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RELIGIOUS MUSIC IN PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOIR: ATTITUDES, PRACTICES, AND EXPERIENCES

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Bachelor of Music
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Submitted in partial fulfillment of

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RELIGIOUS MUSIC IN PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOIR: ATTITUDES, PRACTICES, AND EXPERIENCES

LANDON LAMONTAGNE

ABSTRACT

A large portion of the choral music canon is sacred or religious in nature because the history of choral singing is in large part due to its importance in the development of the Christian church. Many public school choir teachers include sacred or religious music as a part of their repertoire because of its historic, musical and educational value. The fact that religious songs and sacred texts are often included in public school choir curricula has raised numerous philosophical and legal questions over the past several decades, although research regarding public school choir curriculum and religion is limited. The purpose of this study is to examine the present state of religious and sacred music in public school choir classrooms. I administered a survey to 100 5th-12th grade choir teachers from 32 U.S. states to gauge their attitudes towards sacred and religious music, their teaching practices involving sacred and religious music, and discover experiences teachers have had with someone who expressed concern over the religious content of their repertoire. The majority (87 out of 100) of choir teachers surveyed were in favor of teaching religious music in public schools, and most (98 out of 100) program at least some religious music for their choirs. A majority of teachers (68 out of 100) surveyed have also had a student, parent, or administrator express concern about religious content in their repertoire, and a variety of measures were taken to resolve these concerns. Legal precedents, guidelines from professional organizations such as NAfME, and many school policies suggest that religious music is in large part permitted in public schools, but the

many experiences recounted by respondents to the survey indicate that choir teachers should also be aware of how their repertoire choices are perceived by others. The survey data suggests that choir teachers who program sacred or religious music are likely to receive concerns from students, parents, or administrators, but further research is needed to confirm this assertion on a larger scale.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The First Amendment of the United States Constitution protects citizens' right to the free practice of religion, while also forbidding the government from passing laws that establish an official religion. This delicate balance between religious freedom and government involvement is prevalent in public schools, where teachers, administrators, and students must make frequent decisions on the role of religion and religious practice in the classroom. Religion and spirituality are a major part of everyday life for a vast majority of students and teachers (Boone, Fite, and Reardon, 2010; Baurain, 2012; Nelson, 2010; Losh & Nzekwe, 2011), yet religion and spirituality are often considered taboo in the classroom. However, one place in public schools where religion and spirituality are often more accepted is the music classroom, particularly in choir. A large portion of the choral music canon comes from sacred or religious texts (Perrine 2016), and western choral singing developed, in large part, through practices in Christian churches over the course of their history. Even so, the fact that religious songs and sacred texts are included in public school choir curricula has raised numerous philosophical and

legal questions over the past several decades (Cranmore & Fossey, 2014; Perrine, 2013; Perrine, 2016; Perrine, 2017).

The scholarly research discussion on public school music and religion, a subject that is becoming increasingly relevant and thoroughly debated in informal settings, is limited. Scholarly discussion on the topic consists mainly of legal precedents and philosophical perspectives, and there are very few quantitative studies involving sacred music and public schools. A quantitative study focusing on choir teachers and their attitudes, practices, and experiences in the classroom can provide needed and helpful information regarding the prevalence of religious music in public schools and how choir teachers approach teaching it. Qualitative data from teachers' perspectives on religious music as well as their experiences handling concerns over religious content can also be valuable for discovering ways to approach sacred and religious choral music in the public school classroom for both new and experienced choral music educators.

The purpose of this study is to examine the present state of religious and sacred music in public school choir classrooms. The main research questions are:

1) What attitudes do public school choir teachers have towards sacred and religious music in their classrooms?
2) How are public school choir teachers approaching the topic of sacred and religious music with their choirs? (i.e. what practices are they using with their choirs regarding sacred/religious music?)
3) What experiences have choir teachers had with parents, students, or administrators who expressed concern over the religious subject of a piece of music they performed or rehearsed?

4) Is there a relationship between demographic information (Age/experience of teacher, size of program, location of school) and whether choir teachers have had concerns over religious content expressed to them?

Additional questions to be considered are: Do teacher attitudes towards religious music align with their practices in the classroom? and How can teachers approach teaching religious music to their choirs more effectively?

As a choral music educator, I have dealt with this issue firsthand, and have heard many experiences from other choir teachers involving students, parents, and administrators raising questions about their repertoire choices. I was a choir student myself throughout middle school, high school, and college, and all choirs I sang in performed sacred or religious music regularly. From an early age, I learned the historical and cultural value that most choir directors place on sacred and religious music as a part of the choral music canon. As a Christian growing up in a Christian household and attending church frequently, I did not give a second thought to singing religious music in choir because it felt normal to me. But I know not everyone shares that same experience, so this research in part attempts to gain perspectives both from parents, students, and administration who may have different worldviews and understanding of religious music as well as choral music educators who come from a different religious tradition than myself.

CHAPTER II

RELATED LITERATURE

There have been a few scholarly discussions on general "spirituality" in music and music classrooms (Jorgensen 2011, Yob 2010, Palmer 2006, Palmer 2010), as well a few legal analyses mainly by David Perrine (2013, 2016, and 2017), but apart from these, the scholarly research discussion on public school music and religion is limited. Expanding the search to religion and spirituality in the general classroom yields considerably more literature, and allows for an examination of the state of religion and religious studies in public schools as a whole.

The literature is presented in five sections: 1) legal rulings involving religious music in public schools and their philosophical and legal implications, 2) arguments and perspectives on the role of religion and religious discussion in public schools, 3) arguments and perspectives on the role of religious and sacred music in public school choirs, 4) teacher and student religious identity and its impact on classroom environment, and 5) general spirituality in music and music teaching as it relates to music teachers in the public school music classroom. While the main focus of this literature is the role of *organized* religion in public schools, the last section on spirituality is included due to its

emphasis specifically on the relationship between *music teachers* and religious principles in public schools. The literature also addresses public schools mainly within the United States, although a few perspectives are offered from other countries and the world in general.

2.1 Legal Rulings and Precedents

There have been numerous district court cases involving the practice of religion and performing of religious music in public school settings (Cranmore & Fossey, 2014). Although the U.S. Supreme Court has never set specific federal guidelines for performing sacred music in public schools, many district and federal appeals court cases have set legal precedents for teachers, administrators, and courts to follow (Cranmore & Fossey, 2014). Although a Supreme Court case and not specifically related to music, *Lemon v. Kurztman* (1971) produced a three-part checklist for determining the constitutionality of an educational practice involving religion, called the Lemon Test (Cranmore & Fossey, 2014). An educational practice involving religion was deemed constitutional if a) it has a secular purpose, b) the primary effect is one that neither enhances nor inhibits religion, and c) it does not foster excessive entanglement with religion (Cranmore & Fossey, 2014). The Lemon Test was used by the Supreme Court to interpret the Establishment Clause throughout the 1980s and 90s, although varied interpretations have developed over time (Cranmore & Fossey, 2014).

As Perrine (2013) states, legal challenges to performing sacred music in public schools are "a relatively recent phenomenon" (p. 179). The earliest significant case is *Florey v. Sioux Falls School District* (1980), which allowed the performance of religious holiday music at a school-sponsored program as long as it is presented in an "objective

and prudent" manner (Perrine, p. 179). The court argued that Christmas music had been assimilated into American culture, and that a public school music curriculum devoid of sacred music would be "incomplete" (Cranmore & Fossey, Landmark Cases section, para. 1).

Doe v. Duncanville ISD (1995) is another federal appeals court case that upheld the constitutionality of religious music in the public school music curriculum (Perrine, 2013). A public high school choir in Texas decided to use "The Lord Bless You and Keep You", a song with Biblical text, as its "theme song". (Cranmore & Fossey, 2014). A parent objected to the use of a sacred text as the theme song of a public school choir, but the court ruled that it had a secular purpose and was pedagogically valuable outside of its religious connotation (Cranmore & Fossey, 2014). Similar to *Florey v. Sioux Falls*, one of the court's arguments was that disqualifying religious music from the curriculum would severely limit the amount of music available for choirs to sing (Cranmore & Fossey, 2014).

A federal appeals court again ruled in favor of a public school sacred music performance in *Buchman v. West High School* (1997) (Perrine, 2017). The court upheld a performance of the previously mentioned "The Lord Bless You and Keep You" and "Friends" (a contemporary Christian worship song by Michael W. Smith) at a high school graduation ceremony by the school choir because the court argued the songs had a "plausible and legitimate" secular purpose (Perrine, 2017, p. 194). The court's argument was consistent with previous arguments, stating that a "sizable portion" of "serious choral music" draws from religious themes or texts, and that an authentic and broad choral curriculum would "necessarily include religious works" (Perrine, 2017, p. 194).

Bauchman v. West also upheld the constitutionality of holding public school events in religious places of worship. The choir had performed in Catholic, Presbyterian, and Latter Day Saints worship spaces (Perrine, 2017). The court used the Endorsement Test, which states that a government action can be viewed as unconstitutional if it endorses or disapproves of a particular religion, in their ruling (Perrine, 2017). Other courts determining the constitutionality of holding public school events in religious worship spaces have used the Endorsement Test in their rulings, including in *Doe v. Elmbrook* (2009) (Salvaggio, 2013). The court ruled that holding Elmbrook School District graduation ceremonies at Elmbrook Church was unconstitutional because the overt religious iconography (which included a giant cross on stage, religious pamphlets, posters, banners, bibles, and hymnals) was seen as an endorsement of religion (Salvaggio, 2013). However, the court ruled in *Bauchman v. West* that their performances in religious spaces passed the Endorsement Test and was therefore ruled constitutional, showing that application of the test is up to interpretation by the courts (Perrine, 2017).

Despite many court rulings in favor of performing sacred music in public schools, a few more recent courts have ruled against it. *In Nurre v. Whitehead* (2009), a school wind ensemble was prohibited from performing an instrumental version of Franz Biebl's "Ave Maria" at a graduation ceremony because the superintendent deemed the title of the piece to have obvious religious connotations (Perrine, 2013). The superintendent's action was upheld by both the 9th District Court and the Federal Appeals Court (Perrine, 2013).

In another 2009 case, *Stratechuk v. Board of Education*, a music teacher sued the South Orange and Maplewood, New Jersey School District over their policy permitting the practice of sacred music in the classroom but prohibiting it in public performances

(Perrine, 2016). The court ruled in the school district's favor, and their decision was upheld by the appeals court, stating that the school district had "the secular purpose of attempting to avoid a constitutional violation" (Perrine, 2016, p. 133). They also stated that "a failure to promote religion to the constitutionally permitted maximum does not indicate a disapproval of religion (Perrine, 2016, p. 133).

According to Cranmore and Fossey (2014), these court decisions, along with many others, have established the following legal guidelines for determining the constitutionality of religious music in public schools:

- Performing religious music in a public school setting is not, in itself, a violation of the Establishment Clause, as long as the music is used for secular purposes;
- A school district may place restrictions on performing sacred music if the district policy is religiously neutral;
- Performances by public school groups at religious sites in itself is neither Endorsement or a violation of the Establishment Clause;
- Parents have no constitutional right to dictate school curriculum, including music curriculum; and
- Although courts have upheld the musical value of sacred music, it is up to music educators to provide a balanced curriculum that includes secular music (Cranmore & Fossey, 2014).

2.2 Arguments and Perspectives on the Role of Religion in Public Schools

The role and perceived importance of religion in the public school classroom has changed over the course of American history (DeSantis 2011), but does religion still have a place in public schools? How is religion in public school addressed in other countries?

Many perspectives have developed, but the most recent arguments fall into two categories: the idea of pluralistic religious education in the classroom (Aronson, Amatullah, & Laughter, 2016; DeSantis, 2011; Evans, 2008; Horga, 2009), and an emphasis on basic human rights (Evans, 2008; Temperman, 2010).

DeSantis (2011) argues there are four movements regarding religion in the American public school classroom, three of which advocate for an increased emphasis on religious education. The first, Christian Americanists, believe that the "Golden Age" of education in America was the 18th and 19th centuries, when public school curriculum was guided by Christian principles (DeSantis, 2011). They feel uncomfortable with the trend toward cultural and religious pluralism in America, and believe that recent Supreme Court decisions have prevented Christians from exercising their religion freely (DeSantis, 2011). The Religious Pluralism movement advocates for religion to be taught in public schools, but its interpretation of the First Amendment varies greatly from that of Christian Americanism (DeSantis, 2011). According to DeSantis (2011), religious pluralists believe that "respect for dissimilar cultures and religions must be learned" (p. 4). The Charter School Movement proposes that public funding should be used to "meet the needs of students with unique homogenous interests," including religion (DeSantis, 2011, p. 5). Charter School Movement supporters argues separate religious public schools can "meet the diverse needs of students" without establishing one religion over another (DeSantis, 2011, p. 5).

The fourth movement, which calls for a decrease in religious instruction in public schools, is the Secularism movement (DeSantis, 2011). Secularists are in favor of the strict separation of church and state, and believe religion should not be involved in public

schools in any way (DeSantis, 2011). Many recent court rulings have ruled in favor of Secularism, and it is becoming increasingly popular (DeSantis, 2011).

Evans (2008) outlines six possible approaches to teaching religion in public schools: a) *strict secularism*, meaning no religious discussion permitted, b) *incidental religious education*, in which religion is only taught to the extent that it is needed to understand other subjects, such as history, c) *plural religious education*, in which students learn about the basic practices and beliefs of various religions, d) *sectarian religious instruction*, in which students are broken up into homogenous groups and taught about their specific religions, e) *unitary religious education*, in which students receive instruction on the dominant religion in the state in a neutral manner, and f) *religious or ideological instruction*, in which only class on the dominant religion is taught in the state.

A study by Horga (2009) compared the educational systems of 42 European countries and found three models for approaching religious education. The first is *learning into religion*, which emphasizes student spiritual discovery and focuses on one specific religion (Horga, 2009). The second model, *learning about religion*, gives the historical and cultural perspectives on various religions, involves critical analysis, and focuses on understanding the way in which religion influences people's lives (Horga, 2009). The third model is *learning from religion*, where students are tasked with finding their own answers to moral and religious questions and encouraged to develop critical thinking (Horga, 2009).

Horga also discovered European education systems can be classified into two categories, denominational and non-denominational (2009). In denominational schools, religious instruction is organized by the religious communities involved in the school. In

non-denominational schools, curriculum, teacher choice, and textbooks are controlled by the government (Horga, 2009).

Aronson, Amatullah, and Laughter (2016) viewed religious study in public schools through the lens of Culturally Relevant Education (CRE), which asserts that teachers should be aware of students' cultural differences and engage students accordingly. Aronson et al. state that religion is often left out of the conversation on CRE, and believe that considering religion as a part of CRE will lead to deeper understanding and a more widespread acceptance of different religious practices in the United States (2016).

A few researchers have investigated the role of religion in public schools from a human rights perspective. Evans (2008) outlines three universal human rights legal principles that are relevant to the discussion on public school religion. The first principle, Equality and Non-discrimination states that a student should not be forced to take or not take a class based on gender, race, or religion (Evans, 2008). Another manifestation of this principle, although less overt, is that the teaching, lack of teaching, or manner of teaching of particular subjects can have unequal effects on children (2008). Some children may feel left out if their religion is not taught alongside others, and some may face discrimination from other students if they claim religious exemptions from learning certain subjects (Evans, 2008).

The second principle is that parents have the religious freedom to assure their child is provided an education that is consistent with their personal convictions (Evans, 2008). The protection against religious coercion is a universal right that all students and

parents have, although there remain questions over the extent to which curricula need to adapt to ensure that it is in line with parents' values (Evans, 2008).

The third right is simply that education itself is a human right (Evans, 2008). It is clearly outlined in both the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CROC) (Evans, 2008).

