

James Madison University

**JMU Scholarly Commons**

---

Masters Theses, 2020-current

The Graduate School

---

12-18-2020

## The Connections of Music, Culture, and Language: A Qualitative Case Study of the Musical Experience of a Newcomer Program

Jessica Strawderman

Follow this and additional works at: <https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/masters202029>



Part of the [Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons](#), [Language and Literacy Education Commons](#), and the [Music Education Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Strawderman, Jessica, "The Connections of Music, Culture, and Language: A Qualitative Case Study of the Musical Experience of a Newcomer Program" (2020). *Masters Theses, 2020-current*. 65.  
<https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/masters202029/65>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the The Graduate School at JMU Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters Theses, 2020-current by an authorized administrator of JMU Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact [dc\\_admin@jmu.edu](mailto:dc_admin@jmu.edu).

The Connections of Music, Culture, and Language:  
A Qualitative Case Study of the Musical Experience of a Newcomer Program

Jessica Strawderman

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

In

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the degree of

Master of Music

School of Music

December 2020

---

FACULTY COMMITTEE

Committee Chair: William Dabback

Committee Members/Readers:

Amy Lewis

David Stringham

## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iv
1. Introduction.....	1
English Language Learners .....	3
Newcomer students.....	5
Music Education for English Language Learners.....	7
In the Field of Music Education for ELLs .....	10
Multicultural Music Education .....	10
Culturally Responsive Music Education.....	14
Musical Identity .....	16
Cultural Ethnicity and Race .....	20
Positionality of the Researcher .....	21
Justification for the Study .....	23
Purpose Statement.....	24
Theoretical Framework.....	25
2. Literature Review.....	27
General and Creative Educational Experience of Newcomer Students.....	27
Culturally Responsive Teaching for Newcomer Students .....	28
The Role of Relationships for Newcomer Students.....	30
Creative Expression for Newcomer Students .....	35
Summary .....	37
Music and Language Acquisition .....	39
Neurological Justifications.....	40
Educational Justifications .....	41
Summary .....	45
Musical and Cultural Identity of ELLs .....	47
Musical Identity of ELLs .....	47
Music Teacher Impact on ELLs' Musical Identities.....	51
Summary .....	53
English Language Learners in the Music Classroom .....	54
Instructional Strategies for Spanish-Speaking ELLs .....	54
Music Making with a Pluralistic ELL Population .....	61
Summary .....	63
Conclusion .....	64

3. Methodology .....	70
Study Context .....	71
The Building .....	73
The Participants .....	74
Ms. VanMartin .....	74
Mr. Smith .....	74
Ms. Taylor.....	75
Procedures.....	75
4. Results.....	79
Intrinsic Motivational Theory.....	79
Establishing Inclusion.....	80
Developing a Positive Attitude .....	83
Enhancing Meaning .....	85
Engendering Competence .....	89
Challenges.....	92
Conclusion .....	95
6. Findings and Implications.....	100
Perceived Benefits and Helpful Pedagogy.....	101
Establishes Inclusion.....	101
Develops a Positive Attitude.....	102
Enhances Meaning Through Language Acquisition and Identity Development ....	103
Engenders Competence.....	104
Complexities .....	105
Implications and Recommendations.....	108
Appendix A - Consent Forms .....	115
Appendix B - Interview Questions .....	118
References.....	119

## **Abstract**

In this qualitative case study, I investigated the philosophy and process of an elementary newcomer program and explored the perceived benefits for newcomer students of the musical experience, aiding in transition from full-time English as a second language (ESL) services in self-contained class to a general education setting. The studied school division serves a high population of students who are English Language Learners (ELLs), representing a multitude of languages and cultures. The division places students of immigrant families who have no social or educational experience speaking English in the newcomer program. In order to gain a deep understanding of the musical experience provided for newcomer students, I interviewed the music teacher, building administrator, and division coordinator of English language services. Three semi-structured interviews informed the data analysis, using intrinsic motivational theory as a theoretical framework, with the notion that the three participants upheld the conditions of accessing newcomer students' inherent motivation.

Results indicated that education professionals perceived that music, when taught through a culturally responsive philosophy, welcomes newcomer students into the school community; develops a positive student disposition for learning each other's cultures and the new culture to which they are trying to assimilate; enhances meaning regarding language acquisition and development of identity; and engenders competence, putting the students at the center of learning. Therefore, music education should receive strong consideration when planning instruction for newcomer students and ELLs in general. Furthermore, music educators should receive pre-service and in-service training on how to effectively teach students of diverse cultures and languages with a culturally

responsive teaching philosophy. Newcomer programs could also benefit from collaboration between music educators, ESL educators, and culturally representative musicians in the community. The implementation of these recommendations could potentially result in stronger cultural identities among immigrant students and more efficient English language acquisition for ELLs.

## 1. Introduction

The United States is a pluralistic society, representing many nationalities, races, and languages (Scherler, 2005; Campbell, 2018). In 2018, the country's foreign-born population reached 44.7 million (13.5%), an increase of 10.4 million immigrants since 2010 (US Census Bureau, 2018). A greater margin (21.9%) of the population ages 5 years and over speaks a language other than English (2018). That number includes approximately 12 million children (ages 5-17) who speak a language other than English, with 2.3 million children who speak English less than "very well" (2018). This school-aged population of children is known as English language learners (ELLs).

Greater numbers of ELLs are enrolled in school every year (Calderón, 2011; NCES, 2020). In 2017, approximately 10.1% of public school students in the United States identified as ELLs, a rise of 1.2 million students since 2000 (NCES, 2020). According to Freeman and Freeman (2007), by 2030, nearly 40% of the school-age population will speak a language other than English at home. The National Center for Education Statistics (2020) indicates that in the fall of 2017, public school students who identified with a race or ethnicity other than White represented 52% of the student population. In that same year, about 31% of public school students were enrolled in schools where minority students comprised at least 75% of the student population. This new data suggests that the minority student population is the new majority.

Within diverse ethnic student populations reside a myriad of complex backgrounds and characteristics. Many classrooms across the country contain a multiplicity of languages and diverse cultures (Cooper & Grimm-Anderson, 2007). Of ELLs, some are second- or third- generation U.S. citizens, with 10-15 percent of the ELL

population representing newcomer immigrant children (Calderón, 2011).

In recent years music education researchers have turned their attention to the experiences of ‘other’ learners, including students from ethnic minority groups, immigrants, and refugees (Ilari, 2017; Suárez-Orozco, Pimentel, & Martin 2009; Soto, 2011; Lum & Campbell, 2009; Kelly-McHale, 2013; Howell, 2011). According to Ilari, “understanding the ‘other’, in and through music is no trivial task, yet a necessary one in the globalized world” (2017, p. 539). The task of understanding the myriad of student cultures and implementing a diverse, representative curriculum presents challenges, including the need for policies and attitudes regarding pedagogy, values, and teaching strategies (Scherler, 2005; Kelly-McHale, 2013; Ilari 2017). Studies in music education for diverse learners suggest that music might serve as a vehicle for self-expression, agency, and integration as children from ethnic minority groups, immigrants, and refugees navigate different social communities (Rousseau et al., 2005; Howell, 2011; Green, 2011; Ilari, 2017). Ilari says:

Furthermore, collective musical experiences may offer emotional safe spaces for students from immigrant, refugee, and ethnic minority groups to express themselves, as they synchronize their bodies and instruments with peers, giving room to self and group expression, and social cohesion. (p. 537)

This necessitates the exploration of the impact of a music curriculum for diverse learners. While diverse learners can refer to those needing specific support for intellectual, cognitive, physical, and emotional needs and equity for varying racial and ethnic backgrounds, this study follows the path of language and music education for ELLs, and specifically newcomer students.



## **English Language Learners**

English language learners (ELLs) are students whose first language is one other than English (Scherler, 2005; Freeman & Freeman, 2007; Calderón, 2011). ELLs work to learn the English language, as either a second or third language, as a part of their curricular school day (Freeman & Freeman, 2007; Calderón, 2011). These students are also described as Limited English Proficient (LEP), meaning that they come from language-minority households who are not proficient in English (Scherler, 2005; Freeman & Freeman, 2007). ELLs are given only a short time to learn English before they are tested in English in reading, mathematics, science, and social studies (Freeman & Freeman, 2007). They are also assessed and expected to participate in active and creative subjects like physical education, art, and music (Calderón, 2011; Howell, 2011). Thus, they receive education in English as a second language (ESL), a program that provides intensive instruction in English for students with limited English proficiency (Scherler, 2005; Freeman & Freeman, 2007; Calderón, 2011).

The US government has many legislations and rulings in place to secure a free and equal education for diverse learners, including newcomer immigrants and second- and third-generation ELLs. In addition to the Fourteenth Amendment, which ensures equal protection, the 1964 Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination based on race, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, or creed (Scherler, 2005). In 1974, the Equal Education Opportunities Act required that ELL students must be mainstreamed into regular classes for certain instruction. In the same year the Bilingual Education Act stated:

In such courses or subjects of study as art, music, and physical education, a

program of bilingual education shall make provisions for the participation of children of limited English-speaking ability in regular classes (1974).

Additionally, in 1974, the Supreme Court, in *Lau v. Nichols* (Bangura & Muo, 2001), ruled that school districts must provide special programs for ELL students. Furthermore, in the case of *Plyler v. Doe* in 1982, the Supreme Court ruled that children of illegal immigrants must be granted a free public education (U.S. Courts, 1982).

Several different types of programs offered in public school settings have emerged from these legislations and rulings: (1) ESL (2) transitional bilingual education programs (3) English immersion, and (4) two-way bilingual education (Scherler, 2005). ESL programs in the elementary schools provide pull-out instruction, meaning that the students leave their mainstream classes according to a schedule created by the ESL teacher to attend a ESL class (Scherler, 2005; Calderón, 2011). Transitional bilingual programs offer content area instruction in the student's first language while the student is exposed to English by being mainstreamed into the English-only speaking classes, or content area classes such as physical education, music, and art (Scherler, 2005; Freeman & Freeman, 2007; Calderón, 2011). Students transition into mainstream classes if they demonstrate a certain level of English proficiency (Scherler, 2005; Freeman & Freeman, 2007). In structured English immersion programs, teachers instruct in English at a level appropriate to the class of ELLs, orient toward maximizing instruction in English, and use English for 70% to 90% of instructional time (Scherler, 2005; Cooper & Grimm-Anderson, 2007). Some characteristics of two-way or dual-immersion programs include: (1) classes comprised of native English-speaking students as well as ELLs, (2) English speakers learning a second language at the same time that the ELLs are learning English,

(3) both groups of students acting as linguistic models for each one, and (4) the emphasizing the mastery of the regular school curriculum (Scherler, 2005; Calderón, 2011). Unfortunately, school division's selection of instructional methods "may be compromised by financially-driven forces rather than the most effective instructional practices" (Scherler, 2005, p. 8).

### **Newcomer students**

Newcomer students (sometimes referred to as "refugees") are ELLs who are first-generation, newly arrived immigrant children (Calderón, 2011). Families of newcomer students have varied motivations for moving to a new country, including socioeconomic reasons and/or fears of persecution due to ethnic, religious, or political reasons (Ilari, 2017). Many newcomers come from highly educated backgrounds, demonstrating literacy and competency in math, science, geography, and history, but they require word labels in the English-language to communicate their knowledge (2011). Some newcomers, however, have faced great obstacles to access opportunities and safety in the United States, missing years of schooling in their native countries (Calderón, 2011; Ramirez & Taylor Jaffee, 2016). Some of their educational settings might have looked vastly different than American schools (Oxman-Martinez & Choi, 2014). These students require intensive immediate interventions in language and literacy before they can engage with grade-level subject matter (Calderón, 2011).

The first months of arrival are particularly challenging for newcomer students, who often feel isolated, inadequate, and disengaged (Howell, 2011; Ilari, 2017). Newcomers are forced to learn a new language, along with new social and cultural rules, presenting academic and self-esteem challenges (Ilari, 2017). They have to navigate their

prior experiences of trauma while balancing their current search for identity in a new land and feeling pride for their native country (Rousseau et al., 2005; Calderón, 2011). Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2001), offer an important consideration in the success of immigrant children:

Importantly, while all children will be transformed by immigration, the ‘ethos of reception,’ or the opportunities and affordances, along with the attitudes and beliefs held by the members of the new country towards immigration and their group in particular, will determine the quality of their experience in the new homeland. (p. 536)

Suárez-Orozco et al. (2009) discovered the importance of relationships for newcomer immigrant children and how their academic and social engagement directly correlated with their success. Oxman-Martinez and Choi (2014) also explored the experiences of inclusion or perhaps exclusion for newcomers and the potential benefits or detriment that it can cause. They found that a sense of acceptance within social groups and the school community could determine a successful outcome for newcomer students. They also emphasized the value of language ability, empowering newcomers to effectively and confidently communicate with their peers and teachers.

In addition to the previously described ESL programs, some school divisions establish a newcomer center to serve students who enter school with little or no English-language skills (Freeman & Freeman, 2007). This might take shape in its own facility for newcomers or in self-contained classrooms within a school community (Freeman & Freeman, 2007; Calderón, 2011). These schools or programs are designed to not only help newcomer students acquire intensive English-language instruction, but also to

facilitate their assimilation into the public school system (Scherler, 2005). These programs may then seek opportunities to transition students into mainstream classes. Freeman & Freeman (2007) suggests pairing newcomers with partners who speak the same primary language but also are fluent in English. They claim, “When newcomers enter a mainstream classroom where the teacher does not speak their first language, they are often overwhelmed by the new setting, different expectations, and the new language” (p. 99).

### **Music Education for English Language Learners**

Taking the language, social, cultural, socioeconomic, and academic challenges into account, music comes to mind as a powerful tool in transitioning newcomer students to a new community and way of learning (Scherler, 2005; Howell, 2011; Engh, 2013). In Scherler’s dissertation (2005), she accounts for the euphoric feeling that music provides as described by Cantoni-Harvey (1987):

The joy of being an outstanding student of art, dance, or music can offset the pain of discouragement or frustration she may feel in some other classes, and reduce her temptation to drop out of school before graduation. (p. 169)

This aesthetic purpose for arts instruction highlights one of the benefits of music education for newcomer students.

In a comprehensive literature review, Engh (2013) outlines the benefits of music for English language learning. He breaks down the research into five categories: (1) sociological considerations, (2) cognitive science, (3) first language acquisition, (4) second language acquisition, and (5) practical pedagogical resources. From a sociological standpoint, anthropologists argue that humans may have developed the use of song before

speech. Music also establishes a sense of community and “social harmony, creates a safe space to experience learning collectively, and contributes to the building of a community” (p. 114). The use of music and collective singing can promote a feeling of belonging. He claims that music can break down boundaries between the various cultural communities to which students belong. He offers the following statement regarding teaching with music from popular culture:

Therefore, use of music from Pop Culture allows a window to the target language of ‘their culture’ and not only works to bridge the gap between generations, between predefined teacher-student roles and between the stereotypical formal and informal learning environments, but also validates and empowers “their music”, “their language”, and “their culture.” (p. 115)

Familiar songs can provide a culturally rich resource and explain how culture, language, and identity are connected around the world (2013).

Engh (2013) justified the use of music in English language learning through a cognitive science perspective. He said, “Cognitive research investigates the anatomic structure of the brain and its neural functions, suggesting that language and music have important points of convergence and/or overlap” (p. 115). Levitin and Menon (2003) connected chord sequences and sentence structure of spoken or sign language and through MRI scans, detected music processing in the left inferior frontal cortex, which is where language is developed over time. Salcedo (2002) focused her attention on expressive musical processing in the right hemisphere and how most academic learning occurs in the left hemisphere, placing students in a super learning experience. She also traced the cognitive effects of music and language, including its ability to lower anxiety,

boost memory, further conceptual learning, improve pronunciation and grammar, enhance cultural awareness and sensitivity, focus attention, motivate, and provide academic reinforcement. Schön et al. (2007) confirmed that “learning is optimal when the conditions for both the emotional/arousal and linguistic functions are fulfilled” (p. 982) and gave credit to the power of song in reaching both avenues.

Although processes involved in first language acquisition were not part of the current study, it does merit attention that musical vocalizations in infants precedes speech and the aural reception and act of singing aids in developing language (Engh, 2013). Engh (2013) also gives attention to the benefits of music in second language acquisition. He notes that music lowers affective filters, making students more relaxed and thereby more receptive to language learning. He says that popular music can provide meaningful, authentic texts for the students and act as a motivational tool. He reiterates that when music is situated as an aid in the language classroom, “both cognitive and metacognitive strategies are enhanced, affective exploration is increased, and the student is more receptive to language inputs” (p. 118). He claims music assists in vocabulary recall, involuntary mental rehearsal, and language specific skills, such as aural comprehension, grammar, pronunciation, and phonetics.

Engh (2013) concludes that despite strong empirical evidence and theoretical basis for the benefits of music as an aid in language acquisition, little curricular literature exists to equip teachers to utilize music as a tool. The exhaustive list of benefits warrants further study and development of resources of music education for ELLs so that language teachers may feel empowered to utilize song in the classroom and music educators may have the tools to reach across social boundaries to tap into the cultural richness of the

students in their classrooms and develop their language skills.

### **In the Field of Music Education for ELLs**

Some of the current music education research movements can provide insight into effective music instruction for ELLs—and particularly newcomer immigrant children—to provide the benefits. Definitions from these music education concepts will inform points made in the analysis of this study.

#### *Multicultural Music Education*

The initial push for a more diverse national music curriculum compounded at the Tanglewood Symposium of 1967 prompted in part by the Civil Rights Movement (Mark, 2020). In 1972, the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM), which sets minimum standards for the granting of degrees and other credentials, revised its criteria "to include a non-Western requirement for programs leading to a baccalaureate degree in music" (Report of the Society for Ethnomusicology's Education Committee, 1986). In 1983, Gamble devoted an article of the *Music Educators Journal* to a multicultural music curriculum, claiming, "In an era in which relevance plays such an important role in the education of young people, the study of world musics is especially important, for it belongs to real people who are living now" (p. 39). By 1994, nine national music standards approved by the Department of Education obtained language that broadly implied multicultural content, such as "a varied repertoire of music," and "understanding music in relation to history and culture" (Consortium of National Arts Education Associations, 1994, pp. 26, 28–29). Music of many cultural backgrounds began to enter teacher training programs, such as Kodály, Orff, World Music Drumming, and Smithsonian Folkways (Campbell, 2018; Wang & Humphreys, 2009), and general music curricula and instruction (Campbell et al., 2005).



The most recent US national music standards emerged in 2014, written in the context of the artistic process prioritizing music literacy (NAfME, 2014). A reference to cultural context appears in generating musical ideas starting in fourth grade, in analyzing how the context informs the response starting in fourth grade, in analyzing structure and context in preparation of a performance starting in first grade, and in interpreting expressive qualities starting in sixth grade. While the additions presented in the new national and state standards represent progress, considering the mission set by Gamble thirty years prior, these standards do not yet satisfy the cultural representation of students in the classroom with a multiplicity of languages and ethnicities (Kelly-McHale, 2013; Campbell, 2018).

On a state level relevant to the location of this study, the Music Standards of Learning in Virginia updated in 2020 devote one of five strands to “History, Culture, and Citizenship” mandating that:

Students hear and understand musical works from many time periods and places and respond to a variety of music and musical styles from diverse composers and performers. Students identify the values, roles, and reasons for the creation and performance of music from the perspective of many time periods, people, and places. Students develop a lifelong engagement with music as a performer, community member, supporter, and advocate (p. vii).

Standards throughout grades K-12 generally state that “The student will explore historical and cultural aspects of music” (p. 9). A more overt direction for implementing multicultural music appears in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade music standards, stating that the student will “Listen to and describe music from a variety of world cultures” (p. 13). The general

statements lead teachers in the direction of multicultural music education, but they do not explicitly emphasize diverse cultural music as a priority in representing student populations. These guidelines also do not equip music teachers with pedagogy and instructional methods to authentically provide music experiences for students of diverse cultural backgrounds. Perhaps a better understanding of the complexities of multicultural education throughout pre-service and in-service training would equip music educators to adopt a wider scope of cultural perspectives in the classroom.

Banks & Banks (2004) described that the essential purpose of the multicultural education field is “to reform the schools and other educational institutions so that students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social-class groups will experience educational equality” (p. 3). They developed a framework for understanding the issues of social justice in the classroom, consisting of (1) content integration, (2) knowledge construction, (3) prejudice reduction, (4) equity pedagogy, and (5) an empowering school culture and social structure.

