly identify with music of their cultures, and even differences in music. Yet how much more profound if they can affiliate their life experiences with issues and situations that are addressed in the curriculum, thus, becoming tied more closely to the goals of a socially and ideologically aware music curriculum. (p. 11)

Occasionally during the multiple observations of the five choirs, I noticed a few

singers, mostly from the younger choirs, who did not appear to be fully participating in the rehearsal. As I noticed a couple of boys of the Central Intermediate Chorus were obviously not as involved in the working process as much as the other children. The situation changed when the male assistant conductor sat next to them and helped them in singing and learning their parts. This situation can be interpreted in two ways: Possibly, the boys were intimidated by the presence of an adult, and therefore started working harder; or they felt good having a male instructor next to them and felt more confident. My conclusion was the latter because the boys appeared to enjoy communicating with the male instructor and receiving assistance.

The rehearsals usually continued nonstop for two hours, which was not easy for all the children. While they took one short break during that time, it was hard for the students to maintain their focus and involvement for the full length of the rehearsal. I never spotted children, however, who looked completely bored or wanted to exclude themselves from the rehearsals. The majority of the children I observed enjoyed the rehearsal time because they were eager to learn and work on their singing skills.

During one of the rehearsals of the Premier Chorus Trecek-King spoke about the harmonic analysis of the piece. It was rather complicated music built on inverted intervals, which caught the interest of the singers and turned the discussion into an interesting and very sophisticated conversation about the construction of that harmony. Later, Trecek-King said that he had never planned to go into so much detail about harmonic analysis, which he personally found interesting and had simply decided to share with his singers. An element of spontaneity and improvisation, the approach of trial-and-

error with some music, is also a teaching approach that can help in building strong repertoire.

A mutual admiration for the choral conductors at the BCC existed between the conductors, the parents, and the children. All the participating parents referred to the teaching staff as greatly qualified professional musicians who helped to set and maintain high performing standards. The parents also expressed their satisfaction with the level and intensity of choral education programs at the BCC. Sarah, a mother of a girl from the Central Intermediate Chorus said:

I think the music education is incredible here. It's obvious, or maybe not. My daughter goes to a private school, but I think the kind of music instruction that she gets here is above and beyond what she gets at the private school. (personal interview, May 14, 2015)

The mother of a singer from the Central Intermediate Advanced Chorus gave her opinion on the BCC: "I think they have a good curriculum . . . We like the fact that they can sing for broader audiences and they have many concerts and lots of levels to move up" (Marilyn, personal interview, June 1, 2015). The father of another singer from the Young Men's Ensemble stated:

There is a lot of value in not just learning how to sing, but in being able to read music and a little bit of music theory. It is amazing to me how much [my son] progressed. He can pick up a sheet of music now and read it and understand it. Something I can't do. So, all that, I think, has been really valuable for him. (George, personal interview, June 16, 2015)

The parents believed that they gained a deeper appreciation and understanding of what happens during the rehearsals because the choral conductors included them from time to time in the rehearsal process to get feedback on the quality of the choir's performances. The parents mentioned that along with giving musical instruction, the

conductors teach children many valuable social skills and help them to better understand commitment and priorities.

While the younger children spoke highly about their conductors in a general way, the older children were able to specify what exactly they like about the conductors and their teaching styles. One student appreciated the expressiveness of a conductor's hand gestures. Others said they appreciated learning about self-discipline, communication, and other social skills from the conductor. In addition, some singers mentioned the visiting choral conductors who they thought provided additional musical experiences to make them a better singing group.

Some of the older students offered healthy criticism regarding their experiences. Gloria, from the Premier Chorus, found it sometimes hard to understand the intricate details of the music theory the conductor tries to explain. There is not much time to get into a deeper music analysis, so students need to “[have] a more solid basis in that [music theory] before we're going to more specific dialogue about those things” (Gloria, personal interview, June 18, 2015). Many instructional techniques were used by the choral conductors, and all of those added to building confidence in singers and creating a safe space, thus contributing to the BCC's overall social change mission.

Choral Repertoire as the Core of the Curriculum

I analyzed the data related to repertoire selection, which came mainly from the conductors' interviews and questionnaires, and I considered the parents' and students' views of repertoire as well. For music educators, and choral conductors in particular, the framework of a music curriculum is mostly comprised of a well-planned choral

repertoire. As Apfelstadt (2000) wrote:

Through the repertoire we choose, we not only teach curricular content to our students, but we also convey our philosophy in terms of what we believe students need to learn to achieve musical growth. Lofty goals are not met through second-rate repertoire. (p. 19)

When teachers have an understanding of students' backgrounds, they can incorporate learning styles, culture, background, and prior knowledge into the curriculum (Gay, 2010). Curriculum content is an important part of culturally responsive teaching.

Moreover, Gay (2000) insisted that content should be structured in ways that encourage students to negotiate their own meaning based on their cultures, attitudes, prior knowledge, and approaches to learning.

The interviewed conductors emphasized the importance and complexity of the repertoire selection process and indicated the existence of variable ways to approach it. For all the conductors at the BCC, the mission statement greatly influenced repertoire choices. The analysis of the interviews and questionnaires helped to highlight some aspects essential for the repertoire selection process suggested by the BCC conductors (see Figure 2).

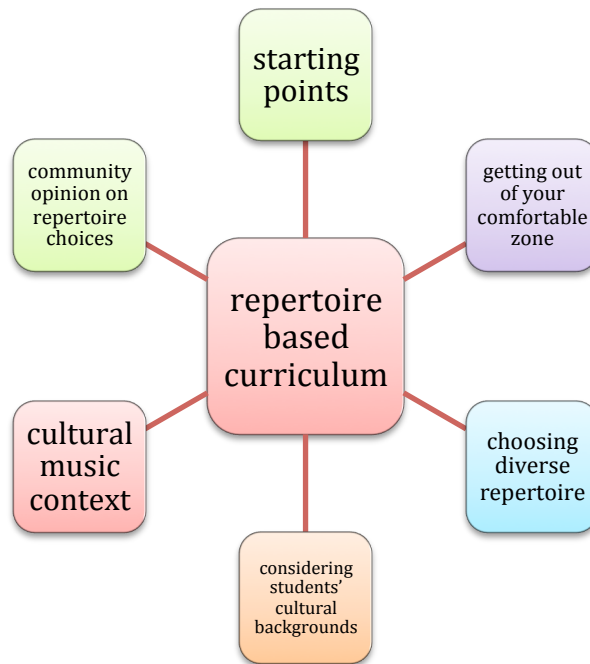


Figure 2. Main aspects for repertoire selection process identified by the BCC’s conductors.

Starting points: preconditions and inspirations. Both leading conductors confirmed that searching for repertoire is a continuous process, one which occurs throughout the year. The conductors said that each of them had an extensive list of desired music that they revise and renew periodically. The next step requires the conductors to make decisions about what would and would not work with a group.

Preconditions. Trecek-King believed finding repertoire is a multifaceted process that choral conductors approach in different ways. For him, and also for Adams, it usually begins with some preconditions, for example, part of the repertoire is usually determined by partnership projects. As Trecek-King described it, the BCC always represents American music, such as spirituals, because “it’s a body of purely American

music that needs to be continually performed and explored” (interview, May 14, 2015).

Finding good arrangements or making new ones is a desirable pursuit. According to Trecek-King and Adams, selected repertoire should be age and level appropriate for students but should still provide challenges. Sometimes picking a particular musical style can help to outline the search for music.

Inspirations. For Trecek-King, a search for music often starts with finding a topic or a theme for a concert. For example, the Premier Chorus sang a concert featuring music from operas and musicals. Trecek-King said:

Finding the material and going through the great opera areas and duets that are out there and then deciding what would work well with the kids. It was topic based, so I thought about the topic, did some research and thought through what pieces might work well for our singers. For us I’d like to try to include something that is more edgy or [relates to] social justice [issues]. (personal interview, May 14, 2015)

While searching for music that referred to social justice topics, he found the score for the original 1957 Broadway version of “America” from Leonard Bernstein’s *West Side Story*. The original version contained criticism of America and American anti-immigrant prejudice, especially against Puerto Ricans:

ANITA

Puerto Rico . . .

You ugly island . . .

Island of tropic diseases.

Always the hurricanes blowing,

Always the population growing . . .

And the money owing,

And the babies crying,

And the bullets flying.

GIRLS

Here you are free and you have pride

BOYS

Long as you stay on your own side.

GIRLS

Free to be anything you choose

BOYS

Free to wait tables and shine shoes.

BERNARDO

Everywhere grime in America

Organized crime in America

Terrible time in America. (“America,” n.d.)

Adams said that, when choosing repertoire, she likes to listen to high-quality music recordings and to go online to find performing artists and groups. She said that listening to folk group music or field recordings allows her to not only deeply penetrate into the culture and learn about authentic sounds and styles, but also to make adjustments while learning a piece from another culture. Both Trecek-King and Adams believed that using a good arrangement or creating new songs specifically for a choir and collaborating with a composer can be inspirational too. Observing colleagues and other choirs also serves as a source of encouragement for new ideas for repertoire.

At the BCC, an upcoming tour or a visiting guest artist can be a defining reason for repertoire choice decisions. When Maria Guinand, an internationally recognized choral conductor from Venezuela, visited the BCC, the Concert Chorus, Young Men's Ensemble, and Premier Chorus prepared a program celebrating the music of Latino culture. It was an excellent opportunity for singers and conductors to work with a renowned choral conductor and to penetrate more deeply into the Latino culture's music. In addition, the program helped to foster partnerships and collaborations among local educational, community, and musical institutions while offering audiences access to a high level artistic experience.

In order to develop strong singing foundations, Adams picked familiar and more accessible choral repertoire for the beginning singers. Then she gradually introduced other choral literature to teach about music elements, styles, multiple parts, and languages.

Choosing music. Both conductors agreed that choosing diverse repertoire is extremely important. Building diverse repertoire takes significant time and effort. It is a systematic process of educating children about music and what it means to sing. Choosing repertoire that includes composers of various nationalities and of both genders, in different styles and languages, and about different subject matter is critical to engage diverse student populations. Adams stated:

This also goes back to what am I trying to teach, because in those pieces there are nuts and bolts of musical literacy that I'm trying to hit: rhythmic concepts, intonation, nuances, learning key signatures. Also, I have to consider the demands of this organization. We are programing "*Carry on*" because it works for an event "Express Yourself" they are singing down at the Wang Center. We're also learning a piece from the symphonic repertoire. We're learning Britten's "War

Requiem” in the same season. That’s a detailed look at a short answer of variety. (personal interview, June 4, 2015)

Furthermore, Adams suggested that choosing repertoire that resonates with conductors personally helps them to pass on their affections to the singers.

All the conductors stressed the importance of making connections between songs and students’ identities and choosing a wide range of choral repertoire written by composers of various nationalities and genders, in a variety of styles and languages, and about different subject matter. One conductor wrote in a questionnaire response: “I don’t think we realize how much harm we do by constantly choosing the same ‘style’ of music to teach our students written by the ‘same’ people (i.e., folk songs or classical music written by old, white men).”

