CHOOSING A THEORY FOR ANTHROPOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Investigating Paradigms

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PREFACE

This tutorial is the result of a personal quest to make God the center of my academic life. To do this, I had to challenge the foundations of my faith and previous academic training. The result is a paper that deals more with biases than with the literature. But the outcome has been a complete re-design for my research, and not only something I can now understand, but something I can pursue with passion.
From a personal perspective, I have been trained in scientific research from a Master’s degree at the University of Maryland in 1985. Not only did I learn the scientific method of research, but also the scientific mindset that goes along with it. This included objectivity, control of variables, hypothesis testing, questionnaire development, and statistical analysis. Upon entering Fuller Theological Seminary, I brought this mindset with me.

When I began reading Denzin’s Handbook of Qualitative Research, I realized the scientific mindset was not the only option available. In the handbook Guba discusses four “paradigms of analysis:” positivism, post positivism, critical theory, and constructivism. Each paradigm has three parts: ontology, epistemology, and methodology. The first has to do with the ultimate nature of reality, and ranges from an “apprehendable” reality to locally constructed realities. Epistemology lies on a spectrum from objectivity to subjectivity. And the methodology begins with controlled experiments and ends with hermeneutical dialogue. Figure 1 summarizes his discussion.

It is not necessary to discuss these paradigms in detail in this paper. The point is that all paradigms have a basic set of beliefs. These beliefs cannot be proven. “They must be accepted simply on faith (however well argued); there is no way to establish their ultimate truthfulness” (Guba 1994:107). Most people do not consciously consider the beliefs they hold. In research, these beliefs must be recognized and stated clearly from the beginning.
In reading Denzin’s Handbook, I also discovered some of the limitations of scientific theory. Guba discusses the “critiques of quantification” (Guba 1994:106-107) and I summarize them below:

- **Internal**
  1. Real life does not consist of "controlled" variables.
  2. Human behavior has meaning and purpose, not just causes and effects.
  3. The researcher's interpretation of the people he or she studies is always distinct from their own interpretation.
  4. Population studies do not apply to an individual.
  5. Hypothesis testing limits being able to discover new phenomena and create new theories.

- **External**
  1. "Facts" are only objective when seen through a given theory.
  2. The same set of facts can support different theories. Theories cannot be proven, only disproved.
  3. Theories are value statements. "Facts" also come from values.
  4. The researcher is always part of the study. Interaction is inevitable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Positivism</th>
<th>Post positivism</th>
<th>Critical Theory</th>
<th>Constructivism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ontology</strong></td>
<td>naive realism – &quot;real reality but apprehendable&quot;</td>
<td>critical realism— &quot;real reality but only imperfectly and probabilistically apprehendable&quot;</td>
<td>historical realism— Virtual reality shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values; crystallized over time</td>
<td>relativism—local and specific constructed realities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Epistemology</strong></td>
<td>dualist/objectivist findings true</td>
<td>modified dualist objectivist; critical tradition/community findings probably true</td>
<td>transactional/ subjectivist; value-mediated findings</td>
<td>transactional/ subjectivist; created findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methodology</strong></td>
<td>experimental/ manipulative; verification of hypotheses; chiefly quantitative methods</td>
<td>Modified experimental/ manipulative; Critical multiplicity; Falsification of hypotheses; may include qualitative methods</td>
<td>dialogic/ dialectical</td>
<td>hermeneutical/ dialectical</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The internal factors describe the limitations of quantitative studies. (Most scientific studies are quantitative.) The external factors point to the importance of one’s biases. Guba emphasizes the importance of knowing one’s biases in research: "No inquirer, we maintain, ought to go about the business of inquiry without being clear about just what paradigm informs and guides his or her approach" (Guba 1994: 116). Thus, I began to explore my own biases.

Guba points out that “questions of method are secondary to questions of paradigm” (Guba 1994: 105). A general tendency among students is to focus on the methods of investigation without considering the theory behind the methods. He defines paradigm “as the basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways” (Guba 1994: 105). This caused me to consider what paradigm will guide my research.