Content integration refers to “the extent to which teachers use examples and content from a variety of cultures and groups to illustrate key concepts, principles, generalizations, and theories in their subject area or discipline (Banks & Banks, 2004, p. 16). The education field has traditionally focused on European American values and perspectives; a multicultural curriculum instead provides an arsenal of cultural experiences (Campbell, 2018). The process of knowledge construction describes the ways in which ideas and experiences are formed, noting that vantage points of teachers have profound effects on ideology, human interests, values, and biases presented in the classroom (Banks & Banks, 2004). Banks & Banks (2004) urge teachers to consider their

own implicit cultural assumptions when interacting with students, giving space for students to navigate the world's perspectives. An essential part of multicultural education pertains to prejudice reduction, which addresses stereotypes of minority groups (2004), acknowledges the consequences of systemic and human reactions to those stereotypes, and works to lessen prejudice. Equity pedagogy allows all learners in the classroom, regardless of ethnic, cultural, or social background to succeed to their highest potential. It requires teachers to modify their instruction to eliminate their own bias and empower their students to develop as unique individuals. Finally, creating an empowering school culture and social structure encompasses a multicultural mindset adoption from the entire community of students, teachers, and staff. This involves school level experiences that provide equal opportunity and accessibility for students, eliminating the social constructs that limit student participation based on their status or heritage.

Banks and Banks (2004) articulate four levels of curricular reforms, qualifying teachers' application of a multicultural approach. These four levels include (1) contributions, (2) additive, (3) transformation, and (4) social action. These levels are intended to make the overhaul of curricular design sequential and more manageable for schools so that the process can result as genuine and authentic. The ultimate goal of multicultural education, social action, or social justice, realizes the full extent of multicultural ideals, eradicates the impacts of prejudice, and provides a more open, inclusive learning environment.

With its central position in many cultures and traditions around the world, music seems like a promising means of learning and honoring heritage and embracing equity (Campbell, 2018). Multicultural music education teaches the music of diverse cultures

and provides a platform for social justice. Campbell (2018) asserts, “An equitable musical curriculum must incorporate a range of musical cultures in meaningful and equitable fashion” (p. 86). Thus, Banks and Banks’ (2004) four levels act as a guide for music educators, sequencing multicultural music implementation steps from singing songs of the civil rights movement (contributive) all the way to participating and/or performing in cultural community events (social action).

Research on multicultural music education not only suggests that this form of authenticity in musical experiences is enriching, but also imperative (Campbell, 2018). These authentic musical experiences acknowledging and valuing a wide range of cultures from around the world can convey to newcomer students a sense of welcome and respect (Scherler, 2005; Soto, 2011). This message can portray that their own cultural backgrounds and experiences would be accepted.

#### *Culturally Responsive Music Education*

In recent years, music education researchers have moved beyond the tenets of multicultural music education to view culturally responsive music teaching as another important consideration for diversifying music programs (Lind & McKoy, 2016; Campbell, 2018; Kelly-McHale, 2013). According to Gay (2010), culturally responsive teaching (CRT) involves “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (p. 31). It engages youth in education by using students’ cultures, languages, and lived experiences (Ramirez & Taylor Jaffee, 2016). A fundamental feature of culturally responsive teaching is the trusting and caring relationship built by teachers with their students (Gay, 2010).

Similar to the breakdown of pillars in multicultural education, Gay (2010)

describes six characteristic features of CRT, including (1) validating, (2) comprehensive, (3) multidimensional, (4) empowering, (5) transformative, and (6) emancipatory. CRT validates students by drawing connections between their “academic abstractions and lived sociocultural realities” (p. 31) and suggests that their culture, language, and ideas are appreciated, respected, and valued. CRT is comprehensive because it honors and develops the whole child, constantly contextualizing new information within their own realm of understanding. CRT is multidimensional, comprising curriculum content, learning context, classroom climate, student-teacher relationships, instructional techniques, classroom management, and performance assessments and the depths that cultural experience and perspectives can permeate aspects of teaching. CRT empowers students to “take ownership of their learning, fosters their self-efficacy, and continually values their culturally situated knowledge as an important means of achieving academic success, rather than a barrier to it” (Lind & McKoy, 2016). CRT is transformative because it questions traditional education practices and allows all students to learn to their full potential (Gay, 2010). Finally, CRT is characterized as being emancipatory because it “lifts the veil of presumed absolute authority from conceptions of scholarly truth typically taught in schools [and suggests that] no single version of ‘truth’ is total and permanent” (p. 38).

This comes to fruition in the music classroom when music teachers “move beyond materials and repertoire to delve more deeply into the intricacies of culturally situated musical expression” (Lind & McKoy, 2016, p. 20). Culturally responsive music education occurs “in valuing the varying culturally-specific knowledge bases and musical ways of knowing that their students bring to the music classroom and using these varying

points of reference to facilitate and maximize student learning in music” (p. 35). On the other hand, the efforts of music teachers to develop a truly culturally responsive curriculum is in vain if the values are not embedded in their school environment. Music teachers may also utilize student family music experiences to establish a connection between school and community by inviting family members to perform in the school (Lind & McKoy, 2016; Lum & Campbell, 2009). The philosophy of CRT is most fully carried out when school and local communities, as a whole, prioritize the identities of the students residing in it (Gay, 2010).

The philosophy of CRT is compelling for the education of newcomer students as their “cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles” (Gay, 2010) experience a great shift when transitioning to US culture and schools. Taking a CRT approach in music could potentially validate and empower newcomer students to take pride in their heritage and ownership of their learning. A strong sense of affirmed cultural identity can provide a firm foundation for new growth in newcomer students.

### *Musical Identity*

Student identity has become a major consideration in curriculum planning and instruction. According to Oxman-Martinez and Choi (2014), “Identity lays the foundation for how individuals view themselves and their future prospects” (p. 24). Ilari (2017) groups identities into social and ethnic, each constantly interacting and intertwining with one another. Students belong to different social groups, including ethnic and cultural, while also obtaining the beliefs and practices of one or more cultural communities. Just as experiences with different cultures are eminently social as they are directly linked to the ongoing process of identity construction, “music is typically experienced in a social

realm, and is therefore related to the development and construction of identity” (Ilari, 2017, p. 528).

MacDonald, Hargreaves, and Miell (2002) situated a position that “music is a fundamental channel of communication, and we argue that it can act as a medium through which people can construct new identities and shift existing ones in the same way as spoken language” (p. 10). The authors divided musical identities into two categories: identity in music (IIM) and music in identity (MII).

IIM involves the conceptualization of self, defined by the roles established by the social influences of music. These include general roles such as musician, performer, composer, or teacher as well as specific roles tied to certain instruments or conductors. These identities reach past the ensemble constructs to the way people relate to music with labels like “I play a few chords on the guitar,” or “I am tone deaf” (Hargreaves, MacDonald, & Miell, 2017). In contrast, MII is the result of the process of using music to develop identity and define one's self. This notion suggests that the way people relate to music in all aspects of life (personal, family, community, school, professional, religious, etc.) contributes to the development of who people are as individuals, particularly in the lives of children. Therefore, this study resides in the category of MII when discussing musical identity for newcomer students.

Through music, students can develop and deepen their own individual identities while also gaining a better understanding of the identities of other students (Soto, 2011; Gamble, 1983), as many musical identities coexist in the music classroom among students from a wide range of social, cultural, ethnic, religious, and national backgrounds (Ilari, 2017). Green (2011) offers a comprehensive definition of the identity formation

process that occurs in musical learning:

Musical identities are forged from a combination of personal, individual musical experiences on one hand, and membership in various social groups—from the family to the nation-state and beyond—on the other hand. They encompass musical tastes, values, practices (including reception activities such as listening or dancing), skills, and knowledge; and they are wrapped up with how, where, when, and why those tastes, values, practices, skills, and knowledge were acquired or transmitted. (p. 1)

This description envelops how vast, yet personal, musical identity is. Musical identity is heavily influenced by students' unique lived experiences, cultural heritage, current social groups, and daily activities.

With the arrays of social influences and the diversity of cultural backgrounds among students, students potentially construct, reconstruct, and continually shape multiple musical identities throughout their lives (Soto, 2011). Children may negotiate globalized identities with other identities formed at both the local and national level (Green, 2011). Soto (2011) claimed that:

If children are developing an affiliation with the dominant culture (such as mainstream American) and an association with the culture of their own or their parents' (or grandparents') origin (Mexican), then it stands to reason that these children may also be developing a musical identity within each culture, thus constructing for themselves a bimusical identity. (p. 12)

The music classroom hosts first-, second-, or third-generation immigrant children, with families obtaining a proud ownership of their heritage. Thus, children develop and



navigate their own multiple musical identities.

Soto (2011) identified three aspects of musical identity, including (1) knowledge of the repertoire, (2) participation in each musical culture, and (3) understanding the culture in which the music is situated. Children's repertoire of music can come from a multitude of sources, such as family music, church music, camp music, popular music, and cultural music (Lum & Campbell, 2009; Soto, 2011). The evolution of technology has changed how children tap into popular music (Ilari, 2017; Lum & Campbell, 2009). Children participate in musical cultures by singing, dancing, listening, moving, and playing, but each of these actions might look different in multiple settings, such as school, community, or family (Ilari, 2017; Green, 2011). Cultural understanding of students' musical experiences roots children in the joys and values of that culture and opens their awareness of the world around them (Campbell, 2018; Ilari, 2017).

Music educators around the world are giving a nod to more informal and community methods of music making, since not all cultural music experiences reflect those in the music classroom (Green, 2011):

They suggest that music education can gain in many different ways when it acts in parity and interchangeably with both global and local musical traditions and practices; and that global and local musical traditions and practices can complement and fill many gaps left by more formal approaches to music teaching and learning. (p. 18-19)

This adaptation mirrors culturally responsive music teaching, in which music teachers welcome the ideas and experiences of the students in the learning and creative process (Lind & McKoy, 2016) bringing the cultural values and identities into the music classroom. This form of musical identity development embraces musical learning outside

of the music classroom, reaching out to musical learning opportunities of diverse cultures in the community (Green, 2011; Lum & Campbell, 2009).

The essence of musical identity in the classroom is that music educators acknowledge and embrace the identities of all learners. Newcomer and refugee children experience a deep impact of a new culture and language, navigating new musical identities while seeking resemblances of their own heritage. These students often struggle as they develop and construct their bilingual (or even multilingual), bicultural, and bimusical identities (Soto, 2011; Ilari, 2017). The music classroom provides a lens into what musical identities are accepted in their new culture. An education without reference to newcomer students' identities and cultures could be damaging to the child (Soto, 2011). Thus, it is the role of the music educator to seek linguistic and cultural representation of each child in the curriculum and repertoire and welcome the ideas and input of children, no matter their diverse identities (Scherler, 2005; Green, 2011; Campbell, 2018; Ilari, 2017).

### **Cultural Ethnicity and Race**

The discussions of multicultural music education, culturally responsive music teaching, and musical identity encompass all social constructs, including but not limited to ethnicity and race (Campbell, 2018; Lind & McKoy, 2016). The lines of distinction between these two terms are blurry at best. Biologically speaking, race connects a group of people based on their physical traits (Bhopal, 2014). According to the social sciences, however, this definition is extremely limiting based on the cultural characteristics shared by racial groups and social injustices historically transgressed upon people of color (Bhopal, 2014; DeLorenzo, 2016). Bhopal defines ethnicity as implying one more of the

following: 1) shared origin or social background, 2) shared culture and traditions which are distinctive, maintained between generations, and lead to a sense of identity and group-ness, and 3) common language or religious tradition. A common theme between race and ethnicity is shared origins. To suggest that the two are exclusive from one another would limit the richness of cultures that identify with one or the other.

The impact of race in education merits noting. DeLorenzo (2016) attributes a disparity in educational success among students of color due to the lack of racial representation among teachers. According to DeLorenzo, students of color account for 40% of the public school population in the United States, while teachers of color represent only 17% of the workforce. This not only creates a lack of voice from people of color in instructional and curricular decisions, but it also provides a lack of models of success for students of color. Music educators have contributed to Eurocentric curricula when it focuses solely on Western art music traditions and excludes genres like jazz, hip hop, and R&B (DeLorenzo, 2016; Lind & McKoy, 2016). I would be remiss to not acknowledge the call for social justice for people of color in music education.

This study, however, emphasizes the role of culture in regards to ethnicity due to its focus on language and countries of origin outside of the United States. ELLs and newcomers might refer to students who are Black or Latino alluding to issues of race. Other ELLs and newcomers fall under the category of White, but still speak a first language other than English and possess conflicting cultural identities. The purpose of this definition is to clarify the intention of the study, but it also acknowledges the messiness of race and ethnicity.

### **Positionality of the Researcher**

I acknowledge my own positionality in pursuit of understanding cultural identities and access of the English Language for immigrant children. I am a white, cisgender, female, English-speaking music teacher who grew up in a homogeneously white, suburban area. I took great pride in the amount of opportunities I had to excel in supported music programs with an array of ensemble types, not realizing that they were available as unearned privileges. I acknowledge that I never had to consider how my race or cultural background would impact my successes or failures. I participated in Spanish classes in high school as a foreign language, but rarely encountered ELLs in my peer group.

Like many pre-service teachers, my undergraduate coursework and training focused heavily on Western art music as a source of study. I loved singing Black spirituals and African and Latin American folk songs in choirs, but they were mostly described as “fun” and lacked the background study that they deserved. I entered the teaching profession feeling like I had all of the answers and believing that my students should reside at the center of my teaching, but not having the toolkit or an authentic perspective on how to apply culturally responsive teaching.

My first teaching job was at a school for the deaf and the blind, where I taught music in grades K-12 to a racially and ethnically diverse population. I was so overwhelmed by the special education field that I worked to understand their disabilities and musical ability, but I did not yet see the value in considering their musical identity in curricular and instructional decisions. My next position was teaching middle school choir in a rural county, in which I encountered Spanish and Russian speakers, but people of color and ELLs were still the minority. In fact, ELLs could not always access the fine arts

because electives conflicted with ESL instruction in their schedules. During that time, I started my graduate coursework, enrolling in Kodály summer workshops and engaging in discussions about culturally responsive teaching and authentically sourced music material. I learned that the content can equip a pedagogical sequence, but more importantly, it can represent the cultural identities of the students in the classroom.

Currently, I teach elementary general music in a school with a 50% ELL population, encompassing 26 languages and 29 countries of origin. Ideally, my philosophy agrees with adapting my pedagogy to giving all students a meaningful music experience that is culturally representative and developmentally appropriate, but practically, my instruction based on my position and training often falls short. In my research, I seek to better understand the lived experiences of marginalized students so that I can more fully serve the students in my classroom through the avenue of music, no matter their ethnicity or race.

### **Justification for the Study**

Ramirez and Taylor Jaffee (2016) begin the conversation of culturally responsive teaching for newcomer students in a content classroom, but their study focuses on high school students rather than elementary age children and a social studies classroom rather than a music classroom. Although scholars have focused on musical identity in the 21st century (Hargreaves, MacDonald, & Miell, 2017; Green, 2011; Ilari, 2017), limited studies have been conducted with a focus on the elementary music classroom (Soto, 2012). Howell (2011) explored the social benefits ascertained in the music classroom along with the instructional strategies that most benefit immigrant and refugee children, but the study took place in Australia and her findings could have varying implications in

the United States. Scherler (2005) interviewed elementary music teachers in Texas regarding their instructional and curricular decisions when teaching ELLs, but concluded that more research was necessary to understand the newcomer experience in the music classroom. Soto (2012) conducted an ethnographic study of the formation of musical identity in elementary ELLs, but called for “future research devoted to the impact of music and its effectiveness on a dual language or bilingual curriculum...” (p. 214). The latter two studies focused on schools with strong Hispanic populations, but Soto also raised the importance of “Further exploration of what it means to be bimusical and how it may be defined in different cultural and ethnic groups can add to a teacher’s understanding of how to teach children of various ethnicities” (p. 215).

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate the philosophy and processes of an elementary newcomer program and to explore the perceived benefits of the musical experience for newcomer students, including how the program facilitated the transition from full-time ELL services in a self-contained class to a general classroom. The studied school division serves a high population of students who are ELLs from a multitude of ethnicities and languages. The division places students of immigrant families newly arrived to the United States who have no social or educational experience speaking English in the newcomer program at Blue Ridge Elementary School. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the musical, lived experiences of an elementary newcomer program, I interviewed the music teacher, building administrator, and division English Language (EL) coordinator. I sought to answer the following sub-questions:

1. What are the perceived benefits by school personnel of music instruction for

newcomer students?

2. What musical pedagogical tools are particularly helpful for teachers in their work teaching newcomer students?
3. How do educators perceive that music can help newcomers find a sense of identity while immersing into a new culture?
4. How does a diverse, pluralistic population create a complex learning environment in the music classroom?

### **Theoretical Framework**

Intrinsic motivational theory (Ginsberg, 2005) provides a theoretical framework for the data analysis of this study. Intrinsic motivation occurs when, lacking any external motivators, students participate in learning due the interest and value of the learning content. Ginsberg argues that intrinsic motivation resides in learners across all cultural and ethnic groups, and that “When people can see that what they are learning makes sense and is important according to their values and perspectives, their motivation emerges” (p. 221). She purposefully alludes to Culturally Responsive Teaching because it honors the diverse perspectives, values, and talents that students bring to the classroom (Ginsberg, 2005; Gay, 2010). In order to explore the inherent benefits of music education for newcomer students, I explore how the music curriculum taps into students’ intrinsic motivation, understanding that the students come from diverse cultural and language backgrounds.

Four conditions of the learning environment frame intrinsic motivational theory (Ginsberg, 2005): 1) establishing inclusion, 2) developing a positive attitude, 3) enhancing meaning, and 4) engendering competence. Establishing inclusion embraces the

principles and practices of a learning environment in which students and teachers feel welcomed, respected, and connected to one another. Developing a positive attitude relates to the principles and practices that contribute to, through personal and cultural relevance, a favorable disposition toward learning. Enhancing meaning expands and strengthens student learning, building on their existing identities and developing new identities as valued participants in the classroom. Engendering competence uses authentic learning experiences to help students become more effective at what they value. Ginsberg (2005) says, “The four conditions simultaneously interact to encourage and support intrinsic motivation within and across student groups” (p. 221).

The four conditions provide a lens through which to sort interview responses, with the general assumption that the music curriculum used in a diverse newcomer program satisfies intrinsic motivation. This aids in illuminating ways that music as content provides a vehicle for effective and thorough learning. I seek how a music classroom can give newcomer students a sense of belonging in a new culture and give them confidence for future success.



## **2. Literature Review**

Many researchers depict the music classroom as an ideal setting for embracing diverse cultures and communities (Campbell, 2018; DeLorenzo, 2016). Engh (2013) provided an exhaustive list of reasons to justify music used in language, social, and cognitive development for ELLs. Although many scholars agree (Banks & Banks, 2004; Campbell et al., 2005; Lind & McKoy, 2016), research literature has only tangentially related to the benefits of music instruction for elementary newcomer students in regards to language development and cultural identity.

This peripheral review of research literature begins with studies related to the newcomer educational experience in North American schools, exploring how culturally relevant pedagogy, relationships, and creative expression impact newcomer students' successful and authentic learning. Then, I review the research literature that shows significant evidence of music's beneficial role in language acquisition, along with the secondary physiological and neurological benefits. The third section entails studies related to musical identity of ELLs. The final section comprises studies that look at the instructional methods selected by music educators and their effects on ELLs.

### **General and Creative Educational Experience of Newcomer Students**

A great deal of research exists regarding newcomers' initial transition into the public schools for students in grades Kindergarten through 12. This discussion includes elements of culturally responsive teaching, social relationships and inclusion, and the effects on language acquisition. Ramirez and Taylor Jaffee (2016) explored the newcomer experience through the lens of culturally responsive teaching in the social studies classroom in a high school setting. Suárez-Orozco et al. (2009) discovered that

positive relationships in schools directly correlated with the academic and language success of immigrant children through their mixed-method study. Oxman-Martinez and Choi (2014) dove deeper into the adverse effects of social isolation that immigrant children sometimes experience in the school system. Rousseau et al. (2005) touched on the topic of music's effects on newcomer students through the related approach of creative expression through writing and storytelling. The selection of literature in this section focuses solely on the newcomer population of ELLs since the purpose of this research seeks to understand the newcomer experience in music education. Each of these studies holds relevance for this study, as the music classroom potentially acts as a source for culturally responsive teaching, positive social relationships, and language acquisition (Lind & McKoy, 2016; Engh, 2013).