The idea of "State Neutrality" in relation to human rights and religious education is explored by Temperman (2010). Temperman asserts that the concept of "state neutrality" in religious education is important because primary school education is compulsory (2010). The state is obligated to make sufficient neutral education possible for students, although the Human Rights Committee asserts that religious instruction in public schools is permissible if an opt-out clause is available (Temperman, 2010). Even though Temperman (2010) states that neutrality is imperative when approaching religious education, he concludes that "the right to freedom of religion or belief and parental guidance rights do not embody a corresponding right to be kept ignorant about religion or secular philosophies in the course of one's public school education" (p. 891).

A review of the literature on public school religious education perspectives suggests that religious education in public schools is necessary and appropriate, as long as it neutral and pluralistic in nature. Public school teachers are permitted to teach *about* religion in appropriate contexts, but should refrain from the teaching *of* religion (Temperman, 2010). A State does not lose its secular character by including religious education in schools, although there remains a concern of identifying common values (Horga, 2009). Schools should also clearly communicate standards involving religion in curricula that are positive in tone (DeSantis, 2011).

2.3 Arguments and Perspectives on the role of Sacred and Religious Music in Public School Choirs

Arguments for and against teaching religious music in public schools have occurred since the 20th century (Fisher, 1966; Freer, 2014; Meints, 1965; Schwadron, 1970; Whittaker, 1929). The issue of whether to program sacred and religious music is a decision that every public school choir director must face. Even though the majority of choir teachers support teaching religious music in public schools (Drummond, 2014), there are varying perspectives in the music education community. The official stance of the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) on sacred and religious music is that "the study and performance of religious music within an educational context is a vital and appropriate part of a comprehensive music education. The omission of sacred music from the school curriculum would result in an incomplete educational experience" ("Sacred Music," n.d.). They compare teaching sacred music in choir to teaching about the Sistine Chapel in art history and Renaissance cathedrals in architecture courses; both are vital components of their respective subjects, and declining to include them would result in an incomplete education.

Even though NAfME considers sacred music an important part of the repertoire, they advise music educators to choose it for its important standing in the history of choral music and its educational musical features, not for the purpose of worship or indoctrination. Furthermore, NAfME lays out guidelines for performing what they call a "religiously neutral" program in the form of seven questions, as follows:

1. Is the music selected on the basis of its musical an educational value rather than its religious context?
2. Does the teaching of music with sacred text focus on musical and artistic considerations?

3. Are the traditions of different people shared and respected?

4. Is the role of sacred music one of neutrality, neither promoting nor inhibiting religious views?

5. Are all local and school policies regarding religious holidays and the use of sacred music observed?

6. Is the use of sacred music and religious symbols or scenery avoided? Is performance in devotional settings avoided?

7. Is there sensitivity to the various religious beliefs represented by the students and parents?

Again, NAfME states the importance of focusing on musical value, while also admonishing teachers to be aware of all beliefs and cultures that students have in their programs. They also include being aware of all religious holidays, not just the ones on the school calendar.

Drummond (2014) offers six practical steps for introducing religious music to choirs in public schools (pp. 30-31):

1) Learn your school division's policies and follow them during concert season.
2) Have a solid educational reason for all repertoire choices and be able to articulate it.
3) Know your school and community's traditions and expectations.
4) Educate your students.
5) Educate your audience.
6) Respect and embrace diversity.

As Drummond states, Teachers must actively think about their decision to program sacred or religious music, carefully considering all outside perspectives and potential reactions. They should also be prepared to inform parents and administrators of their decisions and reasoning, even if they are in line with school policies and expectations.

Brown (2016) states that "one of the biggest obstacles that music teachers in many places face is the delicate balance of programming sacred and secular music" (p. 14). No public school program should contain exclusively religious music, but finding where to draw the line is the challenge. Brown focuses mainly on beginning teachers, stressing the importance of being aware of the community and being prepared in advance to confront potential issues: "it is . . . essential for you to know your school's history when making decisions. . . . Try to find out what has been done in the past and the way in which the community reacted. . . . If your school has only ever performed secular music, you may need to explain to inquiring minds why you are starting to incorporate sacred music in the repertoire" (p. 15). In some cases, it may be prudent to continue the traditions of the community, but either way teachers must be prepared to explain their decisions.

Like NAfME ("Sacred Music," n.d.), Drummond (2014), and Brown (2016), Reynolds (1984) also stated the importance of knowing the community stance and school guidelines regarding religion. In 1984, Reynolds examined school policies across the country and found ten typical topics concerning teaching religious music in public schools: 1) *Pluralistic Tolerance* (being knowledgeable and tolerant of each other's views), 2) *Educational Goal* (stressing the importance of the educational aspect of teaching sacred music, 3) *Neutral Guarantee* (ensuring that music from many faiths be considered and valued), 4) *Program Limitations* (no program should advocate for religion or non-religion, or resemble any type of religious service), 5) *Program Development* (opinions of all parties, including administration and parents, should be considered when programming music), 6) *Preparation Time* (Preparing sacred music should include

educational content and objectives), 7) *Program Notes* (Either program notes or oral presentation should be included with program of sacred music for clarification), 8) *Evaluation* (programs that include sacred music should be monitored to ensure adherence to guidelines), 9) *Grievance Procedure* (avenue for parents, students, or administrators to express concerns over repertoire choices), and 10) *Student and Parent Rights* (students and parents have rights based on personal convictions). While public opinion and school policy change over time, these topics provide a framework for what acceptable rehearsal and performance of sacred music looks like in a public school setting. Even so, Reynolds' analysis is also a reminder for teachers to consult school district policies and guidelines before making repertoire decisions.

Despite the majority of music educators being in favor of sacred and religious music in public schools (Drummond, 2014), many of them advocate for consideration and inclusion of a variety of musical materials and tradition in the classroom. Hoffman (2011) recognizes the presence of the "dominant Christian culture" in American public schools and "the subsequent religious nature of music education" as a result, and suggests that teachers be aware of this bias by "continu(ing) to serve those already included in music education, but paus[ing] to consider those we may unintentionally exclude" (p. 59). American public school classrooms include a diverse array of cultures and religions. However, the population of choir teachers is less diverse, and they must be more aware of the diversity of their students (Hoffman, 2011).

That being said, being more aware of the diversity of students does not necessarily mean merely programming more music from other cultures, or focusing on students who are different for the purpose of understanding and inclusion. Teachers must

be aware of the context of music in other cultures, as sometimes religious music does not have the same meaning as it has in the Christian tradition (Drummond, 2014). For instance, programming a Hanukkah song for a winter concert might not have the same significance as programming a Christmas song, because Hanukkah is a minor holiday in the Jewish tradition (Jacobson, Eaton, Connor-Moen, Leach., & Lloyd., 2007). Teachers must also consider that their actions to include students of different cultures and religions, while well-intentioned, may result in students feeling singled out for "being different" (Hoffman, 2011). Students want to feel included, but when they are asked to speak on behalf of their entire culture or religion, they are likely to feel immense pressure and feel like they are an "other" in an entire group of "same" (Hoffman, 2011). Teachers should be aware of how their actions to include various religions affects students, and carefully consider ways to respectfully acknowledge the diversity in their classrooms (Drummond, 2014; Hoffman, 2011).

Stratton (2010) acknowledges the importance of sacred music in the choral tradition, and suggests active listening to sacred music as a possible alternative to rehearsal and performance in order to "lessen the controversy" (p. 38). But if choir teachers chose to include sacred music in their repertoire, they must "increase their knowledge about the origins and contexts of their repertoire choices" (p. 37).

2.4 Teacher Religious Identity

One interesting facet to consider in the conversation on religion in public schools is the impact that teacher religious identity has on education. Teacher's religious identities are often instrumental in the formation of personal teaching philosophies and styles (Nelson, 2010), and a lot of the conversation surrounding other religious education

topics incorporates teacher identity as an important factor (Aronson et al., 2016; Temperman, 2010).

Several studies have sought to examine both teachers' beliefs and the role teacher religious identity plays in everyday classroom teaching (Baurain, 2012; Losh, 2011; Nelson, 2010). A case study by Nelson (2010) involved two Christian teachers, Gwen and Jada, and investigated how their religious identities influenced their teaching. Nelson discovered that, although both teachers attended the same church, they had differing ideas regarding the role religious identity played in their teaching lives and its effect on the classroom (Nelson, 2010). Their ideas were shaped by religious upbringing, race, age, and other factors (Nelson, 2010). While Gwen's approach was more holistic and focused on general spirituality in the classroom, Jada was more overt in her specific Christian religious identity in her classroom (Nelson, 2010). Despite these differences, both saw a need for spiritual conversation and formation in the classroom with their students and felt a religious calling to nurture them (Nelson, 2010).

Baurain (2012) interviewed 23 Christian teachers who teach English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) to answer the question "How do Christian ESOL teachers describe putting their religious beliefs into practice in their profession?" (p. 318). The results center around four themes: a) Christian love or charity, in the sense of acting for the good of others, b) respect for persons, based on a high spiritual view of personhood, c) student-centeredness as an outgrowth of religious convictions, and d) Christian witness (Baurain, 2012). It is apparent that faith plays a major role in the lives of many of the teachers in the study, although Baurain raises questions about the appropriateness of

religious witness in schools. Baurain also noted that, for the most part, the themes found in the study are universal in nature and not specific to religion (Baurain, 2012).

Losh (2011) administered another teacher questionnaire examining the scientific knowledge and pseudo-science beliefs of almost 700 preservice teachers. She then compared the results to national surveys of adult pseudoscience beliefs. Losh found that the preservice teachers scored very similarly to the general public on basic scientific facts, and a majority of the preservice teachers surveyed held beliefs considered to be pseudo-science (2011). According to Losh (2011), the fact that so many teachers hold these pseudo-scientific beliefs (of which religious beliefs are included) is problematic.

Hamilton Beazley developed the Spiritual Assessment scale, a test that measures the perceived spirituality and perceived leadership of business leaders (Boone, 2010). Boone (2010) adapted the Spiritual Assessment Scale to determine whether the test successfully measures the spirituality of teachers. He sought to find the relationship between teachers' perceptions of their own spirituality, perceptions of their own leadership, and religious affiliation. Boone also measured the relationship between these characteristics and three dispositions considered to be most important to organizational effectiveness: honesty, humility, and service to others (Boone, 2010). He found that the test was able to effectively measure the spirituality of teachers. Boone also measured a strong correlation between religious affiliation and honesty (Boone, 2010). There was a strong relationship between perception of leadership and humility as well (Boone, 2010).

As previously stated, Aronson et al. stress the importance of Culturally Relevant Education, which includes religious diversity (2016). They also assert that teacher religious identity is important in CRE, because teachers should consider their own

religious identity and its effect on curriculum decisions (Aronson et al., 2016). Teachers should be aware of their own religious biases and consider how their teaching reflects these biases, so they can work towards developing a curriculum that is beneficial for all students (Aronson et. al., 2016).

2.5 Music and Spirituality

Most who enjoy music can recall a transformative musical experience that affected them in an intangible way. Furthermore, people who pursue music as a career hardly do so because they like notes and rhythms on a page; music has power beyond the material world that cannot fully be described.

Many music educators and scholars define this elusive quality of music as "spiritual." Bogdan (2010) describes what he calls the *shiver-shimmer factor* of music, the "fingers up and down the spine" sensation coupled with an embodiment of complete aesthetic experience in the moment (p. 116). This shiver-shimmer factor, Bogdan says, leads to complete intellectual understanding and emotional fulfillment of music and "produce(s) a truly embodied 'intelligent' musical spirituality" (2010, p. 123-124).

But what is spirituality? Yob (2010) refers to Albanse's definition that it is "the personal, experimental element in religion," which implies the religious connotation spirituality possesses for many (p. 146). Yob argues that religion is but one manifestation of spirituality, which leaves room for other manifestations that are non-religious in nature (2010). She calls for a change in the way we approach spirituality in the classroom and in music, that it is not something that resides in the music itself but in the music maker and listener (Yob, 2010). Music educators should "employ music as a spiritual language" by encouraging a variety of responses to music and music making, whether it be to continue

to make music, an interest in listening to more music, or to engage in other spiritual languages such as visual art or dance (p. 150).

Palmer (2006) examines experiencing spirituality in music through what he calls "transcendence" (p. 144). He emphasizes that teachers should recall their own spiritual experiences with music to better help their students reach transcendence (Palmer, 2006; Palmer, 2010). To Palmer, the idea of transcendence in music involves visualizing process and product as a unified whole where both are of equal importance (2006). Palmer (2010) believes that spirituality is not taught but rather "achieved through setting up conditions under which transcendence can occur" (p. 164).

According to Carr (2008), there are diverse senses of the spiritual nature of music. Music of ecstasy and transport (e.g. tribal music), music of consolation (e.g. the blues), motivating music (e.g. work songs), healing music (e.g. music that is therapeutic), and devotional music (e.g. religious music) are all different types of music that exhibit a spiritual sensation (Carr, 2008). Although Carr (2008) mentions that many of these spiritual senses cannot be authentically recreated in the classroom, it is important that students understand and appreciate the spiritual undertones present in all types of music.

Jorgensen (2011) analyzes the spirituality of music and music education using Alfred Whitehead's statement "The essence of education is that it be religious" (p. 155). She asserts that Whitehead did not mean "religious" in an organized sense, but rather the primary goal of education should be the search for wisdom as opposed to the search for information (Jorgensen, 2011). A complete education values duty, reverence, and present-centeredness, although each of these should be examined and challenged (Jorgensen, 2011). All knowledge taught needs to pertain to the whole be and related to

and relevant in students' lives outside of school (Jorgensen, 2011). Jorgensen (2011) also emphasizes the need to grasp this knowledge procedurally, and points to the "performative" aspect of music education as an important element to achieve this (p. 160).

CHAPTER III
METHODS AND PROCEDURES

3.1 Type of Study

Because the goal of this research was to discover what was going on inside choir classrooms concerning this topic, I chose a survey of choir directors in order to gauge the state of religious and sacred music in public school choir programs. The survey centered around the three topics presented in the research questions: attitudes, practices, and experiences.

When thinking about how to gauge the attitudes of choral directors concerning sacred and religious music, several points of emphasis arose: what percentage of choir teachers think it is appropriate to program religious music in a public school setting? Do choir teachers distinguish between music that is "sacred" and music that is just "religious?" What rights do students, parents, and administrators have to express displeasure with a piece of music that is religious in nature? Do choir teachers think it appropriate to talk to their students about the religious nature of a piece in their repertoire? I also determined that survey respondents should have the opportunity to elaborate on and clarify their own opinions in their own words on certain questions.

The “practices” section of the survey provided respondents the opportunity to elaborate on how they approach teaching religious music in their classrooms. Points of interest included: how many teachers program religious music for their choirs, the percentage of music that teachers programmed that was religious in nature, and whether teachers discussed the religious contents of pieces. Additionally, interest arose in hearing about music that teachers programmed that were from religious traditions besides Christianity, and how teachers approached teaching those pieces.

In the “experiences” section, respondents could elaborate on experiences in which students, parents, or administrators raised concerns their choice of religious literature. The emphasis was on how many choir teachers have had someone express concern about religious music, and how they resolved those situations. Additionally, I concluded it was important to discover whether or not respondents’ teaching practices changed as a result of such experiences. Due to the narrative nature of the responses in this section of the survey, this section was much more qualitative in nature than the first two sections.

I implemented a variety of question types to construct the survey, including multiple choice, short answer, and Likert-type scale responses. The four sections were: 1) Demographic Information, 2) Attitudes, 3) Practices, and 4) Experiences. For the sake of ease of access and user friendliness, I constructed the survey using Google Forms**.**

3.2 Survey Questions

A copy of the survey is available in the appendix.

3.2.1 Demographics. Part one of the survey consisted of demographic questions about the teacher, their students, and their school. First, participants indicated their age from a list of ranges: 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, and 65+. I concluded age was

best indicated as a list of ranges to group the data more neatly and provide increased anonymity. The range of ages came from survey examples on snapsurveys.com (DeFranzo, 2012).