Upon reading both Titon (1997) and Rice (1997), whom I would have expected to discuss ethnomusicological issues in the book: Shadows in the Field (1997), I found them discussing epistemological issues instead, and was surprised to find them advocating non-scientific paradigms. Titon specifically states: “I ground musical knowledge in the practice of music, not in the practice of science” (Titon 1997: 94). Later he adds that “knowledge is experiential and the intersubjective product of our social interactions” (ibid. 95). With this emphasis on experience and subjectivity, Titon’s paradigm would fall under the general category of “postmodernism.”

Rice also sought “for alternatives to the Enlightenment position…(where)…knowledge of the world is dependent on methodologically precise, objective observation” (Rice 1997: 113). He changed his paradigm from the researcher who has to prove the
world around him or her, to the researcher interacting with the world to understand it. He then describes a paradigm called “phenomenological hermeneutics” where “since…we understand our world in terms of pre-existing symbols, like language, before we explain it, our explanations are always conditioned by pre-conceptions and pre-understandings given to us by those symbols” (Rice 1997: 115). I interpret that to mean that our conclusions are heavily determined by our biases. Thus, I sought to clearly state my biases before discussing my research design.

Postmodernism in part is a result of the breakdown of the scientific paradigm. “Experience” and “subjectivity” are now recognized as valid elements of research. Since the scientific method was limited to the five basic senses (sight, sound, taste, smell, and touch), miracles, spirits, and supernatural phenomena were unexplainable. Therefore, theology and anthropology remained separate camps. But with new paradigms being proposed and accepted for research, the opportunity has arisen to be able to study God and spiritual transformation from within academics as never before. I would like to propose that it is time to begin research with the bias that God is actively working in our world. The second part of this paper will attempt to work with such a bias.
PERSONAL BIASES: WINDOWS OF INVESTIGATION

I will start this paper by explaining some of my biases toward research. I propose that theories are ways of organizing concepts in order to understand a phenomenon. They are windows of investigation. I was first introduced to this concept by professor Wilem Van Gemeren at Reformed Theological Seminary in 1992. He explained to us that any object or subject can be viewed from different angles. Each angle or perspective contributes to our understanding of the object or subject being studied. No one angle or perspective is the “correct” one.

DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

There are different aspects of this idea. One is that an object can be viewed from different angles. In order to view the totality of an object, one has to view it from various angles. Persons observing from different angles will view different aspects of the object. When these persons share their observations, everyone gains a more complete view of the object.

![FIGURE 2: VIEWING FROM DIFFERENT ANGLES](image)

This illustration (figure 2) is assuming that the object in study is relatively small and manageable. One person could easily view it from all sides. But when we begin to study cultures, the magnitude of the object is more than one could fully study in a lifetime. When we attempt to study the whole world (the human race), the project reaches
log rhythmic proportions! We will never be able to fully research our world! (See Figure 3.)

FIGURE 3: VIEWING A LARGE SUBJECT

WINDOWS OF INVESTIGATION

Another way of illustrating this is the image of a building with windows. (See Figure 4.) This idea was expressed by Brian McLaren when he was discussing the different theories of the atonement in his book: “The Story We Find Ourselves In.” In referring to different theories of the atonement, he proposes that none of them fully explain the atonement by themselves. But each theory is like a window in a building. From inside the building, one cannot see the whole sky through one window, but by looking out different windows, one gains a better picture of the full sky. As McLaren summarizes: “theories are windows” (McLaren 2003: 102).

From within the building we are limited to what we can see of the world outside. This is like trying to view the sky through the windows. It is impossible to view the whole sky from one window, but if a person views the sky from several windows on different sides of the building, they will gain a much more complete picture of the sky than from just one window.
The limitation is that the sky is constantly changing. By the time one returns to a previously observed window, the sky has changed, and what one sees is different from the previous observation. Only by many simultaneous observations from several windows over time, can one begin to understand what the sky is like.