#### *Culturally Responsive Teaching for Newcomer Students*

Ramirez and Taylor Jaffee (2016) proposed the idea of education assuming the mantle of culturally responsive active citizenship as it considered the newcomer United States educational experience. They pinpointed the concern that a culturally irrelevant curriculum, lack of multicultural resources, and potentially ineffective social studies teachers due to their lack of cultural knowledge or understanding have critically and negatively shaped the notions of citizenship for newcomer children. They sought to reconceptualize what qualifies good citizenship, focusing on active citizenship education in social studies classrooms for new immigrant students.

Their study employed a qualitative multi-site collective case study design of two teachers by observing, interviewing, and gathering artifacts in high school social studies classrooms in New York and Arizona. The goal of their study was to understand and interpret each case in regard to the principles and intersections of Culturally Responsive

Teaching (CRT) and active citizenship education and to illuminate findings of social studies practices for newcomer immigrant youth in public schools across two states. Data analysis included a cross-case analysis of the case in New York and the case in Arizona, respectively examining the major principles and intersections of CRT and citizenship education. They coded interview transcripts, observation field notes, and classroom artifacts using deductive data analysis examining ways in which the teachers employed the principles of CRT and citizenship education. Finally, they completed an inductive data analysis to examine emerging themes within and across the two case studies.

To provide context behind the two classrooms, Ramirez and Taylor Jaffee (2016) explain the structure of English language learner programs in Arizona and New York (2016). Arizona places its ELLs in four-hour blocks of intense English instructions with math and science classes generally in the afternoon. New York, on the other hand, provides customized programs and services, including bilingual programs, ESL programs, and newcomer programs. They strive to strengthen native language development and content knowledge while learning English and focus on academic, linguistic, social, and emotional wellbeing of their newcomer students. Newcomer programs incorporate family education, where parents can learn about their child's new experiences. Faculty/staff are provided with ongoing professional development to better understand their newcomer students.

Although the two states' programs have different infrastructures, findings indicated that teachers in both systems fostered an open classroom community, wherein students were able to critically inquire about what it meant to be part of a community and the decisions required for living in the society. The benefits of this educational design

provide newcomer students with an ownership of their new culture along with their heritage in a welcoming and nurturing environment. Ramirez and Taylor Jaffee (2016) stated, “In our growing culturally and linguistically diverse public schools in the United States, teachers must consider how to engage newcomer students’ social, cultural, political, and economic backgrounds and experiences” (p. 64).

*The Role of Relationships for Newcomer Students*

Rather than focusing on the citizenship perspective, Suárez-Orozco et al. (2009) explored the effects and significance of relationships for immigrant children. They discovered a discrepancy between newcomer students’ positive attitudes towards school and aspirations for the future, and their lower academic success and lack of retention in schools. They found disproportionate dropout rates and uncovered causes of inherent challenges of migration and language acquisition, thus demanding the need for venues of change and teachers taking on the responsibility of cultural affirmation and language development. Suárez-Orozco et al. claim that social relations provide newcomer students with a variety of protective functions necessary to evade systemic, language, and cultural challenges. These functions include a sense of belonging, emotional support, tangible assistance and information, cognitive guidance, and positive feedback. They define two social relations groups as 1) peers and 2) teachers, counselors, coaches, and other supportive adults.

The purpose of the Suárez-Orozco et al. (2009) study was to examine the contribution of relationships to academic engagement and performance using data from the Longitudinal Immigrant Student Adaptation Study (LISA) of 407 recently arrived immigrant youth from Central America, China, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Mexico. They recruited students from 51 schools in the United States in seven school

districts with high densities of immigrant populations. They identified factors that account for patterns of academic engagement and achievement of the participants in the final year of the study and used correlation analyses and stepwise-regression modeling to shed light on the factors that contributed to these patterns. The recruited students arrived in the United States within the previous five years and included first-generation immigrant students, stratified by region of origin. By the fifth and final year of the study, the sample size had reduced to 309 (57 Central American, 72 Chinese, 60 Dominican, 50 Haitian, and 70 Mexican) youth, ages nine to fourteen. They also attempted to stratify each group equally by gender (57% female and 42% male). Research participants were limited to those who had one working parent and at least one relative residing in the area for a minimum of one year.

Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, they assembled an interdisciplinary research team with a long history of collaboration focusing on the cultural and psychological features of immigration. A team of bilingual/bicultural research assistants (RAs) assisted in conducting interviews in participants' first language to create a more relaxed environment with thorough communication. The research team also recruited cultural advisors to provide guidance on the groups under consideration with which the codirectors did not have specific research expertise. The RAs administered structured student interviews of all participants, which were conducted each year of the study to assess growth and change. Students received questions related to their perceptions on school violence, academic self-efficacy, school-based supportive relationships, cognitive engagement, behavioral engagement, and academic engagement. Each question included a Likert scale, which the researchers then coded and reduced to a 4- or 5-point scale. The

parental interviews were conducted during the first and last years of the study. They embedded standardized fixed-choice question formats in the fifth-year parent interviews to gain quantitative demographic data.

The research team organized and analyzed the qualitative interviews with the aid of FolioViews and ATLAS/ti and performed inductive and deductive development and application of codes across data sources. At the end of the study, they ran Nagin cluster analyses and determined five trajectories of performance—consistently high; consistently low; declining slowly (by half a grade); declining precipitously (by more than a grade and a half); and improving over the course of the study. When writing their findings, the research team made note of significant correlation between the predictor variable and the outcome variables (greater than or equal to the .05 level). They discovered that GPA is highly related to perceptions of school violence and gender, and English language skills are associated with better academic outcomes. Additionally, engaging in self-efficacy behaviors leads to higher grades. They used the ethnographic interviews and a comparative analysis of two representative case studies to complement the quantitative findings and highlight the processes by which school-based supportive relationships can impact students' outcomes.

In the end, Suárez-Orozco et al.'s (2009) mixed-method research data were consistent with their research (Baker, 1999; Rumberger, 2004; Wang, Haertel, & Wahlberg, 1994) that has suggested that positive supportive relationships are particularly important for newcomer immigrant students to “bridge the gap between home and school cultures and provide important feelings of safety and opportunities for success in the school setting” (2009, p. 741). They concluded, “Taken together, these findings suggest

that efforts to understand and bolster immigrant students' relational, cognitive, and behavioral engagement are likely to yield important academic payoffs" (p. 741).

Oxman-Martinez and Choi (2014) dove further into the notion and importance of newcomer relationships. In this study, they explored the experiences of newcomer immigrant children and their parents in relation to social inclusion and exclusion within the school context through their own accounts. They proposed that "identity lays the foundation for how individuals view themselves and their future prospects" (p. 24) and social interactions and social relationships are key defining factors for the development of children's identity. They analyzed four potential factors of exclusion for newcomer children: 1) social isolation, 2) psychological isolation, 3) perceived peer discrimination, and 4) perceived teacher discrimination.

Oxman-Martinez and Choi (2014) highlighted that newcomer children often face the significant differences of educational settings between their original countries and the host countries. They insisted that connections with caring teachers and adults at school can be an important protective factor for immigrant children's psychological isolation. Thus, their study examined whether the factors of inclusion/exclusion and children's outcomes were different between the two urban settlement cities selected in Canada: the greater Montreal (Quebec) and the Toronto (Ontario) areas with focuses in immigration policies and practices and educational policies and practices.

In their quantitative study, they used the New Canadian Children and Youth Study (NCCYS), a national longitudinal survey of the health and well-being of approximately 4,000 immigrant children living in Montreal, Toronto, the Prairies (Winnipeg, Edmonton, Calgary), and Vancouver in Canada. Participants were either first-

or second-generation immigrants within 10 years preceding the beginning of the study, and were within the ages of 4-6 and 11-13. The article they presented focused on 515 newcomer children ages 11-13 from Mainland China, Hong Kong, and the Philippines.

The NCCYS used respondent-driven snowball sampling strategies to identify hard-to-reach and highly mobile immigrant populations. The Community Advisory Councils (CAC) members contacted potential sample families to request permission to introduce a research team member to explain the study and to obtain written consent to participate. With consent, bilingual interviewers conducted interviews in the home of the family that took approximately 2 to 3 hours.

Resources developed by the NCCYS, the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY), and the CAC helped to inform of demographics and assess children's self-esteem and social competence. Academic grades represented students' academic success in the study. Independent variables included inclusive school environment, social isolation, psychological isolation, perceived peer discrimination, and perceived discrimination by teachers. Demographic and background variables included child sex (male or female), parent education, low income family (poverty), ethnic group, length of time since arrival in Canada (years), and settlement region (Toronto or Montreal). Oxman-Martinez and Choi (2014) conducted several types of statistical analyses to make sense of the data collected. They performed a descriptive analysis of the frequencies and means of all study variables, bivariate analyses to compare mean/sampling distribution differences of predictors and outcome variables between the two locations, and a series of multiple regression models to examine the effects of inclusion and exclusion on their developmental outcomes.



Oxman-Martinez and Choi (2014) discovered that based on the family income, 44.4% of the immigrant families lived in poverty. Between the two evenly split representations between the two cities of Montreal and Toronto, they found significant differences for family income (poverty), ethnic group, inclusive school environment and social isolation. The results indicated that more than half of the Montreal sample (53.2%) lived in poverty, as compared with 35.9% of the Toronto sample. The results also revealed that psychological isolation, peer discrimination, and teacher discrimination made significant contributions to explaining variation in self-esteem scores. Inclusive school environment, psychological isolation, perceived discrimination by peers and teachers were highly significant in relation to social competence. The effect of an inclusive school environment was positively related to academic grades, whereas social isolation was negatively associated with academic grades.

Oxman-Martinez and Choi (2014) concluded that “Children’s ability to communicate effectively with peers is related to their language ability as well as their social behavior such as their interactions with peers that either promote or hinder the development of healthy peer relationships” (p. 33). They implored educational institutions to accommodate diversity in their educational policies and practices. They called for schools to “develop a systematic effort to increase a better understanding of different cultures, a greater capacity to communicate with those from other cultures, along with positive attitudes toward other groups among both the majority and the minority” (p. 34).

#### *Creative Expression for Newcomer Students*

The final research study of this section moves away from the impacts of relationship for newcomer students and toward the effects of creative expression.

Rousseau et al. (2005) acted as leaders of creative expression workshops designed for immigrant and refugee children in Quebec, Canada. The program consisted of 12 weekly sessions, each lasting two hours. The aims of the workshops were 1) to enable the children to create/re-create a meaningful and coherent world around their pre-migration and migration experience; 2) to foster reciprocal respect of differences in identity and experience so as to promote bonding between children; 3) to bridge the gap between home and school.

Rousseau et al. (2005) held the creative expression workshops in two elementary schools serving a highly multiethnic population. Immigrant and refugee children attended the workshops to expedite learning French, the mainstream language of Quebec. They conducted their evaluative study during the second semester of classes so that the students had already become fluent in French. They utilized a convenience sampling as they could not randomly assign the children to the experimental or control groups because the workshops were part of the regular school day and the children could not be temporarily switched to another group for the program. Parents signed a consent form in their own language (the form was translated into 18 different languages). The researchers assessed emotional and behavioral symptoms while children experimented with an interactive character named Dominic in a variety of situations. The teachers used the Teacher's Report Form (TRF) to report children's internalizing and externalizing symptoms. They assessed children's self-esteem with the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale (CSCS). They performed two series of analyses based on a univariate generalized linear model (GLM) to assess the effects of the creative expression workshops on the children's emotional symptoms and self-esteem.

Children were from immigrant families originating in 30 different countries (mostly Asian and South American) and the majority of children (68%) were born outside of Canada. In the posttest, children in the experimental groups reported a significantly lower mean level of mental health symptoms than those in the control group and higher mean levels of feelings of popularity and satisfaction. Gender and age did not display any significance in relation with the effects of the workshops on externalizing and internalizing symptoms. In the case of self-esteem, the interaction effect of gender was specific to integration classes, whereas the interaction effect of age tended to be more specific to regular classes.

Rousseau et al. (2005) discovered that “implementing school-based programs to promote the mental health of immigrant and refugee children and prevent psycho emotional problems is quite a challenge because of the diversity of ethnic communities and the complexity of the school system” (p. 183). The creative workshops aided in bridging the gap between the countries of origin and the host country, helping them construct meaning and identity. They found through the creative expression workshops, newcomer children experienced improved self-esteem, expression of emotions, problem solving and conflict resolution.

### *Summary*

In the previously detailed studies, researchers observed the benefits of culturally responsive teaching, positive relationships, social inclusion, and creative expression in the transition of newcomer students to a new school and social culture. Ramirez and Taylor Jaffee (2016) discovered the importance of validating newcomer students’ lived experiences and cultural backgrounds in their new school setting and curricular content classes. They recommended that educational institutions reframe the concept of

citizenship as cultural citizenship in order to embrace diversity. Suárez-Orozco et al. (2009) noted the importance of fostering positive and nurturing relationships to bolster newcomer students' academic and behavioral engagement. This might include parental supports, teacher affirmations, peer approval, and community involvement. Oxman-Martinez and Choi (2014) highlighted the adverse effects of social and cultural exclusion. They claimed, “For immigrant children, a sense of acceptance or a feeling of inclusion within the school community is a crucial part of their successful adaptation process since they have unique characteristics related to ethnicity” (p. 32). Rousseau et al. (2005) explored the impact of creative expression workshops for newly arrived immigrant children, how these workshops facilitate their ability to bridge the gap between their past experiences and their new culture, process their potential trauma or losses and develop a strong sense of identity.

All of these studies reside on the periphery of the potential inherent benefits of music education for newcomer children. Music can easily fall into the category of culturally responsive teaching with curriculum and repertoire, including songs, dances, games, and rhythm patterns from the heritages of the children in the classroom (Lind and McKoy, 2016). Affirming their cultural backgrounds through music can potentially aid in the transition to American culture and in the development and embrace of their identity.

The opportunities in the music classroom affirm the importance of establishing strong social relationships as asserted by Suárez-Orozco et al. (2009). The music classroom develops a community environment whether in a general music setting or musical ensemble setting (Campbell, 2018), giving voice to all students and establishing a sense of trust, safety, and belonging (Green, 2011; Ilari, 2017). Oxman-Martinez and

Choi (2014) continue this notion claiming the importance of inclusion of newly arrived immigrant children, “To promote positive peer interactions of immigrant children, participating in social groups provide opportunities to learn new kinds of pro-social skills, to develop new value systems through mutual interactions among group members, and to gain acceptance into new peer groups” (p. 24). Further research into the opportunities possible in the music classroom could shed light on the benefits of music education for newcomer students.

Rousseau et al. (2005) came close to the specific realm of music with creative expression workshops. Through story-telling and creative writing, immigrant children constructed meaning and identity, worked through their experiences, and came to terms with possible trauma. This study called for further research into other forms of creative expression, such as visual art or music, in the support of mental health for newcomer children.

All of these previous research studies lack the focus in an elementary music setting. Two of the studies mentioned were located in Canada, proving a minimal pool of research on the newcomer experience in the United States, in spite of the unprecedented rate of immigrant children entering the US educational system (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2009). This necessitates a deeper look into the newcomer educational experience and the challenges of assimilating to a new culture and language.

### **Music and Language Acquisition**

Research in the twenty-first century lends to the use of music in the acquisition of language, from both neurological (Levitin & Menon, 2003) and educational standpoints (Salcedo, 2002; Schön et al., 2007). School success requires ELLs to learn English-

language at a rapid rate while also learning the academic and social content (Freeman & Freeman, 2007). Previously mentioned studies highlighted that newcomer students experience an even stronger shift when they arrive in the United States school system, navigating a new home, culture, and school environment (Ramirez & Taylor-Jaffee, 2016; Oxman-Martinez & Choi, 2014). The following studies argue the efficacy of music for ELLs in language acquisition and processing without regard to the student's level of English-language proficiency.

#### *Neurological Justifications*

Much research has explored the neurological benefits that music listening can play in the process of learning (Salcedo, 2002; Levitin & Menon, 2003). Levitin and Menon (2003) made the connection that musical structure and language are processed and developed over time in the same part of the brain. They claimed that "In [music, speech, and American Sign Language], the sensory input evolves over time in a coherent structure" and sequence to maintain meaning and understanding (Levitin and Menon, 2003, p. 2142). They looked to studies that have related chord sequences to sentence structure and how it is processed in the left inferior frontal cortex (LIFC). They hypothesized that listening to music would activate greater bold temporal coherence than listening to scrambled stimuli. However, they expected the left hemisphere to process the temporal components of music and the right hemisphere to process pitched components.

For their quantitative study, Levitin and Menon (2003) recruited 13 right-handed and normal-hearing subjects, ages 19-23; 7 females and 6 males. Subjects listened to 23-second excerpts; one group listened to pre-recorded music and the other group listened to scrambled versions of the excerpts, differing in temporal coherence. As a source of data, MRI scans were acquired every 2 seconds in a single run that lasted 8 minutes and 48

seconds. The experimenters set the stimuli at a comfortable listening level determined by each participant during a test scan. Subjects listened to repertoire from Western classical art music, including the *William Tell Overture* and *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*, both as recorded and scrambled examples. Group analysis was performed using a random-effects model that incorporated a two-stage hierarchical procedure.

Levitin and Menon (2003) found significant activation in the pars orbitalis region of LIFC and the adjoining anterior insula as well as their right hemisphere homologues when subjects listened to original recordings of classical music. This suggests that music heightens stimulation in several areas of the brain, but can spark and strengthen language processing that also occurs in the LIFC. In contrast, the scrambled music evoked deactivation in other areas of the brain, reinforcing the value of musical listening during learning. They conclude, “it may be part of a neural network for perceptual organization, obeying the rules of how objects in the distal world ‘go together’ when they are manifested as patterns unfolding in a structured way over time” (p. 2149). The act of listening to music could stoke brain activity and serve language development and acquisition for ELLs.

#### *Educational Justifications*

While Levitin and Menon (2003) explored the neurological effects of listening to instrumental music and language processing, other researchers suggest the use of songs as an instructional tool in language learning settings (Salcedo, 2002; Schön et al., 2007). These studies provide evidence that when educators utilize songs in learning, students gain a wider vocabulary, a deeper meaning of text, and a stronger memory recall. They claim that songs not only affect linguistic function, but also physiological, emotional, and motivational functions in the language learning process.

The purpose of Salcedo's (2002) research was to show the value of music as a pedagogical tool in the foreign language classroom. She claimed:

Music can often provide a context to better understand the language. Pitches and melodies, rhymes, beats, and phrases can function as musical context. Music can be a way of activating meaning and improving comprehensibility, similar to a visual aid. (p. 10-11)

The insight from this study can help to inform research on the topic of songs as a teaching tool for any second language acquisition, not just the foreign language classroom.

Salcedo (2002) provided a literature review with an exhaustive list of benefits of singing for language learning that merits attention. She cited second language acquisition theories by Krashen (1985), who believed using classical music to relax students creates a type of super learning due to comprehensible input in a low-anxiety state. She included more physiological benefits, such as lowered heart rate, pain, and blood pressure, as well as improved respiratory rate, recovery, and tension relief (Salcedo, 2002). She referred to Anton (1990), who revealed that in the Contemporary Music Approach (CMA) methodology, song is used as a memory prompter, especially in recalling grammatical structures. Anton also showed that music, when connected with words, engages both left and right hemispheres of the brain, creating an ideal and productive learning situation. Salcedo (2002) looked to evidence of how music can positively affect math and reading development. It can improve motivation and engagement and enhance grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. Lastly, Salcedo shared that through the use of folk songs, music can improve cultural awareness and sensitivity. Her literature review conveyed that



the incorporation of songs is mutually beneficial for learning music skills and language skills.

In preparation for her quantitative research, Salcedo (2002) conducted three pilot studies to troubleshoot any errors. She assessed her subjects' text recall by counting how many deleted words of a presented text they replaced with correct words. She performed a one-way ANOVA test to test for significance of the means of treatment regarding the dependent variables between the classes. From there, she sought a randomized subject pool for the official study, which formed through the normal university registration process.

