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**“Americanized” Worship
in Brazilian Churches**

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By

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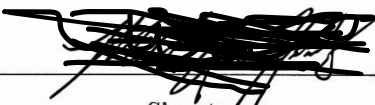
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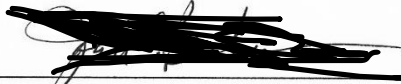
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Abstract

Motivated by the marketability of high-profile artists and bands, Christian churches worldwide may see the inclusion of profit-driven worship songs as a recruiting tool for their communities. This process of globalization or "Americanization" around the world, propagated by mass media, is yet to be thoroughly investigated. This trend is likely decreasing the use of indigenous styles in Christian worship. The primary purpose of this current study is to produce scientific data suggesting that "Americanized" worship is a trend in Brazil and is affecting the production of indigenous worship repertoire. An online questionnaire was developed and applied to Brazilian worship leaders. 68% of the participants (n=106) reported a high percentage of translated worship repertoire, and only 1% reported no use of translated songs in their worship repertoire. 61.9% of the participants said that "Americanized" worship discourages the production of original indigenous worship songs in their communities. Social media websites (42.3%) and streaming platforms (33%) are the primary sources for new worship songs. The results suggest that "Americanized" worship is widespread in Brazilian churches. The participants indicated that "Americanized" worship negatively affects the production of indigenous worship and that mass media is a factor in this process. Future research may develop studies applying the same methodology in multiple non-English speaking countries to assess if "Americanized" worship is a global trend.

Keywords: Contemporary Christian music; Praise and Worship Style; Americanized; Indigenous Worship.

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Contents

Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgments	iv
List of Figures.....	vii
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Background	1
Statement of the Problem.....	4
Statement of Significance	5
Research Questions.....	5
Hypothesis.....	6
Definition of Terms	6
Summary.....	9
Chapter Two: Literature Review	10
Introduction.....	10
Music and Missions.....	11
Translated Hymnody	14
Contemporary Christian Music.....	20
Translated Contemporary Christian Worship.....	25
“Americanized” Worship.....	29
Ethnodoxology.....	32
Summary.....	37
Chapter Three: Methodology	38
Introduction.....	38
Design.....	38
Data Collection and Analysis	40
Participants.....	40
Summary.....	41
Chapter Four: Results, Findings, and Discussion.....	42
Data Collection.....	42
Results	43
Discussion	46

Summary	49
Chapter Five: Conclusion	51
Appendix A: Survey (English)	68
Appendix B: Survey (Portuguese)	69
Appendix C: Results	70
Bibliography	75

List of Figures

Figure 1: “How old are you?”	43
Figure 2: Percentage of Translated Worship Songs	44

Chapter One: Introduction

Background

In the last three decades, Contemporary Christian music shifted from its humble origins in the 1960s Jesus Movement to become a significant player in the music industry, leaving its initial niche to become a global phenomenon.¹ This music style is a multibillion-dollar industry in the twentieth-first century's marketplace, from albums to songbooks, magazines to T-shirts.² Contemporary Christian music incorporates elements of pop, rock, and folk music in a way almost indistinguishable from other secular styles. Some scholars suggest that a stylistic definition might not be achievable: "When asked to define jazz, Louis Armstrong is reported to have answered, 'If you have to ask what jazz is, you'll never know.' The same is true for Praise and Worship and Evangelical identity. The music is an *ichthus*—a line in the sand that encircles a community's shared faith identity."³ Similarly, Monique Ingalls states, "I have found, however, that contemporary worship music is the most ubiquitous term for the repertory this dissertation discusses and is also the single term recognized by the vast majority of the evangelical community—with the notable exception of 'praise and worship music'—whose multi-faceted referent is understood, if not always easily defined."⁴ Among this uncertainty of definition, the

¹ Tanya Riches and Tom Wagner, "The Evolution of Hillsong Music: From Australian Pentecostal Congregation into Global Brand," *Australian Journal of Communication* 39, no. 1 (2012): 18.

² Charles Brown, "Selling Faith: Marketing Christian Popular Culture to Christian and Non-Christian Audiences," *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* 24, no. 1 (2012): 113, <https://doi.org/10.3138/jrpc.24.1.113>.

³ Greg Scheer, "A Musical Ichthus: Praise & Worship and Evangelical Identity," *International Journal of Community Music* 2, no. 1 (2009): 96, https://doi.org/10.1386/ijcm.2.1.91_1.

⁴ Monique Ingalls, "Awesome in This Place: Sound, Space, and Identity in Contemporary North American Evangelical Worship," PhD Dissertation (University of Pennsylvania - Philadelphia, 2008), 13-14 <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004>.

term “Praise and Worship” (P&W) seems immediately recognized by large audiences and associated with corporate Christian worship.

The term “Americanized” in the title of this thesis is intentional. I have observed anecdotally in my overseas trips that, outside the United States, it is common to use terms such as “American” or “Americanized” as a generic reference for any cultural element coming from English-speaking countries. It is common to see people surprised when they learn that some of their musical references are, in fact, not “American” artists or bands. Hillsong United, one of the world's most prominent and representative worship ministries, is Australian, and famous Christian artists such as Matt Redman, Stuart Townend, and Tim Hughes are British.⁵ For the purposes of this study, all English-speaking worship ministries from the United States, Canada, Australia, and United Kingdom will be considered under the umbrella of “Americanized” worship. “Americanized” worship, then, will be defined as Contemporary Christian worship in non-English speaking countries, with at least half of its usual repertoire consisting of translated worship songs originally composed in English. Indigenous worship in this study will refer to original worship songs written in local languages and regional styles.

In the past, early missionaries intentionally imposed the use of translated hymns on indigenous Christian communities.⁶ The intentional suppression of local styles was viewed as an appropriate strategy to disseminate Christian doctrinal principles and values. The typical mindset was that some local pagan and secular elements should not be allowed in Christian worship to

⁵ Ruth Dowson, “Towards a Definition of Christian Mega-Events in the 21st Century,” *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage* 5, no. 3 (2017): 1.

⁶ Christopher Dicran Hale, “Are Western Christian Bhajans ‘Reverse’ Mission Music? An Introduction to Hindu and Christian Influences in Aradhna’s Bhajans,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Music and World Christianities*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 146, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199859993.013.10>.

avoid religious syncretism and preserve the integrity of Christian doctrines.⁷ However, this situation negatively affected the production of indigenous hymnody.⁸ A similar process is likely happening to contemporary Christian worship.

Missiology and ethnomusicology have significantly evolved since early missionary approaches to indigenous music. The new generation of missionaries tends to be more open to local styles and the use of indigenous styles in Christian worship.⁹ A new trend, however, might be generating similar effects. While local churches in non-English speaking countries might not be subjected to missionaries' decisions regarding worship styles, they may still find themselves under the influence of a powerful force that plays a relevant role in the process of "Americanization": globalization and mass media.¹⁰ The power of mass media likely influences current worship repertoire decisions in local churches; congregations may place more value on incorporating P&W songs popularized through streaming platforms rather than selecting them for their content and doctrine. Therefore, as part of this examination, I also investigated the effects of globalization on indigenous P&W repertoire.¹¹

⁷ J. Lenherr, "Advancing Indigenous Church Music," *International Library of African Music* 4, no. 2 (1968): 34.

⁸ Douglas R Anthony, "Faith of Our Fathers? Musical Function, Appropriation and Change Among the Christian Churches of Allen County, Ohio," Master's Thesis (Bowling Green State University, 2001), 45.

⁹ Andrew E. Hill, "Biblical Foundations of Christian Worship," in *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*, ed. James Krabill et al. (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2013), 139.

¹⁰ Fiona Magowan, "Globalisation and Indigenous Christianity: Translocal Sentiments in Australian Aboriginal Christian Songs," *Global Studies in Culture and Power* 14, no. 4 (2007): 459, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10702890701578472>.

¹¹ Charles Brown, "Selling Faith: Marketing Christian Popular Culture to Christian and Non-Christian Audiences," *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* 24, no. 1 (2012): 116, <https://doi.org/10.3138/jrpc.24.1.113>.

Statement of the Problem

The tremendous growth of Contemporary Christian music in the last few decades creates numerous opportunities for Christian artists and bands. Most music streaming platforms include contemporary Christian music in their inventories; Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI), an organization that manages copyrights for Christian artists and bands, has thousands of subscribers. Conversely, this revenue increase might affect repertoire choices in churches and Christian events. Motivated by the marketability of high-profile artists and bands, churches worldwide may see the inclusion of these profit-driven songs as a recruiting tool for their communities. This process of globalization and secularization around the world, propagated by mass media, is yet to be thoroughly investigated. This trend may have positive effects but is likely to decrease the use of local styles in Christian worship. The use of regional styles is a powerful tool in evangelism, as John Benham states:

By its very nature, the biblical intent of the worship service is not for the unbeliever; i.e., the purpose of the worship service is not evangelism. It is vertical in nature, a dialog between God and His people. However, when God is the center of our worship, His nature is revealed, and His people are changed. As we noted in Acts 2, these factors led to the first great conversions.¹²

Using original songs is also an empowering tool to strengthen local worship expressions.¹³

Despite all the market share growth Contemporary Christian music has recently experienced, theologians and pastors question its importance; some have even coined the term “7-11 songs” due to their lack of doctrinal and theological depth.¹⁴ Some scholars, however,

¹² John L. Benham, *Biblical Principles of Worship: A Seminar on Worship and Culture* (Blaine, MN: John Benham & Associates, LLC, 2016), 104.

¹³ Brian Schrag and Robin Harris, “Ethnodoxology: Facilitating Local Arts Expressions for Kingdom Purposes,” *Mission Frontiers*, 2014: 7.

¹⁴ Marissa Glynis Moore, “Contemporary Worship Music: Text, Theology, and Musical Meaning,” *The Hymn* 69, no. 97 (2018): 27.

voice concerns about the influence and secularization the music industry has inserted into contemporary Christian music. Brown mentions that, because of contemporary Christian music's profitability, numerous secular companies have purchased evangelical businesses over the years.¹⁵ In addition to the growth in relevance and marketability, Contemporary Christian music, particularly the Praise and Worship style (P&W), is one of the top trending genres in mass media, including streaming websites and social media.¹⁶ This presence is noticeable globally and affects local church worship styles.

Statement of Significance

This process of Americanization in worship has not been thoroughly investigated worldwide. In many cases, the suppression of local worship styles goes almost unnoticed.¹⁷ The effect of mass media on repertoire choices tends to give preference to songs with more visibility and marketability. If Christian communities become aware of how mass media affects worship production in indigenous styles, they might be able to reverse this tendency and promote events and training opportunities that may increase the presence of local styles in their services.

Research Questions

I investigated this issue through the following research questions:

- 1) What is the percentage of translated worship in Brazilian churches?
- 2) "How does 'Americanized' worship affect the production of original indigenous worship songs in Brazilian evangelical churches?"
- 3) "What is the role of mass media in this process?"

¹⁵ Brown, "Selling Faith: Marketing Christian Popular Culture to Christian and Non-Christian Audiences," [missing information - if this is a journal article, a journal name and issue number is needed] 2012, 114.

¹⁶ Leon Neto, "Contemporary Christian Music and the 'Praise and Worship' Style," *Journal of Singing* 67, no. 2 (2010): 195.

¹⁷ Ingelid Gundt, "A Música no Culto: Em Busca De Uma Musicalidade Relevante Para O Culto no Contexto Das Igrejas Da Convenção Batista Pioneira do Sul do Brasil," (Master's Thesis, Faculdades EST, 2017), 28.

- 4) “What is the percentage of indigenous worship in local styles in Brazilian Evangelical churches?”

This investigation intended to help clarify how the “Americanization” of contemporary Christian worship affects the production of indigenous P&W repertoire worldwide. Information about this trend may assist worship leaders and pastors in avoiding some of the deleterious consequences of the imposition of translated hymnody in the past.

Hypothesis

Based on the above-stated research questions, the initial hypothesis of this study was that there is a current global trend in contemporary Christian worship affecting the production of indigenous P&W repertory in non-English speaking communities. Currently, mega worship ministries and famous Christian artists from the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom dominate social media and music streaming platforms, significantly influencing Christian communities worldwide.¹⁸ In these communities, including translated P&W songs as part of their worship sets is common.¹⁹ This trend may be affecting the production of indigenous P&W repertoire globally.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are recurrent in this study; For a better understanding of the context in which they are used, they are defined as follows:

¹⁸ Ruth Dowson, “Towards a Definition of Christian Mega-Events in the 21st Century,” *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage* 5, no. 3 (2017): 11.

¹⁹ Ingelid Gundt, “A Música No Culto,” 63.

“Americanized” Worship – Contemporary Christian worship in non-English speaking countries, with at least half its usual repertoire consisting of translated worship songs originally composed in English.

Christian Artist – The term describes professional, traveling singers who usually perform contemporary Christian music. Some Christian artists act as worship leaders.

Contemporary Christian Music – Christian music is based on modern styles such as rock, pop, and R&B, with lyrics, focused on matters related to the Christian faith.

Corporate worship – Same as congregational, communal worship singing in the context of Christian service or liturgy.

Ethnodoxology – The interdisciplinary study of how Christians in every culture engage with God and the world through their own artistic expressions.

Evangelical Church – Protestant churches devoted to the inerrancy and inspiration of the Scriptures and the gospel of Jesus Christ. This segment includes many denominations with beliefs that vary greatly. They share a common commitment to Scripture, a Christ-centered gospel, and a Trinitarian view of God. Evangelical denominations in Brazil include Historical churches such as Baptist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Congregational, and Methodist, Pentecostal churches such as Assembly of God, Deus E Amor, and Igreja do Evangelho Quadrangular; and Neo-pentecostal churches such as IURD, Renascer em Cristo, Bola de Neve, and Igreja Internacional da Graça de Deus.

Expert Sampling – Expert sampling is used when your research requires individuals with a high level of knowledge about a particular subject. Your experts are thus selected based on a demonstrable skill set or level of experience.

Globalization – Globalization is a term used to describe how trade and technology have made the world more connected and interdependent. Globalization also captures in its scope the economic and social changes that have come about as a result.

Indigenous worship – Original worship songs written in local languages and regional styles.

Mass Media – Collectively, the communications media, especially television, radio, and newspapers, reach the mass of people. Currently, mass media is directly related to the internet.

Praise Band – Modern ensemble that leads congregational worship. Praise bands usually include a lead singer, backing vocalists, a rhythm section (Acoustic guitar, Electric guitar, Bass, Keyboard, and Drums), and sometimes solo instruments (Flute, Saxophone, Lead guitar, brass instruments). Same as Worship band or Praise team.

Praise and Worship (P&W) – Contemporary Christian songs used primarily in the context of congregational singing.

Self-report Survey – A self-report study is a type of survey, questionnaire, or poll in which respondents read the question and select a response by themselves without any outside interference. A self-report is any method that involves asking a participant about their feelings, attitudes, beliefs, etc.

Social Media – Interactive forms of media allow users to interact with and publish to each other, generally using the Internet. Examples of social media websites are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube.

Syncretism – Reconciliation or fusion of differing belief systems, as in philosophy or religion, especially when success is partial or the result is heterogeneous. In Brazil, religious syncretism is present among Afro-Brazilian religions that incorporate elements of Catholicism in

their rites. Some scholars argue that Brazilian neo-Pentecostal churches display syncretic aspects in their services, such as shamanism and manipulation of deities.

Streaming Platforms – The technology of continuously transmitting audio and video files over a wired or wireless internet connection. Examples of audio and video file streaming platforms are Spotify, YouTube, and Cloud sound.