![FIGURE 4: VIEWING FROM WINDOWS](image)

Finally, we all see the world through different sets of glasses. (See Figure 5.) McElhanon describes the same idea as “conceptual metaphors” (McElhanon 2000: 18). He agrees that our past experiences influence the way in which we see present events. We may call these “cultural glasses.” These glasses are our personal biases, and may be based on culture, past experiences, and/or future expectations. Generally speaking, people who have lived in the same culture for some time, tend to have very similar glasses, although not identical ones. People in different cultures, usually have very different glasses, and thus see things very differently. For example, McElhanon describes how our perceived concept of truth as an object, has influenced our English translations of the Bible. If we had seen truth as road or path, rather than an object, our translations of truth in the Bible would have been different.
Many persons see these ideas as pure relativism. I think not. When several persons are studying the same object, phenomenon, or idea, they will start with different biases, they will look through different windows, they will study from different angles, but they are all researching the same thing. If one person is studying human music composition and another is investigating carbon accumulation on spark plugs, they will never agree on their conclusions. But if one person is looking at why people laugh, and another at why people cry, their conclusions will relate to each other, because they are both studying human behavior. Their conclusions do not conflict, but they add together to understand humans.

Medical research is another example. Cancer is killing people, and doctors want to save them. Some research will focus on what causes cancer. Other research will look at how cancer grows. Still other investigations will experiment with how to kill the cancer cells. But all of them are focusing on solving the same problem.

Another point is that all of the aforementioned researchers are using a scientific bias. Therefore, their conclusions will be scientific ones. If another researcher begins with another bias, such as the spiritual power to heal, then he or she will study the effect of prayer on cancer. Others may start with the bias that the body can heal itself. Their
conclusions will be that diet and exercise affect the growth or shrinking of cancer in the body.

The question remains, will any method work? Is any bias valid? Are all biases valid? This implies a paradigm shift from the importance of data to the cruciality of assumptions. So how do you “prove” an assumption? You can’t. We return to culture. In a culture, people don’t try to scientifically prove their assumptions. They just live with them. The assumptions of the majority form a culture, and people live within that culture, use it, change it, and enjoy it.

So where does culture come from? Human necessity for survival? A drive to be creative? Striving to make meaning out of life? Putting order to chaos? Constantly improving our living?

I agree with McElhanon (2000) that ultimately we make our culture from our experiences. (I would add that we also add our dreams and ideals that we have not yet experienced.) If we assume that we are alone in the world, that is, no extraterrestrial being, no divine being, nor spirits exist, then we are limited to our capacities, both mental and physical. But if we experience something that we cannot attribute to another person or a “this world phenomenon,” then we begin with another bias: there’s something beyond this world. Science, positivism, and much of academics has refused to accept this bias. I propose that we embrace it.

By assuming that a spiritual world does exist, how does this affect our research? How does it change our cultural glasses? What new objects does it give us for study? Which methods will be appropriate for the investigation? How will this bias affect the
topic: “The Role of Song in Christian Discipleship in Ecuador?” This paper will attempt to answer these questions.

MY BIASES

Based on the preceding discussion, I would like to propose the following biases as a basis for my research:

1. A theory is a “window of investigation;”
2. A research project looks through one window at a time;
3. One theory cannot fully explain a phenomenon;
4. A researcher must study something from different angles in order to gain an acceptable understanding of it;
5. No one, in one lifetime, will be able to study something fully.

ONE: WINDOWS OF ORDER

Theories are windows of investigation. We make theories to order our world to be able to better understand it and live in it. We cannot live in chaos. We have to order our thoughts and concepts into frameworks. These frameworks are what we use to view, interpret, and understand our world. What distinguished us from animals is our ability to be creative and organize our view of the world in different ways. We create theories. We use them, test them, change them, and live by them. They are like windows through which we see.

Many authors agree that order is part of our lives. In Geertz’s definition of religion, he includes the phrase: “formulating conceptions of a general order of existence” (Geertz 1973: 90). According to Geertz, religion helps us order meaning in our
lives. Berger agrees when he says, “Men are congenitally compelled to impose a meaningful order upon reality (Berger 1969:22). Grunlan adds that “true science, natural and behavioral, is concerned with discovering the order in God’s creation” (Grunlan 1979: 22).

I agree with Grunlan that God created the world with order, but also I think that God is not bound to that order. He can change it at will. And not only has God ordered the universe, but he sustains that order. God has also given us the capacity to order our world, and we can choose to do so with him or against him.

**TWO: CHOOSING A WINDOW**

A research project can only look through one window at a time, and a researcher must know through what window he or she is looking. This requires that a research project have a clear theoretical basis. Guba and Lincoln are very adamant about this. "No inquirer, we maintain, ought to go about the business of inquiry without being clear about just what paradigm informs and guides his or her approach" (Guba 1994: 116). Very often a research project is conducted with much emphasis on the data collection and the conclusions, but very little thought is taken toward the assumptions that guide the research. Yet the theoretical basis determines the category of the conclusions. Without acknowledging the assumptions of the study, the conclusions can go in any direction.