When I asked the students to describe the choral repertoire they sing at the BCC, the most commonly named characteristic was diversity of the music. What *diverse* meant to the students varied among styles, difficulty, cultures, and arrangements to deeper meanings in the messages articulated in the songs. All the singers referred to the music from other cultures as fun but sometimes challenging to learn. Even the younger singers understood the importance of having exposure to music from other cultures. To a question about whether they would include any songs in different languages if they were selecting repertoire, Madison from Central Intermediate Advanced Chorus answered, “I find [songs from different cultures] really interesting, because if I weren’t here, I probably wouldn’t have any interest in it, or I wouldn’t be learning about this at all” (personal interview, May 18, 2015). Sienna from the Concert Chorus found it fascinating that songs in different languages and from different cultures could “relate to similar

things” (personal interview, May 27, 2015). Among their favorite songs from the repertoire at the time of their interviews the children named “Sesere Eeye,” a traditional song from the Torres Strait Islands in Northern Australia; “Like a Singing Bird,” a song that combines a traditional Scottish ballad and a melody sung to the Burns poem “A Red, Red Rose”; “Let the River Run,” a pop song with inspiring lyrics that lead to a discussion of the values and meaning of life; “Las Amarillas,” a traditional Mexican song in Spanish; “Son de Camaguey,” a Cuban folk song in Spanish; “How Can I Keep From Singing,” a Christian Hymn; and “Wading Deep Waters,” an American Spiritual.

The older children emphasized the importance of including songs that communicate deep messages such as “Home” by Feigenbaum. The children described “Home” as a song of hope and belief in humanity; it was among the most favorite pieces from the Young Men’s Ensemble’s and Premier Chorus’s repertoires at the time of the interviews. Songs that portray real life situations and talk about drugs or depression presented the most appeal to the adolescents I interviewed; the teenagers saw it as an opportunity to talk about issues relevant to their lives.

The singers from the younger choirs also articulated preferences for songs with powerful messages. Among those were the songs by Papoulis, who frequently collaborates with the BCC. Anaya from Central Intermediate Advanced Chorus claimed that Papoulis’s songs encapsulated “what BCC is trying to be and what it is” (personal interview, June 1, 2015).

Some singers derived profound emotional satisfaction from well-written and well-arranged choral parts (e.g., an eight-part a cappella arrangement of “How Can I Keep

from Singing”), from learning a new part in a piece they already knew, from feeling the beauty of choral harmony (e.g., in the three-part song “Carry On”), or from exploring meaningful texts of a music piece (e.g., “Like a Singing Bird).

The parents’ responses about the BCC repertoire resembled what the children described but in more detail. All the parents I interviewed admitted that, overall, the conductors had an excellent selection of choral music, and the concerts were very enjoyable and of high quality. Many parents emphasized the importance of introducing kids to different cultures through the choice of choral repertoire and agreed that children develop more appreciation for other cultures and languages by learning music from cultures other than their own. One parent of a student from Central Intermediate Chorus noted:

The cultural introduction comes through the musical repertoire. As adults, we are thinking: “Oh, my God! They are learning music in so many different languages!” But I don’t think kids find it that hard. They admire the conductors who teach them beautiful music. I don’t think it’s a struggle for them. I think it’s fantastic that they are singing in other languages and learning about other music styles and sounds. (Marian, personal interview, May 28, 2015)

Michael from the Young Men’s Ensemble concluded his interview with his description of the BCC: “It’s full of great people. It’s full of great music. It’s full of wonderful energy. I always want to come back every week. That’s pretty much it. I love this choir” (personal interview, May 27, 2015).

Considering music context. Conductors made multiple remarks regarding the cultural context of music. Trecek-King insisted that ignoring cultural context is unforgivable and makes it impossible to fully appreciate a musical piece. According to Trecek-King and Adams, finding cultural connections to repertoire is as important as

studying the cultural context and discussing the music origin with the singers of a choir. Locating authentic music and finding composers from specific cultures helps create a deeper connection with the culture. For instance, Trecek-King said that when the choir was working on the repertoire that included a wide selection of Arabic music, he invited the culture bearers who not only “gave us inflection of the language, but also talked about culture” (personal interview, May 14, 2015), which helped the choristers to better understand and perform that music. Moreover, Trecek-King assumed that such cross-cultural communications—when students can learn about, acknowledge, and celebrate different cultures—becomes an enriching experience that opens new possibilities, new sounds, and new languages. In his opinion, singing music from other cultures not only helps singers better understand the cultures, but also opens up horizons for kids and establishes great connections.

Considering the conductor. Hernández-Sheets (2005) recommended that culturally responsive teachers “must begin by examining their own personal issues” (p. 49). In order to understand how beliefs, experiences, values, and assumptions are linked to culture, I asked the two leading conductors of the BCC and three members of the administrative team to first reflect on their social, cultural, and societal contexts. In response, they shared the sociocultural backgrounds that eventually shaped their perceptions regarding culturally responsive teaching.

Asked to identify the main strategy that a choral conductor should follow while choosing repertoire for diverse groups, Trecek-King responded:

I just think exploration of various cultures that are out there is the key [strategy]. That includes getting out of your comfort zone. I’ve done that a lot. Programming

music that I didn't know anything about and having no idea how to pull it off, but you try and consult with people. So even if it is not comfortable to you it is a growth opportunity for a conductor to learn something else. So I think that's my main thing – always exploring as many different cultures as you can, because this is kind of why we are here and music is a great vehicle to do that. (personal interview, May 14, 2015)

Trecek-King said that instilling confidence in singers even when you, as a conductor, have difficulties in understanding the piece of music is important. As an example, he spoke of a piece by a modern composer that was hard for him to understand. Yet he decided to challenge his singers. To his surprise, they learned and performed the piece well. Trecek-King suggested that trusting and challenging your students yields unbelievable results. Additionally, deep penetration into the culture or a consultation with people from that culture could be a helpful solution.

Considering students. Considering students' cultures while choosing repertoire, especially when there are large groups of different ethnicities in a choir, is one of the focal points of culturally responsive teaching. For example, Trecek-King included "Kalinda," a Haitian song, in the repertoire of the Premier Chorus because it has a large group of Haitian students. In order to engage the students with Mexican backgrounds, Trecek-King involved them in the process of choosing a Mexican song. In addition, he shared his plans to perform a concert featuring Irish folk music and dancing because one girl in the choir is Irish and could do Irish dancing. He said:

I'm thinking of her specifically as I'm trying to think through a program of Irish music. So I definitely think of the cultures and whom do we have in a group and how we can leverage what they know to bring something to the rehearsal process. (Trecek-King, personal interview, May 14, 2015)

Adams continued:

Earlier this year we sang “Infant Holly” in English, but we spoke [about the fact] that it is traditional Polish carol. The kid in my class who has a Polish mother and speaks Polish at home said, “I know this carol and I can sing it in Polish.” We discussed that and she ended up singing one verse solo at the concert. Part of that is knowing the kids and looking for the opportunity. It is very important and is very organic. That is a prime example of that. They take the ownership of the group. I hope I’m creating an environment where they feel they can speak up and making me aware of these opportunities. Sometimes it’s appropriate, sometimes it’s not, but it’s a great example of when this sort of things can work really well. (personal interview, June 4, 2015)

Adams and Trecek-King suggested that perhaps it is even more significant to expose students to a wide variety of cultures other than their own to broaden students’ perception and knowledge of other cultures. While analyzing the choral program of the past season, Adams named a few pieces that were part of the current repertoire of the Concert Choir: the traditional Christian hymn “How Can I Keep from Singing,” a Cuban folk song “Son de Camaguey,” and the pop song “Carry on” recorded by the group Fun. She stated, “[I programmed these songs] because all different sorts of music are going to speak to different kinds of kids and that music has its own validity” (personal interview, June 4, 2015).

Selecting repertoire from the full range of cultural backgrounds within a group to mirror an ensemble’s diversity is one of the principles of culturally responsive teaching (Shaw, 2014). Furthermore, exploring cultures through repertoire selection contributes to the construction of a positive environment. As Adams shared her experiences, she remembered that sometimes finding one particular song helps bring diverse groups together. The conductors of the training choirs admitted that while they do include music from students’ cultures, they do not see it as a rule.

While providing opportunities for all the singers to learn about each other's cultural backgrounds and develop cross-cultural competence, all the conductors of the BCC admitted that the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of the students did not always come into consideration unless it was directly relevant to the music the group was learning in rehearsal. All the teaching staff emphasized the importance of introducing their students to a wide range of cultures and styles beyond the cultures represented in the chorus in order to avoid cultural isolation, to break cultural barriers, and to encourage the students to interact effectively with people of different cultures. For example, one of the concerts of the season, performed by the Combined Intermediate Choirs, Central Intermediate Advanced Choir, and Combined Training Choirs, involved a program called "Freedom Is Coming," which not only reflected the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of some singers, but also promoted cultural awareness by featuring the music from other cultures less familiar to the singers and audiences. Among the selections were Acadian, Serbian, and Israeli songs; Australian indigenous music from Moa Island; an American spiritual; and an English piece by Britten.

The combined treble Intermediate Choirs opened the concert with a moving interpretation of "When I Am Silent" by Joan Varner, a contemporary composer from Oklahoma. The original choral song is dedicated to a young victim of a Nazi concentrated camp and begins with a musical statement: "Who will sing my song when I am silent? Who will count the colors of the dawn?" The tender and deeply moving sound of children's voices set the tone for the entire concert. At the end, the combined Training and Intermediate Choirs performed a closing selection titled "We Sing," by Jim Papoulis, a contemporary New York City based composer whose works are well known to the BCC's singers. The narrative, spoken by children, not only served as an introduction to each of the performed choral pieces, but also helped to successfully unify the songs around the themes of freedom, justice, and peace. Regrettably, the program notes included only the translations of the texts and had no information about the featured cultures and the

composers, which I thought would be helpful and educational for the audiences. (excerpt from concert observation notes, March 14, 2015)

At the BCC the conductors tried to provide opportunities for every singer to experience a diverse choral repertoire that properly reflected not only cultures from around the world, but also the issues important to the students, the local community, and the world.

Premier Choir was already working on the new piece “Regreen” by Elaine Agnew, a contemporary composer from Ireland, when I entered the rehearsal room. The women’s group was singing solfeggio in four parts while the men were studying the score. It was a very challenging piece with dissonant harmonies and wide melodic skips. I noticed an audible improvement from the previous rehearsal I observed. Suddenly, musically it started making much more sense. The choristers started singing by heart and there was so much more expressiveness in their singing. The conductor thanked students for memorizing the piece and reminded them about the upcoming world premiere of this piece in Prague where the choir was going on a tour in July.

As the choir moved to “Earth Song” by Frank Ticheli, the conductor stopped the singing to discuss the deep meaning of the words: The scorched Earth cries out in vain. / Oh war and power, you blind and blur. / The torn heart cries out in pain. / But music and singing have been my refuge, / and music and singing shall be my light.

He spoke about personal experiences and the influence music had had on his life, and the students responded by talking about their interpretation of the song’s message. As a result, students sang with much more passion. The quality of the sound and phrasing continued to improve. The singers were giving suggestions to the conductor and at the same time listened to his comments and recommendations. It was a constructive dialogue between the professionals based on an ethos of respect and care. The chorus was getting ready for a big European tour dedicated to honoring the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi camps and the repertoire contained very emotionally intense pieces.