Worship Community – The equivalent of a non-denominational church. This term can be used interchangeably with church or congregation. In Brazil, worship communities include Comunidade da Graça, Renascer em Cristo, Comunidade da Zona Sul, and Trazendo a Arca.

Worship Leader – The equivalent of a music minister or music director in an evangelical church. The worship leader is responsible for leading congregational singing, directing the praise team rehearsal, and selecting songs for the worship sets. Some professional Christian artists are guest worship leaders in concerts and special events.

Worship Set – List of P&W songs in sequence as part of the congregational singing in churches and worship communities.

Summary

This tendency merits a global investigation. For this thesis, however, I decided to narrow the target population to Brazilian evangelical churches. Because this study could not collect data globally, generalizations of the results must be considered with care. The primary purpose of this current study was to produce scientific data suggesting that “Americanized” worship is likely a trend in Brazil, affecting the production of indigenous P&W repertoire. An online questionnaire was developed and was applied to non-English speaking countries.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

The region of Somotillo is one of the poorest areas of Nicaragua, the second poorest country in the western hemisphere.²⁰ I have been visiting this region since 2017 on short-term mission trips. In one of these trips, in a small village with no running water and little access to electricity and internet, one of the villagers contacted our team about a little girl with a beautiful voice. They said that the girl often sings Christian songs in worship services in surrounding villages. The locals knew we were always seeking to find singers and songwriters within the towns and that we were interested in local worship styles. We were excited about the prospect of recording indigenous worship songs. After arriving at the local church, we met the little girl and her parents and asked them if they could share one of their songs with us. They kindly agreed and proceeded to prepare the stage and instruments for worship. After a few minutes of singing, we were both shocked and surprised at the same time, not only for her pure, beautiful voice but also because, in the middle of a remote village in Somotillo while expecting to hear a worship song in Nicaraguan style, we ended up listening to a cover rendition of “Oceans” by Hillsong United, in English.

Situations such as the narrative above are becoming common. Anecdotal reports suggest that contemporary Christian worship worldwide has become highly influenced by American, Australian, and British worship ministries.²¹ Translations of worship songs to vernacular

²⁰ Espinal Montoya Jennsi Hídalia, Perla Indira Zeledón Zeledón, and Lazo Marín Cristina Ceferina, “Factores de Riesgo Nutricionales y Culturales Asociados a Anemia En Mujeres Embarazadas En Somotillo,” *Journal Health NPEPS* 2, no. 2 (2017): 354.

²¹ Stephanie A. Budwey, “Hymns in Periodical Literature,” *The Hymn* 65, no. 2 (2014): 32.

languages and imitation of the original music style are becoming the norm.²² There are a few cases, such as the one in Somotillo, when the songs are in the original English version, regardless of the local language. Finding a Christian community in non-English speaking countries with no influence from American, Australian, or British contemporary Christian music repertoire is becoming rare. If this occurrence is a global trend, how is this trend affecting the production of indigenous Christian worship repertoire worldwide? What are the implications of this influence in local worship in non-English speaking countries? Situations with similar components that happened in the past might be helpful in the process of answering these and other questions. Episodes from the history of music and missions have similarities with this current trend and perhaps can anticipate potential problems and risks related to this issue.

Music and Missions

Music is a standard tool for evangelization. David Dunaetz states: “Music has always played a role in young churches, from New Testament times to today.”²³ Frank Kennedy found twenty-two articles that refer to the Jesuits’ use of music in their evangelization endeavors.²⁴ In the process of evangelization, music played an important role. Fray Pedro de Gante, a Catholic priest, was one the most influential music educators in the Western hemisphere because of his

²² Fiona Magowan, “Globalisation and Indigenous Christianity: Translocal Sentiments in Australian Aboriginal Christian Songs,” *Global Studies in Culture and Power* 14, no. 4 (2007): 474, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10702890701578472>.

²³ David R. Dunaetz, “Mission in Evolving Cultures: Constructively Managing Music-Related Conflict in Cross-Cultural Church Planting Contexts,” *Missiology: An International Review* 44, no. 3 (2016): 297, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00918296166634753>.

²⁴ Frank T. Kennedy, “Music and Jesuits: Historiography, and a Global Perspective,” 3 (2016): 372, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22141332-00303002>.

work introducing Amerindians to Western music.²⁵ Gante's work allowed Catholic missionary work to gain respect beyond the religious realm and achieve acceptance among educators. New colonies recruited missionaries based on their scientific knowledge and, in some cases, learning about music theory.²⁶

Inevitably in this process, however, Western music began to be imposed on indigenous new converts: "Upon their arrival, missionaries wasted no time in rooting out what they perceived as 'paganism' among the Basotho, which was, in their view, a great obstacle to the progress of the gospel of Christ."²⁷ In the conquest of the Americas, missionary work was fundamental for the gradual introduction of Western culture. Beatriz Aguilar, Darhyl Ramsey, and Barry Lumsden state, "The conquest of the Americas implied not only the acquisition of new territories by the Spanish but also the assimilation of the indigenous into the Western Christian world."²⁸ Robin Leaver states, "In the earlier, non-English-speaking colonies in the south of the North American continent, and Central America, the liturgical music was strongly influenced by European models."²⁹ Roberta King suggests that the same process took place in Africa: "the history of the church in Africa is filled with stories of culturally inappropriate music introduced

²⁵ Beatriz Aguilar, Darhyl Ramsey, and Barry Lumsden, "The Aztec Empire and the Spanish Missions: Early Music Education in North America," *Journal of Historical Research in Music Education* 24, no. 1 (2002): 64.

²⁶ Jane E. Southcott and Angela Hao Chun Lee, "Missionaries and Tonic Sol-Fa Music Pedagogy in 19th-Century China," *International Journal of Music Education* 26, no. 3 (2008): 215, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0255761408092528>.

²⁷ Paul Leshota, "Postcolonial Reading of Nineteenth-Century Missionaries' Musical Texts: The Case of Lifela Tsa Sione and Lifela Tsa Bakriste," *Black Theology* 12, no. 2 (2014): 140, <https://doi.org/10.1179/1476994814Z.00000000026>.

²⁸ Aguilar, Ramsey, and Lumsden, "The Aztec Empire," 69.

²⁹ Robin A Leaver, "Hallelujah! Using Historic Music in Contemporary Worship," *The Choral Journal* 43, no. 7 (2003): 61.

by missionaries.”³⁰ Similar situations happened in India in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Christopher Hale explains: “Missionary attitudes toward Hindu religion and culture during this period ranged from considering the Hindu world completely evil (the ‘dominant paradigm’ prevalent in the early 19th century) to the idea that much within Hindu culture could be ‘possessed’ and transformed, as in the possession model of J. H. Bavinck (1895–1964).”³¹ Jacob Joseph states that because of this bias in India “even a century later, churches still use the same hymnal and the translated Book of Common Prayer for worship.”³² In the same manner, Russian Orthodox’ early missions in Alaska strongly influenced today’s church music repertoire among the Aleut natives: “The Russian Orthodox Church, especially through the missionary outreach of St. Innocent of Alaska, brought Orthodox Christianity to Alaska, where its music and liturgy still resonate among the Aleut Native Americans who converted to Christianity via Orthodoxy.”³³ Similarly, Western hymnody is still present in numerous countries that incorporate those hymns as their religious tradition.

Centuries of well-intended but predominantly ethnocentric mission work resulted in little encouragement for indigenous Christian music: “The use of foreign material in churches suggests a Christianity dominated by western culture.”³⁴ From the sixteenth century through the

³⁰ Roberta R. King, “Toward a Discipline of Christian Ethnomusicology: A Missiological Paradigm,” *Missiology: An International Review* 32, no. 3 (2004): 297, <https://doi.org/10.1177/009182960403200302>.

³¹ Christopher Dicran Hale, “Are Western Christian Bhajans ‘Reverse’ Mission Music? An Introduction to Hindu and Christian Influences in Aradhna’s Bhajans,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Music and World Christianities*, ed. Suzel Ana Reily and Jonathan Dueck (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199859993.013.10>.

³² Jacob Joseph, “Indigenized Christian Worship in India: Some Considerations,” *Global Forum on Arts and Christian Faith* 2, no. 1 (2014): n.p.

³³ S. T. Kimbrough, *Music and Mission: Toward Theology and Practice of Global Song* (New York: General Board of Global Ministries, 2006), 53.

early twentieth century, the missionary perspective regarding indigenous music was rarely inclusive: “Rather than using these expressions to teach and celebrate the gospel, which would have involved learning the people’s music and dance, missionaries tended to impose their worship song.”³⁵ At the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the new millennium, the paradigm slowly shifted, and overseas missionaries and church planters in multi-ethnic areas in the United States began to give more importance to ethnic worship.³⁶ This change of paradigm was not without issues. Dunaetz, in a study on church-planting mission projects, identified some of these cultural conflicts: “Church-planting missionaries in such contexts are more likely to experience music-related conflict than are missionaries in contexts where churches can be established in only a few years.”³⁷ One of the most celebrated legacies of the early missionaries is the vast number of translated hymns and hymnals produced during the first centuries of global evangelization.³⁸ These hymns are historical achievements and served as evangelization and educational tools, but ultimately may have contributed unintentionally to cultural and ethnic conflicts.

Translated Hymnody

The strategy of translating Western Christian music to indigenous languages is not a new one. In North America's first colonies, British and Spanish settlers used this strategy: “To

³⁴ Peter and Emma Wild-Wood Wood, “‘One Day We Will Sing in God’s Home’: Hymns and Songs Sung in the Anglican Church in North-East Congo,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 34 (2004): 147.

³⁵ Kimbrough, *Music and Mission*, 11.

³⁶ Leshota, “Postcolonial Reading,” 147.

³⁷ Dunaetz, “Mission in Evolving Cultures,” 297.

³⁸ C. Michael Hawn, “Streams of Song,” *The Hymn* 61, no. 1 (2010): 20.

accommodate the need for repertoires for the indigenous choirs, music books were compiled. Three years before the first English settlers arrived at Roanoke Island in an attempt to colonize North America, approximately fourteen music books had already appeared in Mexico City.”³⁹ Andrew Granade and Wu Anping, in an article on Chinese hymnody, make a shocking statement: “Translation efforts in hymnody have so dominated Protestant mission work that, around the world, the first exposure most non-Western societies have had to Western music has come through church music.”⁴⁰ The same authors using the Scottish Presbyterian Robert Morrison, who published the first translated hymnal in China, as an example suggest that hymn translation “was a fairly common practice among Protestant missionaries.”⁴¹ In Africa, it was not different. Peter Wood and Emma Wild-Wood describe a compilation of hymns used in Anglican churches in North-East Congo: “*Nyimbo za Mungu* (NZM) is an assortment of American and British hymns and gospel songs, the majority of which date from the end of the nineteenth century.”⁴² In the same manner, Brian Schrag describes how missionaries in the 1940s imposed their Western hymnody on Congolese Mono communities:

In the 1940s, a Congolese evangelist planted the first church among speakers of the Mono language in what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). He counseled the first Christians to burn their musical instruments and learn to sing Euro-American hymns translated into a trade language—Lingala. When my family and I moved to their community to help translate the Bible into Mono in the early 1990s, we found a church

³⁹ Aguilar, Ramsey, and Lumsden, “The Aztec Empire,” 73.

⁴⁰ Wu Granade, S. Andrew and Anping, “Unity in Song: The Creation of an Indigenous Chinese Hymnody Through 'Hymns of Universal Praise',” *The Hymn* 2, no. 58 (2007): 13.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Wood and Wood, “‘One Day We Will Sing in God's Home': Hymns and Songs Sung in the Anglican Church in North-East Congo,” *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 34 no. 2, (2004), 147.

that, while it was active, worshipped through foreign arts and language and had a mixed moral reputation.⁴³

The justification for this and similar attitudes towards indigenous cultures has always been to avoid syncretism. Overlapping, however, seems to be almost inevitable. John Benham states, “I’ve never met a Christian who didn’t have issues of syncretism in his/her life.”⁴⁴ The concept of sacred and profane is fluid; the Moravians, for example, saw the cittern as a “divine” instrument, while other Christian denominations such as the Quakers and the Amish banned instrumental music in all forms from their services: “According to Zwingli, ‘God ordained vocal music, the wicked added the instruments.’ Most Amish districts today do not allow instruments even at home.”⁴⁵ Similarly, while some African religions consider drums to be sacred, traditional Christian denominations may see the same instruments as pagan and inadequate for Christian worship. In Bahia, Brazil, *atabaques* and *tumbadoras* are drums dedicated to deities of Candomblé and Umbanda, Afro-Brazilian cults. Through the ritualistic playing of these drums, the *mãe-de-santo*, a woman shaman, incorporates spirits of ancestors and deities.⁴⁶ Typically, it would be unlikely to see these drums in Catholic churches. Still, religious syncretism is so interwoven in Bahia’s culture that *atabaques* and *tumbadoras* gained acceptance in the community and are commonly used in Catholic youth praise bands.⁴⁷ Syncretism is also present

⁴³ Brian Schrag and Robin Harris, "Ethnodoxology: Facilitating Local Arts Expressions for Kingdom Purposes," *Mission Frontiers*, 2014, 7.

⁴⁴ Benham, *Biblical Principles of Worship*, 55.

⁴⁵ D. Rose Elder, *Why the Amish Sing: Songs of Solidarity and Identity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 35.

⁴⁶ Patricia Rodrigues de Souza, “Candomblé: A Religion for All Senses,” *Material Religion* 16, no. 3 (2020): 368, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17432200.2020.1756652>.

⁴⁷ George Oliveira, “Modos de Religiosidade Juvenis No Catolicismo Contemporâneo: Um Estudo Comparativo de Jovens Católicos Carismáticos e Não Carismáticos, Em Bezerros-PE” (Master's Thesis, Universidade Federal de Campina Grande, 2019), 33.

in Brazilian evangelical churches. Reinaldo Pereira writes about the conflicts that the Igreja Batista da Lagoinha, in Minas Gerais state, faced among other Baptist churches while transitioning to a charismatic doctrine. Pereira states that accusations of incorporation of pagan practices, such as spiritual healing and divination, generated some battles.⁴⁸ The Igreja Batista da Lagoinha later became the largest worship ministry in Brazil.

In these past situations, the medicine was arguably worse than the disease, as we can see in Harris' example with the Mono community. Christian values should always be non-negotiable, but cultural blending is impossible to curb and might be beneficial. Paul the apostle writes, "Do I mean then that food sacrificed to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons" (1 Corinthians 10:19-20). The intended audience of this entire book of the Bible is the Church at Corinth. This church connected the Greek mainland with the Peloponnesian peninsula and was a crossroads between the Aegean region and the Western Mediterranean. As such, there was much intermingling with other religions and cultures. These verses might suggest that the apostle had the sense that food is amoral, in the same sense that music is amoral. His concerns were related to idolatry and not culture necessarily. Similarly, pastors and missionaries had to learn from their mistakes, start separating the tares and wheat and allow cultural elements in Christian worship without compromising doctrines and values. This process, however, is far from ending.

In 1881, the Brazilian Baptist Convention published its first Baptist Hymnal, the *Cantor Cristão*, which was, for the most part, a compilation of Portuguese translations of American

⁴⁸ Reinaldo Pereira, "Igreja Batista Da Lagoinha: Trajetória e Identidade de Uma Corporação Religiosa Em Processo de Pentecostalização" (Master's Thesis, Universidade Metodista de Sao Paulo, 2011), 195.