**THREE: “THE DATA BOX”**

The third basis shows that no theory is “the best” theory. My own Western, scientifically based education pushed me toward seeking for “the one theory that would
best explain the data.” This is a logical fallacy, because the same data can support more than one theory (Guba 1994: 107), or different theories can explain the same data.

One case is point is the sedimentation in the earth. This observation has long been explained by the evolutionary theory. But sedimentation can also be explained by a catastrophic flood on the earth. Both theories explain the data, and the data support both theories. Ultimately, one’s bias determines one’s conclusions. Science taught me that the conclusion comes from the data. I will take the position discussed in an unpublished paper by Shaw that the conclusions pass through the data but are defined by the biases of the researcher.

This concept could be illustrated by arrows piercing a box. (See Figure 6). All the arrows go through the box but where they exit is determined by the direction in which they entered. One example would be a man who has “lost his mind” and is confined to a psychiatric hospital. If I assume all mental illness is due to trauma (X), I will conclude that he had a severe mental trauma (X’). If I assume that all mental illness is due to
spiritual possession (Y), I will conclude that an evil spirit is in him (Y'). If I assume that mental illness is due to a lack of some physiological chemical in the brain (Z), I will conclude that his condition is due to malnutrition or disease (Z'). In all three of these cases, one could conduct an investigation with the given bias and based on the data collected would conclude the corresponding outcome.

FOUR: MY DESIGN

A researcher must study something from different angles in order to gain an acceptable understanding of it. I have discussed this in my personal biases. This inspires me to include several theories in my dissertation. I will discuss the different perspectives I plan to use later on. In this paper I discuss the development of one of these perspectives. The others I hope to develop in other tutorials.

FIVE: EVALUATING WINDOWS

Research never ends. We can never fully know. No one, in one lifetime, will be able to study something fully. We expect others to continue investigating after us. As we have stood on the shoulders of researchers before us, using what they have discovered to discover even more, so we hope that others will stand on our shoulders, using our work, and taking it further and deeper. No investigation is ever complete. They are always more angles to study. Add to this the factor that the phenomena we observe are always changing. The logical conclusion might be, as someone might ask, “Then will we ever really know anything?” I propose that science and positivism have pushed us to find the ultimate answer and to explain everything fully. But the beauty of knowing is that there will always be more to know.
CHOOSING A FRAMEWORK

I will begin with some traditional schools of thought in anthropology, and I will focus on the cultural aspects of anthropology, using Clifford Geertz as the principal source. From his article on religion, I will pick one paradigm to apply to music research, and discuss the appropriate approach and methodology as it applies to answering the question of Christian worship in Ecuador. This discussion will be based on the traditional biases of secular research.

The second part of this paper will be to challenge the traditional biases of secular research and apply new biases of spiritual existence and activity. From this I will propose another approach and methodology for my research.

SCHOOLS OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL THEORY

Salzman lists seven different schools of anthropological theory (Salzman 2001: 1). Each of these is a window through which research can be conducted. I will use music as a case example for each of these schools.

Functionalism views society as consisting of institutions or structures. Malinowsky is considered the chief proponent of this theory. Each is a part of the whole and each is affected by the others. Most often what is studied is the relationship between these structures. In this case, music would be one of the structures of society, and one would examine how music functions within a culture and how it affects other parts of society. Alan Merriam listed ten functions of music in society (Merriam 1964: 230).

Processualism sees individuals in all societies and cultures as agents of their own actions. People form their own culture, and this culture is constantly changing. Bailey and
Barth used this framework. From this point of view, music is composed by the people of a culture. They may use the same songs or make new ones. Jeff Titon used this theory to study musical folklore (Titon 1988: 1).

Materialism grounds everything in the human need for food, clothing, and shelter. Karl Marx is well-known for this theory. Marvin Harris is better known for this in anthropological circles. Few people study music from this point of view because music is not seen as an essential element of survival. Although it is interesting to note that all cultures have music (Nettl 1983: 40).