The next question was where participants indicated their years of teaching experience, again using ranges: 1-5, 6-10, 11-20, 21-30, and 31+. My reasoning for using ranges for teaching experience was to again group data more neatly and provide anonymity. I estimated that teachers with one to five years of experience differed greatly than those with six to ten years of experience, so I made the distinction between the two in the survey. Otherwise, I divided the increments into ten for the sake of ease.

Participants indicated the grades that they taught in the next question. Because I was interested in the perspectives of middle school and high school teachers, I included grades five through twelve as possible answer choices. I listed each grade as an individual answer to give respondents the opportunity to click each grade that applied to them, because schools in different areas are divided by different grades.

Respondents then could answer how many students were in their choir programs, choosing from ranges of 0-100, 100-200, 200-300, 300-400, and 400+. I chose the ranges based on previous experiences, as most directors think of the sizes of their programs in increments of 100.

The next question allowed participants to indicate what state they live in. This question was in short answer form.

The following question was about the location of the school, using definitions I derived from the National Center of Education Statistics and the U.S. Census Bureau

("Definitions," 2006; "Glossary," 2019). I defined the three classifications, Urban, Suburban, and Rural, in the following ways:

- Urban: is within the principal city of an "urbanized area," which is an area with a population of more than 50,000
- Suburban: is within an urbanized area but outside of the principal city
- Rural: is outside of an urbanized area

Participants then could indicate their personal religious affiliations and the religious affiliations of their students in the final two demographic questions, or click "choose not to answer." I asked respondents to record their own religion and all religions they knew their students to be a part of from a list of choices derived using the Pew Research Center ("Appendix D," n.d.).

3.2.2 Attitudes. Part two of the survey consisted of four statements which participants responded to using a Likert-type scale ("Agree," "Somewhat Agree," "Neutral," "Somewhat Disagree," and "Disagree"). The four statements were as follows:

- There is a difference between sacred music (used for a church service specifically) and religious music (has a religious text or themes but is not intended for a worship service).
- Public school choral programs should include religious/sacred music in their repertoire.
- Choir teachers should talk to their choirs about the religious content of a piece.
- Students and parents should be allowed to express concern about the religious content of a piece of music.

Participants then had the option to clarify their responses in short answer format.

3.2.3 Practices. Part three of the survey consisted of seven multiple choice questions and two short answer questions about how teachers approach religious music in the classroom. They are as follows:

- Do you program sacred or religious music for your choirs? (Yes/No)
    - If you program sacred or religious music for your choirs, roughly what percentage of the music you program is sacred or religious in nature? (Less than 10, More than 10 but less than 50, around 50, 50-75, 75-100)
    - If you program sacred or religious music for your choirs, do you usually talk to your students about the religious nature of the piece? (Yes/No)
        - If you talk to your students about the religious nature of the piece, what religious aspects of the piece do you usually focus on? (Historical and/or cultural context, Meaning of the text, Both, N/A, or Other)
- If you do not program sacred or religious music for your choirs, give a brief explanation of why you do not (short answer).
- Have you ever programmed a religious piece that was other than Judeo-Christian? (Yes/No)
    - If you have programmed a religious piece that was other than Judeo-Christian, what religious tradition did that piece come from? (short answer)

- If you have programmed a religious piece that was other than Judeo-Christian, did you talk to your students about the religious nature of the piece? (Yes/No)
    - If you did talk to your students about the religious nature of the piece, what religious aspects of the piece do you usually focus on? (Historical and/or cultural context, Meaning of the text, Both, N/A, or Other)

3.2.4 Experiences. Part four consisted of questions where teachers described any personal experiences that involved conflict concerning religious programming. The first question was multiple choice, "Have you ever had a student, parent, or member of school administration express concern about the religious content of a piece of music you were performing/rehearsing?", with answer choices "yes" or "no." If participants answered "yes," they completed a sequence of short answer questions: "If yes, describe the nature of the concern expressed," "How was the situation resolved?" "Did your attitudes or practices change as a result of the situation? If so, how?" and "If you have had more than one instance of someone expressing concern about the religious or sacred nature of the piece, please describe the experience here, answering the same questions as above."

3.3 Participants/Sampling

To acquire a sample of participants for the survey, I enlisted the help of NAfME. I gave NAfME the criteria (middle school and/or high school choir director), and they pulled up all listed members that fit that criteria in Microsoft Excel. They gave each member a random number using the random number generator in Excel, then sorted each number by ascending value. NAfME uploaded approximately the first 6,000 names into

their email marketing system, then removed those who opted out of receiving their emails. Those 5,000 members received an email detailing the research with a link to the survey should they choose to participate. Once participants accessed the link, they were taken to the informed consent page, and were not allowed to continue the survey unless they marked "I consent." After marking "I consent," they were permitted to complete the rest of the survey.

Google Forms collected all completed surveys and put them into a spreadsheet detailing each answer. I used the first 100 responses I deemed appropriate in this study. Appropriate responses were ones that met the following criteria:

- Respondent answered all non-optional questions (in the attitudes, practices, and experience sections).
- Respondent's answers were internally consistent (e.g. did not answer "no" to one question then answer another question only meant for respondents who answered "yes" to the previous question).
- Respondent answered only once per question (except where multiple answers were accepted).

If responses met all the above criteria, I included them regardless of whether the respondents answered all demographic questions.

3.4 Analysis of Results

The survey results yielded both quantitative and qualitative data, so I took a mixed methods approach to analyzing. Google Forms recorded the results of each survey individually and copied them into a spreadsheet. I examined each response and did not include responses that failed to meet the criteria mentioned in the previous section. Once

I found 100 responses that met the criteria, I created a new spreadsheet with only those 100 responses. I used this spreadsheet to analyze the data.

3.4.1 Quantitative Analysis. After collecting all 100 individual responses in a spreadsheet, I tallied the responses for each question and used Microsoft Excel to graph the data. For descriptive statistics, I used the program JASP to build contingency tables to compare respondents' answers to the following questions:

- "Public school choir programs should include sacred/religious music in their repertoire" vs "Do you program sacred or religious music for your choirs?"
- "Choir teachers should talk to their choirs…" vs "…do you usually talk to your students about the religious nature of the piece?"
- Age vs "Have you ever had a student, parent, or member of school administration express concern about the religious content of a piece of music you were performing/rehearsing?"
- "Location of current school" vs "Have you ever had a student, parent, or member of school administration express concern about the religious content of a piece of music you were performing/rehearsing?"
- Number of students in choral program vs "Have you ever had a student, parent, or member of school administration express concern about the religious content of a piece of music you were performing/rehearsing?"
- "Years of teaching experience" vs "Have you ever had a student, parent, or member of school administration express concern about the religious content of a piece of music you were performing/rehearsing?"

I also conducted Chi-Squared tests to determine the p-value and contingency coefficient for each table.

3.4.2 Qualitative Analysis. To analyze all short answer questions, I created a new spreadsheet with only short answers, organized in the same manner as the original spreadsheet. I used a cross-case method to analyze the answer to each question individually across all respondents. For each question I searched for commonalities and differences, using codes to differentiate each commonality. Due to the nature of the questions asked, some a priori commonalities arose, while other commonalities emerged on their own. Because the commonalities were different across each question, I did not find it valuable to compare questions to one another using this method. For each question, I counted the frequency of every code and recorded the percentage of all responses that contained each code.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

4.1 Demographic Results

All respondents answered every demographic question except for 12 who did not put an answer for "state." For respondents who did not record an answer for "state," I recorded "didn't answer."

4.1.1 Age. Table I shows the age of all respondents. Ninety-two out of 100 respondents indicated they were in between the ages of 25 and 64. Of that range, the majority of respondents (30) indicated they were in the 45 to 54 category, while 24 respondents fell between the ages of 25 and 34.

Table I

Age of Participants

Years	**n**
18-24	3
25-34	24
35-44	18
45-54	30
55-64	20
65+	5

4.1.2 Years of teaching experience. Table II shows the years of teaching experience of all participants. Years of experience and age were similarly distributed, with 31 participants indicating 21 to 30 years of experience, the highest total. This is consistent with age, in which the highest number of respondents indicated they were 45-54 years old. Just over half of the participants (55) indicated they have between 11 and 30 years of teaching experience.

Table II

Years of Teaching Experience

Experience	**n**
1-5	17
6-10	16
11-20	24
21-30	31
31+	12

4.1.3 Grades taught. Table III shows the number of respondents who taught each grade. The totals for grades taught are all relatively even, with a majority of respondents indicating they have taught both 7^{th} and 8^{th} grade at some point. Every respondent that indicated they have taught 9^{th} grade also indicated they taught 10^{th}, 11^{th}, and 12^{th} grade. Just over half of the respondents indicated they have taught 5^{th} grade at some point in their teaching.

Table III

Grades Taught

Grades	**n**
5th	52
6th	72
7th	80
8th	82
9th	65
10th	65
11th	65
12th	65

4.1.4 Number of students in program. Table IV and figure 1 show the distribution for number of students in each program among respondents. Most respondents fell within the smallest category, with over half indicating their choir program has less than 100 students in it. Thirty-one respondents indicated their program has between 100 and 200 students, meaning only 13 respondents have programs with more than 200 students.

Table IV

Number of Students in Program

Number of Students in Program	**n**
0-100	56
100-200	31
200-300	9
300-400	1
400+	3

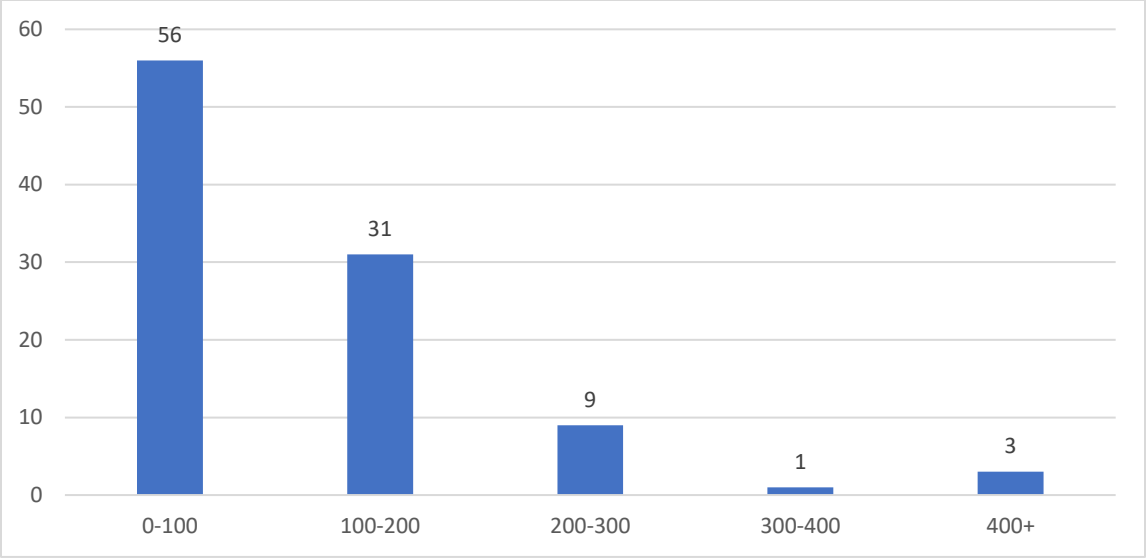


Figure 1. Number of students in choral program.

Note: The numbers in the figure represent the number of respondents that indicated each answer

4.1.5 State. Table V shows all states indicated by respondents, categorized by the number of respondents that indicated a given state. Twelve respondents did not indicate their state; the 88 respondents that did indicated they were from 32 different states. Seven respondents indicated California and Ohio, six Missouri and Pennsylvania, and five Illinois. All other states mentioned had fewer than five responses.

Table V

State

n	State
7	California, Ohio
6	Missouri, Pennsylvania
5	Illinois
4	Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, South Carolina
3	Colorado, Florida, Nebraska, Utah
2	Idaho, Louisiana, Maryland, Virginia
1	Alabama, Connecticut, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Michigan, New Mexico, Vermont, Washington, West Virginia, Wyoming

Note: every state in the right-hand column had the corresponding number of respondents.

4.1.6 Location of current school. Table VI and figure 2 show the distribution for school setting among all respondents. Forty-five respondents indicated they teach in a rural area, meaning the city their school is in has fewer than 50,000 residents. Eighteen respondents indicated they teach in an urban setting, meaning their school is in the principal city of an area with more than 50,000 residents. Thirty-seven respondents indicated their school is in a suburban area, meaning their school is in an area with more than 50,000 residents, but outside the principal city.

Table VI

Location of Current School

Setting	**n**
Urban	18
Suburban	37
Rural	45

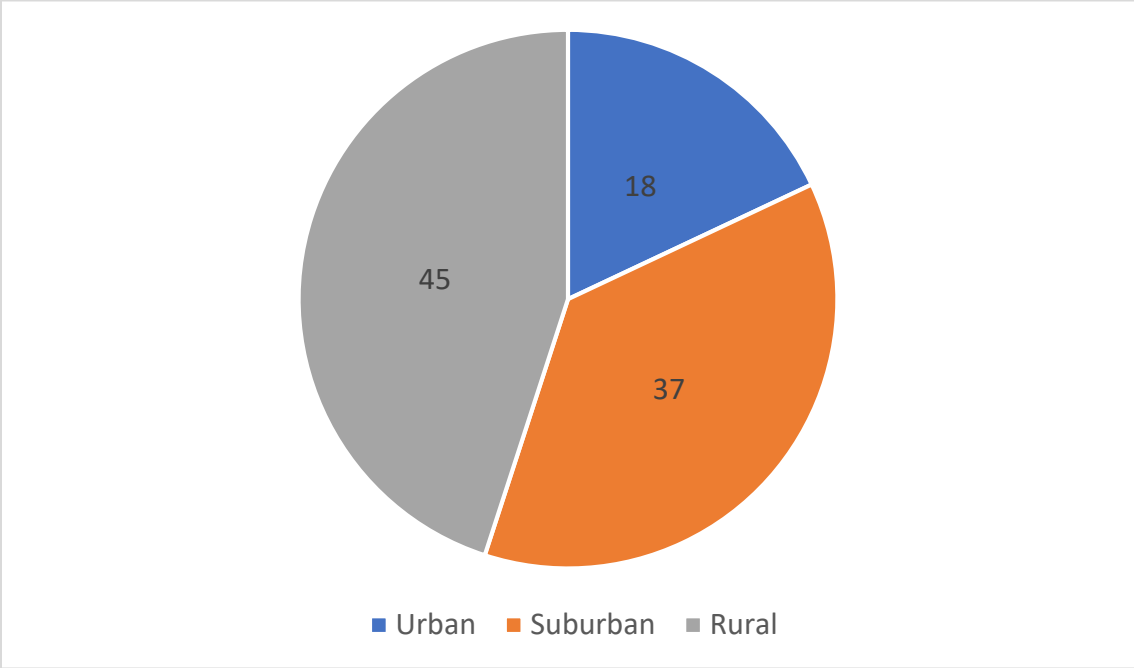


Figure 2. Location of current school.

Note: The numbers in the figure represent the number of respondents that indicated each answer

4.1.7 Personal Religious Affiliation. Table VII and figure 3 show the personal religious affiliations of all respondents. Almost half the respondents (49) indicated they were of the Protestant Christian faith. Sixteen were Catholic, ten were Atheist, and seven stated they were not particularly religious. Seven respondents indicated they chose not to answer the question. Five respondents wrote in a variant of Mormon – Church of Latter-Day Saints, and one wrote in Pagan.