The test took place in beginning level Spanish classes. One teacher administered the music treatment during six class periods as regular class time to four groups. Group A heard texts in the form of three songs. Group B heard the same texts, but as recorded speech. Group C served as the control group for song 1, then heard the melody songs 2 and 3 while testing. Group D served as the control group for song 2 and 3. As a result, the students who heard the text through song showed greater memory recall and scored significantly higher than the students from the text class.

On a more qualitative note, all student participants agreed that the association of words and music made memorizing less difficult and the class more enjoyable. Salcedo (2002) claimed, as a result of her findings, that music has definite pedagogical value in the process of language acquisition. Between the motivational and aesthetic impact on the classroom environment and a more effective memorization strategy, music served to benefit language learning.

Schön et al. (2007) conducted a similar study on songs as an aid for language

acquisition. They hypothesized that song contributed to language in several ways:

1. The emotional aspects of a song may increase the level of arousal and attention.
2. The presence of pitch contours may enhance phonological discrimination, since syllable change is often accompanied by a change in pitch.
3. The consistent mapping of musical and linguistic structure may optimize the operation of learning mechanisms.

With their hypothesis, they sought to discover if, “compared to speech sequences, a consistent mapping of linguistic and musical information (song) would enhance learning” (p. 977).

Their methods consisted of three experiments with which to compare results (Schön et al., 2007). In the first experiment, 26 native French speakers listened to seven minutes of a continuous speech stream resulting from the concatenation of six three-syllable nonsense words that were repeated in a pseudo-random order. As a result, participants were not able to discriminate words from part-words. The second experiment involved all new participants listening to the same nonsense words, but the syllables of the continuous stream were sung by the synthesizer rather than spoken. They assigned a given pitch to each syllable so that each time the word was sung, the listener would hear the same melodic contour. With the simple addition of singing in a comprehensive manner, the results yielded 64% correct answers. In order to test the correlation between music and linguistic function, they conducted a third experiment in which new participants listened to the same stream of syllables sung on the same melody, except that the syllables were shifted one pitch in the melodic sequence. This meant that the experiment could maintain arousal and phonological boundaries, but linguistic and

musical boundaries no longer correlated. This resulted in significantly more correct answers than experiment 1, but less correct answers than experiment 2 (56%), suggesting that “in the presence of multiple statistical cues, linguistic statistical cues take precedence over musical statistical cues” (p. 981).

Schön et al. (2007) concluded that language learning is optimal when the conditions for both the emotional/arousal and linguistic functions are fulfilled. They made an important note that their study focused on pitch-mapping rather than rhythmic structure related to prosody, which may have yielded different results. They suggest more studies can help shed light on the rhythmic value of song in language acquisition. Regardless, they suggest that the process of learning a second language “may largely benefit from the motivational and structuring properties of music in song” (p. 982).

#### *Summary*

A clear relationship exists between musical structure and language acquisition (Levitin & Menon, 2003; Salcedo, 2002; Schön et al., 2007). Whether researchers utilized instrumental music or song, the listening aspect created a deeper learning state, allowing for neurological stimulation in the same area of the brain as language, greater retention and recall, and a more enjoyable experience. These educational benefits claim the indispensability of the envelopment of music with language learning.

Levitin and Menon (2003) provided empirical evidence of the neurological connection between music and language. Using an MRI, they compared brain responses while participants listened to classical music and scrambled versions of the same music. In comparison to the scrambled counterpart, when the subjects listened to music the researchers discovered significant activation in the pars orbitalis region of the LIFC. They believed that stronger language and music development can occur when they are

presented together over time.

Salcedo (2002) and Schön et al. (2007) explored the pedagogical benefits of song in text recall compared to simply using spoken language. Salcedo (2002) provided a wealth of research background behind other benefits of the use of music in language acquisition, including physiological, motivational, neurological, academic, cultural, and linguistic benefits. Her study enlisted three songs in Spanish from popular music as a listening tool for text recall. While one test group listened to the songs as recorded, another group listened to the text recited by a native speaker of the same gender and nationality as the popular recording artist. As a result, participants experienced greater retention when the text was presented in the form of a song. In addition to the quantitative results, students who listened to music felt that they had a more positive learning experience. Salcedo urges that music should be considered an important teaching method that is an acceptable tool for classroom instruction.

Instead of popular music, Schön et al. (2007) utilized pitch mapping to contextualize language acquisition and explore the benefits of songs. The researchers presented participants in all test groups with six three-syllable nonsense words, one with a string of spoken text, one with methodic syllable and pitch association and sequence, and one with some pitch association but without a replicated melodic pattern. Schön et al. (2007) discovered that the most successful test group was the one who experienced the text in song with clearly matched linguistic and musical boundaries. Therefore, they agreed that music in the form of song had pedagogical value in language learning.

These studies identify the benefits of music for language acquisition, suggesting its place for the instruction of ELLs. In addition to the linguistic benefits, Salcedo (2002)

referred to the cultural benefits in her literature review in the development of identity.

This reference merits further exploration into how language and cultural identity and how music can help those two developments coincide.

### **Musical and Cultural Identity of ELLs**

Research into students' musical and cultural identity (Hargreaves et al., 2017; Green, 2011; Ilari, 2017) informs this research study. As newcomer immigrants enter the United States education system, they must navigate the parameters of a new culture and school environment, working to establish their new identities, while also holding onto their cultural heritage. Soto (2012) claims that music can act as a vehicle to develop and deepen students' own individual identities, along the lines of Hargreaves et al.'s theory of MII (2017). Therefore, looking into the lived experiences of ELLs can illuminate the benefits of music specifically for newcomer students.

#### *Musical Identity of ELLs*

Lum and Campbell (2009) gave voice to an elementary aged Mexican American girl, Mirella Valdez, through a narrative study, in which they aesthetically described her home life, family, and community. Narrative research offers a lens into the lives of silenced, marginalized individuals and embraces cultures of "the other." Their creative analytical practice encompassed conversations, personal reflections, layered texts, and music notation that "blur the edges between text, representation, and criticism" (Lum & Campbell, 2009, p. 114). Lum established a connection with Mirella by volunteering at Viewcrest Elementary for a university-school collaboration called Music Alive! A third-grade teacher at the school referred Lum to Mirella as she was an active participant in music classes and exuded a passion for life and a confident personality. Mirella journeyed to the United States from Mexico with her parents soon after she was born. Her

grandparents immigrated to the US prior to her parents joining them.

Upon receiving consent and visiting Mirella's household, Lum and Campbell (2009) learned that Mirella's family had formed the Tex-Mex, *conjunto*-style band with close friends and relatives one year prior and practiced almost every evening. Mirella had started learning to play the drum set and the accordion. In addition to the active musical experience at home, Mirella spoke enthusiastically about her musical experiences at church, where she encountered another profound realm of her music identity. A final sector of Mirella's music identity came from popular culture. She shared her excitement for rap and hip-hop, finding sources of popular music on the local radio station, satellite TV, and her older sister. Lum and Campbell highlighted that "Technology is at the heart of Mirella's music enterprise, constantly defining and re-defining her musical identity" (p. 122).

The myriad of genres entangled in Mirella's life shaped and formed her musical identity, "from the *Tejano* regional music of her father's influence to current popular Spanish-language hits, and from children's religious songs to the hard-core rap and hip-hop that radiates from the ubiquitous media" (Lum & Campbell, 2009, p. 122). Mirella's story provides insight into the musical identities of immigrant children, but it is only a glimpse through one window.

Soto (2012) broadened the horizon of research into musical identity for children with multicultural backgrounds. The purpose of her ethnographic study was to examine the bimusical identity of Mexican American children in a Mexican American bilingual-bicultural school as they navigate between the different musical and cultural spheres that are present within their daily lives. Her guiding questions included:

1. What are the musical identities of Mexican American children living in a community (and educated in a school) whose majority population is Mexican?
2. Who are the musical and cultural agents within the school and how are they influential of Mexican American children's musical and cultural identities?
3. How do family and community members and experiences influence children's musical and cultural identities?

The study took place at Riverview Elementary School, a 95% Spanish speaking, dual-language school in Toppenish, Washington in the Yakima Valley. Although Soto (2012) was on site for three years, focused research spanned 37 weeks over the course of the school year. For data collection, she utilized observations, interviews, and examination of material resources. She sought a homogeneous sampling of first-, second-, third-, and fourth generation Mexican American children in grades K-5. Soto was already situated as an itinerant classroom music teacher as a part of Music Alive! in the Valley project, the same program in which Lum and Campbell (2009) participated.

In her residence, Soto (2012) conducted interviews and observations of students along with observations within the community. She kept audio and video recordings of scheduled data collection, noting school, home, and community culture along with technology and media influences along the way. Interviews with children and cultural agents (teachers, school administration and staff, parents, and community members) were structured and semi-structured individually and in small groups.

Soto (2012) interviewed sixty students during music class time, including two kindergarten students, ten first grade students, eleven second grade students, thirteen third grade students, fifteen fourth grade, and nine fifth grade students. The purpose of the first

interview phase was to gain trust, access, background information, and a greater understanding of the participants of the study. The second phase encompassed school and community interviews and observations where children, teachers, and administrators were asked about their ethnic and musical identities. Soto downloaded and transcribed all interviews and systematically categorized all interviews, observational field notes, reflections, and research materials for triangulation.

Soto's (2012) findings report in a narrative fashion her experiences with students and community members of Riverview Elementary School and the essential components that form and juxtapose their bimusical identities. She describes the musical experience at Riverview Elementary School and its significance as a bilingual school, as students regularly and enthusiastically code switch between their two cultures and languages. Soto reviews the students' bilingual experience in their music class with Mr. Smith, who alternated days of teaching songs in English and songs in Spanish. Mr. Smith exposed all fifth-grade students to Mariachi music and a fourth-grade teacher sponsored a Mariachi ensemble for students who elected to tap more into the Mexican musical style.

Although they sing Mexican folk songs at school with pride and the school embraces both identities, the Mexican American students perceive the spheres of school music and home/community music differently (Soto, 2012). At home, they navigate between many musical styles. The musical genres that influence the Mexican American children include traditional genres like conjunto, tejano, norteño, banda, pasito duranguense, and mariachi, modern genres like rap, hip hop, reggaeton, rock, country, and classical, and children's popular culture sourced by Disney, Nickelodeon, and MTV channels. She noted the cultural practice of the family band, holiday celebrations of



Cinco de Mayo, Virgen de Guadalupe, and Las Posadas, along with technological influences from television and radio programs.

Soto (2012) concludes that children at Riverview Elementary demonstrated knowledge in two different languages, cultural traditions, and musical identities. She reports observations that parents and teachers were sensitive to the transition between home and school and embraced both identities. She implores that music educators must learn the cultural backgrounds of their students and have their music and culture presented in the classroom as a valid form of musical study, “enabling them to learn about the rich complexities inherent in their music” (p. 217). She states that a bilingual and bicultural school is not the norm and it is a role of the music teacher to embrace and empower the music identities of students possessing different ethnicities in the music classroom.

Lum and Campbell (2009) and Soto (2012) explored the musical identities of ELLs in geographical areas with dense Hispanic populations, gaining a glimpse of the students’ lived experiences. This research informs music educators of the complex backgrounds of their students and the developing musical identities that can drive their outlook on music instruction. The converse perspective of the music teacher’s outlook and philosophy can affect ELLs musical experience and the development of identity.

#### *Music Teacher Impact on ELLs’ Musical Identities*

In her study, Kelly-McHale (2013) drew on the responsibility of the music teacher to link students to their cultural heritage and musical identities. The purpose of her study was to examine the ways an elementary general music teacher’s curricular beliefs and practices influence the expression of music in identity and identity in music for second-generation immigrant students. She designed her qualitative collective case study “to

provide an understanding of the interactions between the roles of music instruction, cultural responsiveness, and musical identity” (p. 195). She dove into research regarding the multicultural issues in music education, asserting that music teachers need to “assess their beliefs and attitudes toward diverse populations, and to recognize the impact that their life experiences have had on their beliefs and attitudes, to ensure they are delivering instruction and choosing materials that benefit all students” (p. 196). She validated and necessitated culturally responsive music instruction as a primary outlook for instructing students of diverse cultures.

Using a purposeful sampling strategy, Kelly-McHale (2013) interviewed and observed a music teacher in a suburban general music classroom and four of her students who were children of Mexican immigrants (2013). Located in a large midwestern city, the research site, Bronte Elementary, contained a majority population identified as ELL and immigrant or second-generation students, 75% of which are Hispanic. She also selected a school that used the Kodály method because of its European roots and focus on Western art music. Out of the four students who had experienced the school music program for four and a half years, one of the students participated in the school orchestra program. One participant had a musically active family, as her father played guitar and sang with the children at home.

Kelly-McHale (2013) spent 14 weeks observing music classes and conducting interviews with the teacher and four students. She audio recorded and transcribed each interview; video recorded and transcribed each observation, focusing on the teacher; and took field notes during observations, focusing on the students. She completed a constant comparative analysis and a data analysis spiral. Themes emerged throughout the coding

process and were placed on a master code list, which she analyzed, interpreted, and refined into broad themes. She used data from interviews, observations, field notes, video recordings, a field journal, autobiographical notes, and artifacts that included concert programs, curriculum and assessment documents, and lesson plans for triangulation. All transcriptions were validated by participants.

Following her research process, Kelly-McHale (2013) discovered that the music classroom observed focused on a Western art music approach prioritizing music literacy. This emphasis on musicianship defined by reading and writing music did not align closely with students' experiences outside of music class, and thus, lacked the opportunity to build active music lives outside of or in conjunction with school music programs. A more meaningful and lasting experience would have affirmed their musical identities and found connections between musical skills and cultural heritage. She suggests that music teachers would serve students more fully by becoming learners and listeners of their culture and experiences.

#### *Summary*

These studies grant perspectives of musical and cultural identities from the student perspective, the teacher perspective, and the influence they have on each other (Lum & Campbell, 2009; Soto, 2012; Kelly-McHale, 2013). Lum and Campbell (2009) provided a lens into the musical identity of an individual Mexican American child who has resided in the United States for most of her life, which differs from the intention of this study to dive into the newcomer immigrant experience and how music can smooth that transition. Also, more marginalized groups may experience the navigation of musical identity differently than active predominantly Hispanic communities.

Soto (2012) helped to explain the navigation between Mexican American

children's bimusical spheres upheld by an active Hispanic community and a bilingual school. Soto recommends, "Even though this ethnographic study examined the children's musical and language preferences in class, future research devoted to the impact of music and its effectiveness on a dual language or bilingual curriculum should be conducted" (p. 214). Music education research fixated on newcomer immigrant children could yield different results in a more diverse, pluralistic environment.

Kelly-McHale (2013) carried heavy implications when considering the potential benefits of music education for immigrant children. In her observations, she discovered that music instruction missed its pertinence when solely focusing on conceptual awareness and musicianship based on playing an instrument by reading music and earning a living. According to Kelly-McHale, embracing the musical identities in the classroom and adopting a culturally responsive music curriculum is imperative for effective, meaningful music instruction. This is an important caveat when approaching the music classroom for ELLs and seeking the perceived benefits.

### **English Language Learners in the Music Classroom**

In spite of the research conducted on music's influence on shaping cultural identity (Lum & Campbell, 2009; Soto, 2012) and acquiring English language (Levitin & Menon, 2003; Salcedo, 2002; Schön et al., 2007), only three studies directly inform the research on the instruction of ELLs in the elementary general music classroom.

#### *Instructional Strategies for Spanish-Speaking ELLs*

Soto (1995) examined instructional strategies utilized in music classrooms consisting of predominantly Hispanic children and gathered information and methods that elementary music educators include when considering Hispanic influences on Mexican-American children. In his quantitative study, he delivered a questionnaire for music

educators in elementary schools with a music curriculum. For recruitment purposes, he contacted district supervisors and administrators of elementary schools in Laredo, Texas, which was the most-Hispanic city in the United States at that time. Then, he contacted each music educator whose name was received and placed a code number on each returned questionnaire to ensure confidentiality.

Selected administrators and music teachers reviewed preliminary drafts of the questionnaire, providing feedback for refinement and clarity. Finally, Soto (1995) mailed revised questionnaires to all music educators who participated in the survey.

Questionnaires sought information from music educators regarding their demographics, educational experience, communication barriers, methodology/teaching strategies, and music materials/activities. Soto reported the received questionnaires by frequency and percentages.

All participants in the study obtained some experience in elementary music instruction regardless of their current teaching position. Responses contained a fair representation of teaching experience, music subjects (instrumental, choral, and general), and age. An important discrepancy to note is that although the majority of music educators in Laredo were Hispanic (66%), that number did not represent the 98% Hispanic population in the border town (Soto, 1995). The vast majority of respondents reported a 90% or more representation of Hispanic students. Many educators reported using the “World of Music” curriculum, Kodály or Orff methodologies, teacher-developed curricula, and songs and instrumental music. Guitar and piano emerged as the most relevant and appealing instruments for students.

Responses were divided between the use of English-language, Spanish-language,

or both in the classroom, suggesting either a lack of resources in bilingual music instruction or understanding in the value of using students' native language in song repertoire (Soto, 1995). A great majority of teachers agreed that language acts as a barrier for Mexican-American children. The percentages decreased gradually for each of the following agreements: schools should organize traditional Mexican-American groups in their programs (76%), students should learn representative songs in their native language (72%), children in Laredo should be taught Hispanic music in their classes (60%), more contemporary Mexican-American music should be incorporated into their teaching strategies (56%), and the music education of a Mexican-American children must be relevant to the child's home and life (56%). A striking 44% disagreed that music history of Mexican-Americans should be studied, analyzed, and communicated to students and 40% had no opinion whether they should understand the cultural background of Mexican-American children.

In conclusion, Soto (1995) asserts the importance of culturally relevant materials and instruction in the music classroom. His suggestions for implementing meaningful music experiences for Mexican-American children include singing songs in their original language cultivating authenticity, performing compositions with appropriate native instruments, reproducing music on the latest electronic equipment, and becoming more familiar with the history of ethnic music and its evolution to contemporary popular forms. He offers that teachers are not solely to blame for the lack of understanding, but also division, state, and university levels. He says, "American society with its unique ethnic and cultural platform should be fertile ground for the realization of innovative and exemplary curricula, yet exemplary models are limited and reasons for this delay are not

obvious” (p. 87). He recommends that “future music research should continue obtaining baseline data on multicultural music education while providing solutions to problems of teacher expertise, curricular guidelines, and materials” (p. 91). It is profound to note that these statements were made 25 years ago.

Scherler (2005) investigated the teaching practices and curricular decisions of elementary music teachers who instruct Hispanic ELL students. Her descriptive multiple case study utilized a phenomenological research paradigm to examine how music educators instruct ELLs and how they attach meaning to the instructional strategies that they employ. She examined four participating English-only, monolingual elementary school music teachers. She enlisted a purposeful sampling technique, selecting teachers provided by the fine arts coordinator from elementary schools with high populations of Hispanic students. The Internal Review Board of the University of North Texas granted permission to perform the research. The researcher obtained permission from the school district to conduct research in the four selected elementary schools. Each teacher signed informed consent forms. Families of all students who potentially appeared on observational classroom videos signed consent and assent forms offered in English and Spanish. Scherler assigned pseudonyms and different gender types in the data and different school names to protect confidentiality. She acted as a non-participant observer relating as a monolingual, English-only speaking music educator, with interest in this study based on personal teaching experiences in culturally and linguistically diverse school settings.

Interviews, teacher journals, and observations provided the basis of data for Scherler’s (2005) study, which was collected and triangulated to clarify meaning. She

performed a constant comparison and cross-case analysis throughout three phenomenological interviews with all four selected elementary music teachers, each conducted with time (approximately 3 weeks) between each interview. During the 90-minute interviews, Scherler asked open-ended questions that facilitated the teachers' reflections of their practice. In the analysis of the interviews, the responses were coded to capture the "lived meaning" of the parts (p. 87). She conducted classroom observations of the music teachers' instruction of ELL students. She also asked the teachers to record reflective audio journals, prompting them to comment on their experiences that occurred when teaching ELL students, which they recorded throughout the day.