Hymns: “The vast majority of the hymns found in *Cantor Cristão* comes from collections of Ira Sankey and McGranaham, who brought to Brazil evangelistic songs from New England.”⁴⁹ The majority of the 581 hymns of *Cantor Cristão* are translations of American and European hymns. Only sixteen have lyrics originally in Portuguese (all written by American and European missionaries).⁵⁰ Translations can be challenging; Rose elder states, “[s]ome ideas and concepts resist translation from one language to another precisely because language is not just a way of communicating an experience but an orientation to a total way of life, a way of perceiving and interpreting the world.”⁵¹

Even in the few cases where original hymns were included in these hymnals, most were not necessarily in indigenous styles. Aguilar explains how Amerindians, after prolonged exposure to Western music, tended to imitate Western styles:

A short time after the indigenous learned the European way of singing, they began to compose their music. Spanish musicians often found it difficult to believe that these compositions had been created by the indigenous. To their ability to imitate European musical tradition, the indigenous added their creativity and personality through instrumentation, rhythmic patterns, and even lyrics.⁵²

In the early 1990s in Brazil, with the new Baptist Hymnal, *Hinário para o Culto Cristão*, original Brazilian hymns began to be included. Still, only a handful of them are in indigenous styles.⁵³ Uipirangi Câmara states that from the 441 hymns in the *Hinário para o Culto Cristão*,

⁴⁹ Ingelid Gundt, “A Música No Culto: Em Busca de Uma Musicalidade Relevante Para o Culto No Contexto Das Igrejas Da Convenção Batista Pioneira Do Sul Do Brasil” (Master’s Thesis, São Leopoldo, 2017), 51.

⁵⁰ Uipirangi Câmara, “O Canto Que Encanta: O Ideal Batista de Identidade Doutrinária,” *Via Teológica* 13, no. 26 (2012): 103.

⁵¹ D. Rose Elder, *Why the Amish Sing: Songs of Solidarity and Identity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 14.

⁵² Aguilar, Ramsey, and Lumsden, “The Aztec Empire,” 75.

⁵³ Gundt, “A Musica no Culto,” 80.

only eighty-two are written by Brazilian composers, most of which are in traditional European styles.⁵⁴ Wood and Wild-Wood, describing a group of indigenous hymns translated and published by Western missionaries in northeast Congo, state: “There is no familiar African rhythm to the music.”⁵⁵ Missionaries used local cultural and ethnic elements to justify the exclusion of indigenous hymns in some cases. Paul Leshota gives an example of this missionary attitude: “The need, therefore, to assess the template of the famous *Chant de Sion* of César Malan—a renowned Christian hymn writer, with over a thousand hymns to his credit—was occasioned by the need to root out pagan customs and traditions and introduce Western civilization and Christianity.”⁵⁶

This suppression of indigenous elements resulted in a gradual Westernization of local Christian songs. Leshota explains the creation of *Lifela tsa Bakriste*, a compilation of blended African hymns: “[T]he *Lifela tsa Bakriste* resulted from a combination of melodies borrowed from Europe with words composed by missionaries as well as hymns imported directly from Europe with translations done by either missionaries or Basotho converts.”⁵⁷ In her master’s thesis on Japanese Christian songs, Katie Ann McWilliams reported that most Christian songs and hymns in Japan are Westernized.⁵⁸ The consequences of centuries of Western influence over indigenous Christian hymns are still visible today.⁵⁹ Despite the efforts of the new generation of

⁵⁴ Câmara, “O Canto que Encanta,” 108.

⁵⁵ Wood, “One Day We Will Sing in God’s Home,” 147.

⁵⁶ Leshota, “Postcolonial Reading,” 143.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 144.

⁵⁸ Katie Ann McWilliams, “Contextualized Songwriting in the Japanese Church” (Master’s Thesis, Liberty University, 2020), 1.

⁵⁹ Kimbrough, *Music and Mission*, 11.

missionaries and Christian musicians, the vast majority of hymns in protestant churches still follow traditional European and American styles.⁶⁰ Parallelism is likely happening, with similar effects, in contemporary Christian music.

Contemporary Christian Music

Defining contemporary Christian music stylistically is no easy task. *The Encyclopedia of Contemporary Christian Music* defines it vaguely as “popular music with Christian lyrics.”⁶¹ Although simplistic and vague, this definition delineates the essential characteristic of contemporary Christian music: its popular appeal. Since its origin, Contemporary Christian music has been directly connected to popular musical styles. In the late 1960s, a revivalist movement, later labeled as the “Jesus Movement,” started among hippie converts in southern California, attracting not only hippies and counterculture young people but also many young Christians who felt comfortable in a less structured and strict setting.⁶² Many new converts joined the movement seeking a way out of drug addiction and occult influences. They found a religious setting with the same feeling of a free spirit, rock and roll, communal living, and an unconventional view of the church.⁶³ The meetings were initially informal and improvisational. The Jesus Movement’s members naturally incorporated folk and rock styles into the new

⁶⁰ Paul Schrag, Brian and Neeley, *All The World Will Worship: Helps for Developing Indigenous Hymns*, (Duncanville, TX: EthnoDoxology Publications, 2005), 3.

⁶¹ Don Cusic, *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Christian Music: Pop, Rock, and Worship*. (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Press, 2010), 62.

⁶² R Webber, “Praise and Worship Music: From Its Origins to Contemporary Use,” *National Association of Pastoral Musicians* 27, no. 3 (2003): 21.

⁶³ L. Eskridge, *God’s Forever Family: The Jesus People Movement in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 28.

Christian songs written for the meetings. The songs, later branded as “Jesus Music,” gave rise to the modern genres of Christian rock and contemporary Christian music.⁶⁴

Initially, the “Jesus Music” style was unstructured and informal, but it gradually evolved into a more elaborate and marketable product. Robert Webber describes how Maranatha! Music, the first contemporary Christian music label, stated: “At the same time, this small church established a publishing house for these new choruses: Maranatha! Music. Maranatha! put these choruses on tapes that were sent all over the world.”⁶⁵ Not long after, Maranatha! Music started to commercialize “Jesus Music,” and other similar labels, such as Vineyard, Integrity, and Hosanna Music, emerged, targeting the same new growing market.⁶⁶ In just a few years, contemporary Christian music became a marketable product in the music industry. All major mainstream retailers such as Walmart, Target, and BestBuy opened their doors to this new genre.⁶⁷ With this crossover marketing strategy and the subsequent advertisement of Christian-related products in the mainstream media, contemporary Christian music became a world phenomenon.⁶⁸ The Christian band that best exemplifies this world market growth is the Australian band Hillsong United, which started as a small congregation and became a mega-global ministry almost overnight.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Webber, “Praise and Worship Music: From Its Origins to Contemporary Use,” 23.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁶⁶ Ruth Dowson, “Towards a Definition of Christian Mega-Events in the 21st Century,” *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage* 5, no. 3 (2017): 13.

⁶⁷ John Lindenbaum, “The Neoliberalization of Contemporary Christian Music’s New Social Gospel,” *Geoforum* 44 (2013): 112, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2012.10.007>.

⁶⁸ Robert Abelman, “Without Divine Intervention: Contemporary Christian Music Radio and Audience Transference,” *Journal of Media and Religion* 5, no. 4 (2006): 221, https://doi.org/10.1207/s15328415jmr0504_1.

⁶⁹ Tanya Riches and Tom Wagner, “The Evolution of Hillsong Music,” *Australian Journal of Communication* 39, no. 1 (2012): 19.

The growing presence of contemporary Christian music in the mainstream media also affected worship styles in local churches. David Toledo explains: “There can be little argument that the popular styles that began to find their way into the song of many congregations in the latter decades of the previous century have radically transformed church music.”⁷⁰ In some denominations, this change brought confusion and controversy. Shawn David Young explains, “A battle waged by evangelicals and conservatives, the so-called culture war emerged during the 1970s and 1980s.”⁷¹ Pastors and scholars questioned contemporary worship songs' style and doctrinal and biblical content during that time. Marissa Moore states: “Throughout the worship wars of the 1980s and 1990s, criticisms were often leveled against the content of Contemporary Worship Music (also known as ‘Praise and Worship’ music): the songs were too individually focused, too subjective, and most problematically, too light on the theological richness that defined the beloved mainline Protestant hymns of previous centuries.”⁷² The “worship-wars” lasted for over a decade, but today this tension has receded in most denominations. Thousands of evangelical churches in the United States use contemporary Christian music in their services; CCLI lists over 1,600 churches in America that pay copyrights for contemporary Christian music usage in their services, and this is likely only a tiny fraction since not all churches that use these songs in their services pay for licenses to use copyrighted music.⁷³

⁷⁰ David Toledo, “Celebrating Grace Hymnal: Five Years Later,” *The Hymn* 66, no. 1 (2015): 19.

⁷¹ Shawn David Young, “Evangelical Youth Culture: Christian Music and the Political,” *Religion Compass* 6, no. 6 (2012): 324, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8171.2012.00354.x>.

⁷² Marissa Glynis Moore, “Contemporary Worship Music: Text, Theology, and Musical Meaning,” *The Hymn* 69, no. 97 (2018): 27.

⁷³ “CCLI,” Accessed November 12, 2020, <http://us.ccli.com/>

Praise and Worship (P&W) is the preferred style used in evangelical churches for congregational worship, not only because of its communal appeal but also for its marketability. In 2020 Billboard Magazine's "Hot Christians Songs," seven top-selling songs are in P&W style.⁷⁴ P&W is a sub-set of contemporary Christian music; P&W songs usually have easy-to-learn melodies, are highly participatory, have a comfortable range, and have repetitive choruses.⁷⁵ P&W songs are present in worship services and Christian concerts. This overlapping allows the P&W style to reach local churches and secular audiences globally.⁷⁶ There has been much debate about the appropriateness of this terminology. Some argue that biblically there is no difference between "praise" and "worship."⁷⁷ In fact, most Bible passages that include either of these words do not discriminate specific uses or discrepancies that would justify this terminology. Others argue that there is a stylistic difference. Jonathan Dueck states, "'Praise' denoted the first songs to be sung in any such set: rapid in tempo, loudly sung, with texts emphasizing God's transcendence; and 'worship' denoted the last songs to be sung: slow in tempo, quietly sung, with texts emphasizing an affect of love for God."⁷⁸ In any case, P&W songs constitute the bulk of congregational songs in most evangelical churches worldwide.

⁷⁴ Billboard, "Hot Christian Songs," 2020, <http://www.billboard.com/charts/christian-songs>. Accessed November 13, 2020.

⁷⁵ Leon Neto, "Contemporary Christian Music and the 'Praise and Worship' Style," *Journal of Singing* 67, no. 2 (2010): 197.

⁷⁶ Walrath Woods, R., *The Message in the Music: Studying Contemporary Praise and Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 38.

⁷⁷ Greg Scheer, "A Musical Ichthus: Praise & Worship and Evangelical Identity," *International Journal of Community Music* 2, no. 1 (2009)94.

⁷⁸ Jonathan Dueck, "Binding and Loosing in Song: Conflict, Identity, and Canadian Mennonite Music," *Ethnomusicology* 55, no. 2 (May 27, 2011), 230, doi:10.5406/ethnomusicology.55.2.0229. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/ethnomusicology.55.2.0229>.

In this context, mass media is a significant factor and has contributed to making P&W style a global phenomenon. Lawrence Mumford suggests that “[t]his relatively recent and globally popular musical language—with its almost infinite branches including soft rock, hard rock, country cross-over, folk rock, punk rock, alternative, adult contemporary, rhythm and blues, hip-hop, etc., and often called simply ‘pop’—has proved to be the principal model for what is sometimes called ‘praise and worship’ music.”⁷⁹ Birgitta Johnson seems to agree when she states, “the popularity of praise and worship music has been a key element to increase participation in weekly worship and church growth commonly experienced in megachurch contexts over the last thirty years.”⁸⁰

Contemporary Christian music is an amalgamation of evolving and changing styles.⁸¹ P&W is one of the facets of contemporary Christian music and perhaps the most popular of all its subsets. P&W is becoming popular even in remote rural settings around the world. Fiona Magowan studied Christian communities of Aborigines in Australia. She stated, “with the proliferation of stereos, hi-fis, TVs, and other technology in Yolngu society, Yolngu learn new Christian songs predominantly from listening to recordings. Other songs have gained currency due to society. Yolngu learn new Christian songs predominantly from listening to recordings.”⁸² The influence of mass media on local worship in non-English-speaking countries is noticeable.

⁷⁹ Lawrence R Mumford, “Popular Influences in Recent Church Composition,” *Choral Journal* 52, no. 4 (2011): 57.

⁸⁰ Birgitta J. Johnson, “Back to the Heart of Worship: Praise and Worship Music in a Los Angeles African-American Megachurch,” *Black Music Research Journal* 31, no. 1 (May 02, 2011), 111.

⁸¹ Woods, “One Day We Will Sing in God's Home,” 5.

⁸² Magowan, “Globalisation and Indigenous Christianity: Translocal Sentiments in Australian Aboriginal Christian Songs,” *Global Studies in Culture and Power* 14, no. 4 (2007): 472

YouTube and other streaming platforms are replacing traditional methods for learning new songs and, in some cases, directly influencing the worship style.⁸³ Using YouTube as a learning tool for new songs has become common among praise band musicians. Planning Center, one of the most used applications for coordinating rehearsals, has a built-in feature that links new songs to streaming platforms. These online resources have replaced the old method of sharing songs in person. Instead of learning new music by oral transmission, peer-to-peer, now praise band members are learning songs aurally, directly from the internet, performed by the original bands. Since P&W songs from mega worship ministries are more accessible than original local songs, the former is gradually replacing the latter. As a side effect of this growing trend, the prevalence of P&W repertoire may become detrimental to indigenous worship music. Translated P&W songs are becoming the norm in most evangelical churches worldwide.

Translated Contemporary Christian Worship

Irene Bentley investigated two Brazilian churches and discovered many translated hymns and P&W repertoire.⁸⁴ Katie Ann McWilliams researched Japanese worship songs and states: “The Christian Church of Japan has very few songs written in their language and style. Most songs are translated from English or another language.”⁸⁵ Deborah L. Berhó’s study on ethnic identity among Latino immigrants in a Guatemalan community stated that worship leaders prefer

⁸³ Jadwiga Suwaj, “Translating Contemporary Worship Songs Into Polish: Word-for-Word, Sense-for-Sense or Adaptation?,” *International Journal of Arts & Sciences* 7, no. 4 (2014): 337.

⁸⁴ Irene Bentley, “A Musica Sacra em Duas Igrejas do DF” (Master’s Thesis, Universidade de Brasília, 2009). 88.

⁸⁵ McWilliams, *Contextualized Songwriting in the Japanese Church*, 1.

“music by Hillsong that is translated into Spanish” to traditional Guatemalan styles.⁸⁶ These findings are consistent with anecdotal accounts suggesting that translated P&W songs are common in non-English speaking churches.⁸⁷ The reason why indigenous Christian communities tend to use translated contemporary Christian songs is controversial. Dunaetz suggests that compromising repertoire choices and choosing songs that will be more appealing to younger audiences might be a factor: “When members of a young church are not satisfied, they are more likely to leave the church. Thus, in many situations, a church planter will want to minimize the damage caused by conflict by doing all that is possible (without sacrificing what is essential) to increase church members’ satisfaction with conflict outcomes.”⁸⁸ The same author explains that using secular musical styles in church settings may be a valid strategy for younger members’ retention:

Thus, a cross-cultural church planter, in coordination with the emerging leaders from within the church, can incorporate styles of music into the life of a nascent church that is similar enough to the preferences of the non-Christians in contact with the church (typically along the lines of the musical style) to help form relationships. Still, they are different enough (typically concerning the lyrics) to help transform their identity to that of Christ-followers.⁸⁹

P&W repertoire, in that sense, is likely appealing to younger audiences due to its similarity to popular secular styles.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Deborah L. Berhó, Gerardo Martí, and Mark T. Mulder, “Global Pentecostalism and Ethnic Identity Maintenance among Latino Immigrants,” *Pneuma* 39, no. 1–2 (2017): 31, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700747-03901004>.