Table VII

Personal Religious Affiliation

Personal Religious Affiliation	**n**
Christian (Protestant)	49
Christian (Catholic)	16
Jewish	3
Atheist	10
Agnostic	2
Nothing in Particular	7
Mormon – Church of Latter-Day Saints	5
Choose not to Answer	7
Pagan	1

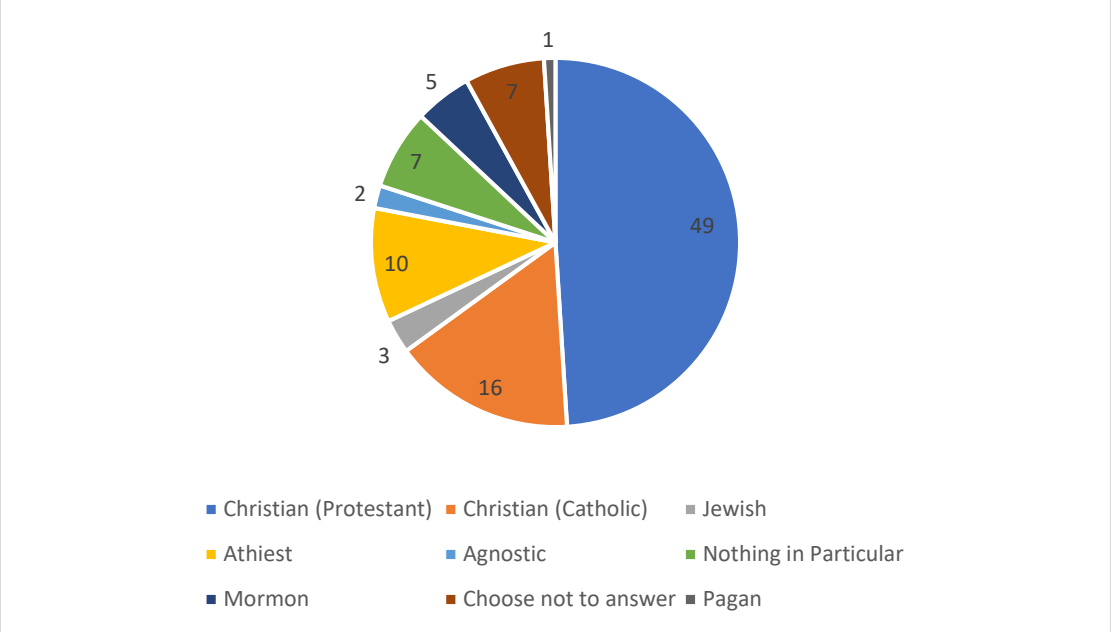


Figure 3. Personal religious affiliation.

Note: The numbers in the figure represent the number of respondents that indicated each answer

4.1.8 Student Religious Affiliations. Table VIII and figure 4 show religious affiliations and how many respondents indicated they knowingly have students of each religious affiliation in their program. Almost all respondents (93 and 92 respectively) indicated they have students they know to be either Protestant Christian or Catholic Christian in their programs. Sixty knowingly have Atheist students, 56 have Jewish students, 53 have Agnostic students, 42 have Muslim students, and 39 indicated they knowlingly have students who are not particularly religious. Other religions that were less represented but still present include Hindu (18), Buddhist (16), Mormon (4), and Baha'i (3).

Table VIII

Student Religious Affiliation

Religion	**n**
Christian (Protestant)	93
Christian (Catholic)	92
Jewish	56
Atheist	60
Agnostic	53
Nothing in Particular	39
Mormon – Church of Latter-Day Saints	4
Muslim	42
Buddhist	16
Hindu	18
Don't Know	15
Baha'i	3
Other	5

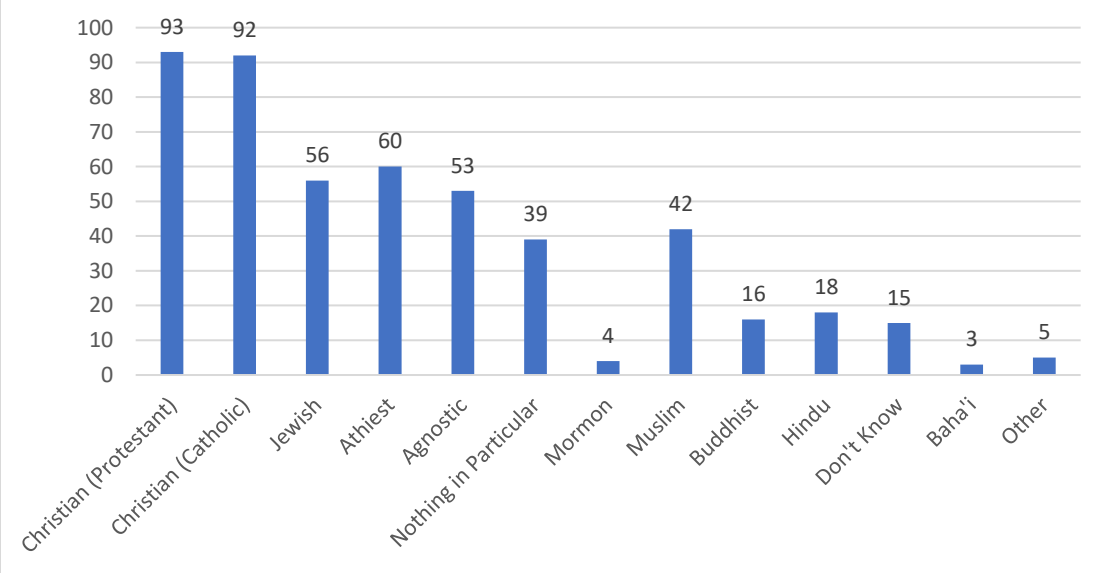


Figure 4. Student religious affiliations (by percentage of respondents that know they have students of said religion).

4.2 Attitudes

4.2.1 There is a difference between sacred music (used for a church service specifically) and religious music (has a religious text or themes but is not intended for a worship service) Table IX and figure 5 show respondent's answers for statement 1 of the "Attitudes" section of the survey. Most respondents (78) agreed or somewhat agreed there is a distinction between "religious" music and "sacred" music. Fourteen either disagreed or somewhat disagreed that "sacred" and "religious" music are separate from one another, and the remaining eight were neutral.

Table IX

Attitudes Statement 1 Responses

Answer	**n**
Agree	45
Somewhat Agree	33
Neutral	8
Somewhat Disagree	7
Disagree	7

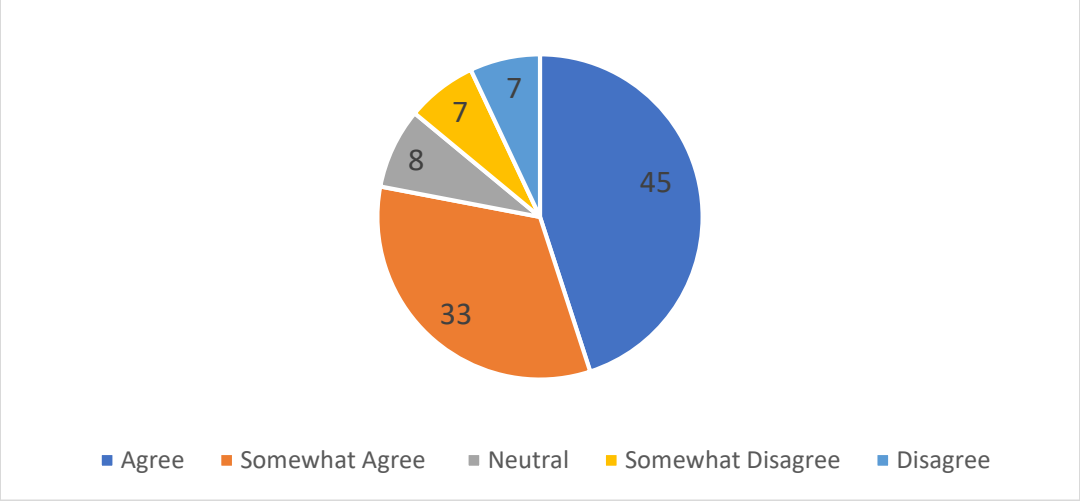


Figure 5. Attitudes statement 1 responses.

Note: The numbers in the figure represent the number of respondents that indicated each answer

4.2.2 Public School Choral programs should include religious/sacred music in their repertoire. Table X and figure 6 show respondent's answers for statement 2 of the "Attitudes" section of the survey. This question had the highest percentage of agree and somewhat agree answers, with 72 agreeing and 15 somewhat agreeing (88 total). Only five either somewhat disagreed or disagreed that public school teachers should program sacred or religious music for their choirs. The remaining eight were neutral.

Table X

Attitudes Statement 2 Responses

Answer	**n**
Agree	72
Somewhat Agree	15
Neutral	8
Somewhat Disagree	3
Disagree	2

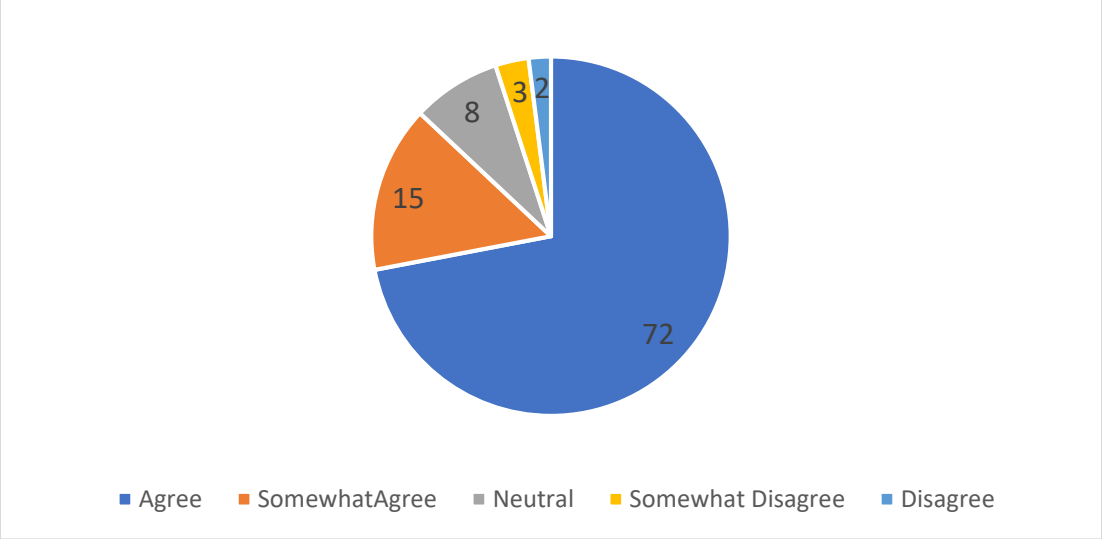


Figure 6. Attitudes statement 2 responses.

Note: The numbers in the figure represent the number of respondents that indicated each answer

4.2.3 Choir Teachers should talk to their choirs about the religious content of a piece.

Table XI and figure 7 show respondent's answers for statement 3 of the "Attitudes" section of the survey. The vast majority (86) at least somewhat agreed with this statement as well, although the divide between "agree" and "somewhat agree" was more even for this question (52 and 34 respectively). Nine respondents were neutral on the matter, and five either somewhat disagreed or disagreed.

Table XI

Attitudes Statement 3 Responses

Answer	**n**
Agree	52
Somewhat Agree	34
Neutral	9
Somewhat Disagree	4
Disagree	1

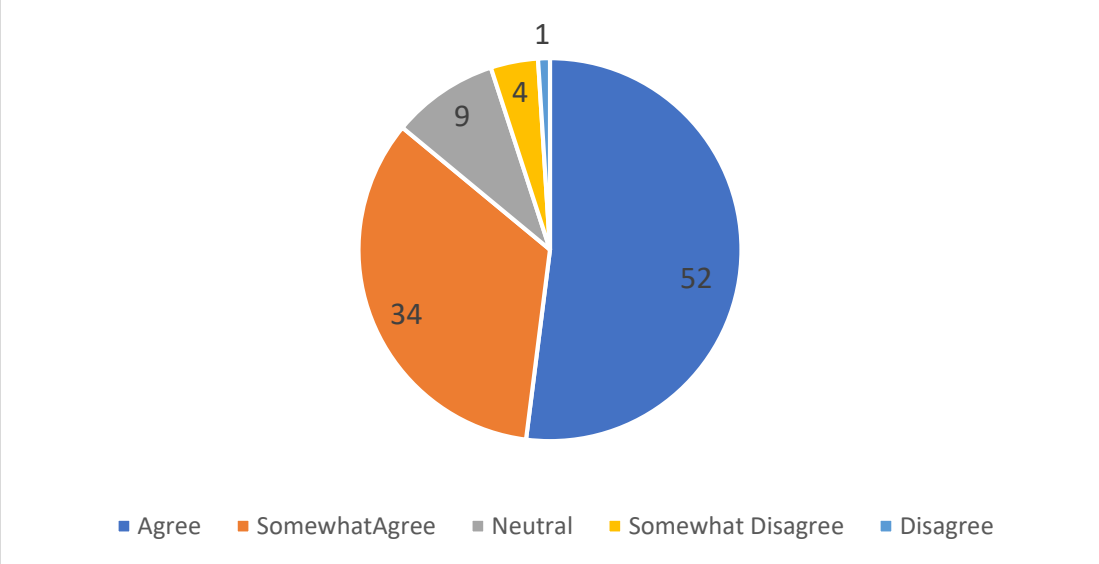


Figure 7. Attitudes statement 3 responses.

Note: The numbers in the figure represent the number of respondents that indicated each answer

4.2.4 Students and parents should be allowed to express concern about the religious content of a piece of music. Table XII and figure 8 show respondent's answers for statement 4 of the "Attitudes" section of the survey. As with all three previous "Attitudes" statements, a majority of respondents either agreed or somewhat agreed that students and parents should be allowed to express concern regarding the religious content of a piece the choir is performing. Fifty-five agreed and 31 somewhat agreed, matching the total of 86 from the previous question. Eight were neutral, four somewhat disagreed, and two disagreed.

Table XII

Attitudes Statement 4 Responses

Answer	**n**
Agree	55
Somewhat Agree	31
Neutral	8
Somewhat Disagree	4
Disagree	2

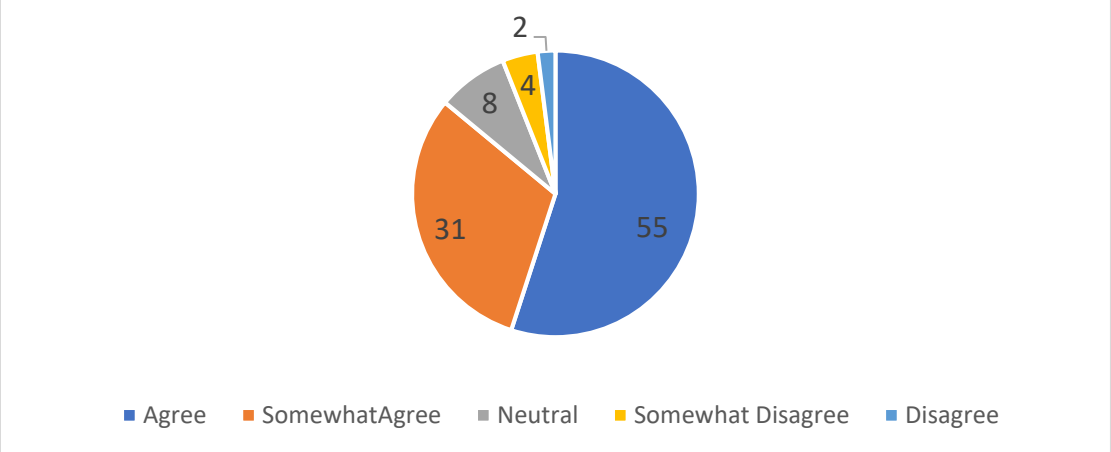


Figure 8. Attitudes statement 4 responses.

Note: The numbers in the figure represent the number of respondents that indicated each answer

4.2.5 Additional Comments from Respondents. Respondents had the opportunity to provide additional clarification for their answers to the "Attitudes" section of the survey. Out of 100 respondents, 49 offered additional comments in this section. Some respondents addressed each statement specifically, while others gave a general response that encompassed their opinions on one or more of the statements.

The first code to emerge centered around approaching teaching religious music from a neutral standpoint. "Historical importance/significance/relevance," "educational purpose/academic exercise," and "musical value/context/artistry" were all included in this code. Of the 49 responses, this code was present in 29 (59 percent), who all mentioned the importance of studying and performing sacred or religious choral music from a historical, musical, or artistic context.