Scherler analyzed transcribed interviews, data collected from teachers' audio journals, observation field notes, and classroom observation video recordings using inductive analysis. She coded subsequent data and identified emergent categories. She completed a cross case analysis of the four teacher cases throughout the research to distinguish concepts and similarities. Credibility measures included member checking of field notes from observation video recordings, transcriptions of interviews and teacher audio journals, and an independent auditor who reviewed the data, methodology, and analysis processes for consistency.

In her results, Scherler (2005) broke down the common and unique practices among teachers of their pedagogy, instructional strategies, description of the influence of life history and experiences on teaching ELL students, awareness, school settings, and description of ELL students. Regarding pedagogy, Scherler discovered that all four teachers possessed a similar philosophy, that music is universal, relates to all subjects, and facilitates well-rounded students. They all also connected music teaching with



current events, making strong positive statements about why ELL students have positive experiences in music, and commenting that the goals for ELL students are beneficial to English speakers as well. Yet Scherler found that some teachers' pedagogical decisions contradicted their beliefs of inclusion, practices, and curriculum as most of the teachers did not approach ELL students differently. They all mentioned that singing songs in English aided in language acquisition and incorporating songs in Spanish from ELL students' cultures was essential for inclusion purposes, but only half of the teachers allowed time and space for ELL students to share their culture and experiences. Only one of the teachers described adaptations and investment of time involved with teaching ELL students.

Some common practices of instructional strategies among the four teachers included verbal affirmations to encourage and motivate modified instructional pace, repetition and breaking down of phrases, and rephrasing, rewording, and checking for understanding (Scherler, 2005). All of the teachers emphasized vocabulary words, used manipulatives and supplemental resources, played singing games and folk dances, and established routines and equal opportunities for ELL students to participate in programs. Scherler highlighted some unique practices, such as call and response, word walls, simple commands in Spanish, open discussion and conversation, and intentional groupings. Most of the teachers did not commit to any conscientious adaptations for ELL students, enlisting what Scherler theorized as the inherent qualities of music participation that are compatible with many strategies prescribed for teaching content to ELL students.

Scherler's (2005) cross-case analysis divulged the four teachers' background experiences that may influence their teaching of ELL students. The teachers were evenly

divided between novice (five years or less) and veteran (more than five years). All of the teachers had early positive music experiences from family influence and successful musicianship, some foreign language instruction languages other than Spanish, and time spent traveling outside of the country. None of the teachers had pre-service training in teaching ELL students or spoke a second language. Only one of the teachers had attended an in-service training related to teaching music to ELLs and expressed the importance of assisting ELL students in English immersion without requiring them to give up their culture or heritage. In spite of their lack of pre-service and in-service training, they all felt compelled to meet the needs of ELLs in the music classroom and viewed their role as “helpers” (p. 172). All four teachers connected cultural learning with music by “acknowledging cultural differences through curriculum and affirmation and including songs from the ELL students’ first language in the curriculum” (p. 194). For three of the teachers, however, their approach was more generalized rather than unique and personal to the individual students in the classroom. Only the one teacher, who coincidentally had attended an in-service training, was able to identify the names and backgrounds of ELL students in his classrooms and demonstrated awareness extending to accommodations in instructional strategies for ELL students.

In her discussion, Scherler (2005) brings up the implications of unanticipated data, particularly regarding pull-outs from music class. She insists, “By pulling ELL students out of music, schools are preventing these students from receiving an enriched cultural and language experience and perhaps an equally imperative service, singing songs in English and drawing language connections” (2005, p. 212). She also claims that teachers’ descriptions of ELL students suggest a lack of understanding of the students’

transition experience and warrants further investigation. According to Scherler, one teacher's response that she was unaware of her role in assisting ELL students reveals that music teachers need explanation that all content area teachers, including music teachers, are responsible for drawing connections between content and language instruction for ELL students.

In conclusion, Scherler (2005) believes that based on music teachers' philosophies of music education and teaching goals, they are well-intentioned in their service to ELL students, but appear overwhelmed and conflicted by the task of accommodation. She suggests that better structural supports and communication and training could provide music teachers with the foundation they need to provide enriching and meaningful language experiences for ELL students. She highlights that the one teacher who did meet the expectations of reaching out to ELL students, meeting their needs, and making them feel welcome in the music classroom had ten years of teaching experience and a personal background to ELL students. Scherler argues that required in-service training related to teaching music to ELL students could better equip teachers to provide necessary adaptations and understanding necessary to improve ELL students' knowledge and participation. Based on her research, engagement in music through a culturally rich program provides ELL students with a meaningful and joyful experience, and in spite of an often well-intentioned, mass-produced curriculum, "ELL students are eager to learn English, enjoy music, and appreciate their teachers' attempt to 'bridge the gap'" (p. 216).

#### *Music Making with a Pluralistic ELL Population*

In a more recent study from Australia, Howell (2011) explored the meaning and understanding that young people ascribe to their music activities at an intensive English

language school for children of elementary age in Melbourne, Australia, that provides specialist language and learning support for newcomer students. According to Howell, the program is “grounded in the belief that music learning needs to invite active participation, engage with the imagination before it engages with technique, and that technique, performance skills, and musical understanding are best learned in the context of music making” (p. 49). She theorized that creative expression could positively benefit newcomer students’ self-esteem, engagement, and overall learning. She chose the creative platform of composition, encompassing various contexts like songwriting, improvising, community drumming, and jamming. She asserted that composition invites an avenue for students’ own visions, thoughts, and opinions, giving them a sense of ownership and belonging.

Howell (2011) conducted a qualitative multiple case study at the Melbourne English Language School (MELS) starting in 2007 that investigated the way newly arrived students in the primary section of the school perceived music making and music learning. She utilized a stratified purpose sample with three newly arrived students (ages 14 from Sudan, 11 from China, and 12 from Thailand). Data collection included participant observation, documents, literature, and interviews with secondary informants (teachers and Multicultural Education Aides who served in the interests of triangulation). She utilized a grounded theory approach, completing initial within-case analysis of the interview transcripts, followed by cross-case analysis, which revealed the common themes (coding). To make sense of unclear meanings due to difficulty in translation, Howell performed a second analysis of the transcripts and video recordings or interviews using the phenomenological approach.

Howell's data collection revealed the importance of visual information and "the essential role that routine, repetition, and imitation play in building students' confidence before they have the language skills to make more detailed, thorough sense of things" (2011, p. 53). She broke down the behavior demonstrated during newcomer students' transition into a new culture using the English language into three levels:

1. The student participates by copying the teacher and peers, but does not understand *why* they were doing it.
2. Students begin to make greater contributions based on better understanding of the English language.
3. Students assumed roles of experts and helpers and took on independent challenges.

By the end of the research, the newcomer students could describe the steps and strategies they used in composing a piece of music or song as they gained a greater knowledge of the English language. They could recall their initial experience of self-doubt and confusion upon arrival in early lessons.

In conclusion, Howell (2011) stresses the value of music connecting beyond language to social relationships and affirming their past experiences. She recommends the use of visual and non-verbal strategies in order to ease confusion and uncertainty so that English language learners can participate immediately and actively. She asserts, "Transition between cultures, like any transition in music, requires time to reach its conclusions, and new arrivals require much greater processing time and emotional space than similarly aged, local peers" (p. 57).

#### *Summary*

The limited amount of research in the venue of the elementary music classroom

regarding teaching ELLs calls upon evaluation of the benefits of a culturally responsive music education experience for newcomer students. Soto (1995) highlighted that “Music is a functional means of developing communicative skills, elaborating on the variety of cultures, or projecting thoughts and feelings to others” (p. 4). Both Soto and Scherler (2005) discovered the discrepancy between the opportunities for cultural and language enrichment in the music classroom, particularly for children of Hispanic backgrounds, and the level of awareness among music teachers of the transition process for newcomer ELLs, the language challenges, and necessity for affirming identities. Their focus on Mexican American children leaves a space for research on more pluralistic, globalized school divisions where multiple languages and ethnicities are represented.

Howell (2011) considers children of many cultures and models a more accepting and understanding musical learning environment that fosters creativity. She acknowledges the musical benefits of the affirmation and formation of identity and social connections, along with useful music pedagogy and successful music making. Her process can transfer to American schools, where more research is required on the musical experience of newcomer students.

## **Conclusion**

The inventory of research literature sheds light on the layers of learning for both ELLs in general and newcomer students in particular. It also suggests that an authentic musical experience can help them work through multiple languages, cultures, identities, and social structures. The research field provides context for the newcomer student experience in North American Schools (United States and Canada), including methods that support their transition (Ramirez & Taylor Jaffee, 2016; Suárez-Orozco, Pimentel,

and Martin, 2009; Rousseau et al., 2005) and the complexities that challenge it (Oxman-Martinez & Choi, 2014). Research literature supports that music and language coincide when learning a second language (Salcedo, 2002; Schön, 2007). The evidence suggests that music is not only helpful in the language learning process, but also optimal in order to create a relaxed, superlearning environment (Levitin & Menon, 2003; Salcedo, 2002), strengthen vocabulary, and deepen understanding (Salcedo, 2002; Schön, 2007). The research offers insight on shifting cultural and musical identities that occur for ELLs, whether first-, second-, or third-generation immigrants, as they navigate home and school lives (Lum & Campbell, 2009; Soto, 2012; Kelly-McHale, 2013). Most directly related, the literature includes studies on instructional strategies that aid in teaching ELLs in United States schools (Soto, 1995; Scherler, 2005) and Australian schools (Howell, 2011).

Newcomer children enter school systems as first-generation immigrants navigating new social and educational structures (Ramirez & Taylor Jaffee, 2016; Suárez-Orozco, Pimentel, & Martin, 2009; Rousseau et al., 2005; Oxman-Martinez & Choi, 2014). Ramirez and Taylor Jaffee (2016) situated their study in the social studies classroom observing the effects of a culturally responsive curriculum and how it can create a more autonomous learning environment where all students view themselves as valued civic participants in society. Suárez-Orozco et al. (2009) explored the significant, positive impact of relationships on the academic success of newcomer students. Oxman-Martinez and Choi (2014) discovered the adverse effects of social exclusion for newcomer students when those positive social and academic relationships are not in place. Rousseau et al. (2005) conducted creative expression workshops empowering

newcomer immigrant children to create a narrative that embraces their past and current experiences, respect and bond with children of other identities and experiences, and bridge the gap between home and school. All these studies provide background information behind the newcomer experience outside of the realm of music education.

More studies show evidence of the language support that music can provide for not only newcomer students, but all language learners. Levitin and Menon (2003) through MRI scans found a direct relationship between where music and language are processed in the brain by having participants listen to instrumental Western art music. Salcedo (2002) researched an extensive amount of literature offering the multitude of benefits music can have on language learning. In her study, she discovered that when students listened to foreign language text in a popular song rather than speech, they experienced significantly greater success in recall and a more enjoyable experience. Similarly, Schön et al. (2007) had a similar purpose of experimenting with song as an aid for language acquisition. Rather than using popular music as the variable, they enlisted pitch mapping with three-syllable nonsense words that could guide the student in recalling vocabulary. These studies prove the educational benefit of songs and instrumental music in language learning.

Other studies regarding music and ELLs look to musical identity and the greater complexities that surround first-, second-, and third-generation immigrant children beyond just language (Lum & Campbell, 2009; Soto, 2012; Kelly-McHale, 2013). In their narrative study, Lum and Campbell (2009) offered a glimpse into the life of a second-generation Mexican American girl and how the many musical influences shaped her identity. They discovered a joyful flow between home, school, and community music



in the child's life. Soto's (2012) ethnography gave a broader perspective of the bimusical identities of children in a bilingual and bicultural Mexican American School and how they navigate between the musical and cultural spheres throughout their daily lives. Music played a strong role in constructing and reconstructing their identities. Kelly-McHale (2013) conducted a collective case study that fixated on the music teacher's influence of musical identity for second-generation immigrant students. She found that without culturally responsive music curriculum and instructional strategies, students disassociated musical learning in the classroom with the musical identity that resonates in their daily lives based on multicultural experiences, creating an imperative responsibility for the music teacher. These studies suggest that when seeking the positive impact of music on newcomer students, musical identity is an essential consideration as it takes a toll from the striking effects of a transition to a new home, school, language, and culture.

Although identity is a necessary element of this research, few studies come close to the purpose and structure of exploring the perceived benefits of music instruction on newcomer children (Howell, 2011) from the perspective of school personnel in a United States elementary school (Soto, 1995; Scherler, 2005). Soto (1995) surveyed elementary music teachers in Laredo, Texas, which had a 97.8% Hispanic population, although only 66% of teachers were Hispanic. He found that music presented the opportunity to reinforce language and communication skills, especially when teachers were equipped with bilingual training. He discovered that music could play a powerful role of cultural affirmation and preservation when songs were presented authentically in their original language with appropriate instrumentation, creating more meaningful experiences. Scherler (2005) interviewed four white American, English-speaking elementary school

music teachers to investigate their instructional practice and curricular decisions when teaching Hispanic ELLs. Successful teaching practices that came to fruition from this study included, but were not limited to authentic language experiences from literature and folk songs, singing and playing instruments, building on students' previous experiences, engaging in culturally relevant music, acknowledging cultural differences, and establishing relationship and knowledge of the background of ELLs. Although the multiple case study took place in Australia, Howell (2011) suggested more instructionally beneficial tools while engaging newcomers in music education. She found that newly arrived immigrant and refugee children assimilated to the creative process in the music classroom through active participation through imitation before understanding the language and techniques. Through contextualized music making without extensive explanation and allowing time for newcomers to learn the language, Howell realized that students could feel more connected and confident.

The research included in this review informs understanding of newcomer immigrant children and ELLs as a whole and how music can play a powerful role in their learning. A broader perspective of the newcomer educational experience in transitioning to a new school structure and culture provides a big picture understanding of the academic, social, cultural, and self-esteem challenges that they face. The relationship between music and language acquisition is an essential consideration when seeking the potential benefits of music instruction. The construction and reconstruction of musical identity plays a major role in the cultural shift that newcomers face. Lastly, instructional strategies and curriculum choices in music can provide newcomers with meaningful, culturally relevant experiences. The research literature surrounds the topic of the impact

of music education on newcomer students to the United States elementary school in a pluralistic population, but does not provide direct insight to the purpose of this study. Therefore, this study seeks greater understanding of an elementary newcomer program in a United States school with a myriad of languages and cultures represented and how music instruction can assist in language acquisition, affirm cultural identity, and aid in students' successful immersion.

### 3. Methodology

The purpose of this study was to investigate the philosophy and process of an elementary newcomer program and explore the perceived benefits of the musical experience in transitioning newcomer ELLs from a full-time, self-contained classroom to a mainstream English instructed classroom. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2018), qualitative research provides the foundation for reports and representation of “the Other,” reaching beyond the mainstream, giving a lens into the lives of marginalized groups, and advancing the democratic principles of social justice. This qualitative case study engages in questions with music education research trends in mind, such as multiculturalism, identity, and culturally responsive teaching and how they impact immigrant students, specifically those who are newcomer English language learners.

Case study research involves the study of a case within a real-life, contemporary context or setting (Yin, 2014). A defining feature of a case study according to Creswell and Poth (2018), is that the situation is bounded, meaning that it can be defined or described in certain parameters. Given the broad globalization and the influx of non-English speaking immigrants in the United States and its education system (Oxman-Martinez & Choi, 2014; Ramirez & Jaffee, 2016; Calderón, 2011; Freeman & Freeman, 2007), the research field could benefit from a descriptive window into what a more diverse, pluralistic school music program looks like. Thus, I employed a qualitative case study to gain insight into the perceptions of educators responsible for transitioning newcomer students into American culture and functional use of the English language and how the inherent benefits of multicultural music combined with quality, responsive pedagogy can enrich their experience, improve their English language skills, and allow

them to find their place in a new culture.

In the twenty-first century, music education researchers have adopted the use of qualitative case studies to seek understanding of the music classroom, its learners, and unique scenarios that go beyond teachers' Western musical training and Anglo-cultural backgrounds (Howell, 2011; Kelly-McHale, 2013; Scherler, 2005; Ilari, 2017; Green, 2011). In an ever-changing world, music educators have to consider new pedagogy, curriculum, and repertoire in order to fully embrace the cultural identities of their students (Campbell, 2018; Lind & McKoy, 2016; Kelly-McHale, 2013). Through qualitative case studies, music education researchers have also discovered how music can play an important role in the social and emotional success through creative expression and language acquisition (Howell, 2011; Rousseau et al., 2005).

### **Study Context**

The studied school division resides in a diverse city in a rural area of the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. As of November 29, 2019, the school division served 6,257 students in grades K-12, 2,191 (35%) of whom were English Language Learners (ELLs). Out of the total student population, 708 students qualified as immigrants, which are those students (ELL and non-ELL) who were not born in the US and have been in US schools for less than 3 years. More specifically, 269 of the immigrant students were in their first year in US schools (newcomers). Language preferences of ELL families include, but are not limited to Spanish, Arabic, Kurdish, Russian, Ukrainian, Swahili, and Tigrinya. Most of the schools in the division host a dual-language program, in which students (ELL and non-ELL) learn for half of the day in English and half of the day in

Spanish, in addition to ESL provided for students in other mainstream English-speaking classes.

As all families arrive in the school division, they participate in an enrollment process at a welcome center. All students, whether native English speakers or non-native English speakers take a federally mandated home language survey, in which parents and students are asked the same questions about first language use. The selection of any language other than English by the parents or students triggers an ELL screening provided by WIDA (2020), a source of assessment tools and professional development for English as a Second Language (ESL) programs. If the scores show that the students' English language skills "operate at a place that is not comparable to their native English-speaking peers in that particular grade level and at that age, then they can be identified as [English] language learners" (VanMartin, 2020). If the identification as an ELL couples with families' new arrival to the United States within the last year, then students in grades 3-5 are placed into the newcomer program. These results rely on families' disclosure of language skills and previous home location in the survey.

Since its inception in 2005, the newcomer program has sustained its total number of students, with fluctuation throughout the years. The program has had as few as 7 students and as many as 40 students at a time, as it followed the ebb and flow of immigration trends. Although it originated as a pull-out program, the self-contained program has moved to various school buildings throughout the division based on which building has space as the school division grew and evolved. While the program was previously led by one or two teachers, at the time of this study, the program had enough inflow to require two full-time teachers and two full-time assistants.

The division-wide program situated at one school building provides transportation and instruction for newcomer students. Instruction includes a language focus in social and behavioral routines, calendar, academic and functional math, English alphabet, school structures, development and expression of self, description of family and home life, relationship with friends and community, and identification of the seasons and weather. A combination of academic and social/emotional skills determine students' readiness for transitioning out of the newcomer program. These assessments appear in more formal tests in math and language arts and informal observation in social and emotional learning. Student evaluation occurs in preparation for exiting of the program before winter and spring breaks. Thus, the program population changes throughout the school year.

### **The Building**

Blue Ridge Elementary School (BRES) resides close to what is considered the downtown of the school division city. It is one of the six elementary schools in the school division. It teaches 421 students in grades K-5, 210 (50%) of which are considered ELL, 120 are considered immigrants, and 61 are in their first year in the US (not including Kindergarten). The last number includes the 28 students in the division-wide newcomer program in grades 3-5. The school also houses a preschool program, whose numbers are not included in the data.

Built in the 1950's, BRES's hallways welcome students, staff, and visitors with flags hung of all countries represented in the building. The school's vision and mission statements convey messages of inclusion, belonging, and well-rounded, reflective learning. Two schools carry the same messages of growth and togetherness, one in

English and one in Spanish. Positive messages displayed on bulletin boards around the school are communicated in English and Spanish. Senses of deep pride and community echo throughout the school.

### **The Participants**

Three pseudonymous interviewees contributed to this study.

#### *Ms. VanMartin*

Ms. VanMartin is the Director of English Language Support Programs in Title III for the school division. According to VanMartin (2020), Title III is the federal framework that oversees educational experiences for students identified as English Language Learners, from newly arrived ELLs (newcomers) through year four of their monitoring years. She shared that ELLs are placed into four active levels of ESL instruction and then are monitored for four years after they have graduated out of active instruction. As a school division administrator, she makes a point to be present in the school buildings rather than at the central office. She claims to spend 90% of her time with students and supporting ESL teachers. She has spent her career in the same school division, starting as an elementary ESL teacher, moving on to a middle school ESL specialist, and finally worked at the high school level before beginning her role as director. She spoke dynamically about educating and working professionally with families and advocating for support based on the civil rights of the ELL students.