⁸⁷ Luis Caño, Interview by author, August, 2020; Leon Neto, Daniela Montes Interview by Author, August, 2020.

⁸⁸ Dunaetz, “Mission in Evolving Cultures,” 306.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 298.

⁹⁰ Mumford, “Popular Influences in Recent Church Composition,” 57.

The translation of the P&W repertoire can be problematic in some situations. Adriana Zavaglia, Barbara Silva, and Thais Sarmento investigated two occurrences when hymn translations caused confusion and misrepresentation in Brazil.⁹¹ Translated P&W repertoire might be experiencing similar problems. Jadwiga Suwaj examined translations of contemporary worship songs into Polish and stated: “Of course, these ways of translation are evident, but many in-betweens also exist. Some parts of a text are translated in one way, and some in the other. A lot depends on a kind of a text and its purpose. Hence, it is worth investigating translating worship songs, as they are a very specific kind of text.”⁹² Josh Davis and Nikki Lerner narrate an interesting situation in Burma involving translated worship:

A group of my (Josh’s) friends gathered in a home one Friday night for a time of worship. Some of my friends who gathered were Burmese, from a particular ethnic group called the Karen (pronounced kuh-rén) people. My other friends were White Americans. They desired to have a night of worship together. They visited with one another, and then after a while, one of the White American men got out a guitar and started playing some worship songs. First, they found several songs they all had in common, that the White Americans could sing in English while the Burmese could sing in Karen. After that, the Burmese taught a song or two in Karen to the White Americans. Then, the White Americans taught a song or two in English to the Karen. It was a lovely time. After about forty minutes of singing, however, one of the Burmese men asked a question that startled the White Americans. ‘When are we going to worship?’ he asked. The White Americans thought they already were worshipping. But, clearly, for the Karen, this sharing with one another and singing songs of praise in different languages didn’t seem like worship. One group thought they were already worshipping, while the other was waiting to get started.⁹³

Balcombe states that translated P&W repertoire, due to its Anglicized nature, can be problematic when translated into Cantonese:

⁹¹ Adriana Zavaglia, Barbara Silva, and Thais Sarmento. *Estudos Tradutológicos Primeiros Passos*, 1st ed. (São Paulo, Brazil: CITRAT, 2016), 45.

⁹² Suwaj, "Translating Contemporary Worship Songs Into Polish," 335.

⁹³ Nikki Lerner Josh Davis, *Worship Together in Your Church As in Heaven* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2020), 15.

The second linguistic mode used in praise-and-worship music in Hong Kong, including the RCCHK, is that of writing worship songs directly in Cantonese. This has proven to be more convincing to local people because they have been and remain a more genuinely local Christian music creation. Writing songs in Cantonese means that they are not being translated from someone else's work or experience.⁹⁴

Vicki Ho seems to agree and reports a similar problem: "To early church music in Hong Kong, the translation of hymns had been a hindrance to a certain extent. Due to an incompatibility of the syllables of the Cantonese dialect and the melodies, most of the translated hymns were incomprehensible just by listening to what was sung."⁹⁵ Contemporary Worship might be experiencing similar problems, not only in countries that speak tonal languages but also in using expressions that do not make sense when translated literally.

Translated P&W songs in global worship are so prevalent that some worship leaders and missionaries are proposing proactive measures to encourage indigenous Christian communities to write songs in local styles. Balcombe writes about a songwriting contest in Hong Kong, and McWilliams wrote a thesis on songwriting workshops in Japan.⁹⁶ Magowan states that Christian indigenous music within Australian aboriginal communities is difficult to produce and sell: "Unlike their Western counterparts, Yolngu worship leaders have not had the same access or exposure to the recording industry to produce their CDs. Rather, Yolngu compilations are locally produced and sold within Arnhem Land and the Northern Territory."⁹⁷ Local Christian musicians

⁹⁴ Dennis Balcombe, "Worship Music Localization: A Case Study of the Revival Christian Church of Hong Kong," *Christian Study Center on Chinese Religion and Culture* 16, no. December 2016 (2017): 273.

⁹⁵ Vicky Wing-ki Ho, "Thirty Years of Contemporary Christian Music in Hong Kong: Interactions and Crossover Acts between a Religious Music Scene and the Pop Music Scene," *Journal of Creative Communications* 8, no. 1 (2013): 67, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0973258613512552>.

⁹⁶ Balcombe, "Worship Music Localization," 272; McWilliams, "Contextualized Songwriting in the Japanese Church," 2.

⁹⁷ Magowan, "Globalisation and Indigenous Christianity," 472.

in Taiwan suggest that missionaries negatively affected their ability to write original Christian songs in regional styles: “Both groups, mountain and urban, laid the blame for their divisions in part on past missionary teaching about proper worship ways and song.”⁹⁸

Churches and Christian communities need to be aware of this Westernization process and its effects on indigenous Christian music. If fully aware, these communities might be able to establish strategies to promote the inclusion of indigenous P&W repertoire in services and worship sets. The increasing number of translated P&W repertoire and the assimilation of that musical style by Christian communities worldwide might indicate a global trend. The deleterious effects of translated hymnody on local Christian hymns may suggest that this global trend affects the production of indigenous P&W repertoire in non-English speaking countries.

“Americanized” Worship

In 1940, after a first tour to the United States, the Brazilian-Portuguese singer Carmen Miranda was accused by the news media of becoming “Americanized,” neglecting her humble origins and losing her Brazilian identity. The episode became so famous that it generated a Samba written by Luis Peixoto and Vicente Paiva, ironically recorded by Carmen Miranda herself, stating sarcastically:

*E disseram que eu voltei americanizada
Com o burro do dinheiro
Que estou muito rica
Que não suporto mais o breque do pandeiro
E fico arrepiada ouvindo uma cuica*

And they said I came back Americanized
With lots of money
That I'm very rich
That I can't stand the *pandeiro's* groove anymore

⁹⁸ Kimbrough, "Music and Mission," 11.

And I get annoyed by listening to the *cuica*⁹⁹

Since then, the term *Americanizado* in Portuguese has achieved a derogatory meaning. In Brazil, to say that somebody or something is “Americanized” implies suggesting contamination from foreign influence and is usually seen as offensive to the local culture. In Brazil, the term “Americanized” is used even when it cannot be linked directly to the US but to another English-speaking country. I remember a conversation with my uncle when I was a pre-teen. I asked him what his favorite American rock band was, and he answered: “The Beatles, of course!” I replied, “Uncle, the Beatles are from the United Kingdom.” He then said, “The Rolling Stones, then.” Again, I explained, “The Rolling Stones are also from the United Kingdom.” Then, a bit irritated, he said, “Ok, ok, The Who, then!” This true story is illustrative of a view still prevalent in Brazil; for most people, any songs in English are immediately labeled as “American” songs, regardless of their origin. Paraphrasing my dialogue with my uncle, we could probably ask Brazilian worship leaders to name their favorite American worship band, and they would likely answer Hillsong United, an Australian band. Much has changed since Carmen Miranda became “Americanized.” Currently, foreign influences are not always seen as unfavorable.

Ingelid Gundt investigated the worship repertoire of several Brazilian Baptist churches and found a high percentage of translated P&W songs in most cases.¹⁰⁰ Anecdotal reports from worship leaders and missionaries in non-English-speaking countries suggest this trend.¹⁰¹ Suwaj suggests that most worship bands imitate Hillsong United in style and repertoire in Poland.¹⁰² In

⁹⁹ Ruy Castro, *Carmen, Uma Biografia* (Sao Paulo, Brazil: Companhia das Letras, 2005), 16.

¹⁰⁰ Gundt, “A Musica no Culto,” 67.

¹⁰¹ Leon Neto, “‘Americanized’ Worship: A Transnational Trend” (class paper submitted in ETHM 513 at Liberty University Online, Summer, 2020), 10.

¹⁰² Suwaj, “Translating Contemporary Worship Songs Into Polish,” 336.

my personal experience, I have also observed many local churches outside the United States making use of translated songs. In most cases, indigenous praise bands that use translated P&W also tend to copy the musical style, conferring an “Americanized” flavor to the local worship. Outside the United States, terms such as “American” or “Americanized” are generic references to any cultural element from English-speaking countries. Frequently, I see people surprised when they realize that some of their “American” musical references are, in fact, artists or bands of other nationalities. As mentioned previously, Hillsong United, one of the world's most prominent and representative worship ministries, is Australian, and famous Christian artists such as Matt Redman, Stuart Townend, and Tim Hughes are British.¹⁰³ In my preliminary interviews with Nicaraguan worship leaders, they referred to songs by the Australian band Hillsong as “American” Christian songs.¹⁰⁴

Is “Americanized” worship a transnational trend? There does not appear to be academic literature specifically related to this topic. Vicky Wing-Ki Ho wrote an ethnographic study on contemporary worship bands in Hong Kong but did not emphasize any international influence in their repertoire.¹⁰⁵ Chang Yau Hoon investigates multiculturalism in evangelical churches in Indonesia but does not focus on contemporary Worship.¹⁰⁶ Keillor reviews an interesting recording of Christian songs in fifteen Native American languages and briefly discusses early

¹⁰³ Moore, "Contemporary Worship Music," 28.

¹⁰⁴ Luis Caño, Interview by author, August, 2020; Leon Neto, Daniela Montes Interview by Author, August, 2020.

¹⁰⁵ Ho, "Thirty Years of Contemporary Christian Music in Hong Kong," 65.

¹⁰⁶ Chang Yau Hoon, “Between Evangelism and Multiculturalism: The Dynamics of Protestant Christianity in Indonesia,” *Social Compass* 60, no. 4 (2013): 457, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0037768613502758>.

missionaries' role in blending Native American and Christian hymns, but again, this study does not relate to this current investigation.¹⁰⁷ The studies on the influence of translated traditional hymns on local indigenous worship mentioned previously suggest parallelism with what is happening to contemporary “Americanized” worship. Since there does not appear to be literature explicitly addressing the influence of “Americanized” worship on local churches worldwide, original research is warranted to investigate this issue.

Ethnodoxology

An investigation of Americanized worship will likely involve elements of ethnodoxology, a recent development of study in the field of ethnomusicology that investigates many manifestations of corporate worship in world cultures. This line of research usually focuses on ethnic and indigenous worship and likely involves applied ethnomusicology. Ethnodoxology requires community engagement and is valuable in cultivating the musical skills necessary for multi-ethnic worship. Brian Schrag defines ethnodoxology as “a theological and anthropological framework guiding all cultures to worship God using their unique artistic expressions. The term derives from two biblical Greek words: “ethno” from *ethne* (peoples) and “doxology” from *doxos* (glory or praise).”¹⁰⁸

Ethnodoxology is a relatively new term in ethnomusicology, and although theoretically can encompass all kinds of worship from any religion, it is often related to the study of Christian worship. The Global Ethnodoxology Network (GEN), the former International Council for Ethnodoxologists (ICE), is an organization that promotes communities of Christians in every

¹⁰⁷ Elaine Keillor, “Beautiful beyond: Christian Songs in Native Languages,” *Journal of American Folklore* 120, no. 477 (2020): 356.

¹⁰⁸ Brian Schrag and James Krabill, *Creating Local Arts Together* (Pasadena: William Carey Publishing, 2012), 6.

culture to engage with God and the world through their artistic expressions.¹⁰⁹ GEN defines ethnodoxology as “the interdisciplinary study of how Christians in every culture engage with God and the world through their own artistic expressions.”¹¹⁰ The term was coined by Dave Hall, founder of Worship from the Nations, and appeared in print for the first time in 1997 in an issue of the journal *Ethnomusicology News*, mentioned by Brian Schrag.

The Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM) webpage does not include ethnodoxology as a sub-field of ethnomusicology. Under the “Special Interest Groups” section, SEM lists several topics, including Disability and Deaf Studies, Ecomusicology, Economic Ethnomusicology, Medical Ethnomusicology, Organology, and Voice Studies, but does not list ethnodoxology as one of the interest groups.¹¹¹ While searching for articles in academic peer review ethnomusicological journals, I could not find any literature on ethnodoxology and only a few articles related to Christian worship. Ethnodoxology is present only in Christian journals and magazines. The only academic source on this topic is a draft of a chapter of the unreleased book, *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Christian Theology*, edited by Steve Guthrie and Bennett Zon. In this chapter, written by Brian Schrag, the author describes how it seems to exist a bias in secular academia against Christian music research:

In my first presentation at a Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM) meeting, I identified as a Christ-follower, describing my efforts to encourage the development of local hymnody in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. During the spirited discussion that followed, a prominent ethnomusicologist called my life “a profound contradiction.” This inability to imagine my work as a valid expression of his field—one I was also whole-heartedly choosing—unnerved and irked me.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ "Global Ethnodoxology Network," <https://www.worldofworship.org/>.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ "The Society for Ethnomusicology," accessed 10/31/, 2022, https://www.ethnomusicology.org/page/Groups_Home.

GEN is currently trying to promote publishing opportunities for ethnodoxologists and offering online platforms for articles and projects. The Global Consultation on Arts and Music in Missions (GCAMM) is an annual conference that provides opportunities for ethnodoxologists to present and share their research projects.¹¹³ As a Christian ethnomusicologist, I see great relevance in ethnodoxology. I intend to develop most of my future research in topics related to contemporary Christian worship; therefore, for this study, I will consider ethnodoxology as a sub-field of ethnomusicology, even if the SEM does not recognize it as such.

This sub-field is frequently used in applied ethnomusicology, where researchers seek interaction and involvement with local communities. Applied ethnomusicology attempts to provide “solutions to practical applied problems.”¹¹⁴ In this sense, Schrag explains, “Ethnodoxology can increase the effectiveness of church planting efforts, discipleship and spiritual formation, evangelism and short-term mission outreach, and helping people respond to injustice and trauma.”¹¹⁵ This approach has many possible applications in the sub-field of ethnodoxology. Karen Campbell reports how the facilitation of indigenous praise songs in a multi-ethnic community affected the participation of women in prayer.¹¹⁶ Similarly, Antoinette Hansen and Megan Meyers suggest that local, indigenous worship can help communities move

¹¹² Muriel Swijghuisen, Reigersberg and Brian Schrag, in *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Christian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 3.

¹¹³ "Global Ethnodoxology Network."

¹¹⁴ Alan P. Merriam, *The Anthropology of Music* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 43.

¹¹⁵ Brian Schrag, *Creating Local Arts Together: A Manual to Help Communities Reach their Kingdom Goals*, ed. James R. Krabill (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013), 7.