Culture patterns are defined by Ruth Benedict as: “different cultures are based upon different principles and have different emphases and values” and “a culture can be understood only in terms of its own values and perspectives” (Benedict 1961, quoted in Salzman 2001: 69). Each culture is unique. The strength of this theory is that it recognizes the distinctiveness of each culture, but the weakness is that it discourages comparison between cultures. The “Global Music” concept is based on this perspective that each culture has its own music. The weakness is that many musics and cultures overlap and are constantly influenced by each other. Commercial recordings and the internet promote this.

Evolutionism describes society as constantly growing and changing along with new discoveries. “It was inspired by three evolutions: the technological revolution in Europe; the Enlightenment; and the idea of Progress (Salzman 2001: 87). In the technological revolution society went from agricultural to industrial. Production increased. In the scientific revolution a major shift in worldview occurred. Popular
worldview changed from sacred to secular. The theory of evolution transformed the Western way of thinking.

Many ethnomusicologists based their investigations on the assumption that all cultures came from one culture. They sought to discover the “original music” by reverse linear logic. They assumed that complex music resulted from simpler music, and thus one could extrapolate to defined the first music man had composed. They quickly discovered that what they had called “primitive” music was much more complex than Western music.

Postmodernism has yet to be completely defined. It is a whole new way of looking at research, and challenges many of the traditional assumptions of researchers. One aspect is that it “emphasizes that all knowledge is influenced by the culture and the social position of the observer, and therefore is subjective, and rejects naturalist claims of scientific objectivity and of the efficacy of rigorous methodologies” (Salzman 2001: 121). As for music, some ethnomusicologists have shifted from studying music as culture to studying the experience of music making (Titon 1997: 93); (Rice 1997: 119).

The following chart summarizes the preceding discussion:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School of Theory</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Applied to Music</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Functionalism</td>
<td>Structures in society</td>
<td>Music is part of a culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processualism</td>
<td>People are agents of change</td>
<td>Music is created by people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materialism</td>
<td>Culture is based on needs</td>
<td>Music is not essential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Patterns</td>
<td>Each culture is distinct</td>
<td>Each culture has its own music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evolutionism</td>
<td>Culture is constantly changing</td>
<td>Search for the origin of music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postmodernism</td>
<td>Emphasis on subjectivity</td>
<td>The experience of music-making</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MUSIC AS CULTURE

Ethnomusicology was born when musicology adopted anthropology, and Jaap Kunst coined the term (Kunst 1950: 1). This implied a shift from thinking of music as sound to studying music in culture. Alan Merriam is considered the father of this thinking. “Ethnomusicology is … the study of music in culture” (Merriam 1964: 6). Not everyone has adopted this view, and some ethnomusicologists study music just as sound. “Music is human sound communication outside the scope of spoken language” (Nettl 1983: 24). In this tutorial, I will begin with the framework that music is a part of culture.

There are different ways of looking at music in culture: its function, its meaning, or its affect. Alan Merriam listed ten functions of music in culture: emotional expression, aesthetic enjoyment, entertainment, communication, symbolic representation, physical response, enforcing conformity to social norms, validation of social institutions and religious ritual, contribution to the continuity and stability of culture, and the integration of society (Merriam 1964: 230). Bonnie Wade studies music from the perspective that "All over the world, people make music meaningful and useful in their lives" (Wade 2004: 1). Whereas Jeff Titon takes an approach of a musical performance’s affect on the audience: “Affect is at the center of the barn, the ballad, the folktale, the religious rite” (Titon 1988: 8). At this point, I will choose to use the idea that people give music its meaning.

One of the problems of Alan Merriam’s well-known theory is that it assumes that cultures are stable and bounded. Timothy Rice argues that in today’s world, cultures are constantly changing and interacting. As a result, we need models that take this into consideration. He also recognizes two approaches to studying music in culture, the macro
and micro: “Although some will be moved to analyze the structure and function…of this modern world system, my list of questions points in the direction of individual or small-group musical experience” (Rice 2003: 152) For my research I will focus on the micro, or on small musical events.

![Different Directions or Windows for Music Research](image)

FIGURE 7: MY RESEARCH WINDOW

Thus far, I have narrowed my framework to study music in culture, the meaning people give to music, and small musical events. (See Figure 7.) This leads to doing ethnographies of musical experience in churches. I will now turn to Clifford Geertz’s article on “Religion as a Cultural System” to look for a specific paradigm to use.