That being said, another code that emerged included phrases such as "balanced," "from many cultures," "a good mixture," and "well-rounded" to describe teachers' ideal repertoire choices. Nineteen respondents, or 39 percent, stressed the importance of a diverse music curriculum that includes repertoire from a variety of cultural traditions and genres.

One code emerged in response to statement four, "Students and parents should be allowed to express concern about the religious content of a piece of music." Respondents who addressed this statement used phrases such as "parent concerns should not dictate content," "parent concerns should not outweigh," and "parent concerns should not change curriculum." Responses that did not directly mention parents and students but implied they should not dictate policy were also included in this code, such as "curriculum should

be the decision of the school and teacher" and "teachers should be able to follow their own beliefs regarding curriculum."

Ten responses (20 percent) contained this code, but seven (14 percent) of those responses also stated that parents should be able to express concerns.

One final code that emerged the need for teachers to make educated decisions regarding repertoire and have specific reasons for choosing a song that is religious. Three respondents fell under this code and used phrases such as "choir teachers should have specific reasons," "choir teachers should seek pre-service education," and "the music instructor and administration need to be educated."

4.3 Practices

Participants who answered "No" to any question in this section were given the option to answer "N/A" to subsequent questions if said questions did not apply to them. However, if a respondent answered "No" to a question and left subsequent questions blank instead of answering "N/A," the response was still kept and recorded as "N/A."

4.3.1 Do you program sacred or religious music for your choirs? Figure 9 shows respondents' answers to the question "Do you program sacred or religious music for your choir?" 98 respondents out of 100 indicated they program sacred or religious music for their choirs.

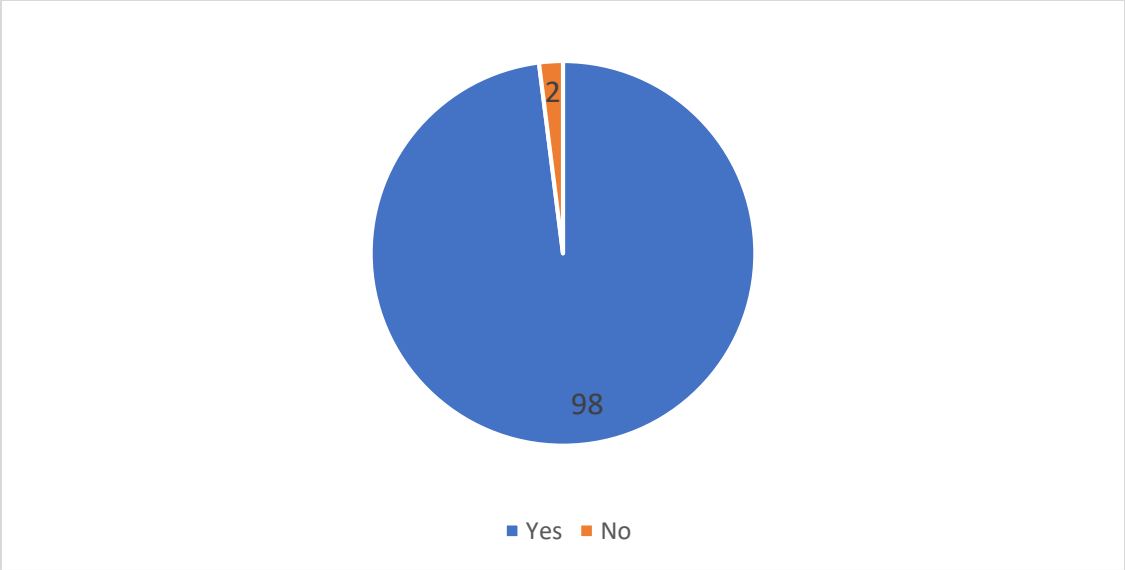


Figure 9. Do you program sacred or religious music for your choirs?

Note: The numbers in the figure represent the number of respondents that indicated each answer

4.3.2 If you program sacred or religious music, roughly what percentage of the music you program is sacred or religious in nature? Table XIII and figure 10 show respondents' answers to the question "If you program sacred or religious music, roughly what percentage of the music you program is sacred or religious in nature?" A majority of respondents (55 out of 98) that program religious music indicated religious songs constitute more than 10 percent, but less than half of their repertoire. 95 of the respondents stated around 50 percent or less of the music they program is religious in nature.

Table XIII

Percentage of Music Programmed that is Religious

Answer	**n**
Less than 10%	21
More than 10%, but less than 50%	55
Around 50%	19
50-75%	3
75-100%	0

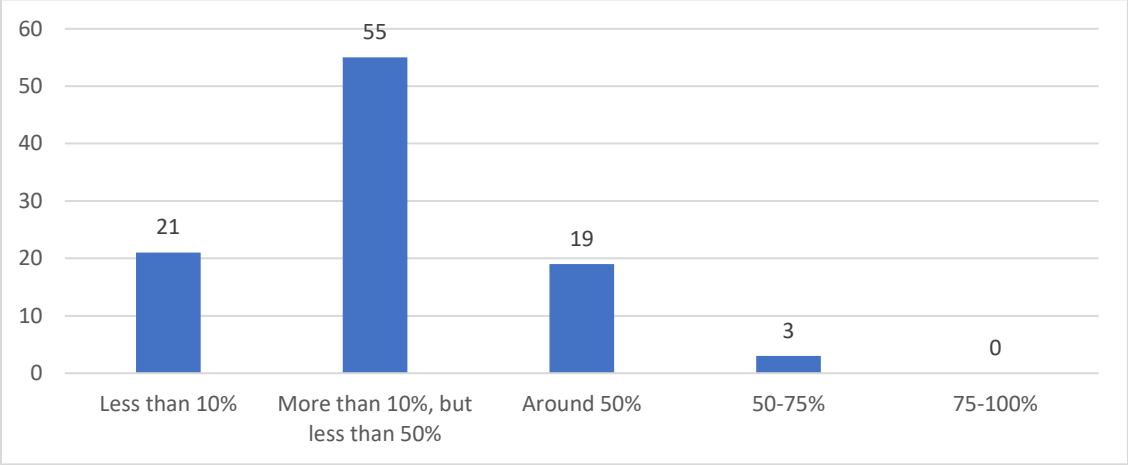


Figure 10. Percentage of music programmed that is religious.

Note: The numbers in the figure represent the number of respondents that indicated each answer

4.3.3 If you program sacred or religious music, do you usually talk to your students about the religious nature of the piece? Figure 11 shows respondents' answers to the question "If you program sacred or religious music, do you usually talk to your students about the religious nature of the piece?" Of the 98 respondents that said they program sacred or religious music for their choirs, 91 stated that they talk to their students about the religious content of these pieces.

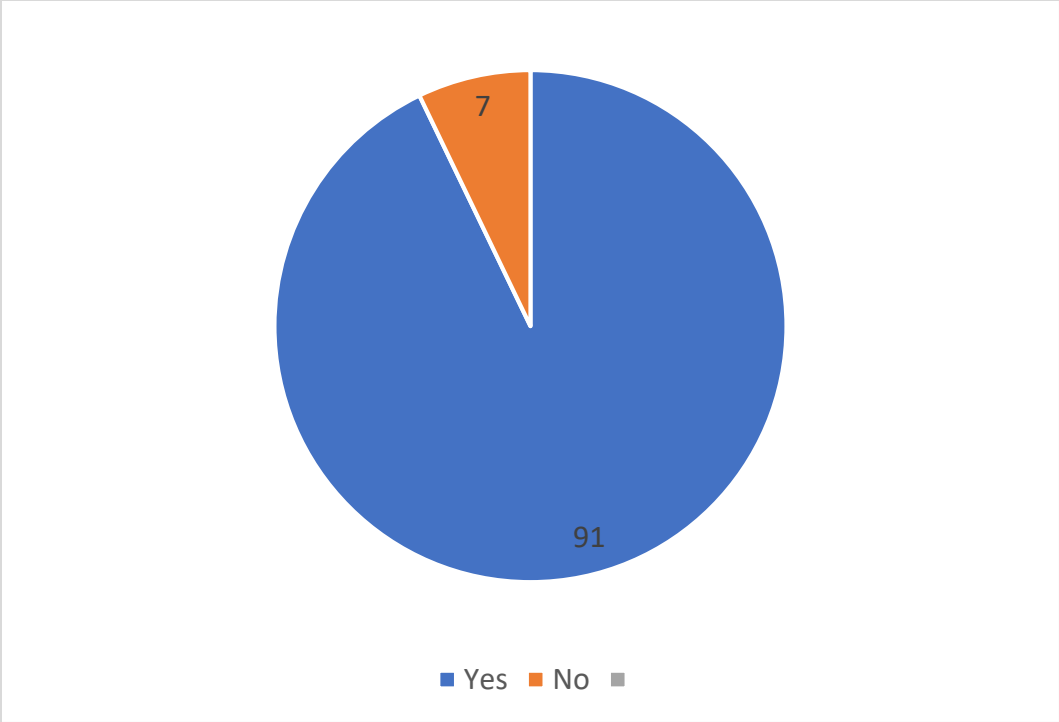


Figure 11. Do you talk to your students about the religious nature of a piece?

Note: The numbers in the figure represent the number of respondents that indicated each answer

4.3.4 If you talk to your students about the religious nature of a piece, what religious aspects of the piece do you usually focus on? Table XIV and figure 12 show respondents' answers to the question "If you talk to your students about the religious nature of a piece, what religious aspects of the piece do you usually focus on?" Of the 91 respondents who indicated they talk to their students about the religious content of sacred or religious songs they perform, 76 stated they focus on both historical context and the meaning of the text when talking to their choirs. Nine indicated they only talk about historical context, and two stated that they only talk about the meaning of the text. Two respondents exclusively chose "other" and filled in their own answers, while two respondents answered "historical and/or cultural context" and added additional

clarification under “other.” Another two respondents answered “meaning of the text,” but added additional clarification under “other.”

One respondent who exclusively answered “other” specified by saying “I talk to them as if it is a story- not a religion.” The other respondent who exclusively answered “other” wrote “I ask students to tell what they know about the meaning of the song.” Respondents who answered “Historical and/or cultural context” and added additional clarification under “other” mentioned “Translation if in another language” and “Possible secular meaning for non-religious purposes.” Those who answered “both” but included additional clarification under “other” include “I always make a point to mention not everyone believes what the text says, share alternate beliefs, and the fact that a large minority believe none of the stories,” and “Also what it means metaphorically for anyone of any religion or lack thereof.”

Table XIV

What Religious Aspects of the Piece do you Focus on?

Answer	**n**
Historical and/or cultural context	9
Meaning of the text	2
Both	76
N/A	7
Other	2
Historical and/or cultural context with additional clarification under "other"	2
Both with additional clarification under “other”	2

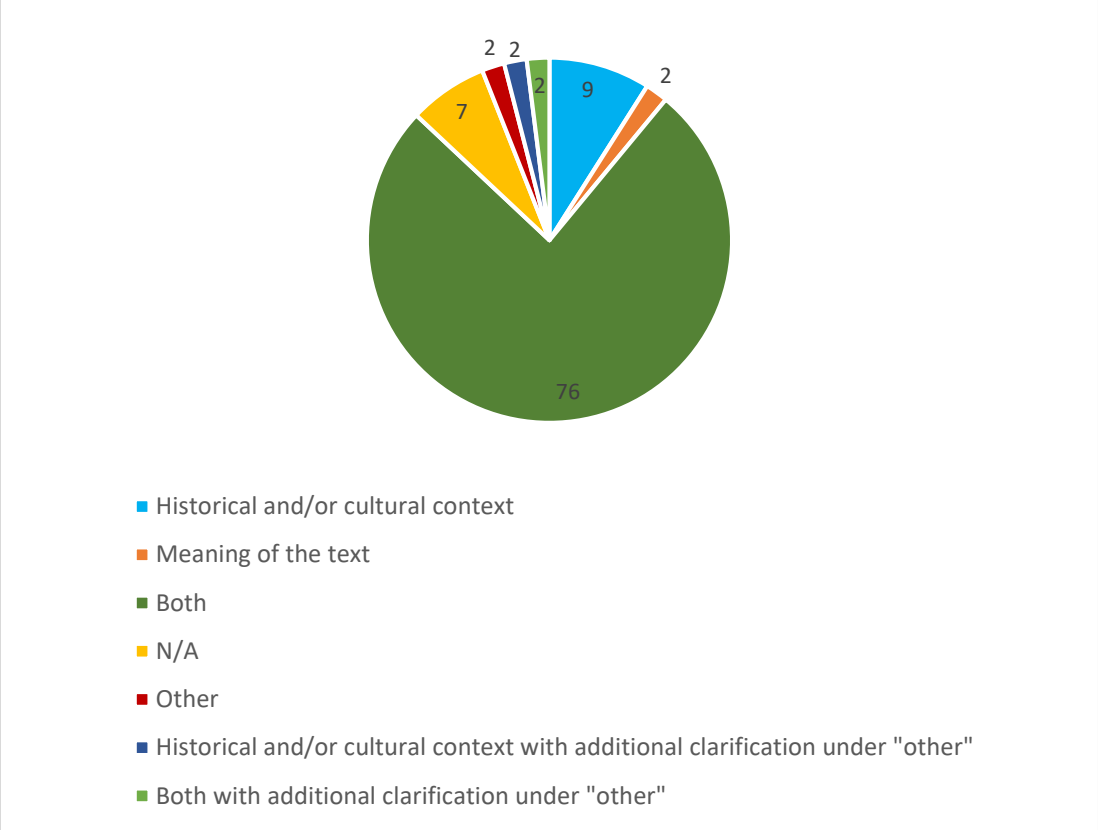


Figure 12. What religious aspects of the piece do you usually focus on?

Note: The numbers in the figure represent the number of respondents that indicated each answer

4.3.5 Have you ever programmed a piece that is religious in nature that is other than Judeo-Christian? Figure 13 shows respondents answers to the question "Have you ever programmed a piece that is religious in nature that is other than Judeo-Christian?" Forty-two respondents indicated they have programmed a religious piece of music from a tradition other than Judeo-Christian, while 58 respondents indicated they have not.

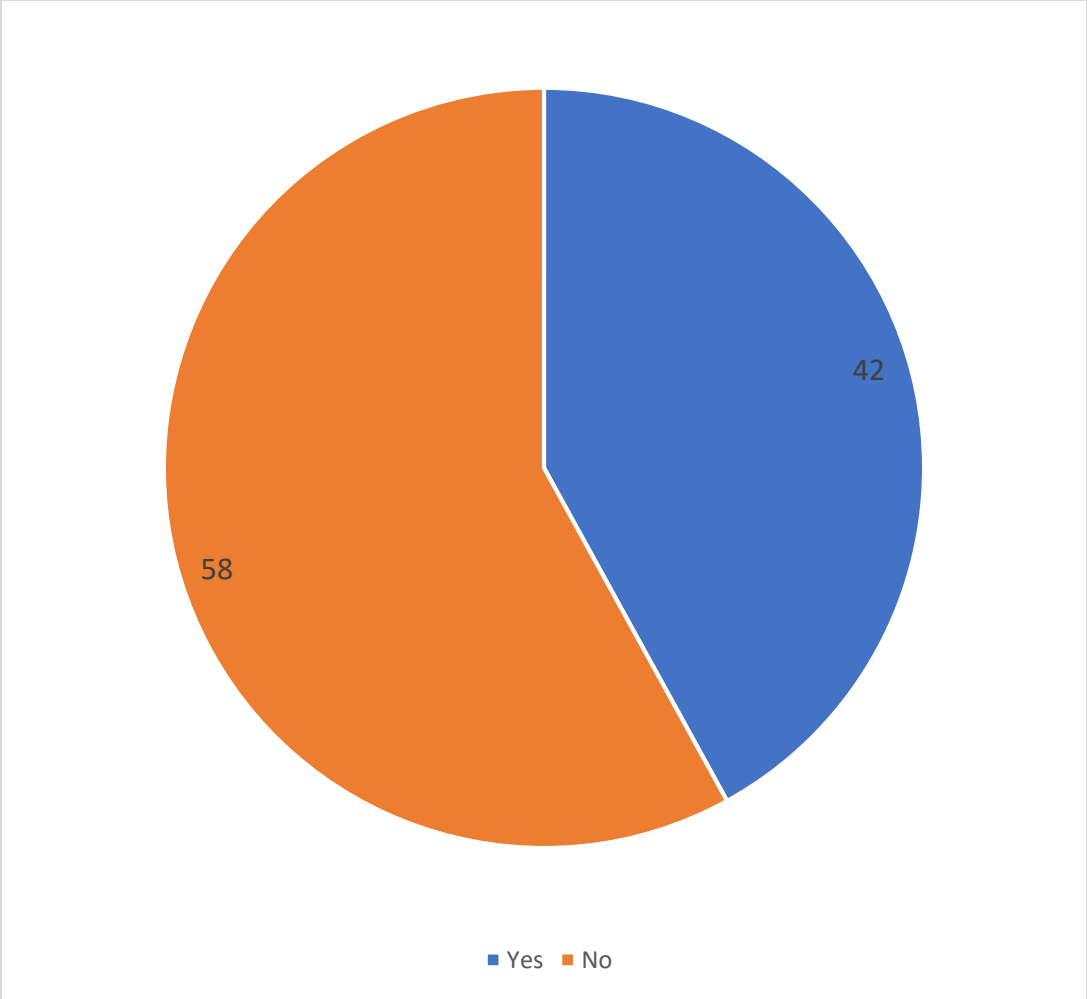


Figure 13 Have you ever programmed a religious piece that was not Judeo-Christian?