The Terezin Music Foundation commissioned “The Song About the Child” for the Premier Chorus. An Israeli-born composer Silvan Eldar based her piece on a poem by Arab-Israeli poet Salman Masalha whose parents survived the Holocaust. The piece is quite complex. There was no time to waste; the chorus analyzed the score, which was in mixed modes such as Mixolydian, Dorian, and minor modes (natural, harmonic, melodic), to continue with sight-reading in parts. While I was observing the girls, who were quietly marking their scores, the boys were trying to navigate their way through by singing solfeggio. There were tough parts to sing, but gradually the piece started to take a shape. The conductor

seemed quite satisfied with the choir's work and emotional involvement, but that did not slow the pace of the rehearsal.

The next piece, "Songs of Sorrow and Hope," by Feigenbaum, was also dedicated to the memory of Holocaust survivors. The singers already knew the piece and discussed the three texts it is based on. The first poem described a story of a 14-year-old boy from Prague who was deported to Terezin camp where he died. The second story is by an African writer who witnessed the Rwandan genocide, and the third one is an excerpt from a book about the mass murder of the Jewish community in Ukraine. As the choir was singing, I looked at the faces of the students. They were full of emotions. I could see not only the changing face expressions, but also communicative body movements. It was clear that the music and stories touched them deeply in different ways. There was a moment of silence in the end. It was very moving and powerful. I forgot for a while that I was watching the rehearsal, not a concert. After a brief summary about what they would continue to work on and fix, the conductor moved to the next selection—an American spiritual called "Deep River." The choir already knew the piece and I got the impression the conductor wanted to review it briefly in order to see how it might fit into the program.

The rehearsal continued for two full hours, but the singers hardly seemed to notice: They did not show signs of being tired, and they remained focused.

The next song, "Home" by Feigenbaum, was still a work in progress. The deep and dark piece described a mother going through a depressing stage of life from the perspective of a young child. It seemed to touch the singers on a different level than the other pieces had. As I listened to them discussing and analyzing the lyrics, I was quite surprised by their thorough analysis and the depth of their thoughts. They shared their feelings and opinions; nobody was laughing, but the atmosphere of openness and ease was in the air.

Summarizing at the end, the conductor said that the last week was overall successful, because they were able to master and improve singing. He also said that it was an enriching process on both sides, and he felt as if the singers were pushing him. (excerpt from rehearsal observation notes, April 9, 2015)

This excerpt from one of my rehearsal observations provides an example of the unique opportunity to view the inner workings of the choir. The atmosphere of inspiration and engagement was typical of all the rehearsals I attended. The chorus I refer to in this excerpt was working on the repertoire while getting ready for the Liberation Tour to the Czech Republic and Germany in summer 2015. The main body of the repertoire contained choral pieces by contemporary composers from different parts of the world,

unified by the theme of honoring the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi camps. Three of the choral pieces they performed were world premieres, and the composers attended. The conductor's unique approach to the topic was finding and combining the stories from the past and the present that on one hand described the horrors of war and genocide, and on the other, showed how to find peace and hope in the beauty of this broken world through the music that serves as a catalyst for social change and healing. Generally, Trecek-King suggested that finding a theme for a program related to the issues of social change, equality, and justice is one of his main focuses when choosing repertoire for a season.

In my observations of the two principal conductors, I noticed how well each of them knew the pieces they were teaching to the students. In the interviews both acknowledged their continual exploration and examination of music layer by layer, vertically and horizontally in order to get the deepest understanding and the best interpretation of a piece.

Considering the community. Both leading conductors of the BCC acknowledged the importance of receiving feedback from the BCC community, including parents and board members, regarding the music choices. The conductors believed in the importance of reflecting the community's opinion regarding certain repertoire selections, although community involvement in choosing repertoire is limited to specific events and concerts. During the concerts, BCC staff encouraged parents to provide feedback and fill out a survey. According to the conductors, the community's voices have an impact on the program.

We often survey our families at the end of the year after concerts and get feedback. They might not know that they have an impact on the program, but they do. As a staff, we certainly listen to the collective voices, take note of those sorts of things. An example would be that we have an annual holiday concert that is very heavily Christian in the repertoire choices we made last year. When we realized that it was too late to change or add something. That was criticized a couple of times, so we'll approach this much more cautiously this year. Not necessarily that we won't do any music with a sacred connotation, but I think we'll swing really hard the other way in response to that. I think for us as organization it's irresponsible not to be sensitive to it. (Adams, personal interview, June 4, 2015)

On the other hand, Trecek-King admitted that the community's contribution to the repertoire was still limited, despite one fruitful attempt to engage members of a Hispanic community during the visit of the Venezuelan conductor Maria Guinand, and the BCC team has to do more.

Building a Community of Singers

Programs and activities. I asked Hires, the director of programs, to talk about the available programs and activities for the children specifically related to the mission of the BCC. The mission statement of the BCC lies in bringing diverse racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups of students together so they can learn about each other's differences and make meaningful connections. Hires supervised one program called "Inviting Artists in Residence." In 2011, the BCC invited Maria Guinand, the internationally recognized guest conductor from Venezuela. Hires, along with the entire BCC team, worked on organizing all activities, which included concerts, a conducting master class for other choral teachers and young conductors, and a panel discussion called "Music Through Social Action" at their community partner Villa Victoria Center for Arts in South End. The discussion explored the philosophy, values, methodologies,

results, and possibilities of the widely recognized choral program *Construir Cantando* that was founded with the conviction that music can be an effective tool for social change. The people from El Sistema and other community organizations participated in that discussion about community music and initiatives. During her visit Maria Guinand presented a lecture about the history of Latin American choral music at Harvard University and later gave a conducting master class with the BCC and three graduate students hosted by the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

In addition, the BCC frequently tours in the United States and abroad, an opportunity for children to immerse in different cultures. Over the last five years, the BCC traveled to many destinations around the country and abroad. The children from the Premier Chorus sang for the King of Saudi Arabia and traveled to Vietnam, Cambodia, the United Kingdom, and recently to the Czech Republic and Germany. Hires explained:

We couldn't do what we do without being multicultural organization. Our whole program is based on the premise that we congregate diverse singers, so that they can learn about each other's differences and make meaningful connections.
(personal interview, April 2, 2015)

Singing in a diverse chorus offers unique opportunities for the singers to find cultural connections not necessarily through singing repertoire, but by participating in the communities' events. All the teaching staff understood the importance of participating in the local festivals in order to give the BCC members a chance to integrate into neighborhood cultures and to directly interact with the families from that particular culture. Although I observed that the BCC takes part in those events from time to time, Trecek-King thought there should be more focus on developing integration with the local communities.

Addressing diversity. To ensure the successful functioning of an organization as diverse as the BCC, the administrative team works continually to develop short- and long-term strategic plans that help realize the role of the BCC within a diverse community, to clearly define its mission and goals, and to address financial issues. One of the important plans included further development of recruitment and retention strategies.

All the interviewed administrative members and teaching staff of the BCC believed that a healthy chorus is a growing one and therefore it is important to use the appropriate strategies to recruit participants. For example, the BCC started extending their programs into Boston public schools; this provided many low-income families access to choral education in school. Presently, diversity among the staff members better reflects the cultures of the community.

In spite of many accomplishments the BCC faces challenges, one of which is to openly discuss with students the issues of race and inequality. According to the administrative staff, it is important that the BCC continue to build a community open to uncomfortable conversations, working with families, and providing more race-training programs for parents. The BCC administrative staff will continue to develop new strategies to prepare audiences and donors to deal with uncomfortable issues like race and inequality and to help children connect to their ideals and undo the bias that exists at their ages.

Howse indicated that the abilities to clearly identify the issues or problems, establish goals, and develop strategies to address problems and goals determine the

effectiveness of the BCC as an organization. Howse said that over the years the organization clarified its vision of the mission goals: a focus on sustainability of both finances and human capital, visibility, and impact. All activities of the organization are tied to these goals. The BCC staff regularly evaluates the strategies to achieve the key goals.

Although each year the BCC receives significant funding from the city of Boston that helps to defray many of the tuition expenses for students, the organization still needs money to fill the financial gap. The BCC's administrative staff has developed strategic marketing programs to strengthen revenues. All members of the Board of Directors have fiduciary responsibilities and participate in designing and implementing a fundraising plan that in turn supports the values and the goals of the mission statement. Each year the administrative team submits an annual report with a detailed description of the activities and programs BCC offered during the fiscal year.

I listened to many children's discussions regarding their identities during my observations. In one of the activities, younger children from the intermediate chorus were assigned to make groups and join the one to which they thought they belonged. After the children grouped, the conductor asked them how and why they grouped that way. In their responses children referred to skin colors, but one girl stood in between two groups because she said she was biracial and felt she should be in the middle. Immediately, some children wanted to join her so she would not feel lonely. All the children were very nice and friendly with each other, and it appeared that nobody had any bad feelings or felt embarrassed. To them, it seemed purely fun. It was important to the conductor that all the

children felt comfortable and accepted their differences with ease because the conductor himself was not afraid to have a respectful dialogue about racial differences with the students. The BCC staff members strongly believed that not only must they begin exploring issues of race in age appropriate ways from a young age, but they must also constantly look for new, effective approaches to discuss race.

Bonding diverse students through music. After I interviewed the 11 children and 13 parents, I concluded that the sense of community at the BCC is quite strong. This is a place where children develop relationships with people with whom they typically would not communicate. Sienna, one of the girls from the Concert Chorus, described the BCC as her social network. Gloria, a senior from the Premier Chorus, stated that she really appreciated the sense of community at the BCC. Anaya, from the Central Intermediate Advanced Chorus, added, “One thing I would say that we are great singers and we love to sing, but also, there are great people and tons of diversity, and you can learn about the other people and have fun singing with them” (personal interview, May 27, 2015). While all the questioned adults and children considered the diversity of the choir as a positive factor, Sienna from the Concert Chorus stated:

I like diversity in BCC, because each person brings something different to the table and each person is unique in his/her own way. When you put this all together we all have similar interest especially with music and it makes it more enjoyable for an experience. (personal interview, May 27, 2015)

Another singer, Michael, from the Young Men’s Ensemble said:

I love the way I get to express the music, and BCC really allows me to be my own creative self. I also like the fact that we have lots of great people in the choirs that are super nice, super collaborative and I just enjoy working with them. They can be younger, older or the same as my age, but they are all fantastic singers to work with. (personal interview, May 27, 2015)

Reflecting on their experiences, the children also mentioned that they became friends with many members of the chorus and enjoyed meeting new people who came from different cultures.

Several other parents indicated that they specifically looked for a chorus with a lot of diversity. Many children described it as a chance to expose themselves to other cultures. Anaya from the Central Intermediate Advanced Chorus said that she likes to learn about other people's cultures rather than just sharing her own:

I definitely like to explore other languages, religions and cultures, because I mean we really are not exposed to any other cultures besides our own. With me it's cool, because I'm the only one who is from the Indian culture at my school. It's pretty cool to be unique and it's really fun to learn about other people's cultures. (personal interview, June 1, 2015)

All children who moved to the BCC from the other choruses believed that here they found a community where people know and care for each other. Sienna from the Concert Choir detailed this phenomenon, "Even if we are not in the same choirs the older people look after the younger ones" (personal interview, May 27, 2015).