¹¹⁶ Karen Campbell, "Movements Toward Multicultural Worship during a Pandemic," *Liturgy (Washington)* 37, no. 1 (Jan 02, 2022)35. doi:10.1080/0458063X.2022.2026177.

from “having no concept of musical worship to embracing music as a valid form of faith expression.”¹¹⁷ James Krabill in *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook* compiled articles from missionaries worldwide describing how they use songwriting workshops to engage local communities, encouraging the production of indigenous worship in regional styles.¹¹⁸

In any case, the usual first step for any ethnodoxological initiative is an assessment of the musical context in the target area. In his seven steps for community engagement, Schrag suggests, as the first step, “meet community and its arts.”¹¹⁹ The following steps in Schrag’s concept on how to apply ethnodoxology in foreign communities are to identify ways particular artistic genres can meet specific community kingdom goals, spark creativity in these genres by local practitioners, encourage community members to improve the new creations, and integrate and celebrate the new works and plan for continuing creativity.¹²⁰ Surveys, questionnaires, and interviews are helpful tools for assessing local contexts and determining cross-sectional analyses.¹²¹

Ethnodoxology can help indigenous communities use their culture and musical traditions to express their faith and avoid potential syncretism problems. In rural or remote settings,

¹¹⁷ Antoinette Hansen and Megan Meyers, "Iron Sharpens Iron: Lessons Learned from a Songwriting Workshop in Mozambique," *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 44, no. 4 (Oct, 2020)380. doi:10.1177/2396939319864809

¹¹⁸ James Krabill, *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*, ed. James Krabill (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013).

¹¹⁹ Schrag, *Creating Local Arts Together*, 261

¹²⁰ Schrag, "Ethnodoxology: Facilitating Local Arts Expressions for Kingdom Purposes," 7

¹²¹ F. R. Brigham, "Some Quantitative Considerations in Questionnaire Design and Analysis," *Applied Ergonomics* 6, no. 2 (1975): 90.

syncretism is potentially more dangerous. Eunhye Chang et al. investigated issues related to syncretism under Paul Hiebert's concept of critical contextualization. They stated, "Those who use Hiebert's approach focus on potential problems within the culture of recent converts, such as female circumcision, polygamy, ancestor veneration, puberty, rites, marriage practices, or traditional healing practices."¹²² It is unlikely that researchers will have to deal with similar issues in urban or metropolitan settings like the ones where my research targets. Hiebert's approach, however, is still necessary. In Brazilian evangelical churches it is usual to find converts whose religious background is rooted in Catholicism. I have witnessed many cases where former Catholic converts keep Catholic practices such as praying the Ave Maria or the Lord's prayer, using rosaries, and worshiping saints. In this context, ethnodoxology can be instrumental in promoting Hiebert's approach to critical contextualization. The Nairobi statement summarizes Hiebert's concept, stating:

A given culture's values and patterns, insofar as they are consonant with the importance of the Gospel, can be used to express the meaning and purpose of Christian worship. Contextualization is necessary for the Church's mission in the world so that the Gospel can be ever more deeply rooted in diverse local cultures.¹²³

Brazil's musical landscape has been investigated by researchers and scholars interested in its rich, famous, and folk music styles.¹²⁴ Brazilian contemporary Christian music, however, has rarely been investigated. Based on my trips and anecdotal evidence, I hypothesize that the Americanization of contemporary worship in Brazilian churches negatively affects the

¹²² Chang et al., "Paul G. Hiebert and Critical Contextualization," *Trinity Journal* 30, no. 2 (2009): 204.

¹²³ Lutheran World Federation, "Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture," *International Review of Mission* 85, no. 337 (1996): 416.

¹²⁴ Carlos Sandroni et al., "Musicians in Street Festivals of Northeastern Brazil: Recent Changes in Forró Music and St. John's Day Festivities," *The World* 5, no. 1 (2016).

production of new indigenous worship in local styles. The first step in investigating this trend is to assess the level of Americanization and how it has affected the presence of indigenous worship in Brazilian evangelical churches.

Summary

In this chapter, I present literature that corroborates my reasoning for establishing a parallelism between translated hymnody imposed by early missionaries in the nineteenth century and “Americanized” worship. I presented evidence of how music and missions have been integrated since the earliest missionary efforts. Early missionaries, intentionally or not, in those contexts, imposed translated hymnody in most missionary fields. This imposition generated a suppression of local expressions of Christian worship. Contemporary Christian music in the late 1960s helped to fill that gap by providing new Christian communities with no ties to traditional denominations, with Christian worship music in synchrony with popular styles of that time. Unfortunately, what seemed like a new approach to Christian worship in the United States, allowing local, style-based expressions generated a new wave of translated worship worldwide. This phenomenon, named “Americanized” worship for this study, is the primary focus of this investigation. To examine this issue, I proposed an approach based on ethnodoxology, one of the many fields of study within ethnomusicology. The next chapter will describe the methodology employed for this investigation.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

Defining the most effective methodology for a research initiative is a fundamental process step. The researcher can only accomplish the research purposes and produce relevant data through sound methods and tools. A research paradigm is an overarching framework that guides the researchers in their quest for the best methodology and data analysis.¹²⁵ The primary purpose of this study was to investigate and produce data on an ongoing phenomenon. In this sense, a positivistic approach was likely the most appropriate. Positivism is usually associated with natural science studies, allowing researchers to observe reality more objectively. Margaret LeCompte and Jean Schensul state, “Positivistic research aims to create accurate descriptions of phenomena, devise valid explanations for observed processes, and increase the predictability of human life by identifying generalizable causal relationships among phenomena.”¹²⁶ Even after creating a hypothesis, it is essential to be open to identifying unexpected results and conflicting data. “Americanized” worship is a complex phenomenon with many causal elements. For this preliminary study, however, I decided to apply a positivistic approach and produce objective data that could be potentially useful for future research.

Design

I used a mixed-methods approach to investigate the process of “Americanization” of contemporary worship in non-English speaking countries. Judith Shoonenboom and R. Burke

¹²⁵ Benjamin K. Sovacool, Jonn Axsen, and Steve Sorrell, “Promoting Novelty, Rigor, and Style in Energy Social Science: Towards Codes of Practice for Appropriate Methods and Research Design,” *Energy Research and Social Science* 45, November 2017 (2017): 14, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2018.07.007>.

¹²⁶ Margaret D. LeCompte and Jean J. Schensul, *Designing & Conducting Ethnographic Research*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2010), 59.

Johnson explain, “Mixed methods research is the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration.”¹²⁷ Randy Stoecker and Elisa Avila agree when stating, “Quantitative methodology requires countable objects of research, while qualitative methodology describes and interprets its research objects.”¹²⁸ I developed a questionnaire and included semi-structured interviews as part of the investigation. Questionnaires are typical tools employed in both quantitative and qualitative approaches.¹²⁹ For the initial part of the research, I developed a self-reported closed-ended questions questionnaire, a strategy allowing objective, quantitative data.¹³⁰ After reflecting on the best methods for this study, I decided to eliminate the semi-structured interview portion. Although this process could potentially increase our understanding of the phenomenon being investigated, it would generate qualitative data that would not be easily transformed into objective data. I still intend to investigate this issue through a qualitative approach in future research, but I decided to keep only the online survey portion for this thesis.

¹²⁷ Judith Schoonenboom and R. Burke Johnson, “How to Construct a Mixed Methods Research Design,” *Kolner Zeitschrift Fur Soziologie Und Sozialpsychologie* 69, no. 2 (2017): 108, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11577-017-0454-1>.

¹²⁸ Randy Stoecker and Elisa Avila, “From Mixed Methods to Strategic Research Design,” *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 24, no. 06 (2020): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2020.1799639>.

¹²⁹ Cynthia Grant and Azadeh Osanloo, “Understanding, Selecting, and Integrating a Theoretical Framework in Dissertation Research: Creating the Blueprint for Your ‘House,’” *Administrative Issues Journal Education Practice and Research* 4, no. 2 (2014): 21, <https://doi.org/10.5929/2014.4.2.9>.

¹³⁰ DebPhyland D, Jennifer Oates, and Kenneth Mark Greenwood, “Self-Reported Voice Problems Among Three Groups of Professional Singers,” *Journal of Voice* 13, no. 4 (1999): 604.

Data Collection and Analysis

The self-report questionnaire was applied online through email and social media. LeCompte and Schensul state, “Surveys are the most widely used form of systematic data collection.”¹³¹ The online questionnaire was available from August 6th through September 6th, 2022. The data was analyzed through quantitative methodology using Google Forms. This self-reported questionnaire generated information on the incidence of translated P&W repertoire in non-English speaking countries—the survey used mostly closed-ended questions. Closed-ended questions are commonly present in quantitative research studies.¹³² Only one open-ended question was included concerning the artists or bands more often translated into Portuguese. A statistical analysis approach was applied to the data generated by this questionnaire.¹³³ After obtaining the responses, I used Google forms to create graphs and charts with the results.

Participants

The primary target population for this research was worship leaders from Brazilian evangelical churches and worship communities. Since Brazil is predominantly Catholic, it was essential to use the term “evangelical” in our recruiting documents. The intention was to specify to potential participants that our population targeted evangelical denominations and not all Christian churches. As explained in Chapter Two, “Americanized” worship is a trend related to the P&W style, which is the most common music style in evangelical churches. Although some Catholic churches may use P&W songs to some extent, I considered these churches to be beyond

¹³¹ LeCompte and Schensul, *Designing & Conducting Ethnographic Research*, 97.

¹³² Grant and Osanloo, “Understanding, Selecting, and Integrating a Theoretical Framework in Dissertation Research,” 21.

¹³³ Sovacool, Axsen, and Sorrell, “Promoting Novelty, Rigor, and Style in Energy Social Science,” 18.

the scope of this current study. Although evangelical churches may present differences in doctrine and liturgy, they most likely have similar corporate worship styles. Including Brazilian Catholic churches as part of this study would potentially generate outliers. “Americanized” worship in Catholic churches would require a specific methodology. Participants for the online self-report questionnaire were recruited via social media websites and email from the network of worship leaders I developed throughout my over twenty years of career and ministry. Social media websites are becoming effective recruiting tools for academic research in recent years and are currently listed in the SAGE handbook as useful for researchers.¹³⁴ The participants were selected through snowball sampling¹³⁵ and recruited via email, social media websites, or SMS text messages.¹³⁶ The sampling process is described in detail in the next chapter.

Summary

In this chapter, the methodology for this study was described. A mixed-methods approach was applied, including an online self-report survey with primarily open-ended questions. The participants were selected via snowball sampling and recruited through social media websites, e-mail, and institutional web pages. An Excel spreadsheet, graphs, and charts were generated through Google forms, displaying the results and percentages. These results were analyzed through qualitative content analysis. The data were analyzed through a statistical approach, and the results were discussed through a qualitative content analysis approach.

¹³⁴ Nanna Schneidermann, “Distance/Relation: Doing Fieldwork with Social Media,” *Forum for Development Studies* 45, no. 2 (2018): 287–303, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08039410.2017.1284153>.

¹³⁵ LeCompte and Schensul, *Designing & Conducting Ethnographic Research*, 75.

¹³⁶ Petros A. Tsioras, “Status and Job Satisfaction of Greek Forest Workers,” *Small-Scale Forestry* 11, no. 1 (2012): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11842-011-9164-0>.

Chapter Four: Results, Findings, and Discussion

Data Collection

After examining potential strategies for this study, I decided to develop and apply an online survey. This research tool appeared to be the most appropriate one to answer my research questions. Since I would be in the United States during the data collection period, an in-person survey would be challenging. Online surveys are practical tools for gathering anonymous quantitative data. Virginia Braun et al. suggest that online surveys are also valuable tools for mixed-methods studies, the methodology chosen for this current study.¹³⁷

As previously stated, the target population for this study was worship leaders or musicians in leadership positions in Brazilian evangelical churches or worship ministries. Due to the specialized nature of this criterion, I considered expert sampling, but this sampling method tends to restrict and reduce the number of responses.¹³⁸ Expert sampling is also time-consuming and is usually applied to qualitative studies.¹³⁹ My chosen population is an under-researched population and difficult to access. There are no online websites, directories of Brazilian worship leaders, or any other kind of database listing potential participants. In place of this context, I decided to use snowball sampling as a non-probability sampling method.¹⁴⁰ I established a protocol with four levels of sampling: (1) contacts from my network; (2) contacts suggested by my initial contacts; (3) contacts obtained from my contact list; and (4) organizations or churches

¹³⁷ Virginia Braun et al., "The Online Survey as a Qualitative Research Tool," *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 24, no. 6 (Nov 02, 2021)641. doi:10.1080/13645579.2020.1805550.

¹³⁸ J. C. Bruce, G. C. Langley and A. A. Tjale, "The use of Experts and their Judgments in Nursing Research: An Overview," *Curationis (Pretoria)* 31, no. 4 (Dec, 2008), 57.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Georgia Robins Sadler et al., "Recruitment of Hard-to-Reach Population Subgroups Via Adaptations of the Snowball Sampling Strategy," *Nursing & Health Sciences* 12, no. 3 (Sep 01, 2010): 369.

obtained from levels 2 and 3. My network of contacts was developed over twenty years of my experience as a worship leader, Christian artist, and guest lecturer in Brazil. This network database includes worship leaders, pastors, Christian artists, and scholars. I searched for similar profiles with my initial contacts. For level 4, I had, in addition to evangelical churches, worship ministries, mission organizations, Christian artists, and Praise and Worship bands. I used Google forms as a survey platform to create and analyze the results. The online survey was available from August 6, 2022, to September 6, 2022.

Results

After one month of data collection, I obtained 106 responses. Most respondents identified themselves as worship leaders or in a leadership role in their worship ministries (96%). The 4% of the respondents that answered negatively to that question were discarded, and their responses were not recorded. All participants live in Brazil, and the age groups are distributed as in Figure 1: 18-25 years old – 4.7%; 26-40 years-old – 32.1%; 41-55 years old – 47.2%; 56 years old and older – 16%.

1- Qual é a sua faixa etária?

106 responses

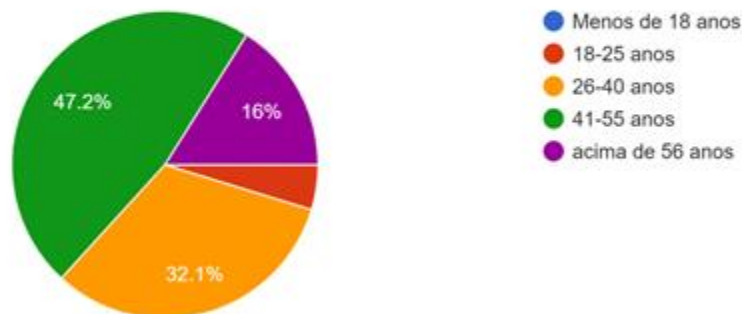


Figure 1: “How old are you?”

The participants were asked to report the percentage of translated worship repertoire used in their worship sets. 32% of the participants reported using more than 50% of translated worship songs, and 36% reported using at least 50%. Only 1% of the participants responded that they do not use translated worship songs in their worship sets (Figure 2). For these translated worship songs, the participants reported that Hillsong United and Bethel were the bands with songs more commonly incorporated into their worship sets.

4- Em uma estimativa aproximada, qual é a porcentagem de músicas traduzidas que são geralmente usadas no louvor congregacional de sua igreja?