Note: The numbers in the figure represent the number of respondents that indicated each answer

4.3.6 If you have programmed a religious piece that is other than Judeo-Christian, what religious tradition did the piece come from? Table XV shows respondents' answers to the question "If you have programmed a religious piece that is other than Judeo-Christian, what religious tradition did the piece come from?" Respondents could fill in their own short answer for this question and gave a variety of responses. The total number of responses other than "N/A" add up to more than 42 because some responses indicated more than one religious tradition from which they had

performed music. Of the religious traditions mentioned by respondents, Islam, various African religions, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Native American all had a similar number of responses. A small number of respondents (five) indicated they have performed a piece from an Asian religious tradition. Five respondents indicated a religious tradition other than the ones mentioned previously.

Table XV

What Religious Traditions Other Than Judeo-Christian Did Pieces You Performed Come From?

Answer	**n**
Islam/Sufism	11
African Religions/Kwanzaa	11
Judaism/Hanukkah	15
Buddhism	12
Hinduism	11
Taoism/Shintoism/Other Asian Religions	5
Native American	10
Other	5

4.3.7 If you have programmed a religious piece that is other than Judeo-Christian, did you talk to your choir about the religious nature of this/these piece(s)? Figure 14 shows respondents' answers to the question "If you have programmed a religious piece that is other than Judeo-Christian, did you talk to your choir about the religious nature of this/these piece(s)? All but one respondent who performed a religious piece that was not Judeo-Christian in nature indicated they talked to their students about the religious content of that piece.

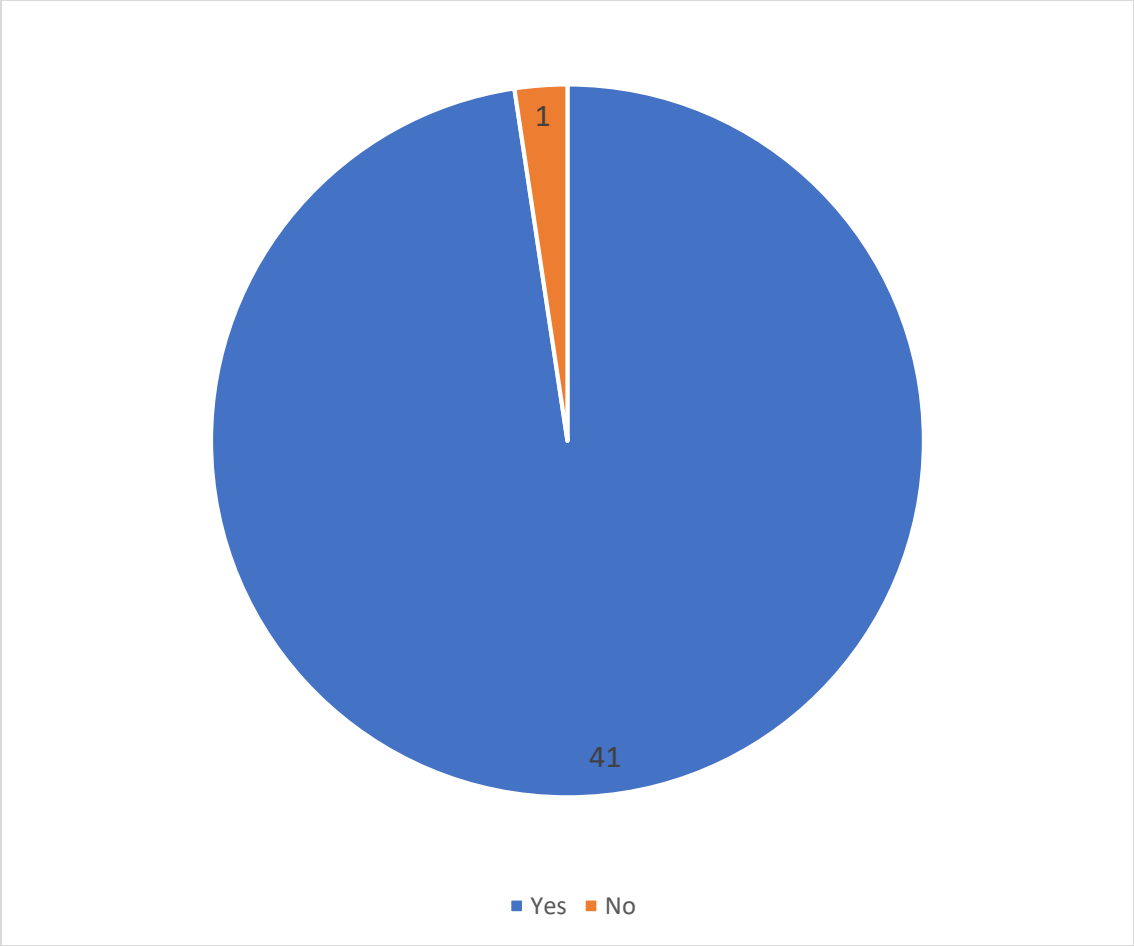


Figure 14. Do you talk about the religious nature of non Judeo-Christian religious pieces?

Note: The numbers in the figure represent the number of respondents that indicated each answer

4.3.8 If you have talked to your students about the religious nature of this/these piece(s), what religious aspects of the piece(s) do you usually focus on?

Table XVI and figure 15 show respondents' answers to the question "If you have talked to your students about the religious nature of this/these piece(s), what religious aspects of the piece(s) do you usually focus on?" Again, most respondents (38 out of 41) indicated they talk to their students about both the historical context and the meaning of the text when discussing religious pieces that are not Judeo-Christian in nature. The respondent

who marked “both” with an additional clarification under “other” stated “Popular secular meanings for non-religious persons.”

Table XVI

What Religious Aspects do you Usually Focus On for Non Judeo-Christian Pieces?

Answer	**n**
Historical and/or cultural context	1
Meaning of the text	2
Both	37
Both with additional clarification under “other”	1
N/A	59

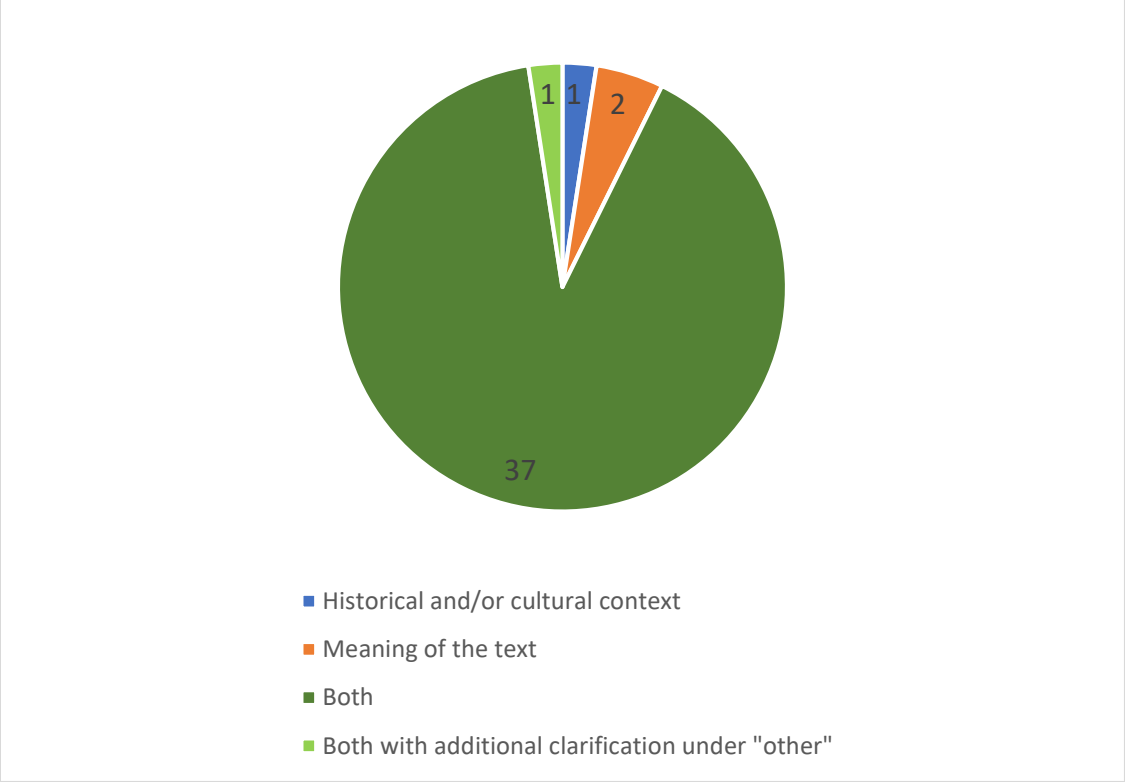


Figure 15. What religious aspects do you focus on for non Judeo-Christian pieces?

Note: The numbers in the figure represent the number of respondents that indicated each answer

4.4 Experiences

4.4.1 Have you ever had a student, parent, or member of school administration express concern about the religious content of a piece of music you were performing/rehearsing?

4.4.1 Have you ever had a student, parent, or member of school administration express concern about the religious content of a piece of music you were performing/rehearsing? Figure 16 shows respondents' answers to the question "Have you ever had a student, parent, or member of school administration express concern about the religious content of a piece of music you were performing/rehearsing?" Sixty-eight participants, or just over two thirds of all respondents, indicated they have had someone express concern over the religious content of a piece of music they were performing or rehearsing.

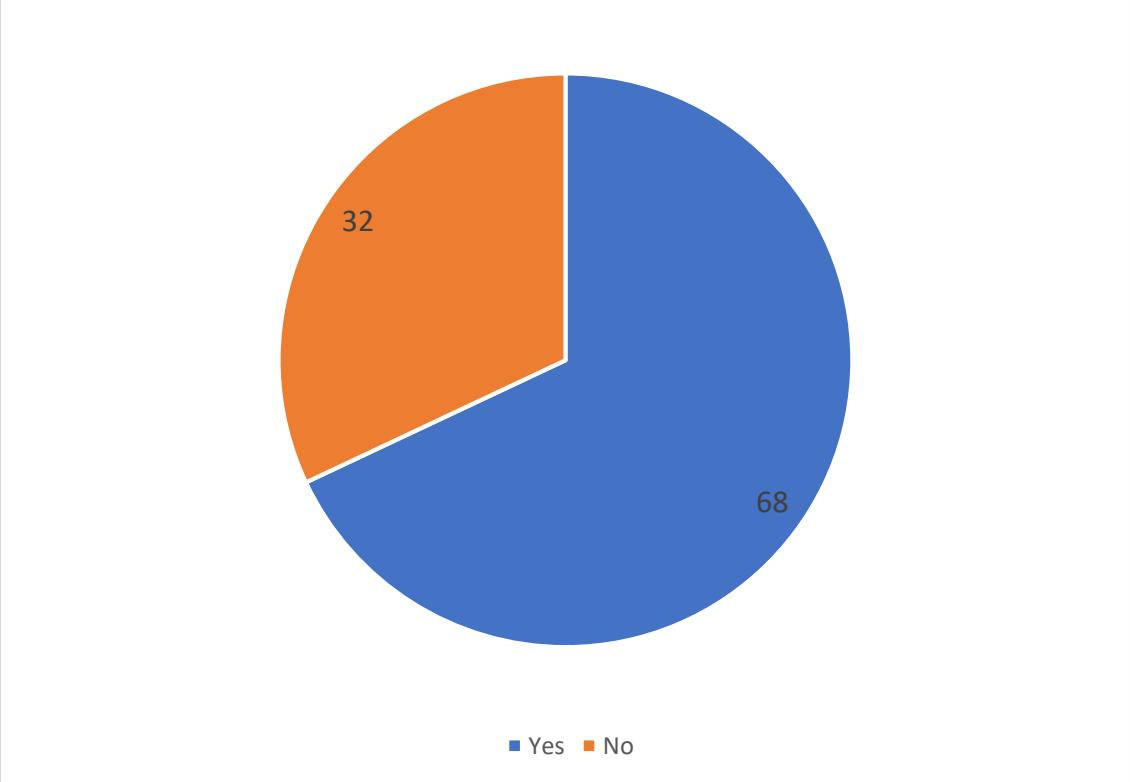


Figure 16. Have you ever had someone express concern about religious content?

Note: The numbers in the figure represent the number of respondents that indicated each answer

4.4.2 If yes, describe the nature of the concern expressed. The first group of codes from this section is a priori because "students," "parents," and "administrators" were all mentioned in the previous question. Of the 68 respondents who said they have had someone express concern over the religious content of their repertoire choices, 40 percent (27) involved students expressing concerns, 29 percent (20) involved parents in some capacity, and four percent (three) involved administrators. Thirty-four percent (23) of cases did not contain one of these three codes, therefore it was unclear who raised questions.

One set of codes that emerged centered around the religious tradition of the concerned parties. Codes in this category that were present include "Jehovah's Witness," "Jewish," "Muslim," "Atheist," and "Christian." Nineteen percent (13) of respondents stated concerns from Jehovah's Witnesses, four percent (three) stated Jewish parents or students, and two concerns (3 percent) were from Muslim students. Three respondents (four percent) stated the concerned party was Atheist. Ten percent (seven) of the concerns stated were from Christian parents who either objected to a piece from another religion being performed or claimed the program was "too secular."

Another code set that emerged, which was related to the religious tradition of the concern parties, centered around the religious nature of the music in question. Twenty-eight percent (19) of respondents stated concerns specifically because the piece of music in question was Christian. Two responses (3 percent) contained the code "Jewish" which described the music questioned, and one respondent (1.5 percent) stated a Muslim piece that was questioned. Both the Jewish and the Muslim codes came from responses that stated the concerned party was Christian. Twenty-one percent (14) of the respondents

neither stated the religious background of the concerned party nor the religious tradition which the piece in question came from.

Three respondents stated that "Separation of Church and State" was brought up as an argument against their choice of religious repertoire. Every respondent who answered "yes" to the previous question gave a description of the concern that was expressed.

4.4.3 How was the situation resolved? Respondents addressed concerns in a variety of manners, but four main codes emerged. Thirty-seven percent (25) of responses contained words such as "discussion," "explained," or "talk." After having a conversation with the concerned party, they resolved the issue.

Fourty-one percent (28) of responses contained a code resembling "alternative assignment" or "(student) did not sing." In these instances, the student received an alternative assignment or was exempted from performing the song in question.

