Using Religious Themes and Content to Affect Cultural Sensitivity in Russian Language Learning

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Using Religious Themes and Content to Affect Cultural Sensitivity in Russian Language Learning

Paul Tristan Gallo

A thesis submitted to the faculty of Brigham Young University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

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Specifically oriented towards Russian culture, this study addresses the need in diplomacy for deeper cultural understanding. As research suggests a link between the inclusion of religious perspectives in second language acquisition (SLA) and student motivation and cultural empathy, this study examines how Russian language classrooms could leverage an understanding of Russian religious themes to foster cultural sensitivity.

The study invited 24 second-year university students of Russian to complete a previously-validated assessment of cultural sensitivity: the Global Perspectives Inventory (GPI). Divided into a control and a treatment group, the participants also watched a short video depicting a story from Russian history on the interactive video platform, Ayamel. The control group viewed a set of 10 extra-textual annotations containing Russian cultural material highlighting secular themes from Russian culture, while the treatment group reviewed 10 that were more spiritually-themed. After viewing the respective annotations, participants completed a short, open-ended, Video Response Questionnaire (VRQ), and completed a GPI post-test. The findings from the VRQ suggested that the video intervention tended to challenge participants’ previous perceptions of Russia, noted a general increase in positive, self-reported perspectives of Russian culture, and revealed a tendency in the treatment group to more often portray Russia as a multi-faceted, rather than monolithic, cultural entity. The comparison of the GPI pre-test and post-test scores revealed an inverse interaction between the collective scores of the control and treatment groups on two questions gauging affective responses to culture. For each of these questions on the post-test, the treatment group’s collective score slightly increased and the control group’s collective score slightly fell.

The findings suggest that interaction with religious themes in SLA may promote feelings of commonality and empathy with a foreign culture. As the relative, religious homogeneity of the sample constitutes a threat to the external validity of this study, the researchers invite similar tests to be conducted in SLA among different population types.

Keywords: religion, diplomacy, cultural sensitivity, SLA, Russian, annotated reading
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So I dedicate this thesis to Him. It is filled with imperfections, but it was made more perfect by Perfect Love. May He do with it as He intends.
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Problem Statement

Increased cultural sensitivity across geopolitical boundaries and willingness to communicate across those borders is in ever greater demand (Martinsen & Alvord, 2012; The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015; Toft, Philpott & Shah, 2011). For conflict seems to be the hallmark of the 20th century, and is quickly defining the next century as well. Beginning with the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the 21st century has witnessed a continuation of violence and discord that is most recently evidenced in the violent spread of the self-proclaimed Islamic Republic, heightened prejudices, massive waves of refugees, shadows of a new Cold War, and the threat of rising, hostile, nuclear states. In response to the troubling scenes of conflict, many are seeking solutions, including educators, government officials, and religious leaders. These actors underscore the need for more meaningful diplomacy that reaches beyond the conflict into the true heart of the issues. For this purpose, reasoned argument has been made for “deeper cultural understanding” as “the most important imperative of all for avoiding international conflict in the 21st century” (Billington, 2009, p. 9).

Though often overlooked, religious beliefs constitute an integral part of one’s cultural outlook and identity, and it is expected that the religious aspects of world cultures will play an increasing role in 21st century politics (Toft, Philpott & Shah, 2011, p. 213). Thus, understanding of the religious or spiritual heart of a culture and its influence is crucial in any holistic, cross-cultural dialogue. Eye-witness to religion’s role in the peaceful diffusion of the Russian 1991 coup, Billington (2009) concludes that “if we cannot learn to listen to others as they whisper their prayers, we may well confront them later on when they howl their war cries”
Though much research has been conducted on cultural sensitivity as a desired language learning outcome, little research has explored how faith factors into the relationship between cultural sensitivity and language learning processes. Accordingly, the US State Department (Cook, 2012) has conceded that

…in terms of improving our understanding of religious dynamics and engagement with religious actors… government officials cannot do this work alone. We rely on consultations and partnerships with civil society leaders and faith-based organizations to help us seek deeper analysis and more effective initiatives.

As cultural understanding, communicative proficiency, and a focus on content already permeate second language acquisition (SLA), the field of religious studies seems to offer at least one of the missing tools needed to promote deeper cultural understanding, and thus, presents a suitable “partnership” for addressing 21st century conflict.