97 responses

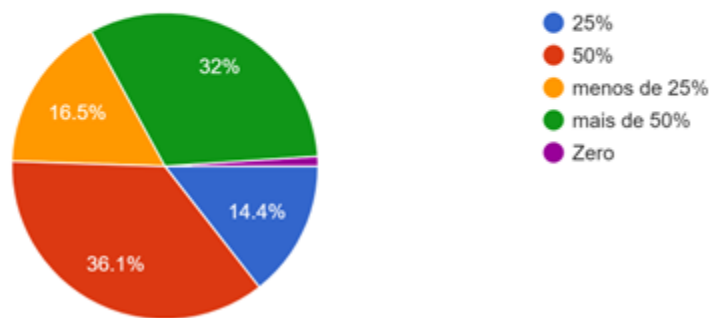


Figure 2. Percentage of Translated Worship Songs

When asked about the main factor that defines their worship song choice, most participants (66%) answered that the text was the main factor. They also mentioned popularity (14.4%) and musical style (13.4%) as factors that affect worship song choice. The participants reported that social media (42.3%) and streaming platforms (33%) are where they primarily find new songs for their praise bands. Only 14.4% of the participants reported finding new songs in other local churches, and 10.3% answered that they find new songs with songwriters in the local

community. Surprisingly, none (0%) of the participants mentioned radio as a way of finding new songs.

In one of the questions, the participants were asked to give a rough estimate of what percentage of them believe that “Americanized” worship affects repertoire selection in their churches. The participants answered “more than 50%” in 29.9% of the responses, “50%” in 26.8% of the responses, “25%” in 13.4% of the responses, “less than 25%” in 18.6% of the answers, and “zero” in 11.3% of the responses. In a similar question, the participants were asked to give a rough estimate of what percentage they believe “Americanized” worship affects the worship style in their churches. This time, the participants answered “more than 50%” in 33 % of the answers, “50%” in 28.9%, “25%” in 14.4%, “less than 25%” in 15.5%, and “zero” in only 8.2% of the answers.

Participants were asked to estimate the percentage of local styles in their worship sets. This question intended to assess regional musical styles in Brazilian churches. The participants answered that this percentage is higher than 50% in only 9.3% of the responses and that the ratio is 50% in 13.4%. Conversely, the participants reported a percentage of less than 25% in 40.2% of the answers and zeroed in 18.6% of the responses.

The survey included a question related to “Americanized” worship potentially discouraging the production of original indigenous worship songs in their communities, and the majority (61.9%) responded “yes,” 29.9% responded “no,” and 8.2% responded “I don’t know.” When asked if they would like to increase the percentage of indigenous P&W songs in worship sets, the participants answered “yes” in 75.3% of the responses, “no” in 12.4%, and “I don’t know” in 12.4% of the responses. The next section of this chapter will discuss these results and highlight some significant findings.

Discussion

Recent statical studies have suggested that the population of evangelical Christians in Brazil is close to 70 million.¹⁴¹ The sample size for this current study (n=106) may look small in this context. However, it is essential to mention that an expert-based criterion was applied to this study. Only worship leaders or Christian musicians in leadership positions would be accepted as participants. In addition, they would need to be 18 years old or older and live in Brazil.

Considering these limitations and the fact that the survey was only available for a month, the sample size may be regarded as robust and be able to suggest generalizations. Although the evangelical population in Brazil has grown considerably in the last two decades, Catholics remain the largest religion. Carlos Sandroni et al. state, “Catholicism was the official religion in Brazil until the late nineteenth century and continues to be the largest religious affiliation, according to official statistics.”¹⁴² If I had included Catholic churches as part of my target population, it is possible that I would have reached a larger sample size. My decision to be specific about recruiting evangelicals assumed that most Catholic churches in Brazil do not emphasize corporate worship or the P&W style. In addition, Catholic churches usually do not have the typical worship leader position that has become so common in evangelical churches.

As explained in the previous chapter, the recruiting protocol included four recruiting levels. In level 1, I contacted worship leaders and Christian artists from my network directly via email or social media websites. Throughout the last 20 years, I have developed a considerably vast list of contacts, including worship leaders, pastors, Christian artists, missionaries, and music

¹⁴¹ "Denominações Evangélicas no Brasil," accessed September 17, 2022, <https://www.tvsobrinhoms.com.br/2022/03/03/denominacoes-evangelicas-no-brasil/>.

¹⁴² Carlos Sandroni et al., “Musicians in Street Festivals of Northeastern Brazil: Recent Changes in Forró Music and St. John’s Day Festivities,” *The World of Music* 5, no. 1 (2016): 167.

producers involved with contemporary Christian music to some degree. Most of these contacts live in Brazil and are connected to churches and worship ministries in Brazil. This level of recruiting was extremely valuable for this research, not only because it generated direct responses but also because it led to levels of recruiting 2 and 3.

In level 2, contacts in level 1 suggested potential participants. This step generated a snowball-like sampling strategy, allowing the recruitment of worship leaders and Christian musicians that were not in the initial database.¹⁴³ In level 3, potential participants in the direct contacts' social media pages from level 1 that they did not suggest were contacted. This step was less effective but expanded the potential participants, identifying a pertinent number of candidates that level 1 participants did not indicate.

In level 4, evangelical churches and organizations that could lead me to other potential participants were contacted. This level proved to be the less effective of all. I only received feedback and responses from a limited number of institutions. It appears to me that in our present time, it is so common to receive online solicitations and advertisements that if there is no direct connection or a referral from a contact, most sites and personal profiles tend to disregard survey invitations. Most participants are between 26 and 55 years old (79.3%). This number is relevant because this is an age group where likely most participants are active in the workforce. Since the target population was worship leaders and Christian musicians in current leadership positions in worship ministries, this high percentage of active professionals may add validity to our data.

The first research question for this study was, "What is the percentage of translated worship in Brazilian churches?" The participants suggested a high percentage of translated

¹⁴³ Sadler, "Recruitment of Hard-to-Reach Population Subgroups Via Adaptations of the Snowball Sampling Strategy," 369.

worship songs, with 68% of the participants answering that 50% or more of their worship sets are translated and only 1% of the participants responding that they do not use any (0%) translated worship songs in their worship sets. This number suggests a high use of translated worship songs in Brazilian churches. The survey question related to this assessment did not specify the music style. Some of the translated worship songs may be performed in local classes. The participants answered that text is the primary factor in selecting worship repertoire (66%). This percentage likely suggests that the message of the songs is more important than popularity (14.4%) and musical style (13.4%). This surprising result indicates that strategies to increase indigenous worship styles must focus on text rather than popularity or music style. In terms of musical styles, the participants answered that the percentage of local musical styles in their worship sets is low. Indigenous worship styles are present in 50% or more of the worship repertoire in only 22.7 % of churches, less than 25% in 40.2%, and 0% in 18.6% of the churches. This datum may be evidence of “Americanized” worship in Brazilian churches. Interestingly, most participants (75.3%) said they wanted to increase the percentage of indigenous worship in their churches. This number seems contradictory to the data related to the selection of songs. Text might be the primary factor, but the participants seem open to increasing indigenous styles in their services.

One of the primary focuses of this study was to understand how “Americanized” worship affects the production of original indigenous worship songs in Brazilian evangelical churches. Most participants (61.9%) said that Americanized worship discourages the production of original indigenous worship songs in their communities. In addition, only 10.3% of new songs, according to the participants, come from songwriters in the community. In a more direct question, I asked the participants about the percentage that they believe “Americanized” worship affects repertoire selection in their churches. Over half of the participants (56%) responded that “Americanized”

worship affects their song choices over 50% of the time. This is a relevant number that also corroborates my hypothesis and helps answer my research questions. This data suggests that more than half of Brazilian evangelical churches are influenced by “Americanized” worship when choosing P&W songs for their services and worship sets. Only 11.3% reported no influence on song choice by “Americanized” worship. An even higher percentage was recorded when the participants were asked about the rate that “Americanized” worship affects the worship style in their churches. 61.9% of the participants reported that “Americanized” worship involves their worship style 50% or more of the time. This question was aimed at answering one of the research questions about the percentage of indigenous worship in local types in Brazilian Evangelical churches. Their responses might suggest that even when Brazilian churches use original P&W songs, a reasonable rate (61.9%) might be directly affected by “Americanized” worship and not be in local indigenous styles.

The hypothesis for the study was that mass media is a significant factor in the process of “Americanization” of worship in Brazil. I asked the participants how they primarily find new songs for their praise bands, and they answered that social media websites (42.3%) and streaming platforms (33%) are the most common places where they find new songs. Since most Brazilian churches choose a large percentage of translated worship songs in their worship sets, these answers may suggest a combined percentage of 75.3% of mass media influence on “Americanized” worship, potentially confirming our hypothesis. This result, however, warrants further investigation as there are potentially other factors in place.

Summary

The main purpose of this study was to investigate “Americanized” worship in Brazilian evangelical churches. An online survey was developed and applied to target Brazilian worship

leaders or Christian musicians in leadership positions in an evangelical church in Brazil. The results suggest that Brazilian evangelical churches use a large percentage of translated P&W songs in their worship sets. The participants also suggested that mass media is a relevant factor in selecting new worship songs for their churches. The participants also reported a low percentage of indigenous P&W repertoire in their worship sets. The results, in general, suggest that “Americanized” worship negatively affects the rate of indigenous P&W repertoire in Brazilian evangelical churches.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

This current study originated with anecdotal evidence and personal experiences which suggested that the “Americanization” of contemporary Christian worship worldwide affects the production of indigenous P&W repertory in non-English speaking communities. The intention behind this project was to produce data that could corroborate this hypothesis. The online questionnaire aimed to assess this trend in Brazilian churches and gather data on the percentage of translated P&W repertoire, the effect of “Americanized” worship in the production of original indigenous worship songs, the role of mass media in this process, and the percentage of indigenous worship in local styles.

The results suggest that this trend is factual in Brazilian evangelical churches. According to the participants’ responses, 68% of the Brazilian evangelical churches use 50% or more translated worship songs in their services. This number might indicate that the same process that happened in early missionary initiatives is currently taking place in Brazil. In the same manner that missionaries in the past imposed Westernized hymnody to indigenous populations generating a mono-stylistic scenario in Brazilian evangelical churches, mass media might be generating “Americanized” worship in Brazil.¹⁴⁴ Growing up in Brazil, I witnessed how predominant translated hymnody was in local evangelical churches. It was infrequent to find an original hymn and even more challenging to find a hymn incorporating Brazilian musical traditions. In addition, choir anthems and choruses were predominantly translated from American and European composers or arrangers. When I attended the Baptist seminary in my hometown to pursue a church music degree, I discovered that many professors were American

¹⁴⁴ Andrew E. Hill, “Biblical Foundations of Christian Worship,” in *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*, ed. James Krabill et al. (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2013), 139.

missionaries. In particular, composition and arranging professors were American missionaries without substantial knowledge of Brazilian music. The significant presence of American missionaries in the faculty roster in evangelical seminaries in Brazil made it possible for these seminaries to offer high-level music education in a country with limited music colleges. However, it also generated unintentional dependency on imported music. Translated hymns and choral anthems were more accessible to local Brazilian churches than original hymns and choruses. Aiming to fill this gap, I wrote original choir anthems when attending seminary, but the lack of publishing companies in Brazil made it extremely difficult for local composers to be published and distribute their compositions nationwide. In this context, translating American hymns and anthems was considerably more viable. In the past, this predominance of translated hymns and anthems might not have been intentional, like the hymnody imposed by missionaries and pastors in early missions. Still, the reality is that the vast majority of worship repertoire in Brazil is not originally produced by local musicians. This is like what happened to traditional hymnody in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when most hymnals in indigenous languages, particularly in Brazil, did not include original compositions in local styles.¹⁴⁵

One of the reasons for this high percentage of translated worship songs in Brazilian churches might be related to the availability and accessibility of mega-church worship ministry resources. In this sense, availability and accessibility might also have influenced the spread of translated hymnody in Brazilian churches. As opposed to the socio-cultural role and production of music in the past, when access to information was scarce, mass media likely incentivizes “Americanized” worship in our current context. The difference from the early missionaries’

¹⁴⁵ Gundt, "A Música no Culto: Em Busca De Uma Musicalidade Relevante Para O Culto no Contexto Das Igrejas Da Convenção Batista Pioneira do Sul do Brasil," 120.

influence on hymnody is that mass media amplifies this process exponentially. What would take years and sometimes generations to take place nowadays takes minutes or even seconds. A quick Google search today reveals thousands of options for audio files, charts, and rehearsal kits. Some of these ministries currently offer translated charts on their websites.¹⁴⁶ It is possible that mass media creates this side effect unintentionally through the process of globalization and not as the result of forceful homogenization, as was the case with some missionaries. Still, it is not completely unlikely that producers and investors intentionally promote “Americanized” worship’s homogenizing effects with commercial intent. Such an investigation, however, lies beyond the scope of this study. Future research could potentially examine how the marketplace affects Christian ethics and values.

Based on my interaction with Brazilian worship leaders and supporting evidence from the survey, it does appear that mass media and market forces influence what is economically viable and thus affects musical style and P&W repertoire worldwide. Brazil is not immune to this process. Subsequent visits to Brazil and local evangelical churches only seem to confirm that more and more congregations choose their P&W repertoire based on what can be found on social media websites such as YouTube and Facebook rather than on content and doctrine. Whenever I go to Brazilian churches and ask for suggestions of songs to include in my worship sets, Brazilians usually suggest songs from mega-church worship ministries such as Hillsong United and Bethel. Not surprisingly, the participants of this study named these two bands as the most translated bands or artists in Brazilian evangelical churches. In these contexts, there appears to be a certain lack of interest in including original Brazilian worship songs.

¹⁴⁶ "Bethel Music En Español," <https://shop.bethel.com/products/bethel-music-en-espanol>.

Accordingly, the results suggest that “Americanized” worship negatively affects the production of indigenous worship. Most Brazilian churches do not include local songwriters in their worship sets. Only 10.3% of new songs come from songwriters in local communities. Over 40% (40.2%) of the churches use less than 25% of worship in indigenous styles, and 18% responded that they do not incorporate any worship songs in local classes (0%). Since most churches use a large percentage of translated worship in their services, it would be reasonable to assume that “Americanized” worship does play a role in discouraging the production of indigenous worship. Most of the participants (61.9%) agree with this assessment, responding “yes” to the question if they think that “Americanized” worship negatively affects the production of indigenous worship. An even more significant percentage (73.5%) of the participants demonstrated that they would like to increase the rate of indigenous worship in their churches. This high percentage may indicate that “Americanized” worship is the dominant trend in Brazilian churches because of the mass media appeal and the lack of other options. In this sense, ethnodoxologists may have an essential role in developing strategies to provide opportunities for Brazilian worship leaders to include indigenous worship songs in their sets. Songwriting workshops have been used successfully in similar contexts.¹⁴⁷

It remains unclear, however, that songwriting workshops are the best strategy in Brazil. Personal experience in this area suggests that most Brazilians, in urban areas at least, see songwriting as an exclusive activity only for the musically gifted and not as a tool for communal expression. This, in my opinion, is the first barrier to addressing this issue. Songwriting workshops would probably need to start with Biblical foundation sessions that could forward the notion that collaborative songwriting can be an inclusive and catalytic change in this current

¹⁴⁷ McWilliams, "Contextualized Songwriting in the Japanese Church," 20.

scenario. It is essential to raise awareness about the applicability of Biblical principles of worship to personal forms of expression. In this sense, writing original worship songs is not different than using your own words in a prayer. Glenn Stallsmith describes four types of workshops in his songwriting workshop manual: Biblical foundation, hymns, translation, and song composition.¹⁴⁸ This is consistent with what Brazilian churches would need to implement songwriting initiatives. Biblical foundation workshops have proved to be extremely useful in some situations. On several occasions, through prayer and Bible study with local musicians, their most pressing needs become apparent and easier to address. Typically, one notices a lack of basic concepts about biblical worship and worship as a lifestyle in Latin American countries. Brazil is likely not different. A Biblical foundation workshop can help remediate this issue and give the participants more knowledge about worship beyond the usual P&W repertoire. In addition, these workshops can help generate potential topics and bible passages for original songs. Several sources with songwriting strategies could be effective in this context. In addition to Stallsmith,¹⁴⁹ Roberta King¹⁵⁰ suggests several strategies, and Katie Ann McWilliams describes how she dealt with similar issues working with Japanese Christian communities.¹⁵¹

Music production costs have decreased considerably in recent years. New digital technology offers software and recording equipment at affordable levels, even in underdeveloped and developing countries. This is possibly a positive side-effect of globalization. Recording

¹⁴⁸ Glenn Stallsmith, "Facilitating Community Song-Writing Workshops," (Class Material in ETHM 611 at Liberty University Online, March 2021), 4.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ King, "Steps to Effective Songwriting Workshops" (video lecture in ETHM 611 at Liberty University Online, n.d.