Touring is an important part of the BCC programs and continues to be one of the reasons why children want to stay with the BCC and also to progress to the higher-level choruses within the BCC. For many interviewed students, those trips became a life changing experience. Traveling with the choir helped many kids to better appreciate the sense of community, brought the members of the choir closer together, and opened their minds to new experiences and challenges. Alice, a singer from the Premier Chorus who came from a single-parent family, said that the chorus tours were her only opportunity to travel outside of the country:

During those trips I've been able to open my mind to new experiences and new challenges, really getting to know the singers in the choir not just through coming to the rehearsals and doing concerts, but being with them 24/7. (personal interview, June 16, 2015).

Later, in an essay published in a concert program, she wrote more about her experiences with the choir she had been attending for seven years. She asserted that participation in the chorus helped her to plan her future, which would involve “tackling social injustice in my community, especially concerning those in poverty” (Alice, personal interview, June 16, 2015).

The collected data showed that the staff at the BCC not only emphasized the importance of knowing children's ethnic and cultural backgrounds, but also made real efforts to connect the kids from different neighborhoods and backgrounds. The conductors strongly believed in the importance of building relationships with the singers based on their genuine, common interests. (Trecek-King and Adams agreed that students can tell the difference between genuine and forced interest.) The conductors said they take time during their rehearsals to have discussions with the children about their cultural identities, so they and the students get to know each other better, helping them to become more open-minded, tolerant, and culturally aware individuals. While working on a piece of music from another culture, it is quite common for the BCC conductors to encourage students and their families to assist, particularly if they are from that culture.

Adams shared an anecdote regarding her experience taking younger children on a two-day tour. She said that during the trips children got real experiences in socialization. Adams explained the importance of creating simple duties for kids on a trip, like cleaning the trash after the meal or being the headcounter on the bus. Furthermore, Adams stated

that a conductor has to carefully supervise relationships between children during the trips. For example, knowing children's personalities helped her to create opportunities for the students to get to know different people. Placing younger singers with the older ones creates a mentorship opportunity, where older students supervise the younger ones, or where the students who had been with a choir for a prolonged period of time offer help to the students who are new to the group. Adams also created short-term goals for the children, such as trying to make a new friend or getting to know someone they had not connected with already:

Sometimes you have little separate factions that occur. Sometimes they do go right around race or ethnic lines or socioeconomic lines, but more often they are interactive with at least someone that they haven't interacted before. To some degree you can't force things—people are going to be friends with who they [choose] to be friends, but they are certainly not going to forge friendships, or get to know other people if they never had been given opportunity interface with them to begin with. For some of these kids, who like me grew up in the all-White or Latino, or whatever communities this is one of their only opportunities to ever interact with anyone that is outside of their socioeconomic class, or whatever this sort of artificial boundary, or real boundary in many cases may be. (personal interview, April 8, 2015)

At the end of the tour Adams asked the students questions like, “Can you cite an example when you were an ambassador of harmony for the BCC?” Other follow-up questions included “Can you cite an example of when you were a leader of this trip?” and “Can you cite an example of a time that you were a friend to a person, or that you reached out for a person that seemed to be in need of a friend?” All the children get to reflect on their social and musical experiences. These tours help improve kids' social skills and enrich them with authentic musical experiences, which contribute to the high quality of performances of the choir.

As I interviewed more children and more parents, asking them about their experiences with the BCC, it became obvious that they experience the BCC as a place full of wonderful positive energy, where an atmosphere of collaboration and support between the members makes them return every week. Singers admitted that appreciation for their choir and the sense of commitment grew stronger each year.

While the majority of the interviewed parents and students gave many positive reflections and described the effects the BCC programs had on them, some aspects could use more attention. One parent had a son attending one of the training choirs for a year. Her son really loved singing, but unfortunately felt he had to leave the chorus for another one he liked better. One reason for that was that her son, who was placed in the beginner choir, felt uncomfortable being in a group where most of the children were younger and the majority of them were girls. The mother said: “He never felt like he fit in. I think it’s harder for the boys . . . My cousin’s boy came to one rehearsal [at the BCC] and never came back. Also, the conductors at that level are mostly women” (Neili, personal interview, May 18, 2015). Nicole, a mother of two children attending the BCC, said that, while her daughter enjoys singing in the choir, she never thought of placing her younger son in a choir as well. Once the schedule worked out, her son started attending the training choir. While he seemed to be enjoying the choir now, the mother expressed doubts about whether the choir was a good fit for him. These examples showed that perceptions of and attitudes toward boys’ participation in a choir are often affected by both gender stereotypes and by gender imbalances in the younger choirs.

Another parent of a child from a training choir with whom I had an informal conversation after one of the BCC concerts pointed out how critical it is for the younger singers to have an opportunity to know each other and make friends in a chorus; then they can feel more connected. She suggested that it would be wonderful to give younger children more recreational time to socialize and make friends, which in turn, would help to cement their stay in the chorus. Many families shared their commitment to the BCC in spite of their long weekly commute. Moreover, every parent whose children have been with the BCC for more than two years noticed that the children's motivation increased every year.

All children who participated in this study discovered and shared the mutual desire to sing, which they said helps them to bond. Alice from the Premier Chorus added:

[The] environment at the BCC is not like in the other choirs where you just come to really learn new songs and sing at the events. That's all they do. The singers don't get to know each other. They come for the two-hour rehearsal and then leave. Here, besides just getting to learn music, you really get to understand what you're singing and do it with people who you care about. It is because of the chorus I was able to meet different types of people that I wouldn't hang out with usually at Brockton. (personal interview, June 16, 2015)

All the interviewed parents agreed that they like the BCC team spirit and most of them became deeply involved with the BCC community. One mother of a boy from the Young Men's Ensemble said:

There is no better reason to sing than to bring people together. I think that's a good mission for music at large to bring people together: Forget about your differences, forget about your politics, but this is a stronger message. They do send a stronger message. It doesn't thump you over the head politically; it's just justice, peace, and fairness in a better world. That's terrific. (Jane, personal interview, May 27, 2015)

Organizational Mission of Social Change

The Boston Children's Chorus (BCC) harnesses the power and joy of music to unite our city's diverse communities and inspire social change. Our singers transcend social barriers in a celebration of shared humanity and love of music. Through intensive choral training and high-profile public performance experience (locally, throughout the U.S. and around the world), they learn discipline, develop leadership skills, and proudly represent the city of Boston as ambassadors of harmony. (Boston Children's Chorus, n.d.-b, para. 1. Mission statement)

As I observed the rehearsals and the concert of the BCC, I realized that the social change mission for the BCC is more than just a written statement or a slogan. It is embedded in the vision and strategic planning of the organization. It determines the main activities and the key values of the BCC and, in particular, its attitude toward the children and parents.

Inspiring social change. In analyzing the data associated with the BCC practices, I found that all the participants consistently discussed the social change mission. Specifically, participants spoke of the importance of the social change mission for not only the BCC community, but also for them personally. For the majority of the interviewed parents and kids, the social change mission was a decisive reason to join the BCC. Also, parents liked the idea of bringing together young people from various Boston communities, so children from suburbs would have a chance to interact with kids from the city and vice versa. The mother of the girl from the Central Intermediate Chorus shared her first impression of the BCC:

The first thing that struck me when we came to auditions was diversity. It's like the United Nations in here. I mean there must be every nationality and I loved that, because [my daughter] gets to meet so many different people, which I think is a good exposure. (Marilyn, personal interview, June 1, 2015)

Robert, a student from the Young Men's Ensemble gave his perspective on what he thought distinguishes the BCC from other choirs in which he had been participating:

“There is a focus on spreading messages of social change, and there is also, a nice personal connection inside the choir itself between all the members. It is really nice working with that group of people” (personal interview, May 27, 2015).

While reflecting on their experiences, the interviewed children also mentioned that they became friends with many members of the chorus and enjoyed meeting new people who came from different cultures. Robert from the Young Men’s Ensemble gave his vision of the social change mission:

One of the biggest things that personally brings me back all the time is not just the music, but more importantly the message that everyone is trying to get across with the music, and it's all about social change and the equality. It is about spreading the good messages using the music. (personal interview, May 27, 2015)

One of the parents pointed out that at the BCC, children have an opportunity to freely exchange their opinions and talk about recreating social change through music and the joy of singing as opposed to other similar organizations where adults seemed to have a dominating voice. The parents also approved of the emphasis the organization places on improving and developing social skills in children. Parents and students liked the noncompetitive atmosphere that helps reduce many fears, but does not prevent children from learning and improving singing skills that could move them to the next level choir. Some parents pointed out that the BCC children bring an advantage to competitive situations because they are less likely to suffer from performance anxiety. All the interviewed participants referred to the existence of a cooperative atmosphere at the BCC, one that not only helped to reduce fears and free children to learn more, but also stimulated students’ self-motivation.

While discussing the progress the teaching conductors made with students toward

accomplishing the social change mission, it is important to acknowledge the impact the BCC and its social change mission had on the teaching staff members. In one questionnaire response, one conductor indicated that:

BCC has inspired me to rethink what my goals are as a music educator. Is it just to make sure my kids can sing in tune and play a bunch of instruments with some skill, enthusiasm, and a smile on their face? Sure, as it should be for every educator. But how can I also use that class time with my students to get them to know themselves better, to know each other better, and to relate to and contribute to the world better? And that's where BCC has made a difference for me.

Goals related to the social change mission. While many researchers have attempted to explain how to create social change, the teaching team of the BCC believed one of the best ways is to prepare people who want to make a positive social change and make steps toward achieving that goal. In fact, the difference between the BCC and many other children's choruses is the approach that focuses on the social development of the singers, on valuing their differences, and on creating a safe place for children. All the participating staff of the BCC emphasized the importance of working toward achieving the social change mission and considered that a priority.

The interviewed participants admitted that working toward achieving social change presents a continuous struggle for the BCC conductors who must balance this objective with performance and literacy instruction. In response to the question about the progress of the organization in achieving its social change mission, all the conductors described responses the BCC's approaches as effective in "uniting diverse communities, generating conversations and friendships across boundaries of race, gender, and socioeconomic status." Regarding reproducing the day-to-day activities, one conductor wrote: "BCC supports their mission by taking rehearsal time to engage the students in

thoughtful discussions about social justice issues that are related to the music, their daily lives, or over-arching themes established by the choir presidents.”

Achieving a mission of social change. The administrative team tracked the progress of communicating the social change mission goals to the BCC community, including singers, staff members, and audiences, by performing regular administrative assessments. As Howse stated:

When you begin to talk about difference, issues of race and inequity can be an uncomfortable language for people. It coincides with funding and money when you talk to donors who are not prepared to hear [about those issues]. They want to fund beautiful kids who sing the music that makes us happy, but when you begin to sing challenging music like “The Death of Emmett Till,” that starts to make one uncomfortable and when one’s uncomfortable, one wants to retreat and move away. We have to figure the way and we are on a good journey. (personal interview, March 12, 2015)

Four years ago, the BCC team sat down and discussed very difficult social issues, discussing what it meant to be a white woman living in the suburbs and what it meant to be a black man walking in a store. “We were just talking, but those are the building blocks to shape a community and a culture that is open to uncomfortable conversations” (Howse, personal interview, March 12, 2015). He added that many people want to believe that we live in a post-racial society, but unfortunately, we do not. Howse said that the members of the teaching staff never shy away from discussing uncomfortable race issues with kids; they try to move the organization toward a deep understanding of racial differences and other social issues the students are concerned about.