CLIFFORD GEERTZ

Clifford Geertz is considered “The most influential anthropologist alive today” (Barrett 1996: 32). His thinking has greatly influenced ethnomusicologists (Titon 1997:
96), (Rice 1997: 104) and researchers in other fields (Schultz 2000: 53). Geertz has advocated “thick description” over “universal laws” (Geertz 1973: 5). None of his works relates directly to music, but his article on “Religion as a Cultural System” has given me an idea for my research.

Geertz looks at culture as symbols that represent meaning. His definition of culture is:

“an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life” (Geertz 1973: 89).

I want to utilize his emphasis on “meanings embodied in symbols.”

Further on in his article, Geertz states the paradigm of his investigation:

“sacred symbols function to synthesize a people’s ethos—the tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood—and their world view—the picture they have of the way things in sheer actuality are, their most comprehensive ideas of order” (ibid. 89).

It occurred to me that I could adapt this paradigm for my own research in music. Timothy Rice did such when he used a few phrases of Geertz for his own “remodeling of ethnomusicology” (Rice 1987: 473). Taking out the added definitions, Geertz’s paradigm would read “sacred symbols function to synthesize a people’s ethos and their world view.” If I take music to be a “sacred symbol,” I could substitute the word “music.” Then I could switch “ethnos” to “identity” and “world view” to “theology.” The resulting paradigm is “Music functions to synthesize a people’s identity and their theology.”

The resulting paradigm implies a very different approach from traditional ethnomusicology. I began this paper by discussing music in culture. Usually music is viewed as a part of culture, and how it interacts with and functions within the rest of
culture. But this paradigm works by viewing music as an expression of culture. The implication is that music becomes a window through which to see a people’s identity and theology. (See Figure 8.) This is useful for my research. I suspect that Ecuadorians do not use their own music in worship, because they have lost their own identity. Therefore I could use music to discover to what identity they are adapting.

![FIGURE 8: A NEW APPROACH TO ETHNOMUSICOLOGY](image)

**ETHNOMUSICOLOGISTS**

The idea of music expressing culture is not foreign to ethnomusicologists. Alan Merriam mentions how music has a symbolic function: “Men everywhere assign certain symbolic roles to music which connect it with other elements in their cultures” (Merriam 1964: 246). John Blacking describes how "Music can express social attitudes and cognitive processes" (Blacking 1973: 54). A Christian ethnomusicologist, Joyce Scott,
says “Music is the way we express what is deepest in our souls and we may fell there is no better way to do this than our own. It is part of our identity” (Scott 2000: 85). And finally, Bonnie Wade, in her most recent book, says “One of the most significant uses to which people put music is to express an identity” (Wade 2004: 16). So music is not just a part of culture, but it can also express culture.

METHODOLOGY

How then, does this paradigm apply to my research of “The Role of Song in Christian Discipleship in Ecuador?” One of the questions I am asking is “Why don’t Ecuadorians use their own music in church?” Having lived in Ecuador for eighteen years, I have witnessed that most of the music used in the evangelical churches is similar to, if not directly imported and translated from, the United States. For over fifteen years I lived in a small, traditional Catholic “pueblo” called “El Tingo” just outside of Quito. Their customs, displayed on festive occasions, such as the Celebration of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, have roots from before the Spanish Conquest. This includes the music that accompanies their festivities. This music is very dissimilar to the music used in the churches, even the catholic ones!

Leaving the indigenous customs, one can find a high influence of Spanish music in the cities. One particular musical style that arouses high emotions among urban Ecuadorians is the “pasillo.” Other popular musical styles, which most Ecuadorians can identify and enjoy are boleros, san juanitos, and pasacalles. Yet none of these musical styles are used in the churches today. My hypothesis is that they have never developed
their own theology nor identity, and so their church music reveals an imported or even imposed identity, and foreign theology.

Ecuadorians have lived for centuries under domination. Before the Spanish came they had been conquered by the Incas. From the 1500s to the 1700s they were under Spanish rule. Even after independence in 1809, Ecuador still lives under Imperialist domination at a national level, and social oppression at a local level. Being under oppressive rule for so long has caused them to suppress their roots.