¹⁵¹ McWilliams, "Contextualized Songwriting in the Japanese Church," 11.

projects in remote areas are much more viable today than in previous years. This accessibility allows missionaries to implement recording projects in indigenous communities that use local styles in congregational worship. Digital recording technology is effective when sound insulation is not ideal, which it is in most instances. Computer programs can now mask and filter noise from outside sources. Post-production can fix intonation, rhythm, and textural issues. Accessing platforms is possible wherever there is internet access, cutting distribution costs to a minimum. In this way, investments in the recording and production of local worship songs become a viable option with the potential of influencing larger audiences and providing an alternative to translated P&W songs.

The finding that the most crucial factor in selecting worship repertoire is the text (66%), however, gives hope that this tendency may be attenuated if initiatives promoting the development of biblically based, authentic indigenous worship repertoire are implemented. Contextualization is probably the most crucial factor that worship ministries should consider. Worship leaders and missionaries need to learn how to deal with old traditions and contemporary trends in a balanced way with a “mutual understanding of biblical principles and their application to cultural values should result in the appropriate use of the arts in the church.”¹⁵² Paul Hiebert recommends a process of constant interaction between missionaries and local communities and emphasizes the local culture as the predominant aspect of this process. Hiebert proposes four basic steps in this interaction:

- 1) Engage in phenomenological and uncritical efforts to understand the cultural practices
- 2) Identify and help the local church examine all relevant biblical passages and theological principles related to the cultural practice
- 3) Corporately evaluate their past customs critically in the light of their new biblical principles and make decisions

¹⁵² Benham, *Biblical Principles of Worship: A Seminar on Worship and Culture*, 2.

4) People are led to rethink and reinvent old practices¹⁵³

When the number of “likes” and hits on mass media websites are the determining factors for selecting P&W repertoire, however, it is doubtful that these principles will be in place.

Contextualization is neither easy nor fast; missionaries and facilitators must remember that cultural revision and changes have their own pace and time. Only by developing relationships is contextualization effective and safe. Hiebert’s narrative about the mistakes of the initial missionaries is a constant warning about potential cultural conflicts.

One problem with adapting translated worship songs is that some translations need to change the metric and meaning of some lyrics to fit the melody with a Portuguese version. In some cases, the content and message of the songs are mostly preserved, but in others, the Portuguese versions are questionable. This would be a fascinating, albeit complex, investigation. The fact that the participants responded that text is the most critical factor in selecting P&W repertoire does not necessarily mean that sound doctrine and theology are essential elements in worship songs. Future research would need to investigate first how faithful the Portuguese versions are to the original English songs and then find out what messages are more appealing to young evangelicals.

This study’s limitations also extend to its use of terminology. Although part of Chapter One is dedicated to justifying the use of the term “Americanized,” this terminology is far from ideal, and some participants could have been confused by it. In my pre-assessment stage, I inquired about other terms such as “translated worship,” “Westernized worship,” or “Globalized worship,” but all these options also have limitations and problems. Translated worship might not

¹⁵³ Paul G. Hiebert, "Critical Contextualization," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 11, no. 3 (1987): 108.

necessarily be “Americanized” worship; it is possible that in some cases, translated worship songs are presented in local styles or original arrangements. Westernized worship is too generic, and globalized worship gives the impression of a multi-cultural setting. Whether a more appropriate term exists remains an open question at this time, but for this current study, “Americanized” worship seemed to be the best option, as explained in Chapter One.

Another limitation is that the sampling criteria reduced the sample size. As explained previously, the requirements were similar to expert sampling criteria, restricting the number of participants. However, over a hundred participants might be considered a robust sample for a preliminary, phase-one study. Using my network as level 1 of the sampling protocol might have generated a bias. This was, however, just the starting point, and it proved to be the most effective approach for reaching participants beyond the initial network.

The most logical follow-up for this study would be to apply the same methodology in multiple non-English-speaking countries. A comprehensive and inclusive study will best assess if “Americanized” worship is a transnational trend. I hope to find research partners to help me investigate this phenomenon. In a preliminary paper, I interviewed five worship leaders from different continents. The participants were selected through expert sampling, a methodology that targets participants with specific skills and knowledge. The sampling protocol used the following criteria: (1) full-time or part-time worship leaders involved in local worship for at least five years; (2) actively engaged in local worship; (3) either native speakers or fluent in the vernacular language. The participants were also selected from my personal network and experience in worship ministry. Participants were recruited from the following continents: Asia (Malaysia), South America (Brazil), Central America (Nicaragua), Europe (Italy), and Africa (Senegal). For this study, worship leaders from Oceania, the United Kingdom, and North

America were considered part of the “Americanized” worship trend and were intentionally not included as participants. All participants suggested that “Americanized” worship is a reality and might be a transnational trend. This preliminary paper was the pilot study for this current project. It is intended that this study could be the initial step toward a more extensive, worldwide investigation.

One of the most intriguing findings was the high percentage (66%) of participants who answered that text is the primary factor for selecting new songs. At first sight, this result might suggest that “Americanized” worship is not entirely influenced by market-driven, shallow, repetitive, and simplistic lyrics. This datum, however, warrants further investigation. As mentioned, Portuguese versions of P&W songs, initially English, are not always wholly faithful to their original content. In some cases, the need for metrics and contextual adaptations may have produced altered versions. Only a detailed investigation of lyrics and, more explicitly, comparing original English lyrics with their Portuguese versions could bring some light to this intriguing datum. The chorus of the song “Reckless Love,” written by Cory Asbury, one of the most controversial lyrics in the last few years, states:

Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending
Reckless love of God
It chases me down
Fight 'til I'm found
Leaves the ninety-nine

I couldn't earn it
I don't deserve it
Still, you give yourself away
Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending
Reckless love of God

This is the Portuguese translation most used in Brazil:

*O irresistível, infinito
Ousado amor de Deus
Que me persegue
E luta até me encontrar
Deixando as noventa e nove
Eu não posso ganhá-lo
E nem merece-lo
Mesmo assim se entregou
O irresistível, infinito
Ousado amor de Deus*

The word *Ousado* gives a different dimension to the Portuguese version. I would translate it as “bold” or “daring,” but never as “reckless.” The Portuguese version has not generated the same controversy in Brazil, likely because of this inaccurate translation. This is just one example of the many instances when translations can be confusing and not wholly faithful to the original lyrics. Future research might be able to explore what the participants meant by choosing text as the most critical factor in selecting new songs and maybe help pastors and worship leaders assess the spiritual needs of their communities.

Hillsong United, one of the world's most recognizable and translated worship ministries, has received criticism for its shallow lyrics and compromising theology. Hillsong United represents what has been defined as “affective spectacles,” services where emotions take place of sound doctrine and deep theology.¹⁵⁴ Nelson Cowan suggests that Hillsong United was not always shallow and “generalist.” He argues that Hillsong United song lyrics started to shift exactly when the ministry became a worldwide phenomenon:

Between 2007 and 2015, the theological content of Hillsong Music has become increasingly “generalist.” Notably, this theological shift, as expressed in the hymnody, is

¹⁵⁴ Matthew Wade and Maria Hynes, “Worshipping Bodies: Affective Labour in the Hillsong Church,” *Geographical Research* 51, no. 2 (May, 2013):173.

embedded in a larger shift in Hillsong Church's vision: from the local church level to a self-replicating global community.¹⁵⁵

The term "self-replicating" used by Cowan is significant to this current study. Even more critical is its association with the "global community." Maybe the exponential worldwide reproduction of Hillsong United is related to the theological shift described by Cowan. Christian audiences might be more interested in self-help messages and feel-good lyrics. One of the reasons "Americanized" worship has spread so quickly is possibly because it is a product of our contemporaneity, like fast-food, pop music, and blockbuster movies. Perhaps this oversimplification is affecting indigenous worship in local styles and becoming the primary reference for evangelicals. This process might not be entirely random but part of a well-thought-out agenda aiming to lobotomize Christian audiences with profit-driven products. Even more concerning is that Christian communities are possibly unaware of this scenario. If this is true, "Americanized" worship affects the production of indigenous P&W repertoire and the core fabric of Christian theology. These are all topics worth investigating. Future research can potentially bring light to at least some of these issues.

The data obtained from the survey strongly suggests that "Americanized" worship negatively affects the production of indigenous worship in local styles. Future studies could investigate the effects of "Americanized" worship on indigenous worship in non-English speaking countries. In such studies, I recommend that researchers hear from local worship leaders on the impacts of "Americanized" worship on their congregation and provide suggestions for dealing with this trend. The interaction with those professionals who deal directly with the

¹⁵⁵ Nelson Cowan, "Heaven and Earth Collide," *Pneuma* 39, no. 2 (2017): 78.

effects of mass media influence on their communities is a valuable tool for developing effective strategies for promoting indigenous worship in local styles.

This study was a preliminary investigation of this process of “Americanization” of worship in non-English speaking countries. The data suggests that this trend is likely a reality in Brazilian evangelical churches and worship communities. “Americanized” worship seems to contribute to a decrease in local worship styles and indigenous P&W repertoire. Before applying the survey, I hypothesized that mass media influenced repertoire choices, promoting “Americanized” worship worldwide. In general, worship leaders tend to prefer songs with more visibility and marketability. The results corroborate this hypothesis since social media (42.3%) and streaming platforms (33%) are the primary sources for finding new worship songs. Currently, it is difficult to fight against technology and digital resources. This new generation is bombarded daily with numerous video and audio files, fully available through the internet. It is challenging to counter the media’s power to reach large audiences and followers. Hopefully, this study will help Christian communities become aware of how mass media affects worship production in indigenous styles. Potentially, some of them will promote events and training opportunities that may increase the presence of local styles in their services.

There are situations where Westernized worship might be appropriate or beneficial. In “A Laughing Party and Contextualized Worship,” an essay by Mark Charles found in *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*, we see an instance where there is a potential justification for “Americanized” worship. Charles states, “Many Navajo Christians are strongly opposed to using many aspects of traditional Navajo culture in Christian

worship.”¹⁵⁶ This could be a case where a worship style with no connections to local musical genres could help avoid religious syncretism. In every case, it is essential always to promote contextualization, but there are situations where Westernized worship can temporarily be a tool. Charles, however, reports that after some time of preparation and discussion with the local Navajo community, they were able to incorporate local elements in Christian worship: “We experienced a small taste of heaven that afternoon, all because we chose to contextualize our worship, so it made sense for our surroundings.”¹⁵⁷ Monique Ingalls, Monique Marie, Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg, and Zoe C. Sherinian, in their book *Making Congregational Music Local in Christian Communities Worldwide*, describe another touching example of how translated worship can have a positive impact on indigenous populations:

In this community, textual and melodic elements of ‘Rock of Ages’ are embedded within an Aboriginal Christian song describing the forced removal of the Indigenous community to the *Woorabinda* settlement, some 1,500 km to the south during the Second World War. The forced evacuation to a much colder climate led to the death of over a quarter of the Hopevale population due to illnesses such as influenza. The lyrics of this Indigenous song describe a Hopevale elder praying to God, asking for his community to be taken back home and for God to deliver them from their trials. Whilst the song lyrics are in English and the melody has been adapted from the American hymn tune, the performance of the song had been rendered a distinctly local expression.¹⁵⁸

Local expressions can involve new arrangements using indigenous musical elements, translations, or versions that include cultural components and, in some cases, just the context in which these versions are used. The “Battle Hymn of the Republic,” for example, is used as a congregational hymn in Brazilian Baptist churches. This hymn has become very popular among

¹⁵⁶ Mark Charles, “A Laughing Party and Contextualized Worship,” in *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*, ed. James R. Krabill, 267-69 (Littleton, CO: William Carey Publishing, 2013), 269.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Monique Marie Ingalls, Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg and Zoe Sherinian, *Making Congregational Music Local in Christian Communities Worldwide* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 2.

other Brazilian denominations and is used regularly as a hymn about the Second Coming. I remember how surprised some of my American friends became when they heard that hymn in regular services. In the same manner, very few people in Brazil know this is originally a patriotic American hymn.

Before starting this investigation, I noticed significant changes in Brazilian evangelical churches in the last few decades. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, when the internet and social media websites were not as accessible as they are today, I used to hear a much higher percentage of indigenous P&W repertoire. In early 1990s, when visiting a famous church in Sao Paulo, the largest city in Brazil, I was impressed with the high quality of original worship songs in local styles. That church is in an upper-middle-class neighborhood in Sao Paulo and had, at the time, many Christian musicians who were connected to *Vencedores por Cristo*, a famous Brazilian worship ministry. The Christian artists and songwriters from that church apparently felt comfortable sharing their original compositions in congregational worship. When I returned to the same church ten years later, I did not encounter a single indigenous P&W song in the several services I attended. Almost all P&W songs were translations from Hillsong United, Bethel, and similar worship ministries. Of course, this anecdotal evidence could be an outlier compared to other Brazilian churches. This current study, however, suggests that this trend has become the norm in Brazil. The question of why “Americanized” worship is happening in evangelical churches worldwide remains unanswered.

This study suggested that mass media, with all its accessibility and appeal, is a significant factor. In the church mentioned above, it is conceivable that mass media did play a role in generating that “Americanized” panorama. In the 1970s and 80s, Brazilian churches had little access to imported albums of Christian bands and worship ministries. Brazilian local churches

had fewer options than today, and maybe local songwriters were more encouraged to write original worship songs and incorporate them into congregational worship. With the rise and the exponential accessibility of mass media and social media websites, the landscape might have been transformed, opening the gateways to “Americanized” worship.

In some cases, however, other factors might be in place. I have great experience working and visiting Hispanic Christian communities and churches in the US; my intuition is that second and third-generations of immigrant descent tend to absorb almost entirely American habits and tastes, including P&W repertoire. In most Hispanic churches I have visited in the last ten years, there is a predominance of translated worship songs. It is possible that in immigrant communities in the US, “Americanized” worship is a way of gaining access to the American way of life. This topic also warrants further investigation.

Another question remains unanswered: what can we do to counter the adverse effects of “Americanized” worship on indigenous P&W repertoire? Maybe a follow-up study could potentially help answer this question. The project has attempted to avoid simplistic approaches to this issue, classifying this phenomenon as either entirely “good” or “bad.” As mentioned previously, there are some instances where translated; Westernized worship might be positive even when negatively affecting local expressions. Each community needs to determine what musical style and worship format are better for their service. It is not suggested that “Americanized” worship must be avoided at all costs. It is possible, however, to offer alternatives. In a recent mission project in a remote Nicaraguan village, my Liberty University team and I facilitated songwriting workshops among the local population. We helped them write over a dozen original songs. Some of the participants never thought they could write original worship songs. They used to see themselves as mere imitators of an established stylistic model.