In 2015 the BCC collaborated with the YMCA to launch racism workshops for parents. That program was held at the main site of the BCC for five weeks and sparked considerable interest among the parents who said that it gave them an opportunity to talk

and ask questions about the issues they otherwise could not discuss anywhere else. The main obstacle according to Howse was scheduling because it was not easy for the parents to find two hours every week to attend the sessions. Yet, he said that the high level of interest in discussing racial issues persuaded the staff to plan another similar workshop:

We believe that that ideal is in the future and we want to plant the seeds early and undo all the bias that exists at earlier age. We've seen the evidence for kids and adults about how, when you are more conscious of difference, you make different choices. You see people; you embrace people in a different way, because you are aware of the lens through which you're looking at the world. It's a hope that we do this work for the generations that are coming behind us. (Howse, personal interview, March 12, 2015)

Howse stressed that bringing diverse children together provides an opportunity for social bridging when children can reveal and discuss their individualities and share experiences and stories. He believed that working with diverse populations of students is challenging, but can be highly rewarding in the end:

[A culturally and ethnically diverse group] brings energy to the room in a different way and brings a project alive... So for me it's always been a wonderful challenge to balance that diversity and to bring the best of what we all bring to that table. There were times when it's been more challenging, because people are not willing to embrace otherness. In those cases, we had to take more time to build trust among the partners, which is critical when you work in a team, but my experiences have been very positive. (Howse, personal interview, March 12, 2015)

According to Ayscue and Greenberg (2013), Massachusetts, which in 1965 initiated the movement for school integration, has now reverted to an increased level of school segregation. The authors expressed their concern that many schools and neighborhoods in the Boston area are becoming further segregated. Howse pointed out that the BCC really tries to connect with people across differences and to bridge social divides, which cannot happen without diversity. "I think having diversity in the room

leads to different kinds of conversations, it leads to a richer end product” (Howse, personal interview, March 12, 2015).

Diversity at the BCC extends to the staff, which includes people of many different races and various backgrounds. This results in better responses to the needs of the BCC singing community. For example, in an effort to cross language barriers and to ensure parental involvement from the increasing number of Chinese children in the BCC, the organization hired a staff member who speaks Mandarin. Similarly, in order to accommodate the needs of Spanish speaking parents and to have the best communication with families, the organization employed a Hispanic conductor.

Howse believed that it is incredibly important to consider and honor the background and diversity of the BCC singers:

It is important that we know the children as much as possible and then we reflect their culture in the music . . . It is a challenge, but if you are committed to the compassionate empathy building you have to do the dirty work. (personal interview, March 12, 2015)

He said that the BCC staff constantly looks for and uses various approaches to consider the diversity of the students and the entire community:

Maybe it’s a female composer and as a female they see themselves in the piece that way. Maybe it’s a piece about Holocaust and you are a Jewish person. It brings such a color to the music and to the performance, because you’re singing from the place of familiarity and pride. When you have that sense of purpose and belonging you can bring your best self and in this case your best voice to the table. That’s the way I think about it and it’s incredibly important not only to reflect the diversity among the kids, but also in the audience, but also in your staff. So the audience also needs to find themselves somewhere in that program that you created. (personal interview, March 12, 2015)

In summary, the collected data was consistent with the principles of culturally responsive pedagogy. The social change mission-oriented planning was the overarching

concept that shaped curriculum, instruction, personal perceptions of staff, students, and parents, and also framed the development of the community of singers at the BCC. I found that all the emerged themes (i.e., personal development, instructional strategies, choral repertoire-based curriculum, and building a community of singers) were in agreement with the five essential elements of culturally responsive teaching. Chapter Five discusses and analyzes the findings documented in Chapter Four and is followed by some implications for future research and practice.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Every classroom in the United States is becoming increasingly diverse not only because of the English Language Learners (ELL), but also because students have various racial, ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds. American classrooms include students from different parts of the world and represent a miniature model of an increasingly pluralistic and interconnected world (Johnson & Lichter, 2010). In response, many educators welcome the variety of cultures in the classrooms and make efforts to integrate culturally responsive teaching (Allen & Boykin, 1991; Au & Mason, 1981; Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Considerable attempts were made to integrate some of the principles of a culturally responsive approach into music education practices (Delpit, 1992, 2006; Heimonen & Hebert, 2010; Joyce, 2003; Rusinek, 2008; Temmerman, 2005). It appears, however, that only a few efforts were made to fully incorporate culturally responsive teaching ideas into music and choral teaching (Rohan, 2011; Shaw, 2014; Tuncer, 2008). According to Aceves et al. (2014) and Lind & McKoy (2016), research is slowly emerging to identify effective culturally responsive teaching practices. Music is an efficient way to learn about diverse cultures (Campbell, 2004; Drummond, 2005), so it seemed to be sensible and practical to further explore the potential of culturally responsive pedagogy in choral teaching.

The overall purpose of this study was to investigate and further understand the practices of the BCC in relation to culturally responsive pedagogy. The goal of this research was not to determine whether the Boston Children's Choir, as an organization,

responded in positive ways to the cultural diversity of its constituencies. Rather, the premise was that the organization did indeed exhibit cultural responsiveness. That is to say that although there may have been areas where the Boston Children's Choir was not culturally responsive, or ways they could have done better, I did not consider these in this research. The focus was on how they achieved cultural responsiveness and not whether or not they were culturally responsive. This is an important distinction because the decision to focus only on the positive could have confounded the research and challenged the objectivity of the researcher and the resulting document. The assumption of this study was that a better understanding of the successful practices of the BCC would help to identify key factors that possibly contribute to teachers' willingness to implement culturally responsive teaching in music and choral education.

The following section of this chapter presents my evaluation of the main findings for each of the emerged characteristics in relation to all three research questions, a review of scholarly literature followed by a discussion of these findings, and an analysis of the implications of the findings for future research. The chapter concludes with several suggestions concerning the relevance of these findings for practices in choral education.

Research Question One

The first research question was "What factors does the conductor of the Boston Children's Chorus consider when he selects repertoire, scaffolds rehearsal strategies, and develops learning schema?" In order to analyze how the BCC conductors considered the cultures of their students, I grouped my findings according to five themes that emerged during the data analysis: personal development, instructional strategies, choral repertoire-

based curriculum, building a community of singers, and the overarching theme of social change mission-oriented planning. The five identified themes corresponded to the five essential elements of culturally responsive teaching described by Gay (2002).

Personal Development

Villegas and Lucas (2002) identified main concepts for culturally responsive education programs for preservice teachers. Condensed into three main ideas, Villegas and Lucas recommended that teachers should (a) examine their own cultural values, beliefs, and perceptions; (b) explore and develop appreciation of the values, experiences, and lifestyles of other cultures; and (c) learn about their students' cultures. Gay (2010) added that teachers should be able to find better approaches to reconnect with the diverse students and confront biases as they analyze and reflect on their own cultures.

The in-depth examination of the personal backgrounds of the leading conductors found in Chapter Four helped me to better understand their transformation toward becoming culturally effective. It revealed the main influences that helped shape the cultural backgrounds of each of the leading BCC conductors. My focus in Chapter Four was to point out cultural differences between the two conductors; in this section, I considered how their cultural awareness informed their pedagogical practices, values, beliefs, and basic assumptions.

Each of the interviewed conductors demonstrated a well-developed racial and cultural self-identity, which according to Vavrus (2002), is critically important for a culturally responsive teacher. The extensive cultural and professional backgrounds of the participants and their continual reflections on their practices allowed them to create an

inclusive and trusting atmosphere among the diverse students at the BCC. Both conductors gained a great deal of experience and insight into their teaching while teaching in various environments, including urban and lower socioeconomic areas and suburbs prior to working with the BCC. They also understood that overcoming cultural biases requires a willingness to go through a process of self-evaluation and reflection. In addition, the participants described their teaching experiences as a continuous exploration of new cultures and new approaches to choral instruction.

Both principal conductors, highly inspiring and motivational individuals, said that they had had charismatic teachers in their lives who led them into the profession. Finally, all the participating conductors shared their regard for one another and commented on the support and dedication of all the BCC staff members.

Instructional Strategies

Culturally responsive approaches to choral teaching. Teachers who put students' cultural identities at the center of their attention and use that knowledge to build instructional strategies to better facilitate student learning and development apply the principles of culturally responsive teaching into their practices (Gay, 2010). One of the main findings of this study revealed that all the participating conductors of the BCC not only emphasized the importance of learning about the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of their students, but also demonstrated their own knowledge about the cultures of their students. They constantly use this knowledge to find and develop successful teaching strategies. The BCC conductors also stated, however, that students' cultures do not always play a decisive role in planning instructional strategies. They suggested that

planning instructional strategies around repertoire and making cultural connections using the text, harmony, meter, and structure of the piece could be more effective in designing choral teaching. They emphasized the importance of finding a balance in teaching elements of musical literacy and the context of music and being able to see the bigger picture while teaching steps and elements of music. For the BCC the bigger picture is the social change mission that defines the vision, strategic planning, and all the activities of the organization.

These findings indicated no deviation from the main principles of culturally responsive teaching. In fact, when the BCC conductors develop teaching strategies and learning activities for the students, they are trying to relate to their students' cultural experiences while simultaneously stretching beyond the familiar by introducing students to other cultures through music. This approach supported one of the principles of culturally responsive teaching identified by Gay (2002), who emphasized the importance of introducing multiple views and perspectives on the world and music. Abril (2013) restated, "culturally responsive teachers are able to help students make connections between the music being studied or performed in the classroom and the musical world beyond the classroom" (p. 9).

While all the proponents of a culturally responsive education (Allen & Boykin, 1991; Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Villegas & Lucas, 2002) insisted on aligning teaching approaches with students' cultures, it becomes a challenging task for any educator whose classroom is racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse, but has no single majority group. How does one consider a broad range of cultures and experiences that

children bring to the choir? Is it possible at all? The findings of the study proved that the entire teaching staff at the BCC understood that there is no single best way to accomplish a broad educational outcome, because singers do not fit a single mold. Consequently, teaching diverse music to diverse groups requires a variety of teaching approaches. All the participating conductors acknowledged their continual search of new, more effective ways to teach choral repertoire.

For example, during the rehearsals of the upper choirs it was common to find students helping each other. According to Gay (2002), peer learning both increases motivation and a sense of responsibility and presents a powerful approach to improve achievement, persistence, and attitudes, especially with African American, Asian American, and Latino American groups. As I discovered, the conductors' division of the choir into teams, or sections, with an elected leader had encouraged team learning and additional practices, which they then evaluated. This was an effective way to provide help to students for whom reading music was an obstacle.

In her interview, Adams perfectly described the complexity of finding the right teaching approach when teaching multicultural music:

When I think of the Cuban song "Son de Camaguey," I know I could approach it by saying: "Let's get the correct pitches and rhythms." That would be plenty of work, but then you don't fully appreciate the piece, what it has to offer. The context of the piece, what country, what area does this song represent? What is this bigger picture of the people and why does this piece sound the way it does? What does it teach you about people, the world, about the style of music? I think you have to look at it with finer lens. As a music educator, I always think how I should approach it. How I'm going to teach it: Solfeggio, or we have the rhythm count this . . . I'm also thinking how are we going to look at it as a piece of artwork? How are these kids going to think of this piece as they're bringing it to stage and put on their hats as artists and performers? How do they really understand it from that perspective? (personal interview, June 4, 2015)

To summarize, the BCC conductors not only used a variety of choral teaching strategies designed to meet the needs of the diverse children's choir, but also continually looked for new approaches they could attach to the social change mission in order to enhance the students' performance.