#### *Mr. Smith*

Mr. Smith is the principal of BRES and has acted in his role for four years. As the building administrator, he ensures that the newcomer program offers an accommodating learning space and an adaptive schedule that meets student needs. He empowers the



teachers to provide meaningful experiences that bring conceptual learning to life, such as walking field trips, collaboration with other classes, and allowing time for socialization and play. Outside of the classroom, he works to create an inviting school community through school meetings, in which students share about their pride for and what they miss about their home country. He demonstrated an awareness of the value of academic along with social and emotional learning.

*Ms. Taylor*

Ms. Taylor is the music teacher at BRES and has fulfilled her duties in that role for three years, after previously teaching high school chorus for three years. She teaches music to students in grades PreK-5 in addition to the two newcomer classes. She also directs the fourth and fifth grade choir that meets as an extracurricular activity. She is a Kodály certified teacher and makes a point to include multicultural music repertoire in her teaching sequence and be responsive to the cultural heritages of her students. She notes the importance of newcomer students receiving the same amount of music as students in mainstream classes as a valuable part of their immersion process.

**Procedures**

The primary focus of the study was its newcomer program, offered to students in grades 3 through 5 and placed into two classes at BRES, even if they resided in another part of the city. The two classes were self-contained classes throughout the school day, including their time in content classes, such as art, physical education, and music. To explore the how educators perceived the benefits gained by these newcomer students in their music class, I sought a purposeful sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2018), including the music teacher, Ms. Taylor, and principal, Mr. Smith, both at BRES, and the school division Director of EL services and Title III, Ms. VanMartin.

In preparation for applying for research, I applied for site permission from the school division superintendent (Appendix A), who allowed interviews to take place on the school division's property. Before pursuing recruitment and data collection, I applied for institutional review board permission from the Office of Research Integrity of James Madison University. Once they granted permission, I sent addressed consent letters to potential participants who all returned the forms agreeing to the interviews based on the purpose statement and anonymity of the research. I assigned pseudonyms to all participants and institutions as a protection of privacy.

Data collection included three interviews and various documents (Yin, 2014). Brinkmann & Kvale (2015) describes the qualitative research interview as "attempts to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experience, to uncover their lived world" (p. 3). I followed Scherler's (2005) justification of multiple teacher interviews as a source of perspective into curricular and instructional decisions for the students and their outcomes. As the case study researcher, I assume that each interviewee spoke honestly and forthright. I assume that observations demonstrated a typical format and not staged to give an alternative perspective.

In-person interviews took place in separate times and respective professional locations with each interviewee. All three participants received the same five open-ended interview questions (Appendix B) in order to remain consistent in data collection, in spite of their various perspectives and expertise. This resulted in different lengths of interviews, between twelve and thirty-two minutes. With permission, I audio recorded and transcribed each interview and sent a copy of each interview to each participant to verify the validity of the transcription. This also gave each participant the opportunity to

elaborate or clarify their statements. Once they confirmed that the transcriptions were true to what they had reported, I coded the interviews by extracting meaningful phrases and words in the text in order to conduct an inductive thematic analysis. From the thematic analysis, I discovered and organized seven prevalent themes to inform my research. These emerging themes included setting and program structure, community building through multiculturalism, language acquisition, creativity and accessibility, affirming and developing identity, culturally responsive music education, and challenges. I selected these themes based on a comparison of the codes from each interview and their relationship to relevant literature in music education. A graduate school advisor reviewed the thematic analysis.

From these reduced themes, I triangulated information given during each interview by comparing them with the other interviews and documents to legitimize their experiences and claims and find deeper meaning and understanding. Finally, I coded the prevalent themes into the theoretical framework of intrinsic motivational theory, structuring how the program aligns with the four conditions: 1) establishing inclusion, 2) developing a positive attitude, 3) enhancing meaning, and 4) engendering competence (Ginsberg, 2005). I added a fifth category to account for the adverse challenges that teachers and students face in the newcomer program.

After the in-person interviews aided in building rapport with the participants, I requested official documents regarding statistical population data, all within the parameters of student privacy, but not accessible to the public. This data included languages represented in the school division, ELL enrollment, the newcomer program general curriculum, and the newcomer program music curriculum. This information

provided context behind the population of the school division in relation to national trends. It also confirmed this case study as an unusual situation (Creswell & Poth, 2018) that can provide a unique perspective which can make the world more visible (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). I also acquired a document of music curricular elements and a working document of the newcomer general curriculum for grades 3-5.

Finally, the themes that emerged from the interviews, along with the data collected from documents informed a holistic analysis of the perceived benefits of music instruction for newcomer students. I structured the analysis through the theoretical framework of intrinsic motivational theory (Ginsberg, 2005), consolidating the benefits of music instruction for newcomer students into four learning environment conditions: 1) establishing inclusion, 2) developing a positive attitude, 3) enhancing meaning, and 4) engendering competence. My analysis of the data concluded with recommendations and full disclosure of limitations and implications of the study.

#### 4. Results

This qualitative case study investigated the philosophy and processes of an elementary newcomer program and to explore the perceived benefits of the musical experience for newcomer students, including how the program facilitated the transition from full-time ELL services in a self-contained class to a general classroom. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the musical, lived experiences of an elementary newcomer program, the subsequent data analysis of the interviews and documents answered the following sub-questions:

1. What are the perceived benefits by school personnel of music instruction for newcomer students?
2. What musical pedagogical tools are particularly helpful for teachers in their work teaching newcomer students?
3. How do educators perceive that music can help newcomers find a sense of identity while immersing into a new culture?
4. How does a diverse, pluralistic population create a complex learning environment in the music classroom?

#### **Intrinsic Motivational Theory**

Intrinsic motivational theory provided a theoretical framework for this analysis as it structures the perceived benefits of music education for newcomer elementary students (Ginsberg, 2005). Ginsberg claims that “awareness of and respect for cultural diversity influences motivation” (p. 218) and that as students realize the significance of their own culture related to others, a more autonomous, rooted, and authentic classroom experience is created. Each of the three interviews demonstrated this awareness from the participant

of the value of a culturally responsive music classroom and upholding the perspectives and experiences of the newcomer students in it.

The philosophies of VanMartin, Smith, and Taylor resemble the components of intrinsic motivational theory and reinforce the notion that cultural diversity creates an environment of autonomous learners, driven to acquire skills and knowledge. VanMartin believed that the diverse cultural makeup of the school system made the school division “ripe” for cultural understanding and that it is the responsibility of the teacher to facilitate a sense that all cultures have value and to build student empathy. Smith remarked that “music is a universal language” and that music offers a culturally responsive setting in which students can feel proud of their country and their music. Taylor consistently referred to newcomer students’ inherent willingness and desire to learn music in other languages and from other cultures and concepts that comprise musical structure. She noted more active participation through listening and singing from the newcomer students than students in her mainstream classes.

Participants’ responses uphold that music as a content subject shapes an optimal learning environment for culturally responsive and meaningful experiences. The four conditions of intrinsic motivational theory will outline the data analysis of this study, including 1) establishing inclusion, 2) developing a positive attitude, 3) enhancing meaning, and 4) engendering competence.

### **Establishing Inclusion**

Taylor described the importance of establishing inclusion, as follows:

It is a space where they can share their own music, their own culture.... At [Blue Ridge] we have two school songs, one in English and one in Spanish. It’s amazing

watching the students that don't speak Spanish learning Spanish, and for most of the day try speaking in English, because it leaves them out. But they get it... We are together. Without knowing all of the words, they understood. We are here together... All are welcome here.

Establishing inclusion embraces the principles and practices of a learning environment in which students and teachers feel welcomed, respected, and connected to one another (Ginsberg, 2005). All three participants conveyed that an essential purpose of music is to invite and integrate newcomers into the school community. They shared a perception that multicultural music education empowered by the cultures represented in the classroom creates the most optimal, inclusive learning environment. They thought that music has the ability to build community and offer a sense of unity.

VanMartin shared her belief in music as a powerful tool for connection, especially when it is rooted in their own cultures, which she acknowledged that Taylor does well. According to VanMartin, a culturally representative music class can help newcomer students to “feel at home in a new space” and “try on and try out the new culture in a way that is non-threatening.” She added that newcomers feel comfortable in the music classroom because they do not have to know what lyrics means in order to sing them and they do not have to worry about making mistakes. She said that in musical learning, students do not have to connect to understanding because they are “connected to something deeper.” As an ESL professional, she asserted that newcomer education should never detract from students' identities, but that music education is additive and allows students to grow in their own identities while feeling connected to the new culture.

Smith shared his view that all students can access music content and be successful in music making, regardless of their cultural background:

Music is...a universal language [and] even though [newcomer] students are coming from...all over the globe, music is really the one place...that can really bring [newcomer classes] together and thinking about language.

He perceived that music does not require as much explanation and that students can listen and be engaged. He claimed to witness that newcomer students gravitate to music and find the time enjoyable. He also believed that multicultural music experiences made newcomer students feel welcome in the school community.

Taylor reported that they begin every music class singing “Hello neighbor, what do you say? It’s going to be a beautiful day,” to show that all are welcome in the music classroom. Two school songs, one in English and one in Spanish, offer a feeling of school connectedness and pride. She said that the one in Spanish includes the word “juntos,” or “together,” and that even though some newcomer students speak a language other than English or Spanish and they do not know all of the words, they understand the message of togetherness.

According to Taylor, the act of singing welcomes opportunities to find meaning in other students’ languages when they stop and ask, “How do you say this word in Spanish/Swahili/Arabic/etc.?” This intentional moment to stop music instruction and reach out to the students demonstrates an adaptive practice in order to connect the students’ languages and root them in their own backgrounds. Taylor builds on the newcomer students’ unifying trait of being new to the school, community, language, and culture. “Music is beautiful. It gives them connective tissue and it allows them to excel



and learn another language.” Taylor perceives that because newcomer students are constantly working to assimilate to the language and culture, they quickly and easily pick up on routines and concepts and can experience success in the music classroom. She uses songs in many languages for instruction to show that everyone’s language has value and is worthy of study.

### **Developing a Positive Attitude**

Taylor asserted the importance of developing a positive attitude:

You immediately have to stop and say “It’s really important. It’s okay if you’re getting it wrong, but it’s important that you’re taking this seriously, because this is somebody’s language in this room, and you’re saying, ‘I want to know them more.’” I think how we set those conversations up is important as teachers. How we make this space for that.

Developing a positive attitude relates to the principles and practices that contribute to, through personal and cultural relevance, a favorable disposition toward learning (Ginsberg, 2005). All three participants believed that music creates a setting for building cultural tolerance and openness by acknowledging and working through cultural differences. When allowed the time to explore the benefits and challenges of a pluralistically diverse classroom through a musical lens, the participants agreed that students learn to honor one another’s cultures and seek to know more. They also believed that the process of creating and exploring musical elements through singing and playing instruments evokes joyful learning.

VanMartin believed that music offers newcomer students the chance to play with the language with a lower affective filter, allowing for much more growth and

perpetuated joy. She claimed that any time newcomer students “wrap their ears and mouth around music from anywhere,” joy permeates throughout the entire group. She said that this sense of joy builds community and strengthens the individuals. She also noted the joyful learning that occurs when learning to play an instrument. She depicted the value of musical learning in creating a positive experience for all ELLs, not just newcomers and that a musical collaboration between ESL and music educators could result in a more positive and productive learning environment to help shape the attitudes and language development of students.

Smith shared that music taps into newcomer students’ social and emotional learning as they form positive relationships through music. Students get to not only learn and enjoy music in their learning language of English, but also hear music in their first language and the languages of students in the room. He claimed that when they hear familiar songs, they feel good and proud of their heritage.

Taylor affirmed that newcomer students crave hearing music from their own culture and that using culturally relevant repertoire helps to build community and develop a respectful environment. Anecdotally, she shared that during a lesson of a drumming unit, in which they were comparing drumming styles in various cultures around the world, a Hispanic student showed a thumbs-down motion regarding African drumming. As a part of a restorative culture, Taylor took advantage of the moment to reconcile the differences, discuss as a class how music is present and connective in everyone’s cultures, and develop a more positive student outlook on global thinking and respectful treatment of others. The moment resulted in the Hispanic student repairing the harm and the African student sharing his drumming skills based on his cultural background and

experiences. Taylor embraced a platform of acceptance and reported that she models kindness and a positive attitude for all students' cultures in the classroom. She said that this student's open-mindedness was imperative in order to create a safe space for students to feel excited about learning.

Taylor reported evidence of newcomer students' natural excitement for English language through song and musical concepts. She claimed that, out of a desire to succeed, newcomer students are actively engaged in singing freely, listening intently, and inquiring constantly. She said that the newcomer classes sing more willingly and without shame than her mainstream music classes. She shared that during listening activities in which they have to demonstrate expressive elements like loud vs. soft or fast vs. slow, newcomer students are more often correct, which she attributes to their routine of listening to learn. According to Taylor, newcomer students ask to learn Curwen hand signs that are displayed on posters on the wall, to hear the pitches played on various instruments, and to repeat songs and vocal warm-ups learned in the classroom. It is difficult to conclude if this is enthusiasm due to the intrinsic traits of the newcomer students or the learning environment established by Taylor. Still, the positive attitudes of newcomer students are evident from Taylor's responses.

### **Enhancing Meaning**

VanMartin supported music as a source for enhancing meaning:

I personally feel like student identity is super important and having students understand that they are not being asked to lose themselves or to leave any part of themselves behind; that all of them should come with them throughout their

experiences and they should be trans-identifying all of the time and having a lens that is thicker and more complex is actually solidifying their individual identities.

Enhancing meaning expands and strengthens student learning, building on their existing identities and developing new identities as valued participants in the classroom (Ginsberg, 2005). All participants asserted the value of music in the development of language and providing greater meaning of concepts for newcomer students. Interviewees also agreed that music creates the venue for newcomer students to embrace their own cultural identity, engage in the identities of other newcomer students, and establish new identities all-encompassing of their heritage and new experiences.

VanMartin made the point that musical learning affects both the strengthening of newcomers' identity and the development of their new identity in a new culture:

I think that music has the potential to allow students to feel at home in a strange space if that music is rooted in their own cultures, but it also gives them the opportunity to try on and try out the new culture in a way that is non-threatening. They can play with being a different person in a different language in a different space, which goes into strengthening their own internal identities and taking on new parts of new cultures and new systems without having to give themselves up.

VanMartin raised the point that the school division represents many cultures and that the music classroom has the opportunities to tap into global thinking from the perspectives of the students in the room. She perceived that initially this diversity along with immersion in United States culture and English language learning can feel inaccessible, but once they play with multiculturalism and become more connected to peers, they can develop a stronger sense of self.

VanMartin also tied meaningful language acquisition together with music. She justified music as an essential instructional tool for phonemic awareness:

It seems to me that for...any child who is cognitively healthy can learn the majority of their phonemic awareness foundational skills through music in a way that the affective filter is so low [that] it allows them to play with that in a way that you don't get in an academic arena.... They can learn so much without actually thinking that they are learning anything because it's fun.

She said that strategies of call and response and babbling in vocal music can help newcomer students find deeper meaning in the English language. Using music, she said that newcomer students can connect language to motion and cognition. She perceived that playing an instrument gives students a sense of prosody and the chances to “chop music into little bits and put it back together again.” The listing of these musical practices led VanMartin to claim that music is a powerful foundation to being an articulate speaker of any language, teaching “inside voice, outside voice, public voice, private voice, and internal voice.” As an ESL educator, she enthusiastically noted that music and language acquisition have “inner braiding.”

Smith credited Taylor with finding music from the newcomer students' cultures in their first language from their specific countries of origin and bringing them into the classroom. He said implementing culturally representative music into the curriculum validates the newcomer students' identities and allows them to compare cultural identities. He perceived that this strengthens student identities as a result of discovering how their cultural background threads through those of other students in the room and how it fits in the new culture.

Regarding language, Smith upheld music's accessibility regardless of students' varying English language levels. He claimed that musical experiences make students think about English language through listening and singing. He believed that the music classroom provides an equitable learning environment that "puts everyone...on the same playing field" and allows for all students to engage and grow.

According to Taylor, newcomer students' identity is juxtaposed by striving to fit in to the new culture and having great pride for their home country. Thus, she implements songs in the students' first languages to help embrace their identities and cultivate growth in their new identities. With students' positive attitudes for each other's cultures, Taylor says that students can learn from each other. She iterates that "when you are respecting someone's language, you are respecting someone's identity." Making equity a priority in the music classroom, Taylor says, allows for newcomer students to demonstrate pride for their country while also seeking their new identity.

Taylor professed that her primary goal is not only to teach music to newcomer students, but also to help them acquire the language so that they can excel in their academic classroom. In addition to multicultural music, Taylor said that she uses short songs and nursery rhymes in English that might seem silly, but are embedded with high language skills. Taylor reported that during newcomer lessons, she takes advantage of opportunities to stop and clarify pronunciation, define vocabulary, highlight correct grammar, and write or spell words in question. She noted that language acquisition goals align with choral techniques, such as enunciating with strong, plosive consonants and accentuating phonetics of vowels. Thus, choral warm-ups serve dual purposes of vocal and language growth.

In order to assist with the meaning of words in songs, Taylor provides English lyrics during class and sends them to the newcomer classroom teachers in order to reinforce language learning. She elides thematic units studied in their academic classroom. She also leads the class in beat motions for songs and chants that reinforce the vocabulary associated with the lyrics, providing a kinesthetic approach to enhancing meaning of the language. She uses Orff instruments with a focus on note names since the letter names are etched on the bars. They sing the letter names while playing the notes associating the English alphabet with music. All of these music instructional tools serve to strengthen student learning, provide a deeper understanding of the language and content, and allow newcomer students to feel more confident in the language and their own evolving identities.

### **Engendering Competence**

VanMartin expressed a prioritized outlook for educators when engendering competence:

I think we have to be very mindful of who our actual educators are [i.e. students] .... We just need...to be sure that every child gets [culturally responsive teaching] and that diversity of thought within.

Engendering competence uses authentic learning experiences to help students become more effective at what they value. The interviewees viewed music as a place for highly creative expression and analysis and that by participating in the creative process, newcomer students became strong, confident learners in a new culture. All three participants agreed that music fulfilled an essential purpose of providing a platform for newcomer students to share their cultural identities as autonomous learners and leaders in

the classroom. According to the interviewees, this strong embrace of cultural diversity through music empowers newcomer students to be successful members of the classroom after they transition out of the newcomer program.

VanMartin highlighted the skills cultivated by the creative process of music making. She noted that much of music is rooted in experimental learning and encompasses the components of other academic subjects. She said that music comprises skills such as constructing, building, layering complexity, analyzing, and creating at a high level. She believed that these skills learned in music empower newcomer students beyond their time in the newcomer program.

VanMartin asserted the imperative nature of embodying a student-led and culturally responsive classroom. By allowing the students to teach each other from their multicultural perspectives, VanMartin believed the classroom loses a singular, hierarchy perspective from the teacher and gains a wider lens with greater agency for deeper learning.

Smith discussed the benefits of a culturally responsive music classroom in the way Taylor accentuates the music of cultures represented in the classroom, empowering newcomer students to share their cultural experiences. He also brought up that BRES hosts all-school meetings, in which they invite newcomer students to come up in front of the school study body and share where they are from, music they like, food they like, why they like living in the United States, and what they miss about their home country. He argued that this type of putting newcomer students up on a pedestal provides a responsive environment, in which they can contribute to learning.



Taylor provided examples of how she embodies a student-led music classroom that propel students into greater self-efficacy and ownership of learning. In a lesson, she taught the song *Frère Jacques*, which is a French folk song, and then began to teach a variation in Tigrinya, a language spoken in Eritrea. As she was teaching the song and Tigrinya pronunciation, two students whose first language was Tigrinya corrected Taylor on her pronunciation. Realizing that they had more language experience with the song than she did, Taylor invited the two newcomer students to teach the class the rest of the pronunciation. According to Taylor, this brought joy and connectedness to the rest of the students in the class as they could see the outcome of investing in another student's heritage and building relationship and it gave the two students who spoke Tigrinya a sense of pride in their own culture and musical learning. She reflected on additional examples of this kind of cultural responsiveness when she taught repertoire in Russian and Kurdish with the intentional step of placing students who speak those languages as the experts.