They never thought they could incorporate their struggles, context, and aspirations in original songs and use them as part of their worship sets. Perhaps this study can, at least, raise awareness for the validity of personal, local, and regional expressions of worship in non-English speaking countries. Brazil has a rich and unique popular music universe with many regional styles and rhythms. Mass media has impacted Brazilian popular music and its nature, but numerous artists and bands keep all those traditions alive and strong. I hope some of these musical “guerilla” efforts can be incorporated into contemporary Christian music in Brazil.

When I started this study, I had the conviction that the data would suggest or even confirm that “Americanized” worship is a reality in Brazilian churches. This conviction comes from all my years working, traveling, and interacting with churches and worship communities in Brazil. Based on my personal experience and anecdotal evidence, I was sure this trend could be documented. My conviction was also based on the parallelism I tried to establish between translated worship repertoire and translated hymnody. Although preliminary, the data from this study corroborates my hypotheses about the existence of “Americanized” worship in Brazilian churches, its influence on the production of indigenous P&W repertoire, and that mass media is a factor in this process. The question if “Americanized” worship is beneficial or deleterious to local congregations in non-English speaking Christian communities was beyond the scope of this study. My goal was to focus on its effect on indigenous worship only. I hope the data produced by this current study will help raise awareness among pastors and worship leaders about this trend and help them make decisions that will benefit their local communities. I hope these congregations will also become aware of the value and importance of indigenous worship as a genuine, culturally based expression of their values and doctrines. I hope local songwriters and Christian artists will become motivated and encouraged to keep writing original songs, even if

their churches keep using translated P&W songs in their worship sets. One thing does not exclude the other. Christianity is, first and foremost, an inclusive religion.

The Bible says, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). If God accepts all people, all cultures, indeed accepts all kinds of culturally expressed worship, the issue with Westernized worship is not the style per se but the tendency to oversimplify and plasticize communal expressions. This simplification of Biblical values is visible in mega-churches where growth in numbers takes the place of uncompromising commitment to Biblical truth. Mass media and the market affect all areas of modern society, and Christian churches are not immune to that influence. Churches tend to be judged by their numbers and not necessarily for their doctrinal integrity. Similarly, the success of mega-church worship ministries is evaluated in numbers of downloads and “views,” which tends to make the criteria for choosing worship songs based on their popularity and accessibility. This tendency is becoming widespread among evangelical churches. It is important to remember that while God accepts diverse forms of expression, He warns us, “Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Romans 12:2). Mass media affects popular culture in many ways. It will probably keep influencing contemporary Christian worship. This study is designed to help Christian churches become aware of this influence and avoid the temptation of “fast food” worship. Churches need to learn ways to use the power of mass media to preach the Gospel, to proclaim the Truth, and reach the unreached. If used contextually, "Americanized" worship might not necessarily be detrimental to indigenous worship, but worship leaders must ensure that this trend does not become an artificial paradigm based only on marketability, popularity, and accessibility.

Appendix A: Survey (English)

- 1- How old are you? A) under 18 B) 18-25 C) 26-40 D) 41-55 E) 56 or older
- 2- Do you live in Brazil? A) Yes B) No
- 3- Are you a Worship leader, or are involved with a worship ministry? A) Yes B) No
- 4- In a rough estimate, what percentage of translated worship songs are used in your worship sets? A) 25% B) 50% C) Less than 25% D) more than 50% E) Zero
- 5- What Christian artist or band would you consider to be the largest producer of translated worship songs that you incorporate into your worship sets? (Examples: Hillsong, Bethel, Chris Tomlin, Elevation Worship, etc...) _____
- 6- What is the main factor that defines your worship songs choice? A) Text B) Musical Style C) Popularity D) Originality E) I don't know
- 7- How do you primarily find new songs for your praise band? A) Social Media (Youtube, Facebook, Instagram, etc...) B) Streaming Platforms (Spotify, Amazon music, SoundCloud, etc...) C) Radio D) Suggestions from friends E) Original songs from your community
- 8- In a rough estimate, to what percentage do you believe that "Americanized" worship affects repertoire selection in your church? A) 25% B) 50% C) Less than 25% D) more than 50% E) Zero
- 9- In a rough estimate, to what percentage do you believe that "Americanized" worship affects the worship style in your church? A) 25% B) 50% C) Less than 25% D) more than 50% E) Zero
- 10- What is the percentage of local musical styles in your worship sets? A) 25% B) 50% C) Less than 25% D) more than 50% E) Zero
- 11- Does "Americanized worship" discourage the production of original indigenous worship songs in your community? A) Yes B) No C) Not Sure
- 12- Would you like to increase the percentage of indigenous P&W songs in your worship sets? A) Yes B) No C) Not Sure

Appendix B: Survey (Portuguese)

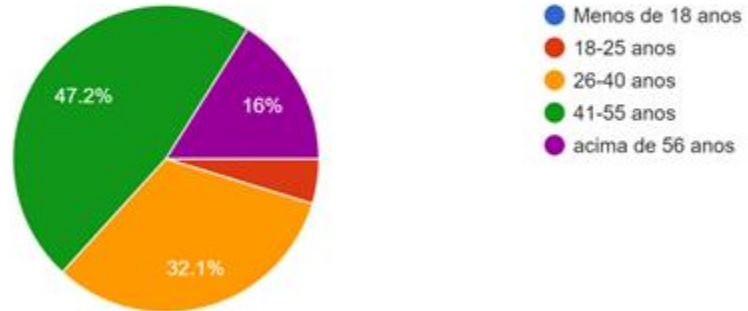
- 1- Qual é a sua faixa etária? A) menos de 18 B) 18-25 C) 26-40 D) 41-55 E) 56 or older
- 2- Você mora no Brasil? A) Sim B) Não
- 3- Você é um líder de louvor ou está de alguma forma envolvido com um ministério de louvor? A) Sim B) Não
- 4- Em uma estimativa aproximada, qual é a porcentagem de músicas traduzidas que são geralmente usadas no louvor congregacional de sua igreja? A) 25% B) 50% C) menos de 25% D) mais de 50% E) Zero
- 5- Que artista ou banda você consideraria como o mais traduzido no louvor congregacional de sua igreja? (Exemplos: Hillsong, Bethel, Chris Tomlin, Elevation Worship, etc...)

- 6- Qual é o fator mais importante na seleção de músicas para o louvor congregacional de sua igreja? A) Texto B) Estilo Musical C) Popularidade D) Originalidade E) Não sei
- 7- Onde você normalmente procura músicas novas para seu grupo de louvor? A) Rede Social (Youtube, Facebook, Instagram, etc...) B) Plataformas de streaming (Spotify, Amazon music, SoundCloud, etc...) C) Radio D) Outras igrejas locais E) Compositores na própria comunidade
- 8- Em uma estimativa aproximada, em que porcentagem o louvor "Americanizado" afeta a escolha de músicas para o louvor congregacional de sua igreja? A) 25% B) 50% C) menos de 25% D) mais de 50% E) Zero
- 9- Em uma estimativa aproximada, em que porcentagem o louvor "Americanizado" afeta o estilo musical do louvor congregacional de sua igreja? A) 25% B) 50% C) menos de 25% D) mais de 50% E) Zero
- 10- Em uma estimativa aproximada, qual é a porcentagem de músicas em estilos regionais no louvor congregacional de sua igreja? A) 25% B) 50% C) menos de 25% D) mais de 50% E) Zero
- 11- Você acha que o louvor "Americanizado" desestimula a produção de músicas de louvor originais em estilo regional em sua igreja? A) Sim B) Não C) Não sei
- 12- Você gostaria de aumentar a quantidade de músicas de louvor em estilos regionais em sua igreja? A) Sim B) Não C) Não sei

Appendix C: Results

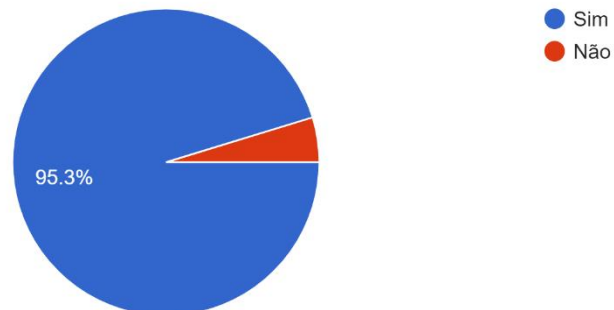
1- Qual é a sua faixa etária?

106 responses



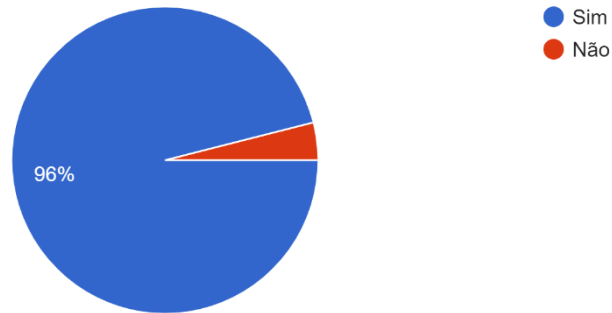
2- Você mora no Brasil?

106 responses



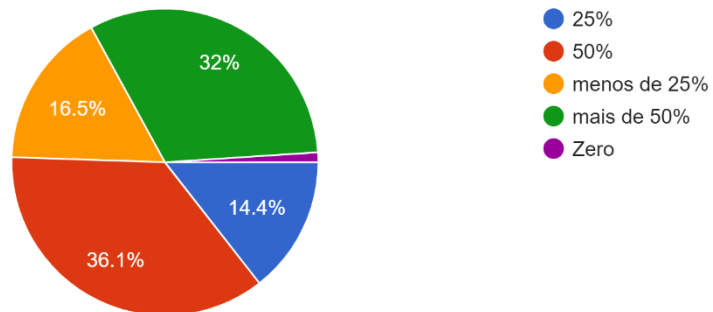
3- Você é um líder de louvor ou está de alguma forma envolvido com o ministério de louvor em sua igreja?

101 responses



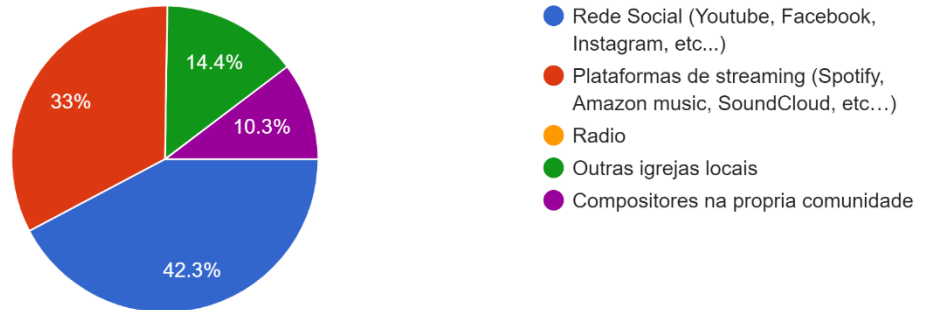
4- Em uma estimativa aproximada, qual é a porcentagem de musicas traduzidas que são geralmente usadas no louvor congregacional de sua igreja?

97 responses



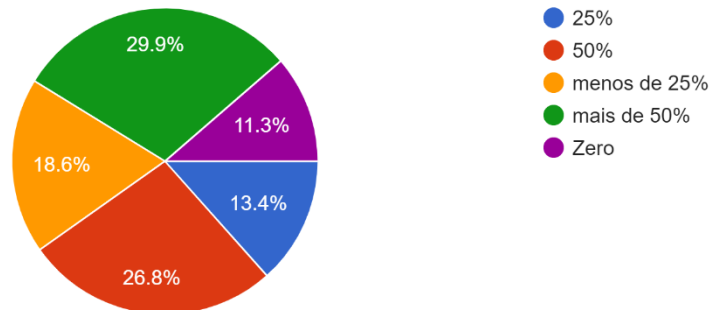
7- Onde você normalmente procura musicas novas para seu grupo de louvor?

97 responses



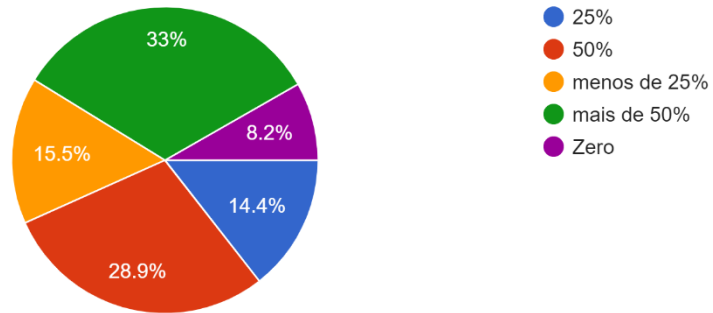
8- Em uma estimativa aproximada, em que porcentagem o louvor "Americanizado" afeta a escolha de músicas para o louvor congregacional de sua igreja?

97 responses



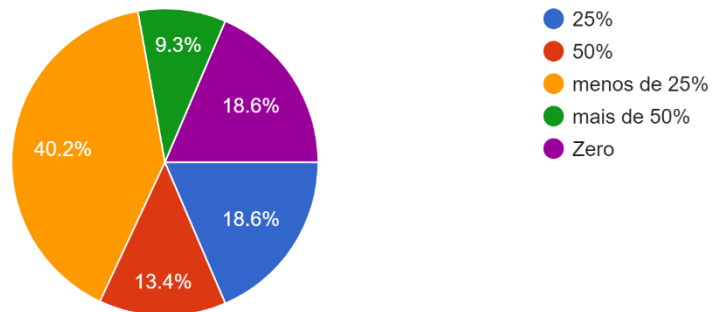
9- Em uma estimativa aproximada, em que percentagem o louvor "Americanizado" afeta o estilo musical do louvor congregacional de sua igreja?

97 responses



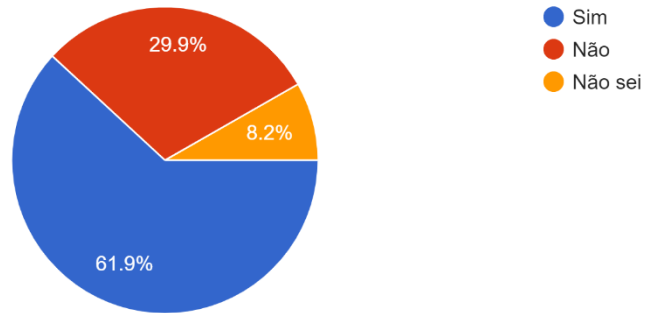
10- Em uma estimativa aproximada, qual é a percentagem de músicas em estilos regionais no louvor congregacional de sua igreja?

97 responses



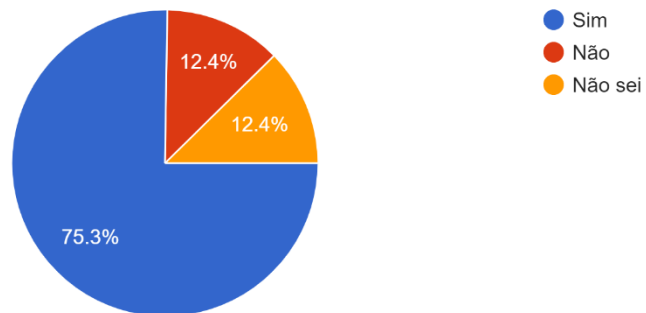
11- Você acha que o louvor “Americanizado” desestimula a produção de músicas de louvor originais em estilo regional em sua igreja?

97 responses



12- Você gostaria de aumentar a quantidade de músicas de louvor em estilos regionais em sua igreja?

97 responses



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