Engaging students. Too often educators interpret culturally responsive instruction as teaching diverse ethnic groups of students in a different way considering their particular cultures, seemingly forgetting that they should be emphasizing students' engagement. Culturally responsive teaching is designed to help empower "students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 382). This means that teachers should use the instruction that would help students to better integrate into the school curriculum and make cultural connections with the community.

Students' level of engagement determines the productivity of a choral rehearsal. To keep students engaged, the BCC conductors used a variety of highly interactive teaching approaches, including question-and-answer techniques, frequent group discussions, and activities during rehearsals. Furthermore, teachers should plan their instructions focusing on those similarities that can help unite diverse groups (Stanfield, 1994; Ravitch, 1991) and aim toward exceeding cultural boundaries and growing transculturally through interactions with different cultures rather than merely identifying cultural differences (Martinez-Brawley & Brawley, 1999).

For the BCC, the social change mission was one of the bonding elements that not only had a positive impact on students, but also provided an opportunity for the

conductors to find and explore ways to achieve that mission through choral instruction and performance. I witnessed how, during the rehearsals, students often engaged in discussions about social justice and inequalities related to the music they sang and also to their daily lives. During the interviews with the singers, I could see the impact those discussions had had on them. The interviewed students from the Premier Chorus and Young Men's Ensemble not only stressed the importance of the social change mission, but also expressed their strong belief that they could make a difference reaching more people through the power of music. That is what gave them satisfaction, and that is one of the reasons why they wanted to return in subsequent years to the BCC.

In a final essay, published in the program of the last concert, one senior wrote,

BCC has given me so many amazing opportunities and I really identified with the message of using music as a tool for social change. Being a member of PC [Premier Chorus] has reinforced my interest in social justice, leadership and human rights issues.

Another senior stated, "BCC sparked my interest in leadership and social justice, two things that seemed cool to me before joining, but nothing I planned on pursuing . . . Now I lead the Disabled Youth Project at my school" (excerpt from the concert program, May 17, 2015).

It is hard to say whether the social change and equality issues were affecting every student at the BCC to the same extent, but it became obvious that the topics could not leave students untouched. To effectively reach students from diverse backgrounds, the BCC conductors used collaborative methods essential to culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2002; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Often students worked in groups divided by alto and soprano sections under the supervision of section leaders while the

conductor's role was to assist and check on the progress of each group. This also allowed the conductors to get frequent feedback from the students and to have conversations about which strategies worked well for the group. In fact, collaborative approaches help to create successful, caring, and safe environments in which conductors can expect students to thrive to the best of their abilities (Gay, 2010).

While creating safe environments is important, the BCC staff learned that it was not enough to create positive social bonds among the singers. Other culturally based neighborhood programs cannot guarantee the high enrollment of Black and Latino students. Enrollment issues are of great concern for the BCC staff and longitudinal research would allow researchers to identify developmental trends and track changes.

Choral Repertoire-Based Curriculum

With an understanding of students' backgrounds teachers can incorporate learning styles, culture, background, and prior knowledge into the curriculum (Gay, 2010).

Curriculum content is an important part of culturally responsive teaching. Villegas and Lucas (2002) proposed a framework for curriculum that would enable different kinds of learning: cognitive, social, personal, political, and moral. Moreover, Gay (2000) insisted that content should be structured in ways that encourage students to negotiate its meaning based on their own cultures, attitudes, prior knowledge, and approaches to learning.

The BCC conductors acted consistently with Gay (2010)'s definition. While all of them applied their knowledge and understanding of students' cultural backgrounds into the choral curriculum, they often concentrated on finding a theme for a concert that would help bond the diverse groups. The conductors intended the BCC concert themes

and programming to promote social change by increasing awareness of the issues of equality, justice, and freedom.

For example, one of the concerts of the combined intermediate choirs, Central Intermediate Advanced Chorus, and combined training choirs featured a program called “Freedom Is Coming,” which not only focused on the music from different cultures, but also demonstrated the versatility and the impact of choral music as an instrument of social change. The theme of freedom helped integrate a wide variety of featured songs from various cultures. Songs such as the lively Serbian gypsy dance “Niška Banja,” the humorous French tongue twister “Ton Thé,” an Israeli song “Oseh Shalom,” and an American spiritual “Freedom Is Coming” delivered a strongly articulated message about truth, justice, and peace.

Designing a theme-based concert requires careful crafting and sensitivity to the authenticity of the presented cultures. In his interview, Trecek-King not only emphasized the importance of a detailed and thorough approach to studying the context of music, but also stressed seeking a thorough understanding of performing music from various cultures. This intricate process requires a detailed study of the score and deep penetration into the culture of the piece. That is why the BCC conductors often invite the culture bearers to enhance understanding of the particular culture and music traditions, especially with cultures like Arabic or Chinese, traditionally not well represented in choral performances.

The BCC conductors utilize a music curriculum based on a well-planned choral repertoire to assist singers in achieving musical growth and learning the fundamentals of

music theory (Apfelstadt, 2000). Students developed understanding and appreciation for various cultures by learning repertoire selections of world music, which in turn improved their ability to understand people from those cultures and engage with them effectively. Thus the multifaceted BCC curriculum included musical and sociocultural aspects and was therefore consistent with a culturally responsive curriculum as described by Gay (2002).

Additionally, my analysis of the findings helped me to identify the essential aspects of repertoire selection by the BCC conductors: (a) starting points, including finding some inspirational themes and topics or listening to great performing artists and folk group music recordings to deeper penetrate into the culture; (b) getting out of one's comfort zone while exploring various unfamiliar music cultures; (c) choosing diverse repertoire to expose students to a wide variety of cultures, styles, and languages and incorporate songs with strong messages that students can relate to their own lives; (d) considering students' cultural backgrounds that help create a positive environment; (e) exploring in-depth cultural context of music, opening new possibilities and new sounds and bridges the gap between different cultures; and (f) reflecting on students' responses and considering community opinion as an enriching experience for both sides.

Building a Community of Singers

“Building community among diverse learners is another essential element of culturally responsive teaching” (Gay, 2002, p. 110). For the BCC, building community starts with a vision: “Boston Children's Chorus envisions a city defined by meaningful relationships among its community members” (Boston Children's Chorus, 2015, p. 12).

The BCC conductors and staff members developed structures and activities to reach this vision. Drummond (2005) strongly believed that music education has the power to change people's attitudes toward various cultures and prepare them for a plural world. While Gay (2002) stressed the importance of building community with diverse student groups, Drummond, along with Mas and Gomez (2012), concluded that positive social changes that occur during music activities could serve as a better rationale for multicultural music education than the purely musical benefits.

The findings of the study showed that the social development of the singers and building a community of singers that unites diverse city populations were among the primary goals of the BCC. The teaching team made real attempts in achieving the goal of positive social change and preparing their singers for that mission. In order to help students get to know each other better and to engage older students in thoughtful discussions about social justice and race issues, the teaching staff incorporated social activities in weekly rehearsals. Although that presented a daily challenge for the conductors, as they worked to balance social activities with performance and music literacy instruction, such practices created a two-way communication between teachers and students, which reflected the fundamental principle of effective culturally responsive teaching.

While implementing these practices, the BCC conductors built stronger cultural connections with singers and families. Gay (2002) suggested that teachers who understand their own cultural identities develop better connection with their students and families. "Culturally responsive teachers help students to understand that knowledge has

moral and political elements and consequences, which obligate them to take social action to promote freedom, equality, and justice for everyone” (Gay, 2002, p. 110). Data from this study helped to identify two ways the BCC is building cultural connections: first by developing and exploring the cultural identities of the singers and second by incorporating various, culturally relevant activities.

Following Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995), who insisted on serious consideration of students’ cultural identities in all aspects of teaching and learning, the BCC teaching team understood that all singers need to share and learn about their cultural identities, because that helps to shape the choral ensemble and develop more open minded, tolerant, and culturally aware individuals. In order to connect students across racial lines and socioeconomic status and to encourage the new relationships between the singers, the BCC conductors used a wide variety of activities and discussions about students’ cultural identities. The BCC provides an opportunity for singers to experience a nonhomogeneous environment, unlike the one many of them experience at their schools and neighborhood communities (Ayscue & Greenberg, 2013). Students have the opportunity to connect with peers they would not otherwise meet. The BCC teaching staff involves family members in the rehearsal process so parents can share expertise of their own cultures and traditions, which conductors incorporate into the choral curriculum and performances.

The BCC visibly expanded over nine years, going from a choir with 25 singers to an organization that has nearly 500 children from over 25 Boston communities. The staff of the BCC makes every effort to diversify the population of singers.

Touring the country and abroad presents another way to enrich cultural

experiences and develop cultural connections between the choir members. The BCC singers have the opportunity to participate in regional, national, and international trips during the year.

The short one or two day trips in the U.S. create an opportunity for enriching the cultural experiences of the younger singers. Older and more mature choristers may get to travel on longer tours abroad. During such trips, students have a chance to get to know each other and often develop meaningful relationships. The trips expose them to different cultures in their original settings, for many kids a life-changing experience. The conductors carefully plan the trips and create various social assignments for the children. In addition, they always find time to listen to students' reflections on their social and musical experiences. Such tours not only help improve kids' social skills, but also enrich them with authentic musical experiences, which contributes to the performance quality of the choir. Culturally enriching tours are part of the BBC's educational and socially engaging programs. For example, during the 2015 Liberation Tour of Germany and the Czech Republic, the Premier Chorus and the Young Men's Ensemble performed a range of music written in response to conflict and strife. The BCC team plans such trips ahead of time, as they require additional funding. The trips' objectives include exposing students to various world cultures and supporting connections between children and others.

In conclusion, I found that the practices of the BCC conductors are consistent with the main principles of culturally responsive teaching and offer some new

perspectives and distinctive approaches to choral teaching in diverse cultural environments.

Research Question Two

The second research question was “What factors does the administrative team for the Boston Children’s Chorus consider when developing a mission statement, creating a long-range plan, strategizing for fund raising, recruiting singers, and building audiences?” In this section, I elaborate on the findings related to the main contributions of the administrative team in relation to culturally responsive teaching. The analysis of the data included the interviews with the BCC executive director and the BCC director of programs.

Personal Development

The personal profiles of the executive director and the director of the programs helped to explain a proactive attitude toward culturally responsive education. With an extensive background building and leading the BCC from the roots, Howse served the organization for 11 years as an executive director and added a level of expertise and experience to the BCC team. His core objective had been helping the BCC to develop and clarify its vision of mission goals and activities tied to these goals.

With a background in philosophy, political science, literature, comparative religion, and ethics, Hires had also acquired significant experience working with youth organizations that he continued to use at the BCC while serving as a director of programs.

The two highly educated professionals had quite different racial and cultural backgrounds; however, they have at least two things in common: They both chose to

work for a multicultural organization, and they came to the BCC with broad experiences in working with diverse populations. They have the ability to establish the goals and vision of the organization and to suggest strategies to achieve them. The findings of this study supported the vision of a culturally responsive organization in which the diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds of the staff members ensured the successful performance of a diverse student population (Cochran-Smith et al., 2003; Villegas & Davis, 2008).