My idea for this research is that by adapting Geertz’s paradigm of music and applying it to Ecuadorian culture, one can begin to understand their real identity and theology. The idea is that by analyzing the music they presently use, one can understand their present mentality. The following idea is that by helping them to compose their own music, or by looking for locally composed songs, one can help them understand their own values and concepts that they are not able to express in present religious music.

The research questions that arise from this proposal are “Why do certain people use certain songs on certain occasions?” “What does the musical event mean to them?” and “What do the songs reveal about the people?”

The implied methods are three. The first being participant observation to study what songs are used on which occasions. Next would follow personal interviews to discover what the musical event means to the individual. And finally, song analysis is necessary to analyze what ideas are revealed in the text and music.

The methodology is summarized in figure 9.
THE PROBLEM STATEMENT
* Why don’t Ecuadorians use their own music in church?

HYPOTHESIS
* They have never developed their own theology nor Christian identity.

THEORY
* Indigenous music can reveal their real identity and theology.
* Christian music can reveal their false identity and imported theology.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:
* Why do certain people use certain songs on certain occasions?
* What does the musical event mean to them?
* What do the songs reveal about the people?

METHODS:
* Participant observation: what songs on what occasions?
* Personal interviews: what does the event mean to them?
* Song analysis: what ideas do the text and music reveal?

FIGURE 9: A PRELIMINARY SUMMARY
DEVELOPING A RESEARCH DESIGN

So far, I have established my own biases, and I have developed a framework for my research: “Music synthesizes a people’s identity and theology.” Now I would like to further develop my research design.

APPLYING THE “DATA BOX” CONCEPT

In my discussion on my biases, I explained a framework which might be called “The Data Box.” This framework is based upon the assumptions that the same data can explain more than one theory, and that the conclusions of an investigation are largely directed by the assumptions one uses to approach the research.

In the case of my research, I will collect data on music in evangelical churches in Ecuador. This is my “data box” which I will use not to process the data, but to process the assumptions through the data. (Note the difference from traditional research methodology!)

Figure 10 illustrates this process with two different theories. Theory A uses the framework I have already developed from Geertz: “music synthesizes a people’s identity and theology.” In this case, I begin by assuming that conceptual frameworks (identity and theology) are the basis for my research. After collecting data on music in the churches in Ecuador, I will process my idea of conceptual frameworks through my data. And I will conclude something about how these ideas in people’s minds are expressed through music.

Now let us contrast this with Theory B, and begin with the framework that God speaks and acts through music. I will begin with the assumption that God is active in our
world today. And I can use the same data I will have collected from Ecuador. When I look at the data from this bias, my conclusions will be in the area that persons have encountered God in the musical experience.

At first someone might think that any conclusion can be draw from any data. That is not true. The conclusion will depend on the starting assumption, and the assumption has to pass through the data. This “data box” theory assumes that a given assumption will produce the same conclusion when passed through the same data.

To illustrate this important point, I will note that I cannot begin with conceptual metaphors and conclude that persons encounter God in the music. Nor can I begin with conceptual metaphors and conclude that persons enjoy rock music better than country music. To continue the logic, I cannot begin with God’s activity and conclude that persons have a false identity. Nor can I conclude that Mormonism is better than
Christianity. The conclusion must coincide with the assumption and have passed through the data.

AREAS OF RESEARCH

For my own research, I want to develop and test three theories with the same data. To discuss this, I will use the Word-World-Church framework promoted by VanEngen (Van Engen 1996: 23). The theme of my research is “The Role of Song in Christian Discipleship in Ecuador.” This can be divided into three areas: anthropology (world), theology (word), and Missiology (church). For each of these areas I would like to develop a theory. I have developed one for the anthropological emphasis which is “music synthesizes a people’s identity and theology.” For the other areas of theology and Missiology, I would like to develop two more theories. This will be the goal for my next two tutorials. Ethnomusicology is the discipline that ties all these fields together, and music in Ecuador is the context for the research. Figure 11 diagrams this proposal.
OVERALL DESIGN

This section will discuss the implied methodology of the previous outline for my research. I would like to apply the “data box” concept to my areas of research in order to bring everything together under “The Role of Song in Christian Discipleship in Ecuador.”