Taylor added that students not only have ownership of songs and melodies, but also rhythms. She said that newcomer students love to play, aurally code, and visually learn rhythm patterns and she works to connect them to cultural music styles that the students recognize. One day, during a unit on sixteenth notes, Taylor aurally presented a dotted eighth note-sixteenth note pattern and several students identified the rhythm pattern as an element of their culture's music, saying, "This the language of me! That is the rhythm of my music!" Taylor affirmed their claims and showed them the rhythm pattern in standard notation, using their excitement to perpetuate their musical understanding and competence.

Taylor shared how she finds ways to combine their cultural experiences with their language acquisition and showcase them in performances. In a recent concert, newcomer students as an ensemble sang a US lullaby, “I See the Moon” with the following lyrics:

I see the moon and the moon sees me,  
The moon sees somebody I want to see,  
Oh, let the light that shines on me,  
Shine on the ones I love.

In addition to singing the song, newcomer students spoke in English, sharing someone they missed and where they live. According to Taylor, this allowed newcomer students to strengthen their skills in English, reconcile with the challenges of their life transitions, instill empathy in the school community, and use music as a source of expression and creativity.

### **Challenges**

The previous sections of analysis included conditions through which, according to study participants, music benefits newcomer students by tapping into their intrinsic motivation. The three interviewees shared their beliefs and experiences of how the instruction of music can establish inclusion, develop a positive attitude, enhance meaning, and engender competence for newcomer students. The elements of the theoretical framework function as a process for transitioning newcomer students from the self-contained classroom of like students to a general classroom, including native-English speakers and first-, second-, and third-generation immigrant students. In addition to the perceived benefits, the three interviewees described the inherent challenges and

complexities of a diverse, pluralistic learning environment in efforts to immerse newcomer students into the new culture.

VanMartin asserted that an initial hurdle for teaching any child about different cultures or beliefs is that just because something is unfamiliar does not make it negative. She claimed that developmentally, children do not recognize new styles or elements of music that they hear and that they are molded into understanding what sounds right. She believed that there are ways to help students find joy in different types of sound and music. Thus, VanMartin pointed out that when newcomer students arrive in a US culture that includes a diverse population, they must navigate a multitude of new sounds, languages, and music.

VanMartin also presented her conviction that the music teacher must be open to the cultural influences of the newcomer students, embodying a culturally responsive, student-led classroom. She claimed that previous music teachers obtained a more central focus on their own priorities of valuable music education and that music rooted solely on one person detracts from the personal identity empowered by multicultural music. She said, "If the teacher does not see the value students bring from a different cultural, linguistic, or race background, it is at the detriment of children's musical experience." She disclaimed that Taylor had been extremely beneficial and culturally responsive to the newcomer program.

As an implication for the future, VanMartin hoped to establish more connections within and outside of the newcomer program. Collaboration between the music teacher and the newcomer classroom teachers provided deeper and stronger language and conceptual learning for the students. She expressed a wish to bridge other school ESL

programs as students leave BRES and to connect ESL educators with music educators, seeking ways for music to further and deepen the learning of all ELLs.

Smith shared that diversity can bring dynamic challenges to the classroom. He said that socialization takes greater efforts due to multiple languages spoken and varying cultural norms experienced by newcomer students. He claimed that newcomer students may also arrive with traumatic backgrounds, which can make it difficult to learn in any culture, let alone a new one while trying to learn a new language. According to Smith, trauma manifests in different ways in different students, thus demonstrating the importance of the teachers building relationships with the students.

Taylor believes that music instruction for newcomer students requires more repetition to achieve understanding. She might have to present the information visually, aurally, kinesthetically, vocally, instrumentally, and textually in order to provide meaningful learning. Based on the interview, Taylor invests in time during music lessons to enhance meaning and engender competence.

Taylor raised a challenge she has with finding meaningful music repertoire for newcomer students. According to Taylor, refugees might not divulge their true location of origin out of fear for the hardships and oppression that caused them to flee their country. For example, Taylor shared that some families report that they moved from Tanzania when they are actually from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Thus, when Taylor presented a folk song in hopes to connect with students' cultural heritage, the students did not connect with the song nor recognize the language of the song. This loss of identity for some newcomer students requires more relationship building and understanding from school staff.

According to Taylor, the most marginalized students among newcomers are those who speak a language other than Spanish. The school greatly identifies with a bilingual English and Spanish structure. The dual language program offers instruction in English and Spanish, communication to families is most often provided in English and Spanish, the schools songs are in English and Spanish, and the school staff are accustomed to translating words into Spanish. Taylor believed that there is more room for mainstreaming communication in Arabic, Kurdish, Swahili, Tigrinya, and Russian speakers as they are sometimes left out of the conversation.

Taylor expressed that the transition for newcomer students out of the self-contained class into a general education class is not always easy. Some students remain at BRES after their time in the newcomer program and continue to take music classes from Taylor. She witnessed that the newcomer class is founded on kindness and acceptance of diversity, which is not always as established in other classes. Taylor reported that she sometimes sees a shift in the newcomer students' demeanor after they transition to a general education class. "Even the strongest ones are almost silent in their classrooms," Taylor said. Without further research on the process, it is difficult to determine the extent of this challenge.

### **Conclusion**

The three interviews illuminated perceived benefits of music instruction for newcomer students. The participants discussed helpful experiences and pedagogy that behoove newcomer students in musical learning. The interviewees clearly aligned philosophically in making culturally responsive teaching a priority to help newcomer students find a sense of identity while immersing into a new culture. According to the

data results, the benefits of music instruction did not come without challenges of a diverse, pluralistic classroom. Given the embrace of diversity and embodying a culturally responsive music classroom, the three educators reflected intrinsic motivational theory, working to establish inclusion, develop positive student attitudes, enhance meaning, and engender competence (Ginsberg, 2005).

The three participants stood on a platform of welcoming and including newcomer students into the school culture. VanMartin, through her role of Coordinator of EL Support Programs worked to establish connections between the newcomer program and families and believed that the content of music could reach the languages and cultures of newcomer students, giving them value and worth in the school division. Smith focused his responses on social and emotional learning and how music can make newcomer students feel welcome in the school community. Taylor used music repertoire from the newcomer students' countries of origin to validate their identities and include their perspectives in the styles of music that warrant further study and performance.

The interviewees worked to develop students' positive attitudes for the sake of manifesting students' favorable disposition of learning and creating a safe space in which all students' musical backgrounds were respected and valued. VanMartin believed that music making offered newcomer students a joyful learning experience in which they could play with the English language with a lowered affective filter and experience music of other cultures. Smith claimed that music offered a place to develop positive relationships that foster social and emotional learning. He also shared that newcomer students feel good when they hear songs in their first language. Taylor utilized responsive teaching methods to resolve cultural conflict in the classroom and music to connect

newcomer students, instilling open-mindedness in all participants. Additionally, she noted newcomer students' inherent willingness and desire to learn about their new culture and home.

Participants shared the common value of enhancing meaning for newcomer students by building their sense of identity in a new culture and offering authentic learning experiences to acquire the English language through the content of music. VanMartin believed that music could strengthen newcomer students' identities while giving space for them to explore commonalities of other cultures in the room and the new culture in which they reside. She also enthusiastically noted the overlap of music and language instruction and asserted that music could provide contextualized phonemic, grammatic, analytical, and creative language experiences. Smith viewed music as an avenue for affirming newcomer student identities, building newly influenced identities, and acquiring the English language to articulate their perspectives of the world around them. Taylor made newcomer student identity a priority by including music in their first language for instruction and performance purposes. She also ensured that English language acquisition took precedence in the music classroom to enhance the meaning of songs in the music classroom and empower newcomer students to be more successful outside of the music classroom.

The three interviewees upheld the value of culturally responsive music teaching and student-led instruction, engendering competence for newcomer students. VanMartin listed elements of the musical creative process that equip newcomer students to become more effective learners. She expressed belief that the music classroom must place students' perspectives at the core of learning rather than the teacher's centralized focus

on what is important. Smith believed in the importance of newcomer students leading in music learning by sharing their own experiences and moving forward with their backgrounds to empower them. Taylor posited culturally responsive teaching by allowing newcomer students to be the experts on the music from their culture. She also focused on rhythmic and melodic concepts characteristic of the diverse cultural music represented in the classroom. Finally, she had newcomer students use their transition stories as inspiration behind the music they sang not only in class, but also in a performance venue.

Hosting a newcomer program in a diverse educational setting brought challenges that warrant consideration. VanMartin said that teachers have to work through students' auditory filter, instilling that new music that sounds different to them is not negative, but unfamiliar and worthy of learning. She also claimed that a music teachers' egocentric instruction could occur at the detriment to the development and growth of newcomer students. Smith shared that cultural dynamics can bring challenges to the music classroom, whether related to conflicting cultural norms or students' traumatic experiences. Taylor expressed the difficulty of relating to newcomer students when they are not transparent about their heritage out of fear of what they experienced. She reported that the Spanish language was more mainstreamed into the school culture than the other languages represented by newcomer students, potentially making it more difficult for newcomer students to access the curriculum and families to access school opportunities. Lastly, she shared the transitional challenges as students leave the newcomer program, in which they bond from their similarities of learning the language and culture, and enter the general classroom with a myriad of language levels and cultural experiences.



The interviews conveyed the perceived benefits of musical learning for newcomer students based on their intrinsic motivation in assimilating to the new culture. These benefits include the strengthening and developing of student identity, forming positive relationships and attitudes, participating in the creative process, and acquiring the English language. Enlisting culturally responsive teaching strategies most behooved newcomer students musical learning. Balancing repertoire in newcomer students' first languages with explicit instruction of the English language in repertoire and vocal exercises aided students in developing a sense of identity while immersing in a new culture. The diverse, pluralistic classroom fostered many opportunities for authentic learning, but it also created a complex learning environment to navigate cultural norms, potentially varying priorities of teachers and students, and previous student trauma. These results illuminate the value of music instruction for newcomer students related to research literature (Howell, 2011; Scherler, 2005; Campbell, 2018) and implications for future research that will be discussed in the next chapter.

## 6. Findings and Implications

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate the philosophy and processes of an elementary newcomer program and to explore the perceived benefits of the musical experience for newcomer students, including how the program facilitated the transition from full-time ELL services in a self-contained class to a general classroom. I sought the overarching perspectives of a music teacher, school principal, and the division coordinator of EL services to investigate the process through which newcomer students access the school curriculum, strengthen existing identities, and develop new identities within the structure of a newcomer program and music instruction. Their insight helped to delve into ways educators through culturally responsive music education can support newcomer students in their transition process to a general classroom. I sought to answer the following sub-questions:

1. What are the perceived benefits by school personnel of music instruction for newcomer students?
2. What musical pedagogical tools are particularly helpful for teachers in their work teaching newcomer students?
3. How do educators perceive that music can help newcomers find a sense of identity while immersing into a new culture?
4. How does a diverse, pluralistic population create a complex learning environment in the music classroom?

In this section, I will reflect upon the data results of the interviews and document collection in relation to the research questions and relevant literature, disclose

implications, and assert significance considerations for future research regarding music education for newcomer students specifically, or ELLs in general.

### **Perceived Benefits and Helpful Pedagogy**

#### *Establishes Inclusion*

The three interviewees agreed that music provides newcomer students with a sense of inclusion, connectedness, and belonging (Ginsberg, 2005). Community building took place in the music classroom through the acknowledgement of students' diverse backgrounds, modeling of mutual respect and acceptance, and the implementation of repertoire from the diverse cultures represented in the classroom. The school community established inclusion by inviting the newcomer classes to grade level field trips and school meetings, where they sing songs of welcoming and togetherness, both in English and in Spanish. The school division embraced diverse families in their welcome center process, which sought to identify ELLs to "make sure that [ELLs] get everything that they need in order to be able to show [teachers] who they are academically and that [ESL educators] can provide appropriate support for them" (VanMartin, 2020). VanMartin claimed that the school division promoted equity with the purpose of providing "the most accelerated form of service" to "maximize [students'] potential."

The research literature validates the importance of culturally responsive teaching for newcomer students (Ramirez & Taylor Jaffee, 2016) and how music can provide an avenue to establish inclusion (Kelly-McHale, 2013; Scherler, 2005; Howell, 2011). Ramirez and Taylor Jaffee's study (2016) revealed that an open classroom community design provided newcomer students with an ownership of their new culture along with their heritage in a welcoming and nurturing environment. Within the music context, Kelly-McHale (2013) asserted that music educators would best serve and welcome

newcomer students by becoming learners and listeners of their culture and experiences.

She said,

...culturally responsive music educators embrace the linguistic and cultural diversity of their classrooms through the development of community and the inclusion of content that reflects and expands the knowledge base of their students (p. 197).

Scherler (2005) discovered a significant difference in music classroom climate when the teacher gleaned an understanding of ELLs background and established strong relationships with students of diverse cultures and languages. Howell (2011) created a similar space of active music making in which all participants, regardless of cultural background, could access the curriculum and participate in the creative music process.

*Develops a Positive Attitude*

The participants acknowledged the natural affinity that newcomer students have for music, the joyful learning experience that music provides, and the ways that music can instill a positive disposition for further learning. Taylor recognized the value of multicultural musical learning centered by the cultures represented by newcomer students with an explicit expectation of respecting and caring for one another. Playing instruments, singing playful vocal exercises, and participating in listening games created a fun learning environment that students enjoyed. Smith confirmed that newcomer students develop positive attitudes through learning music. He said that they gravitated to music due to the strengthened relationships formed through music making. VanMartin agreed that music content lowered the affective filter and allowed students to play with the language, songs, and instruments in relationship with others in the room, without

worrying about making mistakes. These pedagogical tools and classroom management practices gave newcomer students a favorable experience that instilled a positive attitude.

The current research supports that music aids in creating a more enjoyable experience (Salcedo, 2002), increases motivation (Schön et al., 2007), and gives students a sense of pride and joy in the learning process (Soto, 2012). Salcedo's research (2002) also referred to the physiological and cognitive effects of music on learning, similar to the references VanMartin made to the lowered affective filter. Salcedo also discovered that music gave participants a more congenial disposition toward learning. Schön et al. (2007) found that music created a connection between emotional/arousal learning and linguistic learning, resulting in an optimal and highly motivational education setting. Soto (2012) witnessed a favorable and joyful learning environment when the teacher presented music in students' first language and was responsive to their cultural identity.

#### *Enhances Meaning Through Language Acquisition and Identity Development*

The interviews highlighted enhanced meaning that occurs through music regarding newcomer students' language acquisition, strengthening of existing identities, and the development of new identities. Taylor noted that her primary roles as a music educator for newcomer students was to aid in students accessing the English language and to provide a space where they be successful by hearing familiar music that connects to their cultural heritage. Smith reiterated the notion that newcomer students can easily access the music curriculum and find deeper meaning in the English language. He confirmed that Taylor found songs directly from newcomer students' cultures, building on students' existing identities and allowing them to learn from each other, given the pluralistic population. VanMartin believed that music created a space where newcomer students could solidify their identity by exploring the music of their own culture, the

cultures of their peers, and the music of their shared new culture. She highlighted the process of musical learning that overlapped with English language acquisition.

The research field legitimizes the claims made by the interviewees regarding enhanced meaning through music and language acquisition (Salcedo, 2002; Schön et al., 2007) and music and cultural identity (Soto, 2012; Scherler, 2005). Salcedo theorized that “Music can often provide a context to better understand the language” (2002, p. 10). Schön et al. suggested that the process of learning a second language “may largely benefit from the motivational and structuring properties of music in song” (2007, p. 982). Soto (2012) explored the bimusical identities that students who are bilingual navigate daily and asserted that students benefit from the music of their culture being presented as a valid form of musical study “enabling them to learn about the rich complexities inherent in their music” (p. 217). Scherler emphasized that music helps to “bridge the gap” (2005, p. 216) for ELLs between their previous culture and their academic learning environment.

#### *Engenders Competence*

All of the participants supported the high level of creative expression and analytical engagement that music offers newcomer students. Additionally, the comparison of interviews revealed a consistently strong belief in providing a student-led education for newcomer students and a hope for empowerment of newcomer students after their time in the program through the instruction of music. Taylor shared multiple instances of stopping planned classroom instruction to respond to students’ initiatives and of putting students in the spotlight. She followed student creativity and input to add layers to musical learning and develop greater self-efficacy. Smith upholds the values of a culturally responsive music classroom by allowing newcomer students to share about

their musical heritage in school meetings, putting them up on a pedestal in a culturally responsive light. VanMartin noted the multi-dimensional skills required to make music with a group of people, such as constructing ideas, layering complexity, collaborating with others, analyzing elements, and creating at a high level and the invaluable asset that process can be for newcomer students. She insisted that music education is most optimal when it is culturally responsive and student-centered.

The research field supports the claims made by the participants regarding the value of creative expression for newcomer students (Rousseau, 2005), specifically with music as a medium (Howell, 2011). Other music education researchers have found culturally responsive music teaching to be most beneficial for ELLs (Kelly-McHale, 2013). Rousseau (2005) discovered that creative expression could engender competence by allowing refugee children to process their lived experiences and claim their identity. Howell (2011) related more specifically to the music creative process of composition, inviting newcomer students' visions, thoughts, and opinions, giving them a sense of ownership and belonging. She theorized that creative expression could positively benefit newcomer students' self-esteem, engagement, and overall learning. Kelly-McHale (2013) implored that music education follow a culturally responsive teaching philosophy to establish a connection between students' musical identities and musical learning, thus embedding sustained lifelong musicians in newcomer students.

### **Complexities**

The complexities of a pluralistically diverse newcomer class raised by the interviewees merit attention. Taylor claimed that time and repetition are factors to

consider when enhancing meaning for newcomer students. Howell (2011) verified this notion saying:

Transition between cultures, like any transition in music, requires time to reach its conclusions, and new arrivals require much greater processing time and emotional space than similarly aged, local peers (p. 57).

Scherler (2005) also acknowledged extra time as an appropriate adaptation during music instruction for ELLs.

Taylor and Smith brought up the challenge of the multiplicity of languages and cultural norms represented in the newcomer program. This complexity relates to VanMartin's hurdle that just because something is unfamiliar does not mean it is negative. This was evidenced by an anecdote that Taylor shared about a conflict between students who became competitive over cultural styles of drumming. The conflict was resolved by Taylor through a restorative process and the opportunity for students to learn more about each other and uplift each other. Soto (2012) and Kelly-McHale (2013) discussed the challenges of cultural dynamics present in the classroom based on Hispanic cultural norms, but the research field is lacking literature on pluralistically diverse music classrooms and the complexities created as a result.

Taylor, Smith, and VanMartin highlighted the challenge that the identification of a newcomer student's language and previous location relies on the disclosure of the family, which might vary due to previous trauma. Thus, the true origin of a student's identity might not be entirely accurate. This creates difficulty when trying to implement a culturally responsive music repertoire, provide necessary language support, and establish positive relationships. Research conducted by Rousseau et al. (2005) revealed the



challenge of ascertaining background information from newcomer families if they have experienced hardships or trauma, but the process of creative expression can empower newcomer students to reconcile with their past and have a more successful future in their new culture.

Taylor expressed her concern about newcomer students after they leave the self-contained program. While most students attend a different school after they graduate from the newcomer program, some students remain at BRES and continue to take music with Taylor with their newly assigned general education grade level class. She witnessed the students thrive in the tightly knit community created by the newcomer program and flourished in music class, but she has seen a shift in some students in their level of participation after they transition to a class with native English speakers and other non-native English speakers. This notion relates to studies regarding the role of relationships in the newcomer education experience (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2009; Oxman-Martinez & Choi, 2014). Suárez-Orozco et al. theorized that relationships “bridge the gap between home and school cultures and provide important feelings of safety and opportunities for success in the school setting” (2009, p. 741). This supports the positive outcome of relationships formed in the newcomer program that must be re-established after a student leaves the program. The study conducted by Oxman-Martinez and Choi uncovered cases of social isolation among newcomer students and the adverse effects of exclusion. Teachers and administrators of the newcomer program at BRES hope that once newcomer students feel included, develop a positive attitude, acquire enhanced meaning, and become more effective at what they value, that newcomer students do not experience the exclusion highlighted by Oxman-Martinez and Choi.