Building a Community of Singers

The success of a culturally responsive organization depends on at least three factors: organization, policy and procedures, and community involvement (Little, 1999; Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2007).

Organization of the BCC. As described by Little (1999), organization of a school involves administrative structure and the use of the teaching space, as in the physical arrangement of a classroom. A culturally responsive administrative structure should distribute leadership evenly to make sure that all voices are included in all decisions (National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems, 2008). Consistent with that, the fundamental structural characteristics of the BCC included teamwork and collective decision-making.

The Board of Directors at the BCC included 17 members from Boston's corporate professional community and art sectors as well as two parents. A leadership team that included the director of choirs, the director of programs, the director of finance and administration, and the director of philanthropy, along with the president of the chorus, made collective decisions as to whom to invite to join the Board of Directors.

While the artistic director and president of the BCC is leading the organization toward artistic excellence and has the authority and responsibility for envisioning the future performance of the chorus, the Board of Directors and the administrative team help to determine the available resources. The mission and vision of the BCC were the products of team collaboration, and the strategic plan, which the Board of Directors reviews annually, fully supports them. Howse defined the strategic goals of the BCC, which are focusing on financial sustainability and the sustainability of human capital, increasing visibility that ensures connection with the community and direct interaction with the stakeholders, and impacting the community and stakeholders. In order to track the progress of achieving those goals, the administrative team meets “daily, weekly and monthly to find what we need to do to touch on sustainability, visibility and impact” (Howse, personal interview, March 12, 2015).

Their rehearsal space shows students of various backgrounds that they are part of the organization. The visual representations of students from different racial and cultural backgrounds appears on posters and pictures of the singers hung in the practice rooms and hallways at the central BCC location, creating a welcoming atmosphere for singers and parents.

BCC policies and procedures. At the BCC, the social change mission provides a foundation for all policies and procedures. In order to ensure its successful growth, the administrative staff constantly explores ways to better communicate and execute management and development of the program to fulfill the artistic potential and the social change mission.

The study's findings revealed that administrative staff made regular assessments of the progress in communicating the social change mission to the BCC community, the singers, staff members, and parents. This offered conductors, singers, and parents an opportunity to talk about some difficult and sensitive issues like race. In partnership with the YMCA, the administrative team of the BCC organized workshops for staff and parents in which they discussed race-related topics. These types of activities not only provided staff members with the skills to evaluate their own attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about race issues and social justice, but also increased knowledge and confidence in finding a way to discuss these issues with other community members.

To maximize language accessibility and better communication with families, the BCC hired two multilingual staff members, one who spoke Spanish and one who spoke Mandarin and Cantonese. Thus, the staff includes people of different races and cultural backgrounds. As a result, the organization can better respond to the needs of the community. These findings supported research by Ely and Thomas (2001) and Page (2007), who suggested that teams with diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds function more effectively than groups that consist of staff members with similar backgrounds.

To help students learn about each other's cultural differences and make meaningful connections, the BCC launched a program called "Artists in Residence" to collaborate with local composers and conductors as well as internationally recognized musicians from other countries. Working with guest musicians strengthened students' musical skills and gave them an opportunity to grow musically and culturally.

While the BCC team had clearly made some progress toward social change and in the process had identified challenges they faced, the team realized that the organization was still lacking a clear vision for how to advance their social change goals. Perhaps, in order to advance to the next level it was necessary to create benchmarks for every chorus in the organization and every staff member.

Community involvement. Gay (2010) emphasized the importance of “using cultural knowledge of ethnically diverse cultures, families, and communities to guide curriculum development, classroom climates, instructional strategies, and relationships with students” (p. 31). The BCC social change mission helped to define family and community involvement occurring on many levels including an array of activities, from programs assisting parents to better deal with race related issues to inviting community members to work with children and staff.

Recently the administrative team of the BCC started developing closer collaborations with Boston public schools and the relationship became mutually enriching and beneficial. Through this affiliation, the BCC not only reinforced their strategies to recruit singers, but also offered professional development programs for Boston public schools’ music teachers. The staff members believed that further positive reinforcement of such a relationship would produce more fruitful results and would help improve retention of the younger singers.

In the view of growing segregation of schools in Massachusetts (Ayscue & Greenberg, 2013), the BCC administrative staff saw as an important role of the organization the development of stronger ties with local communities. While the BCC

regularly took part in many community events, participation in local musical events and festivals was nevertheless still limited. The administrative members, along with teaching staff, suggested that singing in local festivals could be a chance for BCC children to further integrate into neighborhood cultures and directly interact with those families.

To further develop integration and cultural connections with local communities the administrative staff of the BCC continues to work on developing new programs and activities. Such projects require a team effort to strengthen partnerships with communities.

Research Question Three

“What factors are considered in the artistic and fiscal development of the Boston Children’s Chorus?” was the third research question. As defined by Gay (2010), culturally responsive pedagogy is based on using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students in order to make learning more appropriate and effective for them. This section presents my analysis of the perspectives of the stakeholders (parents and singers) and the role they play in shaping the BCC’s activities. I grouped the most important findings under the personal and instructional dimensions of culturally responsive pedagogy. Although the personal profile is usually used to examine the teacher’s knowledge about cultural values, I decided to use it for examining the personal experiences of the parents and singers. I organized the singers’ and parents’ insights of the BCC’s activities, repertoire selection, and teaching approaches under the instructional dimension.

Personal Development

My analysis of the findings demonstrated that the two decisive factors for parents and students to join the BCC were the diversity of the chorus and the social change mission. Despite the challenge that diversity presents to educators (Carlow, 2006; Cochran-Smith et al., 2003), parents and students of the BCC viewed diversity along with the social change mission as the two key factors for joining the chorus. Moreover, many students perceived music and choral singing as a way to communicate the important messages about equality and social change.

During the interviews, many children said that the BCC became a life-changing experience. One girl's inspirational personal story: she joined the BCC to better control her attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, which meant that just to sit still and focus on a task was a challenge for her. The doctors suggested a variety of medication that would help to suppress her symptoms, but she thought that the BCC gave her much more support. As a result, not only did she learn how to concentrate better, but also she greatly improved her communication skills and learned how to present herself in front of an audience with confidence and clarity. Her singing skills improved to such a degree that she was asked to perform solos at various events in her community.

Such stories are not rare. In fact, the statistics published in the BCC's annual report suggested that 98% of the singers said they would recommend the BCC to their friends (Boston Children's Chorus, 2015). This number coincides with the findings of my research. All the interviewed students said that they would recommend this chorus to their friends. The parents who participated in this research study also expressed their

strong approval, support, and involvement with the BCC. Of the over 100 students who graduated from the BCC, every one of them also graduated from high school, and the same number continued their education in colleges, universities, and post-secondary programs such as City Year (Boston Children's Chorus, 2015). These findings suggested that the BCC's social change mission can be a response to the needs of the stakeholders and community.

Another finding of this research study revealed a strong sense of community among the parents and students. Such a sense reinforced the atmosphere of collaboration and support among the singers as well as supported the emotional and physical safety that allowed students to express themselves and discuss issues they would not feel comfortable talking about in school.

All the interviewed singers and parents expressed strong personal connections with the BCC, and during the rehearsals I observed very few students not fully engaged in the rehearsals. Of those who were not fully engaged, most were the singers from the younger choirs, who obviously had not yet developed strong social and emotional bonds with other members of the chorus. It would be worthwhile longitudinal research to study those disengaged students for a year or two to see whether these students remained in the chorus and whether they had made any progress in feeling a stronger connection to the group.

Instructional Strategies

In their responses, the parents and singers acknowledged the high level of professionalism of the major BCC conductors and their leading roles as mentors and

friendly advisors in the choir. Whereas all the interviewed students and parents rated the level of instruction at the BCC highly, the older students also provided some deeper analysis and even gave healthy criticism about how the conductors presented certain aspects of music theory.

The assessment given by students and parents of the repertoire selections indicated that a diversity of styles, difficulty, and music from various cultures were essential aspects of repertoire selection. For instance, while the majority of students found it essential to include in the repertoire songs with strong social messages that could be related to their everyday lives, many younger children emphasized the importance of learning songs in different languages. Despite the fact that not all of the younger students could clearly identify the cultures and the languages of the songs they were singing, the children felt that the BCC is the place that generated their interest in learning about different cultures and where they were introduced to a wide variety of songs in many languages. Perhaps the conductors should consider better ways to present songs from other cultures to the younger children and have further discussions with the students about those cultures. Parents also stressed the importance of introducing children to music from different cultures and saw it as an opportunity to developing more appreciation for cultures different from their own.

Implications for Practice

Although a vast amount of the scholarly literature is concentrated on connections between main principles of culturally responsive pedagogy and achievement, not enough research describes effective culturally responsive teaching practices (Aceves et al., 2014;

Lind & McKoy, 2016). This research study provided an opportunity to test culturally responsive teaching in a real educational setting within one large choral organization comprised of a diverse student population. One of the main intentions of the study was to address the lack of research evidence on successful culturally responsive practices in music, particularly choral education. Accordingly, the first practical contribution of the present research is that it provides much needed empirical data on demonstrably successful practices of the choral conductors within one choral organization.

This study represents a direct value to music educators in several ways. First, its findings exposed the potential of culturally responsive teaching for choral education. Considering the wealth of diversity in American schools, it is no wonder that increasingly researchers shift their attention to culturally responsive pedagogy (Abril, 2009; Lehmborg, 2008; Rohan, 2011; Shaw, 2014; Tuncer, 2008).

While the student-centered approach—built on recognizing students’ cultural strengths in order to promote their academic success—defines the essence of culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2010), the findings of the study allowed me to detect the distinctive approaches to culturally responsive teaching taken by the BCC. For example, the social change mission-oriented statement served as a bonding component for developing choral instruction, curriculum, and a singing community.

Second, I identified successful strategies and programs that present a practical value. Among those are the essential aspects for choral repertoire selection suggested by the BCC’s conductors that practitioners could find useful. A vast number of scholarly works focused on identifying various criteria for choosing choral repertoire (Canfield,

2009; Forbes, 2001; Hunsaker, 2007; Williams, 2011). For the BCC conductors, however, this process is largely embedded in positive contribution to the social change mission. The identified essential elements for selecting choral repertoire should not be viewed as a prescribed remedy, but rather as an action plan. For example, for music educators to push the boundaries of one's comfort zone means not only taking a risk, but also embracing new challenges and opening oneself up to the possibility of becoming more creative.

The teaching staff at the BCC also effectively incorporated culturally responsive instructional strategies including collaborative methods, peer teaching, and a differentiated approach. As a result, the BCC conductors offered a wide variety of teaching strategies and ideas that can inspire the thinking of preservice educators and help those teachers become aware of the successful pedagogical skills needed to effectively communicate with diverse learners (Belz, 2006; Ilari, 2010; Legette, 2013; Veblen, et al, 2005). Further, the BCC approached the touring program as a means to unite singers, encourage cross-cultural relationships, and acquire new cultural experiences.