Generally speaking, faith-based second language acquisition (or faith-based SLA) examines the role of religious content and identity in connection with language learning (Wong, Kristjansson, Dörnyei, & Smith, 2013). Though many studies have explored faith-based SLA, they are often limited in scope to a study of English language teaching, and are more theoretical than empirical (Wong, 2014). The present study extends the research on faith-based SLA to Russian as a foreign/second language, and seeks to quantitatively measure the potential effect of exposure to religious themes and content on learners' cultural sensitivity, while qualitatively examining student responses to such content.
CHAPTER 2

Review of Relevant Literature

The relationship between faith and SLA constitutes an emerging area of inquiry (Dörnyei, Wong, & Kristjánsson, 2013). Perhaps this is because of the traction that faith-based SLA as a sociocultural construct has gained as a potential contributor to learner motivation, learner identity, and effective language learning (Wong & Canagarajah, 2009; Lepp-Kaethler & Dörnyei, 2013). Yet, despite fruitful discussion, what is needed “are empirically based studies that complement these discussions and provide a foundation and theoretical framework that can inform… thinking and practice [regarding faith-based SLA]” (Wong, 2014, p. 8). Thus, this literature review examines the potential of faith-based curricular elements to contribute to cross-cultural sensitivity, and the potential for using annotated reading within the PACE model as a platform for examining these variables.

Cultural Sensitivity

Research and theory in second language acquisition already suggest a strong “interdependence” between culture and language learning (Phillips, 2003, p. 164). In terms of promoting cultural literacy and sensitivity, The World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015), constituting a consensual fusion of SLA research, underscore the sociocultural context for language, and orient language pedagogy toward addressing “complex cultural perspectives” (Phillips, 2008, p. 94). Culture in SLA is defined as including perspectives, practices, and products (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015). Cultural perspectives refer to the attitudes, beliefs, and values of a group of people. It follows that religion could be understood in terms of cultural perspectives and undergirding beliefs.
With regard to proficiency, research suggests a positive correlation between L2 learners’ cultural sensitivity and their language gains (Martinsen & Alvord, 2012). The concept of language awareness traces this symbiosis to a unifying principle, which principle is defined as sensitive conscientiousness to “the nature of language and its role in human life” (Donmall, 1985, p. 7). It is deemed “crucial in a multicultural society as a means for effective communication,” as an “emancipatory vehicle for asserting one’s identity… and as a tool for understanding others” (Feuerverger, 2001, p. 53). Seen in this context, culture and language can be construed as closely related when regarding identity. Both intrinsically conjure up existential questions regarding meaning and self. This mutual pairing of culture and language suggest that a cognitive grasp of language awareness (how language serves as a vehicle for human culture and self-definition), could reinforce cultural sensitivity, and vice versa. Fittingly, as part of culture, religious elements and core beliefs could contribute to this language-culture union by suggesting answers to pressing existential themes. In this way, religious elements could propel students across cultural divides, potentially with greater momentum than other motivating factors.

According to research, there are two different types of motivators—requirement motivators (authoritative directives) and integrative motivators (which revolve around the desire to belong to the target language culture). One study measured the differing effect of requirement and integrative motivators on language learning motivation in 567 Taiwanese EFL learners (Chen, Warden, & Chang, 2005). It found that integrative motivators had no effect on learners’ interest in learning English, while requirement motivators had a significant effect. The researchers attributed this to the cultural tendency of the Chinese to defer to authority and called for consideration of motivator variation across the East-West cultural divide. By contrast, consider the case study of a student from “an East Asian country” who, because of his faith in
God, felt “an inner urge” to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a different culture (Lepp-Kaethler & Dörnyei, 2013, pp. 175-177). Rather than choosing to learn a language in order to please an authority, this learner was motivated by the desire to share something personal with a foreign people. Such a desire more closely resembles an integrative motivator, or a desire to belong, rather than a requirement motivator, and defies scholarly cultural assumptions about Asian language learners simply preferring to please an authority figure. Religious sentiment seems to have motivated the learner to cross cultural borders where otherwise, he may have not been motivated to do so.