A third code that emerged from this question contained phrases such as "(we) did not sing," "removed the song," or "changed our approach." Nine percent (six) of respondents resolved the issue by either not performing the song in question or changing their approach to teaching it.

Three respondents (four percent) stated that the student either boycotted the concert the piece was being performed in or was pulled out of choir entirely ("Did not attend concert," "dropped the class," "(parent) removed her child"). Thirteen percent (nine) of situations were resolved in another manner. All respondents who answered the previous question gave an answer to this question.

4.4.4 Did your attitudes or practices change as a result of the situation? If so, how?

Responses to this question contained both a priori and emergent codes. Approximately 65 percent (44) of the 68 responses simply stated a variation of "no," that their practices did not change at all as a result of the situation mentioned. About six percent (four) of responses were less committal and contained a variation of the code "not really." Around 22 percent (15) contained either "yes," "somewhat," or "kind of" as a code, meaning almost one fourth of respondents had an attitude or practice change as a result of a concern. One interesting code that emerged was in response to the second part of the question ("If so, how?"). Thirteen percent (nine) of responses contained words such as "more careful," "more cautious," or "more aware." All respondents who used these additional codes answered some variation of "yes," and added that they now express more caution when programming religious music.

4.5 Contingency Tables

Note: If a contingency table did not meet the requirements for a statistical analysis because some expected values were less than one, I included the expected values in the table for reference. All contingency tables failed to meet requirements for statistical analysis due to low expected values except for tables 20 and 22, which is why expected values were not included in these tables.

4.5.1 "Public Scholl Choral programs should include…" vs "Do you program sacred or religious music for your choirs?" Because some expected values are less than one, this contingency table did not meet the requirements for a chi-squared statistical analysis.

Table XVII

Contingency Table 1

		Do you program sacred or religious music for you choirs?		
Public School Choral programs should include religious/sacred music in their repertoire		**No**	**Yes**	**Total**
1 Agree	Count	0.00	72.00	72.00
	Expected count	1.44	70.56	72.00
2 Somewhat Agree	Count	0.00	15.00	15.00
	Expected count	0.30	14.70	15.00
3 Neutral	Count	1.00	7.00	8.00
	Expected count	0.16	7.84	8.00
4 Somewhat Disagree	Count	0.00	3.00	3.00
	Expected count	0.06	2.94	3.00
5 Disagree	Count	1.00	1.00	2.00
	Expected count	0.04	1.96	2.00
Total	Count	2.00	98.00	100.00
	Expected count	2.00	98.00	100.00

4.5.2 "Choir teachers should talk to their choirs…" vs "…do you usually talk to your students about the religious nature of the piece?" Because some expected values are less than one, this contingency table did not meet the requirements for a chi-squared statistical analysis.

Table XVIII

Contingency Table 2

		If you program sacred or religious music, do you usually talk to your students about the religious nature of the piece?			
Choir Teachers should talk to their choirs about the religious content of a piece		**N/A**	**No**	**Yes**	**Total**
1 Agree	Count	0.00	1.00	54.00	55.00
	Expected count	1.10	3.85	50.05	55.00
2 Somewhat Agree	Count	1.00	2.00	28.00	31.00
	Expected count	0.62	2.17	28.21	31.00
3 Neutral	Count	0.00	1.00	8.00	9.00
	Expected count	0.18	0.63	8.19	9.00
4 Somewhat Disagree	Count	0.00	3.00	1.00	4.00
	Expected count	0.08	0.28	3.64	4.00
5 Disagree	Count	1.00	0.00	0.00	1.00
	Expected count	0.02	0.07	0.91	1.00
Total	Count	2.00	7.00	91.00	100.00
	Expected count	2.00	7.00	91.00	100.00

4.5.3 Age vs "Have you ever had a student, parent, or member of school administration express concern…?"

Because some expected values are less than one, this contingency table did not meet the requirements for a chi-squared statistical analysis.

Table XIX

Contingency Table 3

		Have you ever had a student, parent, or member of school administration express concern about the religious content of a piece of music you were performing/rehearsing?		
Age		**No**	**Yes**	**Total**
18-24	Count	1.00	2.00	3.00
	Expected count	0.96	2.04	3.00
25-34	Count	11.00	13.00	24.00
	Expected count	7.68	16.32	24.00
35-44	Count	4.00	14.00	18.00
	Expected count	5.76	12.24	18.00
45-54	Count	9.00	21.00	30.00
	Expected count	9.60	20.40	30.00
55-64	Count	7.00	13.00	20.00
	Expected count	6.40	13.60	20.00
65+	Count	0.00	5.00	5.00
	Expected count	1.60	3.40	5.00
Total	Count	32.00	68.00	100.00
	Expected count	32.00	68.00	100.00

4.5.4 Years of teaching experience vs "Have you ever had a student, parent, or member of school administration express concern…?" Because $p > .05$, the null hypothesis that there is no correlation between years of teaching experience and whether or not a respondent received a complaint about religious repertoire is accepted, thus the results are not statistically significant. This is further supported by the low value of the contingency coefficient, .159, implying a weak correlation between the two variables.

Table XX

Contingency Table 4

	Have you ever had a student, parent, or member of school administration express concern about the religious content of a piece of music you were performing/rehearsing?		
Years of teaching experience	**No**	**Yes**	**Total**
1-5	7	10	17
11-20	6	18	24
21-30	9	22	31
31+	3	9	12
6-10	7	9	16
Total	32	68	100

χ^2 (4) = 2.609, p = .625

Nominal	
	Value
Contingency coefficient	0.159

4.5.5 Number of students in choral program vs "Have you ever had a student, parent, or member of school administration express concern…?" Because some expected values are less than one, this contingency table did not meet the requirements for a chi-squared statistical analysis.

Table XXI

Contingency Table 5

		Have you ever had a student, parent, or member of school administration express concern about the religious content of a piece of music you were performing/rehearsing?		
Number of students in choral program		**No**	**Yes**	**Total**
0-100	Count	23.00	33.00	56.00
	Expected count	17.92	38.08	56.00
100-200	Count	6.00	25.00	31.00
	Expected count	9.92	21.08	31.00
200-300	Count	2.00	7.00	9.00
	Expected count	2.88	6.12	9.00
300-400	Count	0.00	1.00	1.00
	Expected count	0.32	0.68	1.00
400+	Count	1.00	2.00	3.00
	Expected count	0.96	2.04	3.00
Total	Count	32.00	68.00	100.00
	Expected count	32.00	68.00	100.00

4.5.6 Location of current school vs "Have you ever had a student, parent, or member of school administration express concern…?" Because $p > .05$, the null hypothesis that there is no correlation location of school and whether or not a respondent received a complaint about religious repertoire is accepted, thus the results are not statistically significant. This is further supported by the low value of the contingency coefficient, .083, implying a very weak correlation between the two variables.

Table XXII

Contingency Table 6

	Have you ever had a student, parent, or member of school administration express concern about the religious content of a piece of music you were performing/rehearsing?		
Location of current school	**No**	**Yes**	**Total**
Rural (Is not in an urbanized area, i.e. total population of area is less than 50,000)	16	29	45
Suburban (Is in an urbanized area, but outside of the principal city)	10	27	37
Urban (Is within the principal city of an urbanized area. "Urbanized Area" - population is greater than 50,000)	6	12	18
Total	32	68	100

χ^2 (2) = 0.697, p = .706

Nominal	
	Value
Contingency coefficient	0.083

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Quantitative Analysis

The main quantitative purpose of this study was to gather data on teacher attitudes, practices, and experiences regarding teaching sacred or religious music in public school classrooms. Additional goals were to test for correlations between teacher attitudes and practices, as well as possible correlations between demographics and teachers receiving complaints about religious content.

5.1.1 Research Question 1: What attitudes do public school choir teachers have towards sacred and religious music in their classrooms? Most directors surveyed believe sacred or religious music should be a part of a public school choir's repertoire, while also agreeing there is a distinction between "sacred" and "religious" music. For the purposes of the survey, I defined "sacred" music as music that was originally intended to be a part of a worship service, and "religious" music as music with a religious text but not written specifically for a worship service. It is unclear whether respondents agreed that one was more acceptable than the other, as most respondents did not offer additional clarification for this question.

A majority of respondents agreed that choir teachers should talk to their students about the religious content of a piece. This suggests that most choir teachers surveyed believe in being open with their students about the religious content of their music instead of avoiding the topic. Most respondents also agreed that students, parents, and administrators should be allowed to express concern over religious content, meaning most teachers surveyed are open to having discussion about their repertoire choices with concerned parties.

5.1.2 Research Question 2: How are public school choir teachers approaching the topic of sacred and religious music with their choirs? (i.e. what practices are they using with their choirs regarding sacred/religious music?) An overwhelming majority of public school choir directors surveyed include sacred or religious music in their repertoire in some capacity. Most respondents who indicated they program sacred or religious music stated that it accounts for 50 percent or less of their repertoire. The majority of respondents surveyed who indicated they program sacred or religious music also indicated that they talk to their students about its religious nature. Of those respondents, most indicated that they talk to their students both about the historical context of religious pieces and the meaning of their text.

Forty-two respondents indicated that they have programmed a religious piece that is from a tradition other than Judeo-Christian, and most stated they approach teaching these pieces similarly to Judeo-Christian pieces. Including songs from other religious traditions in the repertoire can be an effective way to promote a diverse music curriculum that includes music from many different genres and cultural backgrounds (Drummond, 2014). However, teachers should consider being more aware of the cultural context of

songs they choose, and avoid choosing songs merely for the sake of diversity (Drummond, 2014; Jacobson et al., 2007). Interestingly, 15 respondents indicated "Judaism/Hanukkah" as the religious tradition of a non-Judeo-Christian piece that they have performed, indicating that they do not consider these pieces "Judeo-Christian." I will address this further in the "Limitations and Further Research" section.

5.1.3 Research Question 3: What experiences have choir teachers had with parents, students, or administrators who expressed concern over the religious subject of a piece of music they performed or rehearsed? Over two thirds of teachers recorded that they have had at least one incident where somebody has expressed concern to them over religious repertoire. This illustrates that religious content in public schools appears to be an issue of concern for many, and it is possible that teachers who program religious repertoire will have someone express concern at some point in their teaching. Several respondents stated that being prepared ahead of time to address issues that may arise because of repertoire choice and knowing how to explain the reasoning behind choosing a particular song were effective teaching practices.

5.1.4 Research Question 4: Is there a relationship between demographic information (Age/experience of teacher, size of program, location of school) and whether choir teachers have had concerns over religious content expressed to them? Two of the four contingency tables comparing demographics against concerns over religious content were also unable to be tested due to expected values that were less than one. The correlation between years of teaching experience and whether or not teachers have experienced concerns over religious repertoire is not statistically significant, $r(100) = .16$, $p = .63$; neither is the correlation between the location of the school and whether or

not concerns were expressed, $r(100) = .08$, $p = .71$. From the data presented, there appears to be no statistically significant relationship among demographic factors and concern over religious content in public school music classrooms. There was no relationship between years of teaching experience and religious concerns received, possibly indicating that questioning religious content in a public school choir setting is a relatively new phenomenon that teachers have not experienced until recently. The lack of a relationship between school location and religious concerns received suggests that concerns over religious content can originate from a variety of communities, whether more homogenous in nature or more diverse.

5.1.5 Additional Research Question: Do teacher attitudes towards religious music align with their practices in the classroom? Due to expected values lower than one for both contingency tables, I was unable to perform statistical analysis comparing teacher attitudes to teacher practices. Although most respondents who agreed that religious music should be a part of public school repertoire program religious music themselves, these results could not be tested for statistical significance. Additionally, although a majority of respondents who agreed that directors should talk to their students about the religious content of a piece do so themselves, these results could not be tested for statistical significance either.

5.2 Qualitative Analysis

As previously discussed, an overwhelming majority of respondents indicated their support for performing sacred/religious music in a public school setting. When asked to elaborate on their responses, many mentioned the historical importance of sacred music: "If teachers leave out sacred music, we leave out a huge portion of the great choral

masterpieces in the history of western music," one respondent noted. Another teacher stated that "these [religious] pieces are frequently part of the musical canon; they are pieces that are accepted repertoire standards. We cannot lose sight of this part of the vocal musical heritage." The history of choral music is in large part connected to religion, and most surveyed agree that omitting this history entirely is a disservice to students.

Strongly connected to the historical importance of sacred and religious music is its musical value, emphasized by many respondents. "I think there is a lot of quality literature that happens to be religious," one participant stated. "I do not select a piece of music because it's religious - I select it because it's a quality piece of music." One respondent mentioned the educational value of music in relation to its musical value, stating "I also have the freedom to give my students the best education possible, which means exposing them to great music, even if it happens to be religious/sacred." Many respondents emphasized this, that many pieces chosen for historical and musical value are often religious, but are not chosen because of their religious content. These pieces are an important part of music history that can also help introduce students to many musical concepts ("Sacred Music," n.d.).

Once literature is selected, the majority of respondents agreed that teachers should talk to their students about the religious nature of a piece. However, many respondents related that this should be done in a certain way: "As I discuss religious text, I do so in a way that does not proselytize, merely explains for artistic purposes," one respondent replied. Another stated "I make sure to give a disclaimer every time we do a religious text. I am not telling them that is what they SHOULD believe, I am just telling them what these particular people are saying. We look at it through a purely historical standpoint."

Many respondent stated teachers should discuss the religious content of their repertoire purely as a means to help students understand the meaning and historical context of the piece; most importantly, they should emphasize this to their students. Clear communication about teacher intentions can help avoid misunderstanding, as one respondent iterated: “I ALWAYS tell students that I am doing music for a musical or educational purpose, NOT for religious reasons. A great piece of music is just that...not necessarily a ‘religious’ piece.”

Some respondents compared teaching religious music to teaching religion in other school subjects: “As long as we are not pushing a belief system on students in the public school setting, then we are still within our bounds, just as any history teacher would be in teaching about the foundations of Christianity.” It is possible that some might draw a distinction between learning about religion in a classroom setting and performing religious music in a concert setting, the latter constituting a religious practice as opposed to an educational one. However, several court cases have ruled that performing religious music does not constitute a religious practice as long as the performance in used for secular purposes (Cranmore & Fossey, 2014). One respondent likened it to a theatrical performance: “I tell the kids it's like being an actor. If you play the part of a murderer, that doesn't mean you believe murder is okay. So, you can sing something you don't believe and still learn from it.” Students learn about religion in many contexts throughout their education, including theater, history, and art among others. If teachers in other subjects are allowed to approach religious topics, choir teachers should be permitted to do so as well, as long as it is in a way that is respectful, educational, and religiously neutral (“Sacred Music,” n.d.).

Throughout the majority of this study, I have focused on the Judeo-Christian musical tradition, which comprises a large portion of all religious choral music. Even so, many respondents stressed the importance of a "well-rounded" music curriculum that includes songs from other religious traditions, as well as secular songs. "I believe we should explore a variety of religious music to diversify and educate our students and audiences on things outside our community and in the world," one respondent said. Another stated that they "…believe it is important to include pieces from other religious cultures as part of my choir's repertoire…" If teachers wish to include religious music as a part of their repertoire, many respondents agreed they should consider incorporating pieces from a variety of religious and cultural backgrounds to ensure a diverse and well-rounded musical curriculum. Even though a large portion of religious choral music is Judeo-Christian, there are many choral songs from other religious traditions that have musical, historical and educational value (Drummond, 2014). But as previously discussed, teachers should know the context and appropriateness of a religious piece before programming it (Jacobson et al., 2007). One respondent went as far to say that "choir teachers should seek pre-service education in pedagogical methods of religious literacy," or "the academic, nonsectarian study of religion in society." Regardless of the method, respondents agreed that choir teachers should make historically, educationally, and culturally informed repertoire choices, and be able to explain their rationale for choosing a particular piece.