Third, evidence of the effects of the social change mission on the singers, staff, and community members may serve as justification for resource investment in programs to address a wide array of social issues through choral education. Perhaps, the demonstration of how the administrative staff works in close collaboration with the teaching staff of the BCC can help change the relationship between teachers and school administrators, which can then potentially lead to effective applications of the culturally

responsive teaching programs in the school music curriculum. Choral teachers want to launch a successful should form deeper relationships with their students and learn about those students' cultures. This will help to tailor a choral program to the needs of their community.

Finally, the research could assist in enhancing the effectiveness of music education, and of choral programs in particular, by demonstrating that better results can be achieved by focusing on finding similarities between diverse ethnic and cultural groups of students rather than merely acknowledging the differences. The huge potential of a social issue-based approach to music and choral teaching becomes evident, and the findings of this study support this. In addition, the successful practices of the BCC can serve as further inspiration for preservice music teachers to work with ethnically, culturally, and economically diverse groups of students.

Although this research can present a significant value to music educators, it is important to remember that the BCC designed and implemented the described practices with consideration for the cultural values and interests of one particular community. As Gay (2010) pointed out, culturally placed teaching and learning can vary depending on students' cultural experiences.

Implications for Future Research

This research study provided the original insights into the use of a culturally responsive approach to teaching for one ethnically and culturally diverse urban children's chorus. Although this study investigated in detail the operations of one large choral organization, future research that examines the practices of other choral educators in

relation to culturally responsive teaching can provide more valuable findings.

Only limited research describes effective culturally responsive educational practices in general (Aceves et al., 2014), and even fewer studies examine the implementations of culturally responsive teaching in music instruction (Lind & McKoy, 2016). Hence, it would be beneficial for music education researchers to replicate studies like this one, with other diverse urban children's choruses. Such studies would allow for deeper understanding of the advantages of a culturally responsive teaching approach to choral teaching. A case study comparison of two or more urban choruses within the same urban setting would allow for further evaluation of teaching practices considering students' cultures.

One significant finding of this case study related to the social change mission-oriented planning that served as the overarching concept that shaped curriculum, instruction, and personal perceptions of staff, students, and parents and framed the development of the community of singers at the BCC. Future research would help to check on the progress of the social change mission and follow the evolution of the strategic planning to achieve this goal.

The other findings of the study demonstrated that the personal knowledge, experience, and expertise of the teaching and administrative staff members served as valuable sources that contributed to the successful operations of the BCC. Some researchers (Benham, 2003; Lee & Dallman, 2008; Miralis, 2003; Petersen, 2005) find a lack of cultural competence among preservice teachers. Therefore, another possible direction for future research would be to monitor and study the different stages of

development of cultural competence in music teachers in order to determine the most influential factors that would affect that development.

In addition, a longitudinal study with a duration of two or more years could potentially provide valuable data on singers' development under the culturally responsive teaching practices, and, following the program over time, could allow for further examination of its benefits and deficiencies. Second, larger sample groups would better represent the population and would allow for generalization of the findings. In addition, studies featuring the positive implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy in music and choral teaching could help scholars to identify additional effective and applicable instructional strategies.

Conclusion

In this study, I have attempted to respond to a number of research questions related to how the conductor, his staff, and the support staff (including the administrative team and Board of Directors) consider the issues of cultural relevancy as they program and rehearse music, select concert venues, recruit singers, and market the organization. The study also examined the perspectives of the parents and singers.

The BCC is a dynamic organization that strives to be innovative in terms of best artistic and pedagogical practices. In fact, at the BCC changes occur constantly and are vital in ensuring the further development and progress of the chorus. When I was finishing this research study some administrative changes took place at the BCC. Howse left his position as an Executive Director, but he admitted that his ties with the BCC

always will remain strong. Although his position was not filled, additional people were added to the administrative team including a manager and a coordinator for programs. While the organization continues to grow, it keeps a very steady pace towards achieving its social change mission and bringing in a new generation of culturally responsive members of society.

In summary, the qualitative findings of the study were consistent with the reviewed scholarly literature and the above-described factors that correlate to issues of equity and cultural responsiveness. This research provided an in-depth analysis of the successful practices of the BCC that I found to be fully compatible with culturally responsive teaching. As this study was limited to the practices of one organization, the findings are not generalizable to other choirs serving similar populations. The BCC developed approaches congruent with culturally responsive teaching in response to specific environments and student populations. These successful practices are not duplicable without designing instruction that responds to particular groups. Moreover, it is important to remember that developing and implementing strategies tied to the issues of social change requires a long-term commitment and does not yield immediate results. The findings of the research indicated that in attempting to achieve further progress in its social change mission the development of a detailed strategic plan for all the BCC choirs and staff members was critically important. My hope is that this successful example will serve as inspiration and an outline for other music teachers and conductors to help them to overcome problems that might prevent others from succeeding.

Appendix A

Sample Interview Questions

Initial information for the participant:

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this interview regarding the issues of cultural relevancy in the teaching practices of choral conductors. My name is Oksana Karapetian and I am conducting a research study as partial fulfillment for my doctoral degree in music education from Boston University. The goal of the study is to explore the ways in which a choral conductor may consider the cultural diversity of each singer in the choir while selecting repertoire, scaffolding rehearsal strategies, and developing learning schema for diverse students, so I will be able to develop a full description of activities, beliefs, and settings that define this process. Your answers to these questions are very important to the success of this research study.

With your permission I would like to make an audio recording of this interview as well as take notes while you speak. This will help me to collect your thoughts and ideas more accurately.

Please let me know if, at any time you feel uncomfortable about a question, and we will move on to the next one. You also can stop the interview at any time.

Questions for the leading conductors of the BCC (research question 1)

I. Background

1. Please tell me about your musical background.
2. Please tell me about your teaching experiences as a choral conductor prior to your appointment as an artistic director of BCC.

3. Why did you accept this job as a conductor of BCC? What led you to this decision?
4. How would you describe your cultural background?

II. Cultural Diversity of BCC students

5. Do you think BCC program is different from the other choral programs we have in Boston? If so, please explain how?
6. How would you describe the students of your choir as compared to the student population of other Boston children's choruses?
7. How would you describe the students of your choir compared to the student population of previous choirs you directed?
8. The mission of your choral program is to "harness the power and joy of music to unite our city's diverse communities and inspire social change." Thus far, where is the program in achieving this mission?
9. Can you give one or two examples of how the day-to-day activities in the BCC program support that mission?

III. Instruction

1. Do you consider ethnical backgrounds of your students while selecting the rehearsal strategies?
2. What kind of atmosphere do you try to establish with your students during the rehearsals?
3. How do you build community among the singers in your choir?

4. What effect do your students' cultures have on the instruction you design for them?
5. Do you incorporate music from your students' cultures into your instruction?
6. How do you design instruction to insure the successful learning and communication among your student- singers?

IV. Selecting Repertoire

1. To what extent you think it is important, if at all, to consider the cultural and ethnical backgrounds of your students while choosing repertoire?
2. Do you make any connections between students' identity (e.g., race, socioeconomic factors, and cultural influences) and teaching of the repertoire?
3. Do you consider the diversity of the choir while choosing repertoire?
4. How does the repertoire choosing process start for you?
5. How do you decide on including music from other cultures? What do you think about learning music from other cultures?
6. What must you know about the cultural context of music that you include in your repertoire? How should students learn about the cultural context of music, if at all?
7. How do your students respond to your repertoire selections?
8. How do you go about finding quality music from other cultures? How do you begin/define your search?
9. Can you identify the main strategy that a choral director should follow while choosing repertoire for diverse students?

10. What repertoire do you currently have programmed?
11. What repertoire are you considering?
12. Do the students of your choir influence in any (direct or indirect) way your decisions in the choice of repertoire?
13. Do your colleagues influence in any way your decisions in the choice of repertoire?
 - a. If yes, who assists you?
 - b. If yes, how does this process work?
14. Do the community members contribute to your concert programs in any ways? If yes, can you tell me how?
15. What happens, if at all, when students do not respond to the repertoire?
16. In your opinion, how does the selected repertoire contribute to construction of a positive environment?
17. In your opinion, does the selected repertoire ever produce what you might call a negative environment? If yes, please elaborate.

V. Teaching in the Diverse Cultural Settings

1. Do you have any suggestions or recommendations for choral directors that work with diverse groups of students?
2. If you could design a choral program what would it look like?
3. What would you identify as the primary challenges of being a choral conductor of BCC?

Questions for the members of the administrative team (research question 2)

I. Background

1. Please tell me about your professional background
2. What about this position and the BCC choral program that find particularly appealing to you?

II. Cultural Diversity of BCC students

1. Please describe your experience working with diverse populations and flexibility in working with a diverse group of community volunteers.
2. What are your personal beliefs about multicultural education?
3. What does the mission statement of the BCC chorus mean to you?
4. How do you think the organization addresses the diverse needs of the singers?
5. What are the strategic goals and objectives for this school year? What specific actions are planned? How do you track the progress of your strategic plan?
6. Is the cultural context of music considered in planning and designing concert programs? How important is this aspect?
7. What avenues and opportunities are students given to express their culture?
8. Do you think the choral programs should consider cultural identities of the students?
9. Can you identify any strengths or weaknesses of BCC?
10. How do you choose the members of the Board of Directors?

Questions for the parents of the BCC singers (research question 3)

1. How did you find out about this program?
2. Why did you decide to enroll your child in this program?
3. What do you like about the choral programs BCC is offering?

Questions for the singers of the BCC (research question 3)

1. What do you like about this choir?
2. Do you enjoy the songs that you sing in the choir?
3. What kinds of songs do you like the best?

Appendix B

Cover Letter

Dear _____

As partial fulfillment for my doctoral degree in music education from Boston University I am conducting a research study. I am writing this letter to invite you to become a participant in this study. The goal of the study is to explore the ways in which a choral conductor may consider the background and diversity of each singer in the choir while selecting repertoire, scaffolding rehearsal strategies, and developing learning schema for diverse students, so I will be able to develop a full description of activities, beliefs, and settings that define this process. Enclosed is a questionnaire regarding the consideration of issues of cultural relevancy in the teaching practices of choral conductors.

As a conductor of Boston Children's Chorus your participation is voluntary and very important. If you agree, please complete the five minute questionnaire and mail it back in the enclosed stamped self-addressed envelope. Your anonymous participation is insured as the questionnaire requires no name. Your immediate response is extremely important to the success of this study.

If you have any questions about this study you can contact me at karapo@bu.edu

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Oksana Karapetian

Appendix C

Choral Conductor Questionnaire (Confidential)

Note: All the answers to this questionnaire will be kept confidential

1. To what extent you are familiar with the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of your students?

2. Do you consider ethnical backgrounds of your students while selecting the rehearsal strategies?

3. What effect do your students' cultures have on the instruction you design for them?

4. Do you incorporate music from your students' cultures into your instruction?

5. Do you make any connections between students' identity (e.g., race, socioeconomic factors, and cultural influences) and teaching of the repertoire?

6. Can you identify the main strategy that a choral director should follow while choosing teaching strategies and selecting repertoire for diverse students?

7. Please list any suggestions or recommendations for choral directors that work with diverse groups of students.

8. The mission of your choral program is to “harness power and joy of music to unite our city’s diverse communities and inspire social change”. Thus far, where is the program in achieving this mission?

9. Can you give one or two examples of how the day-to-day activities in the BCC program support that mission?

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