Finally, VanMartin pointed out that previous music educators of the newcomer program had not always adopted a culturally responsive teaching philosophy or a willingness to collaborate with classroom teachers. She asserted that educators must reflect on their practices to ensure that they are not ego-centric in their teaching practice, but are culturally responsive and open to the ideas and values of students. She also believed that all educators should receive more pre-service and in-service training on the needs of ELLs and that more ESL educators would benefit from instructional insight and collaboration on how to most effectively and efficiently teach aspects of language using music as a tool. Many researchers have called for more pre-service and in-service training for music educators on how to provide a culturally responsive curriculum and adequately accommodate ELLs. Kelly-McHale's study (2013) revealed that when music teachers focused on teaching concepts prioritized by Western classical art music, students are not able to connect school music with lifelong music making. A more culturally responsive teaching platform could better merge students' various musical experiences, particularly for students with diverse cultural backgrounds. Scherler (2005) found that music teachers lacked the instructional tools to adapt sufficiently to ELLs and could benefit from pre-service and in-service training.

### **Implications and Recommendations**

The results and analysis of this qualitative case study on the perceived benefits of music instruction for newcomer students come with implications that require disclosure. In the interest of pursuing the broad, structural perspectives of the newcomer program and music instruction, I interviewed school personnel. Scherler (2005) supports the decision to interview educators as a source for curriculum and instructional decisions. On

the other hand, newcomer students could offer first-hand insight to their lived experiences and the beneficial role that music plays in their lives. Further research beyond this study, including newcomer student interviews, could illuminate preferred music pedagogy, content, and instruction by newcomer students and the extent to which music functions in newcomer students' lives after they experience a self-contained program.

I did not conduct observations of newcomer music classes due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which necessitated a nationwide quarantine at the time I had planned observations. Observations of newcomer music classes would have served to inform the research data, provide a source of triangulation to confirm the claims of interviewees, and get a better picture of the "lived experiences" of newcomer students. Thus, I relied solely on the three interviews and document collection to provide data, comparison, and triangulation. Interviews with the newcomer program teachers could have also shed light on the research.

The qualitative case study was a short-term isolated occurrence and did not investigate the long-term effects of music instruction for newcomer students. A follow-up with the participants could provide more insight on the positive effects of music and the welcoming environment that BRES created for newcomer students. Taylor had also only taught at BRES for three years and did not have a long-term perspective of newcomer students' academic and social success. After I conducted the research, the program moved locations to another elementary school in the school division, making a follow-up obsolete.

Future research could investigate the level of engagement that ELLs and newcomer students have in secondary school music opportunities. Research in social justice through multicultural music education emphasizes equity (Banks & Banks, 2004; Campbell, 2018). If music classrooms are truly equitable, then they should also be accessible and representative of student populations within, both in elementary and secondary programs. More research literature exists beyond those discussed in this study suggesting that many secondary school ensembles do not represent the races and ethnicities of the school itself (Stauffer, 2012; Elpus & Abril, 2012). Further research could find connections between the learning experiences and social justice provided in the elementary music classroom and how it can propel newcomer students and other ELLs to engage in curricular music making (Banks & Banks, 2004).

Many other topics emerged from the interviews that warrant further study and consideration. A bulk of the previous research literature related to music education for ELLs who are Spanish speakers, but did not take on the mantle of a pluralistically diverse school population. Further research could explore how diverse cultural norms and languages play a role in the music classroom. Considering the research in music education themes of multicultural music education and culturally responsive music education, the question arises of how to provide deep, comprehensive music instruction when trying to reach a myriad of musical and cultural practices. Based on the research (Lind & McKoy, 2016; Campbell, 2018), it is imperative that teachers strive to reach all learners in the music classroom with relevant musical experiences to bolster cultural identities and instill lifelong music making.

According to the statements made by the participants, the music program at BRES followed culturally responsive curriculum and instructional methods, but as VanMartin highlighted, not all music educators follow the same philosophy or have the training to equip them to make the same curricular or instructional decisions. As the literature has previously claimed (Kelly-McHale, 2013; Scherler, 2005), this research data supports that music educators should receive pre-service and in-service training for accommodating ELLs. Future research could reveal many more connections between music and language learning, music and cultural identity and how music can empower educators to make the most of their instruction for ELLs.

Some questions that were not diligently analyzed for the purpose of this study and merit future research arise from the claims made by the participants. The National Music Standards (2014) state that “Individuals’ selection of musical works is influenced by their interests, experiences, understandings, and purposes” (p. 10) and that students’ response to music should be informed by social, cultural, and historical contexts. The Virginia Music Standards of Learning (2020) include a strand specifically for History, Culture, and Citizenship:

Students hear and understand musical works from many time periods and places and respond to a variety of music and musical styles from diverse composers and performers. Students identify the values, roles, and reasons for the creation and performance of music from the perspective of many time periods, people, and places (p. vii).

An additional strand referring to Innovation in the Arts alludes to culturally responsive teaching, saying “Innovation thrives by cultivating authentic connections between fields

of knowledge” (p. vii). Music education scholars have identified best practices for instruction in the music classroom that involve the diversity of musical ideas, experiences, and identities of the students in the classroom (Lind & McKoy, 2016; Campbell, 2018; Hargreaves, MacDonald, & Miell, 2017). If these structures and guidelines are in place, future research should explore why some music educators make the philosophical decision to embrace racial and ethnic influences in their pedagogy and curriculum and some do not. Also, researchers could discover what characteristics of school buildings or divisions enable music teachers to complacently remain in a Eurocentric, fixed curriculum or scrupulously strive to become an emancipatory (Gay, 2010), social-justice driven classroom (Banks & Banks, 2004). How do school cultures play a role in the level of culturally responsive teaching in the music classroom? How can school administrators assess that effective, culturally responsive teaching is taking place?

The simple answer to equipping teachers to meaningfully instruct ELLs is to provide more pre-service and in-service training. On the other hand, Taylor made culturally responsive decisions in her classroom and effectively engaged with newcomer students relatively early in her music teaching career. An interesting area for future research might be interviews and observations with exemplary music teachers with diverse populations and how they effectively implement authentic music learning for all students. Are there certain dispositions, characteristics, or experiences that predispose music teachers to likely provide high quality, adaptive instruction?

Another avenue not explored in this study is curricular alignment within the school division. The studied school division embraces a Kodály-inspired, concept-based curriculum and is in the process of implementing multicultural, culturally relevant song

materials for all students. Still, the main emphasis is rhythmic and melodic sequences based on standard notation. The curriculum reflects both national and state music standards for building creative and analytical skills in music. Taylor claimed to sometimes speed up or slow down elements of the sequence so that concepts contextually made sense to newcomer students. For instance, she often taught the diatonic major scale in totality, rather than in smaller tone sets, and played it on various classroom instruments. She also considered attainability of English vocabulary in her song selections. Future research should look at music education curricula among culturally diverse school divisions to explore how content can cover national and state standards while also providing meaningful, representative, and responsive instruction.

Based on the research, music is a powerful tool for building relationships (Suárez-Orozco et. al., 2009; Oxman-Martinez & Choi, 2014), exercising creativity (Rousseau et. al., 2005), engaging the brain effectively (Levitin & Menon, 2003), developing language (Salcedo, 2002; Schön et. al., 2007), rooting children in their cultural identities (Lum & Campbell, 2009; Soto, 2012; Kelly-McHale, 2013), and meaningfully instructing all learners regardless of their ethnicity or language (Scherler, 2005; Howell, 2011). The participants in this study agree with these benefits and perceived that the music classroom established inclusion, developed a positive attitude, enhanced meaning, and engendered competence for newcomer students (Ginsberg, 2005). The evidence from this study points to driving social justice into the schools through content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture and social structure (Banks & Banks, 2004) through the art of music (Campbell, 2018). Given the growing diversity in United States public schools (NCES, 2020) and the ever-

changing global climate of racial and ethnic tension (Bhopal, 2014; Campbell 2018; Lind & McKoy, 2016), music educators must embrace their duty to provide high-quality and culturally responsive music instruction to all students, regardless of their age, language, ethnicity, or race. We must diligently strive toward social justice for all students, because music is deeply rooted to their identities and directly connected to their current and future success.



## Appendix A - Consent Forms

### Site Coordinator Letter of Permission

September 25, 2019

Institutional Review Board  
James Madison University  
MSC 5738  
601 University Boulevard  
Harrisonburg, VA 22807

Dear Institutional Review Board,

I hereby agree to allow Jessica Strawderman, from James Madison University to conduct her research at Blue Ridge Elementary School. I understand that the purpose of the study is to investigate the philosophy and process of an elementary newcomer program and explore the perceived benefits of the musical experience in student transition from full-time ELL services in a self-contained classroom to being fully immersed in an English instructed classroom.

By signing this letter of permission, I am agreeing to the following:

- JMU researcher(s) have permission to be on Blue Ridge Elementary School premises.
- JMU researcher(s) have access to the data collected to perform the data analysis both for presentation to James Madison University professors and/or for publication purposes.

Sincerely,

School Division Superintendent (Name removed to maintain anonymity)

## **Consent to Participate in Research**

### **Identification of Investigators & Purpose of Study**

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Jessica Strawderman from James Madison University. This case study will investigate the philosophy and process of an elementary newcomer program and explore the perceived benefits of the musical experience in student transition from full-time ELL services in a self-contained classroom to being fully immersed in an English instructed classroom. This study will contribute to the researcher's completion of her graduate capstone project for her Master of Music Education.

### **Research Procedures**

Should you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to sign this consent form once all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. This study consists of an interview that will be administered to individual participants in Harrisonburg, Virginia. You will be asked to provide answers to a series of questions related to your experience with the subjected newcomer program. The interview will be audio recorded for the purpose of transcription and validation.

### **Time Required**

Participation in this study will require 2 hours of your time. This includes time to conduct the interview, review the transcript, and answer potential follow-up questions.

### **Risks**

The investigator does not perceive more than minimal risks from your involvement in this study (that is, no risks beyond the risks associated with everyday life).

### **Benefits**

There are no direct benefits to the participant except to educate the reader about an exceptionally diverse music education population.

### **Confidentiality**

Participants in this survey will be de-identified using pseudonyms to maintain anonymity. The results of this research will be presented at James Madison University for a committee of professors. The results of this project will be coded in such a way that the respondent's identity will not be attached to the final form of this study. The researcher retains the right to use and publish non-identifiable data. While individual responses are confidential, aggregate data will be presented representing averages or generalizations about the responses as a whole. All data will be stored in a secure location accessible only to the researcher. Upon completion of the study, all information that matches up individual respondents with their answers (including audio recordings) will be destroyed.

### **Participation & Withdrawal**

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to choose not to participate. Should you choose to participate, you can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind.

**Questions about the Study**

If you have questions or concerns during the time of your participation in this study, or after its completion or you would like to receive a copy of the final aggregate results of this study, please contact:

Jessica Strawderman  
 Master of Music Education  
 James Madison University  
 (540) 214-9681  
 jessicastrawderman@gmail.com

Dr. William Dabback  
 Music Education  
 James Madison University  
 (540) 568-3464  
 dabbackwm@jmu.edu

**Questions about Your Rights as a Research Subject**

Dr. Taimi Castle  
 Chair, Institutional Review Board  
 James Madison University  
 (540) 568-5929  
 castletl@jmu.edu

**Giving of Consent**

I have read this consent form and I understand what is being requested of me as a participant in this study. I freely consent to participate. I have been given satisfactory answers to my questions. The investigator provided me with a copy of this form. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age.

I give consent to be audio recorded during my interview. \_\_\_\_\_ (initials)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Name of Participant (Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Name of Participant (Signed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Name of Researcher (Signed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

### **Appendix B - Interview Questions**

1. What is your role in providing educational experiences for students in the newcomer program?
2. How are students identified, qualified and enrolled in the newcomer program?
3. How do you perceive students who are ELLs benefit from music instruction?
4. What musical pedagogical tools are particularly helpful for students who are ELL?
5. How can music help ELLs find a sense of identity while immersing into a new culture?
6. How does a diverse, pluralistic population create a complex learning environment in the music classroom?

## References

- Anton, R. J. (1990). Combining singing and psychology. *Hispania*, 73, 1166-1170.
- Baker, J. A. (1999). Teacher-student interaction in urban at-risk classrooms: Differential behavior, relationship quality, and student satisfaction with school. *Elementary School Journal*, 100, 57–70.
- Bangura, A, & Muo, M. (2001). *United States Congress & Bilingual Education*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Banks, J. A. (2009). *Teaching strategies for ethnic studies*. Boston: Pearson Education.
- Banks, J. A. & Banks, C. A. M. (Eds.). (2004). *Handbook of research on multicultural education* (2nd ed). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Bhopal, R. (2014). *Migration, Ethnicity, Race, and Health in Multicultural Societies*. Oxford University Press.
- Board of Education Commonwealth of Virginia. (2020). Music Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools.  
[https://doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/standards\\_docs/fine\\_arts/2020/2020fasol-music.pdf](https://doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/standards_docs/fine_arts/2020/2020fasol-music.pdf)
- Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2015). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Calderón, M. (2011). *Teaching reading and comprehension to English learners, K-5*. Solution Tree Press.
- Campbell, P. S. (2018). *Music, education, and diversity: Bridging cultures and communities*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Campbell, P.S., Drummond, J., Dunbar-Hall, P., Howard, K., Schippers, H., & Wiggins, T. (2005). *Cultural diversity in music education: Directions and challenges for the 21st century*. Bowen Hills: Australian Academic Press.
- Cantoni-Harvey, G. (1987). *Content area language instruction: Approaches and strategies*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Consortium of National Arts Education Associations. (1994). National standards for arts education. Reston, VA: Music Educators National Conference.
- Cooper, S., & Grimm-Anderson, S. (2007). Structured English Immersion (SEI) in the music classroom: Music instruction for crossing borders. *General Music Today*, 20(2), 20–24.

Creswell, J.W., & Poth, C.N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed). SAGE Publications.

DeLorenzo, L. (2016). *Giving Voice to Democracy in Music Education: Diversity and Social Justice* (1st ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y.S. (2018). *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Elpus, K., & Abril, C. R. (2011). High School Music Ensemble Students in the United States: A Demographic Profile. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 59(2), 128–145. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429411405207>

Equal Education Opportunities Act (1974)., 20 U.S.C. §1203(f).

Engh, D. (2013). Why Use Music in English Language Learning? A Survey of the Literature. *English Language Teaching*, 6(2), 113–127.

Freeman, D., & Freeman, Y. (2007). *English Language Learners: The Essential Guide*. Scholastic Inc.

Gamble, S. (1983). A Multicultural Curriculum. *Music Educators Journal*, 69(9), 39-41.

Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, & practice* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). New York, NY: Teachers College.

Ginsberg, M. (2005). Cultural Diversity, Motivation, and Differentiation. *Theory into Practice*, 44(3), 218-225).

Green, L. (2011). *Learning, teaching, and musical identity: voices across cultures*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Hargreaves, D., MacDonald, R., & Miell, D. (2017). The changing identity of musical identities. In *Collected Work: Handbook of musical identities*, 1-24. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.

Howell, G. (2009). From imitation to invention: Issues and strategies for the ESL music classroom. *Musicworks: Journal of the Australian Council of Orff Schulwerk*, 14(1), 61–66.

Howell, G. (2011). Do they know they are composing? Music making and understanding among newly arrived immigrant and refugee children. *International Journal of Community Music*, 4(1), 47-58.

Ilari, B. (2017). Children's ethnic identities, cultural diversity, and music education. In *Collected Work: Handbook of musical identities*, 527-542. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.

- Kelly-McHale, J. (2013). The influence of music teacher beliefs and practices on the expression of musical identity in an elementary general music classroom. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 61(2), 195-216.
- Krashen, S. (1985). *The input hypothesis: issues and implications*. New York: Laredo Publishing Company.
- Levitin, D., & Menon, V. (2003). Musical structure is processed in “language” areas of the brain: a possible role for Brodmann Area 47 in temporal coherence. *NeuroImage*, 20, 2142-2152.
- Lind, V. R., & McKoy, C. L. (2016). *Culturally responsive teaching in music education: From understanding to application*. New York, NY ; Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- Lum, C. H., & Campbell, P.S. (2009). “El Camaleon”: The musical secrets of Mirella Valdez. In C. Abril & J. L. Kerchner (Eds.), *Musical experiences in our lives: Things we learn and meanings we make* (113-126). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- MacDonald, R. A., Hargreaves, D. J., & Miell, D. (2002). *Musical identities*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mark, M. L. (1999). MENC: From Tanglewood to the present. *Vision*, 5-22.
- Miranda, M. (2011). My name is Maria: Supporting English language learners in the kindergarten general music classroom. *General Music Today*, 24(2), 17–22.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1048371309359612>
- National Association for Music Education. (2014). Music Standards (PK-8 General Music). <https://nafme.org/wp-content/files/2014/11/2014-Music-Standards-PK-8-Strand.pdf>
- National Center for Education Statistics (2020). English Language Learners in Public Schools. [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator\\_cgf.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cgf.asp)
- National Center for Education Statistics (2020). Racial/Ethnic Enrollment in Public Schools. [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator\\_cge.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cge.asp)
- Oxman-Martinez, J., & Choi, Y. R. (2014). Newcomer Children: Experiences of Inclusion and Exclusion, and Their Outcomes. *Social Inclusion*. 2(4), 23-37.
- Ramirez, P., & Taylor Jaffee, A. (2016). Culturally Responsive Active Citizenship Education for Newcomer Students: A Cross-State Case Study of Two Teachers in Arizona and New York. *International Journal of Multicultural Education*. 18 (1), 45-66.
- Report of the Society for Ethnomusicology's Education Committee. (1986).

- Rousseau, C. et al. (2005). Evaluation of a classroom program of creative expression workshops for refugee and immigrant children. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 46(2), 180-185.
- Rumberger, R. (2004). Why students drop out of school. In G. Orfield (Ed.), *Dropouts in America: Confronting the graduation rate crisis* (pp. 131–155). Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Salcedo, C. (2002). *The effects of songs in the foreign language classroom on text recall and involuntary mental rehearsal*. LSU Doctoral Dissertations.
- Scherler, K. (2005). *Elementary music teachers instructing Hispanic English language learners: Reflection on practice*. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International.
- Schippers, H., & Campbell, P.S. (2012). Cultural diversity: beyond ‘songs from every land’. In: G. McPherson & G. Welch (Eds.) *Oxford handbook of music education*, p. 87–104. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schön, D. et al. (2007). Songs as an aid for language acquisition. *Cognition*. 106, 975-983.
- Smith, M. (February 20, 2020). Personal Interview.
- Soltero, C. (2006). Plyler v. Doe (1982) and Educating Children of Illegal Aliens. In *Latinos and American Law: Landmark Supreme Court Cases* (118-131). Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Soto, A. (2012). *Bimusical Identity of a Mexican American School*. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International.
- Soto, G. (1995). *Elementary music education in Laredo, Texas: A survey of teaching strategies and its application in the music education of Mexican-American children*. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International.
- Stauffer, S. (2012). Place, music education, and the practice and pedagogy of philosophy. In *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy in Music Education*, W. Bowman and L. Frega, eds. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Suárez-Orozco, C. & Suárez-Orozco, M. (2001). *Children of immigration*. Harvard, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Suárez-Orozco, C., Pimentel, A., & Martin, M. (2009). The Significance of Relationships: Academic Engagement and Achievement Among Newcomer Immigrant Youth. *Teachers College Record*. 111 (3), 712-749.
- Taylor, M. (2020, February 20). Personal Interview.



U.S. Census Bureau (2018). American Community Survey 1-year estimates. Retrieved from <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=english%20language%20learners&hidePreview=true&tid=ACSS1Y2018.S1601&vintage=2018>.

U.S. Census Bureau (2019). Current Population Survey. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2019/demo/foreign-born/cps-2019.html>

U.S. Congress. House (1974). Committee of Education and Labor. General Subcommittee on Education. Bilingual Education Act: Hearings Before the General Subcommittee on Education and Labor, House of Representatives. 93d Cong., 2d Sess.

U.S. Courts (1982). *Plyler v. Doe*. 457 U.S. 202.

VanMartin, L. (2020, March 3). Personal Interview.

Wang, J.-C., & Humphreys, J. T. (2009). Multicultural and popular music content in an American music teacher education program. *International Journal of Music Education*, 27(1), 19–36. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0255761408099062>

Wang, M. C., Haertel, G. D., & Wahlberg, H. J. (1994). What influences learning? A content analysis of review literature. *Journal of Educational Research*, 84, 30–43.

WIDA. (2020). <https://wida.wisc.edu>

Yin, R. K. (1989). *Case Study Research, Design and Methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.