Although an overwhelming majority of respondents agreed that sacred and religious music should be taught, most also agreed that parents, students, and administrators have a right to express their concerns about religious content. That being

said, many respondents indicated that this concern should not dictate teaching practices: "Parents and students should be able to express concerns," one respondent noted. "However, those concerns should not outweigh the value of performing the music for the musical value of the piece." Several respondents stated the importance of being proactive when handling issues like these: "Choir directors should always have specific reasons for including… their repertoire choices, and should be allowed to discuss that rationale with concerned parents," one respondent said. One respondent claimed they take preventative measures before specific repertoire is revealed to students, stating "I have my students/parents sign a form in the beginning of the year explaining that we will be singing sacred and secular music and that both are important aspects of choral music." Informing students and parents ahead of time that you program sacred or religious music could be one way to minimize future conflicts.

One respondent mentioned the importance of communication with administrators regarding such matters: "Parents can express their concerns," they stated, "but the music instructor and administration need to be educated and on the same page in order to help parents understand the significance and substantial oeuvre of sacred choral music." The importance of open communication and coordination with school administrators is often understated, especially for beginning teachers. Teachers can address parent and student concerns much more effectively with the support of administrators who endorse their practices, as several respondents stated.

Sixty-eight out of 100 respondents indicated that a student, parent, or administrator has at some point expressed concern about performing a sacred or religious song in choir. The concerns were many and varied, from "Parents or students objecting to

singing music with religious text," "Students said that they don't feel comfortable singing that kind of music," and "They thought I was promoting Christianity," to "anything that resembles religion was questioned." Some were dismissive in describing the concerns, quoting the concerned party as saying "Separation of church and state, blah blah. We're Jewish, blah blah," or characterizing the objection as "Vague concern, masking the true displeasure with some other aspect of my teaching." Some received concerns from both ends of the spectrum: "I have had it both ways. We have gotten complains from Christians that we weren't doing enough 'Christmas' music in the Winter concert and I have had Jewish students who wouldn't sing ANYTHING that mentioned 'Christmas.'" One respondent, who indicated they do not program religious music for their choirs because "religion has no place in a school setting," stated the concern was directed towards the previous teacher, saying "[The students] didn't like that the last instructor made them sing religious music and felt it was forced on them."

Respondents addressed and resolved concerns over religious content in a variety of ways. Some resolved through discussion, stating things like "I gave [the student] a polite explanation, and the topic was dropped," or "[The student] and I talked about the significance of the spirituals and the underlying meaning of the spirituals as well as the historical significance of the genre." A few respondents indicated their discussion was not as cordial, saying things like "[I] gave the source an ear and dismissed it." Others gave students alternatives to singing the songs in question, including: "The student left the stage when we sang it and returned when the next piece was presented," "[The] student decided not to sing the particular song," and "Students were excused from performing works that violated their faith." Some respondents removed the song in

question because of the concern. Others indicated that parents removed their children from choir altogether.

Concerns over religious content came from a variety of religious and non-religious persons about both the presence of religious music and the lack thereof. As one respondent stated, “You can’t please them all…,” so teachers must be aware of their school’s community and understand how their repertoire choices are received in that community (Brown, 2016; Drummond, 2014; Jacobson et al., 2007). Several respondents appeared to be dismissive and sarcastic when recounting their experience with a concerned party. This presents an area of concern, as teachers who program religious music should “respect and embrace diversity” (Drummond, 2014, p. 31). That being said, a majority of respondents appeared to be respectful of those who expressed disagreement, and addressed the issue in a constructive manner.

A substantial number of respondents indicated the students who raised concerns were given the option for an alternative assignment or to refrain from singing the song in question. While this might not be an ideal solution for many teachers, it can be an effective way to compromise with concerned parents and students. “I… make sure my students understand that they would never be penalized if they could not participate in a piece due to religious reasons,” one respondent stated.

Most respondents claimed that their teaching practices changed little, if at all, as a result of these situations. However, several respondents stated they have become “more careful” and “more aware” of the implications of their repertoire choices. It is possible that a number of teachers surveyed were already prepared to handle potential conflicts, and were able to keep their protocol the same as before the incident. Even so, being

"more aware" and "more careful" when choosing repertoire could help limit future concerns for teachers.

Another helpful resource when determining actions to take in conflicts over religious content is school policy, as several respondents noted. "We took an educational approach to the concern, examples from other school programs, and looked at what the school board policy was," one respondent said. Another stated that "Our district has a document regarding religion in the schools, [and] I cited this." Some also consulted national guidelines to determine their approach towards sacred music in the classroom; one respondent quoted excerpts from NAfME that were discussed in the literature review. Regardless of one's attitude towards religious music in the classroom, teachers should consult school board policies to both aid in making repertoire choices and explaining their decisions when brought into question (Reynolds, 1984).

5.3 Limitations and Further Research

5.3.1 Study Limitations. As stated previously, the scholarly research on sacred and religious music in a public school setting is limited. Most studies regarding the role of religion in public schools have taken place outside of the choir classroom, therefore the precedent for such research is yet to be set. Until more studies are conducted that involve sacred and religious music in public schools, the implications of this research will be unknown.

I determined that a survey was the most effective way to conduct this research; however, several limitations arose because of this. As I collected the data and reviewed the responses, I found that many participants did not complete the survey to my satisfaction, as discussed previously in the "methods" section. This was due to human

error on the part of the participants that could have been avoided had I taken more proactive measures concerning the setup of the survey. There were many questions that required only one answer; however, I did not program the survey to accept only one answer for each question, so many respondents indicated more than one answer on several questions that were not intended to have more than one answer. I also did not program every question to be required, so several respondents did not answer every question. Because I determined beforehand that I would only accept exhaustive and accurately completed responses, several responses could not be used due to deficiencies of the survey construction.

Another limitation of the survey format is that data from participants was self-reported, leaving potential for misreporting of data from participants, either intentionally or unintentionally. Many questions on the survey required judgement on the part of the respondent, and it is possible respondents misremembered certain events that they recalled or incorporated their own biases into recounting the situations they described.

For the purposes of this survey, I used the term "Judeo-Christian" to define the primary religious tradition from which religious choral music originates, which suggests music from both Jewish and Christian traditions. However, when asked about other religious traditions besides "Judeo-Christian" from which respondents had performed a religious piece of music, 15 respondents indicated some form of "Judaism" or "Hanukkah." It is unclear how every respondent defined Judeo-Christian, but it is possible a more unambiguous word could have been used to avoid confusion.

The sample selected for this study presents another limitation for this research. Because it was selected using the middle school and high school choir teacher database

from NAfME, only choir teachers who were members of NAfME, met the research criteria, and had opted in to receiving emails from NAfME were given the opportunity to be in the sample. According to NAfME, approximately 16,000 of their members indicate they are middle school or high school choir teachers. Of these 16,000, only 5,000 randomly selected individuals were sent an email with an opportunity to take the survey. Many more individuals that were eligible to take this survey were unable to have access to it because they are not members of NAfME. Because only a small portion of the population of middle school and high school choir teachers in the country were given access to the survey, a more exhaustive sample that includes choral music educators that are not members of NAfME may yield different results. Additionally, the small sample size may be the reason for the lack of a statistically significant result, because most of the statistically relationships were unable to be tested due to low values.

5.3.2 Suggestions for Further Research. Quantitatively, a similar study with a larger sample size is needed to either confirm or refute the results of this study. A larger sample size may also allow for statistical testing to be performed on other relationships in the data.

This research produced many interesting qualitative responses from teachers on their attitudes towards religious music and their experiences handling conflicts over their programming of it. A further, more detailed qualitative study that focuses on a few teachers and their experiences with religious music in the classroom could provide individuals an opportunity to more extensively relay their perspectives on why they program the music they do and how they approach solving religious conflicts with concerned parties. This could be especially valuable for inexperienced teachers who have

not encountered these issues in their own education and have no reference for handling such issues.

The results of this study produced several additional questions and areas of insight to be considered for future research:

- Seventy-eight out of 100 respondents at least somewhat agreed that there is a distinction between "sacred" and "religious" music. What are the implications of this distinction? Does it have an impact on teacher attitudes, practices, and experiences in the classroom?
- Respondents self-reported all data, including the religious affiliations of their students. How do teachers discover the religious affiliations of their students? Does this knowledge affect day to day interactions with students? How does the religious make-up of a choir classroom compare to the religious make-up of other classrooms?
- How do religious affiliations of choir teachers compare to the religious affiliations of all teachers?

5.4 Conclusion

Religious music is an important part of the history of western choral music. Most of the respondents surveyed in this study agree that a complete and well-rounded public school choir curriculum will consist of at least some music that is sacred or religious in nature, and include these pieces in their repertoire. Nevertheless, a majority of choir teachers surveyed in this study who program sacred or religious music for their choirs encountered concerns from students, parents, or administrators who called the appropriateness of including such pieces in a public school curriculum into question.

These respondents addressed these concerns in ways such as articulating their rationale for their program choices, offering possible alternatives for students, and considering changes in repertoire if necessary. Many were aware of their district or school policy regarding religious topics when making repertoire choices and when conversing with concerned parties and made sure their programming choices were permitted by policy. Some took preventative measures by informing parents and students at the start of the year that they perform religious music and established their own policy for addressing potential concerns. All these methods appear to be successful solutions for the individuals who implemented them, but further research is needed to determine the effectiveness of such strategies and expound on choir teacher attitudes, practices, and experiences from a broader perspective.

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APPENDIX A

Religious Music in Public School Choir: Attitudes, Practices, and Experiences

* Required



1. *

Informed Consent

My name is Landon LaMontagne, and I am a graduate student in Music Education at Cleveland State University. I am surveying the attitudes, practices, and experiences of middle school and high school choir teachers about sacred music in choir classrooms. I hope this survey will help choir teachers with their approach to sacred music with their choirs. I am conducting this research under Dr. Heather Russell ((216) 687-5099, email: h.a.russell@csuohio.edu).

Your responses will be anonymous. I will ask some demographic questions, but none will give away personal identity. No public information will be revealed. The names of real places and people will not be used.

Please read the statements below. Click "I consent" if you wish to continue the survey:

I understand that participation is voluntary, and that I may withdraw at any time without penalty.

I understand that if I have any questions about my rights as a research participant, I can contact the Cleveland State University Institutional Review Board at (216) 687-3630.

I confirm that I am at least 18 years old.

There are no direct benefits for participating in this research, nor consequences for not participating. Any risks from this research do not exceed those of daily living. The survey should take about 10-15 minutes to complete.

For questions about this research please contact me at (832) 477-3346, email: landonlamontagne@gmail.com, or Dr. Heather Russell at (216) 687-5099, email: h.a.russell@csuohio.edu

Please check "I consent" to continue the survey.

☐ I consent

Demographic Information

2. **Age**

- [ ] 18-24
- [ ] 25-34
- [ ] 35-44
- [ ] 45-54
- [ ] 55-64
- [ ] 65+

3. **Years of teaching experience**

- [ ] 1-5
- [ ] 6-10
- [ ] 11-20
- [ ] 21-30
- [ ] 31+

4. **Grades taught (check all that apply)**

- [ ] 5th
- [ ] 6th
- [ ] 7th
- [ ] 8th
- [ ] 9th
- [ ] 10th
- [ ] 11th
- [ ] 12th

5. **Number of students in your choral program**

- [ ] 0-100
- [ ] 100-200
- [ ] 200-300
- [ ] 300-400
- [ ] 400+

6. **State**

_____

7. **Location of current school**

- [ ] Urban (Is within the principal city of an urbanized area. "Urbanized Area" - population is greater than 50,000)
- [ ] Suburban (Is in an urbanized area, but outside of the principal city)
- [ ] Rural (Is not in an urbanized area, i.e. total population of area is less than 50,000)

8. **Personal religious affiliation**

- [ ] Christian (Protestant)
- [ ] Christian (Catholic)
- [ ] Muslim
- [ ] Jewish
- [ ] Buddhist
- [ ] Hindu
- [ ] Baha'i
- [ ] Atheist
- [ ] Agnostic
- [ ] Nothing in particular
- [ ] Don't know
- [ ] Choose not to answer
- [ ] Other: _____

9. **Student religious affiliations (check all religions you know your students to be affiliated with)**

- ☐ Christian (Protestant)
- ☐ Christian (Catholic)
- ☐ Muslim
- ☐ Jewish
- ☐ Buddhist
- ☐ Hindu
- ☐ Baha'i
- ☐ Atheist
- ☐ Agnostic
- ☐ Nothing in particular
- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ Choose not to answer
- ☐ Other: _____

Attitudes

10. **Choose the answer that most reflects your own personal beliefs. One choice per row.**

	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree
There is a difference between sacred music (used for a church service specifically) and religious music (has a religious text or themes but is not intended for a worship service)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Public School Choral programs should include religious/sacred music in their repertoire	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Choir Teachers should talk to their choirs about the religious content of a piece	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students and parents should be allowed to express concern about the religious content of a piece of music	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

11. **Provide any details or comments regarding your answers to the questions above here (Optional)**

Practices

12. **Do you program sacred or religious music for you choirs?**

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

13. **If you program sacred or religious music, roughly what percentage of the music you program is sacred or religious in nature?**

- [ ] Less than 10%
- [ ] More than 10%, but less than 50%
- [ ] Around 50%
- [ ] 50-75%
- [ ] 75-100%
- [ ] N/A

14. **If you program sacred or religious music, do you usually talk to your students about the religious nature of the piece?**

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
- [ ] N/A

15. **If you talk to your students about the religious nature of a piece, what religious aspects of the piece do you usually focus on?**

- [ ] Historical and/or cultural context
- [ ] Meaning of the text
- [ ] Both
- [ ] N/A
- [ ] Other:

16. **If you do not program sacred or religious music, give a brief explanation of why you do not.**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

17. **Have you ever programmed a piece that is religious in nature that is other than JudeoChristian?**

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

18. **If you have programmed a religious piece that is other than Judeo-Christian, what religious tradition did the piece come from?**

_____

19. **If you have programmed a religious piece that is other than Judeo-Christian, did you talk to your choir about the religious nature of this/these piece(s)?**

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
- [ ] N/A

20. **If you have talked to your students about the religious nature of this/these piece(s), what religious aspects of the piece(s) do you usually focus on?**

- [ ] Historical and/or cultural context
- [ ] Meaning of the text
- [ ] Both
- [ ] N/A
- [ ] Other: _____

Experiences

21. **Have you ever had a student, parent, or member of school administration express concern about the religious content of a piece of music you were performing/rehearsing?**

    - [ ] Yes
    - [ ] No

22. **If yes, describe the nature of the concern expressed.**

23. **How was the situation resolved?**

24. **Did your attitudes or practices change as a result of the situation? If so, how?**

25. **If you have had more than one instance of someone expressing concern about the religious or sacred nature of the piece, please describe the experience here, answering the same questions as above.**

APPENDIX B

Subject: Research Survey – Religious and sacred music in public schools: attitudes, practices, and experiences

My name is Landon LaMontagne, and I am a graduate student in Music Education at Cleveland State University. I am surveying the attitudes, practices, and experiences of middle school and high school choir teachers about religious and sacred music in public school choir classrooms. This survey contains questions about your attitudes on the topic of sacred and religious music in public schools, practices involving sacred and religious music in your classrooms, and any experiences you may have had involving parents, teachers, or administration who voiced concern regarding the religious nature of a piece you performed or rehearsed. It is my hope that this survey will help choir teachers think about their approach to sacred music with their choirs and help when making decisions in the future about what songs they will sing, and why.

If you wish to complete the survey, please click on the Google Form attached to this email, read the consent form on the first page, and click "I consent" at the bottom to continue. The survey should take about 10-15 minutes to complete, and you must be 18 years or older to participate.

For questions about this research please contact me at (832) 477-3346, email: landonlamontagne@gmail.com, or Dr. Heather Russell at (216) 687-5099, email: h.a.russell@csuohio.edu, or you can contact the Cleveland State University Institutional Review Board at (216) 687-3630

Landon LaMontagne

Link to survey: https://drive.google.com/open?id=1-

uJ8TUNRo_G38e60ydeXw1Uy6PVS4s7kPggGpQ3XsY8