To do this, I need to use some of the ideas previously discussed. The first is that the assumptions of an investigation determine the type of conclusions. The second is that one must look through several windows in order to understand a phenomenon more fully. The third is that the data can support more than one theory. Figure 12 illustrates my proposed design.

Each arrow represents a theory. Each theory holds a distinct framework, assumptions and conclusions. Theory A is the one I have developed in this paper: “Music synthesizes a people’s identity and theology.” This theory looks at how people express their cognitive ideas through music. The conclusions will be in the area of how to contextualize music in Ecuador.

Theory B will deal with how music communicates biblical truth. In one sense this is the same area as theory A: cognitive ideas. But the difference is that theory A has to do with how people express their ideas through music, whereas theory B will deal with how people receive ideas through music. The conclusions will apply to evangelism.

Theory C is distinct from the other two in that it will not deal directly with the mind, but with the spiritual. (I’m using this word as a noun.) It will look at spiritual encounter and transformation through music. The conclusions will apply to conversion or to “God-encounters.”
The reason I want to use three theories, is that all of these relate to Christian discipleship. Discipleship is not just bible study or Sunday morning worship. Using these three theories, I will define discipleship as spiritual transformation of one’s identity as one understands and experiences God. My dissertation then will focus on how music can play an important role in this process.

FIGURE 12: THE OVERALL DESIGN
APPENDIX 1 – THE GOAL OF RESEARCH

What is the goal of research? I would like to propose an answer to this question using the “Data Box” model that I have discussed in this paper. In this case, the data box will be the Ph.D. degree, and I will process different assumptions through this box. (See figure 13.) I propose that the normal assumptions of a doctoral degree are 1) that new knowledge will change lives and 2) that understanding is cognitive. Therefore, the expected result of a Ph.D. degree has been to produce new knowledge in the form of a dissertation, and the application of this dissertation will improve human life in some area. I believe this has been the major drive of science, and as far as technology and medicine have been developed in this way, the results have allowed us to better our lives in various ways.

FIGURE 13: ASSUMPTIONS AND OUTCOMES OF A PH.D.
If we begin with different assumptions, the results will also be different, even though a person graduates with a Ph.D. degree just like the first case. The other assumptions are 1) that lives are changed when they encounter God, and 2) that understanding is relational. Therefore the expected result of a Ph.D. will be different from the first example. A Ph.D. student will not just write a dissertation. In fact, the dissertation is not the main goal of the degree. The goal is that during interaction with professors, other students, and the literature, God will transform the life of the student, and the student will have developed life-changing relationships. After graduation, it is the student, not his or her written dissertation, that will improve the lives of others. This second theory is much more applicable to a Christian seminary than the first theory discussed.
APPENDIX 2 – GOD’S ACTIVITY IN OUR WORLD

It remains to document from where I develop the idea that God is active in our world today. For the person who is familiar with the Bible, the idea is certainly not novel. All throughout Biblical history, God has appeared and intervened in human affairs. A quick list would include: God appearing to Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Gideon, Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, the apostles, and Paul. The supreme case is Jesus Christ himself, God who walked with man on earth.

God has also intervened in human affairs. He stopped the sun for Joshua, made the sun go backwards for Hezekiah, divided the Red Sea, brought water from a rock, used many a thunderstorm to win battles for Israel, gave Elijah lightning when he asked, and killed thousands of Assyrians overnight with a plague. Again the supreme examples are the miracles Jesus did in healing the sick, multiplying bread, and calming a storm.

But is he still alive today? Science has ignored him for centuries, and brainwashed most of Western civilization to believe that he is inactive and irrelevant in our world today. Yet some authors are writing with different assumptions. Quentin Schultz writes about communication. One of the statements in his book is that “God is able to enter into culture, to dialogue with individual believers, and even to direct history” (Schultz 2000: 58). Charles Kraft has also written in the field of communication. One of his books begins with the underlying assumption that God has, does, and will communicate with us (Kraft 1991: 1). Kenneth McElhanon takes a different approach. He states that if God is NOT involved with us today, we can never go beyond basic human knowledge. “We can never understand God without God taking the initiative to reveal himself” (McElhanon 2000: 7). In my tutorial on the spiritual I would like to pursue and document this further.
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