Spanning beyond the Christian tradition alone, a study of Muslim immigrant families further demonstrates the power that religious motivation can play in socio-linguistic engagement (Jegatheesan, 2010). The study examined autistic children in several Muslim families as they endeavored to learn Arabic in order to participate in religious activities. Though technically operating within the faith tradition of their families, the children in this study had to cross cultural and linguistic boundaries, specifically because, as atypical learners, they overcame “societal barriers that marginalized individuals with disabilities” (ibid). However, religious motivation seems to have propelled the children into full involvement with communal and familial religious activity. This is suggested by the fact that “prayer [for them] provided a powerful source of structure and predictability” as their parents had taught them that prayer “involves a one-on-one communication with Allah, in which the child can ask directly for blessings and forgiveness.” (ibid). These learners were motivated to take cultural and linguistic leaps, participating in social activities not typically available to children with autism. Additional research with this sample suggests that insight into religious family life may prove “critical for any therapist or educator” as religious underpinnings may help learners to take otherwise
unlikely social and linguistic leaps (Jegatheesan, Miller, Fowler, 2010). Thus, religious themes in SLA content could potentially meet the aims of influencing cultural sensitivity with unique leverage.

Religious discussion, by exploring commonalities in belief, may increase sensitivity towards the target culture by generating empathy, or what the Inventory of Cross-cultural Sensitivity (ICCS) defines as “the degree to which an individual identifies with the feelings of others” (Cushner, 1986). A striking demonstration of this idea plays out in the Arab-Israeli school in Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam, known simply as The School for Peace. Designed as an experiment in both cross-cultural language learning (Arabic and Hebrew) and as an attempt to bridge deep cultural and religious divides, this school purposefully seeks to use religion, in conjunction with SLA, as a tool for fostering peace (Feuerverger, 2001). An ethnography of the roughly 250 Israeli-Palestinian school children of both Muslim and Jewish background enrolled in the school notes the effect of language awareness in relation to the religious-cultural outreach of the students. Students used both the Arabic and Hebrew language to focus on events that held common significance in their differing identities as Jews or as Muslims. Using a variety of strategies to accomplish this, students celebrated common ground among the two cultures, talking about pain, and trying to understand the pains and fears of the other culture. The influence of these factors became evident during the school’s performance of a play about the Nativity. Regarding the “bilingual and bicultural laughter and good cheer” ensuing from the event (Feuerverger, 2001, p. 53), the study observes that “here… was the true spirit of Christmas: Jewish and Arab children performing the Christmas story… with their families sitting side by side” (p. 52). Students were able to see what they had in common. For even though it was noted that students’ families “do not share the same religious and cultural values and norms;
nevertheless, they do ascribe to similar underlying beliefs in equality and justice” (p. 23). Thus, by incorporating interreligious content into the curriculum, The School for Peace successfully identified a precious intersection of core beliefs. Findings from the study indicated that identifying this intersection assisted students in developing the component of empathy, or seeing commonality with another culture (Cushner, 1986).

Furthermore, the example of this school’s success highlights the possibility that participants do not have to share a faith tradition to mutually benefit from an exchange of beliefs. But what about learners who claim no faith tradition at all? In addressing how religious content in SLA could be truly broadened to diverse worldviews, academic discussion suggests an open dialogue that could lead to “the mutual shaping of ideas and views” (Canagarajah, 2009b). This would drive learners to “higher moral and spiritual grounds,” enriching their self and world views, and helping turn exploratory dialogue into “transformative dialogue” (ibid). Thus, rather than propose a religious worldview over a secular worldview, this study makes an inquiry into how religious understanding could curb “dehumanizing tendencies in present-day education” and provide secular and religious parties alike a “common platform for conversation…[with] newly afforded philosophical advantages.”(Canagarajah, 2009a, p. 10)

**Faith-based Diplomacy**

To further explore how SLA and religious considerations may constitute a suitable partnership in addressing 21st century conflict, key principles of faith-based diplomacy deserve at least a cursory examination. In faith-based diplomacy, peace is pursued by appealing to the heart and soul of another people, rather than to the official, political forms that are expected on the global stage. This is often done by having individuals from one culture serve as cultural brokers in discussing a contested issue with religious figures in another culture. Rather than
employing government officials in a secular capacity that negotiates sociopolitical issues on the basis of economics, faith-based diplomacy employs such officials as cultural brokers who negotiate based on a deep understanding of the religious beliefs and values that undergird cultural perspectives and practices (Johnston, 2003). The cultural broker assumes the inherent worth of individuals to God, and therefore, to the community. Such an approach can contrast with current views on international politics, which at times may assume a confluence of “colossal forces,” where “human nature tends to be either ignored, underestimated or misconstrued” (Cox & Philpott, 2003, pp. 33-34).

The same fundamental outlook surrounding a faith-based approach to diplomacy can be applied to SLA. Some researchers claim that when SLA occurs with the intent to positively view a different culture, the added element of faith will make a difference in promoting familiarity, communication, and respect between cultures (Cox & Philpott, 2003, pp. 33-34). Such a paradigm could be fostered with diplomats when diplomats are in the nascent stages of learning a language, where they could be exposed to relevant, religious cultural content, learn to ask questions, and “place their [own] experiences into dialogue” (González-Aller & Hernández, 2017). This could potentially allow them to interact with a culture’s spiritual heart, regardless of their own worldview, be it secular or spiritual, as seeking to understand how beliefs and perceptions factor into lived experience is “congruent with many postmodern theorists” (Feuerverger, 91). Theory suggests that such dialogue could help diplomacy reinforce a transcendent understanding of the good that all peoples and cultures have in common (Cox & Philpott, 2003, pp. 33-34). In this way, for the cultural broker, even in the “darkest corners of human suffering” involving belief in a “divine plan for humanity… [can motivate] her and [make] her work intelligible” (ibid). Fittingly, allowing for oneself or for others a divine vision
of humanity, facilitated by a dialogic exchange of worldviews between cultures (be they secular or theistic), could provide a springboard for taking deeper dives into a culture, and allow students, travelers, and diplomats to “engage our fellow citizens intentionally outside of the contentious political arena and the impersonal marketplace” (Mark, 2016). Thus, faith-based diplomacy could provide a real-world destination for faith-based SLA, and assist in applying cultural sensitivity across socio-cultural divides.

Introducing Religious Elements Through Text

The potential for faith-based content to foster feelings of familiarity and cultural understanding seems relatively congruent with current theory on reading comprehension and interpretive skills. As outlined in the World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015), the interpretive mode of communication includes listening to, reading, or viewing a text. The effective development of this mode necessitates the involvement of “affective engagement,” encouraging students to “read between the lines,” and providing intellectually or emotionally-stimulating texts (Phillips, 2006, p. 98). As previously outlined in the cases of Muslim children with autism and a Christian English student of Asian origin, religious themes can add an emotionally-stimulating aspect to SLA material, especially when emphasized (Jegatheesan, 2010; Lepp-Kaethler & Dörnyei, 2013). Fittingly, the PACE model (Shrum & Glisan, 2009), a contextualized, and culture-oriented language-teaching method, provides scaffolding for this mode, as well as a sound theoretical platform for highlighting religious themes. Using this model, students learn the L2 meaningfully by engaging with a culturally-authentic story. Then, together with teachers, students co-construct and personalize meaning by fastening learner attention to “cultural perspectives embodied in... story” and by investigating a “story’s country of origin, or link[ing] the story’s
theme to an academic area” (p. 220). As applied to Russian L2 content with religious themes, a religiously-themed narrative and spiritual discussion could provide students the opportunity to discuss Russian perspectives, and compare them to what the students themselves believe (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015). In turn, this would potentially help students to form a mental bridge toward common cultural ground on a divided world stage. Instead of thinking of Russians simply as a political enemy, incapable of responding to Western values, students could come to see how Russian cultural values resemble their own values.

Further encouraging connections with the L2 culture, the interpretive mode allows students to bring their own background knowledge to the text through a dialogic process (Bakhtin, 1981; Dombey, 2010). In essence, students co-construct meaning with the religious themes of a text by relating it to what they already know, feel, believe, and have experienced. Thus, rather than a linear movement, the interpretation of texts is more web-like in nature, and is often facilitated by in-text annotations (Porter-O’Donnell, 2004, p. 85)

Research suggests that the effective use of annotations helps learners retain vocabulary and meaning (Todd, 2014). This is because glosses and annotations can promote greater word recognition and enhance the likelihood of acquiring “more vocabulary in the target language than if the instructor were to merely provide a dictionary definition” (ibid, p. 59). Likewise, qualitative data has indicated that annotated reading promotes both enjoyment and comprehension for students (Ercetin, 2016).

An online movie database that uses subtitles, glosses, and annotations could scaffold learning increasing attention to word meaning, and could fit well with the PACE (Presentation, Attention, Co-construction, and Extension Activity) Model. Use of this model has indicated that drawing students’ attention to certain themes in a text (i.e. via questions and annotations) can
later aid the learners in co-constructing meaning with the instructor (Adair-Hauck & Donato, 2002).

Such a platform could be leveraged to scaffold religious meaning as well. Annotations could help highlight religious themes by citing authentic texts and cultural artifacts that indicate core beliefs and perspectives found in the culture. As some researchers have advocated using universal issues in stories as springboards for joint problem-solving activities (Adair-Hauck & Donato, 2002), educators could likewise use co-construction of religious themes in joint problem-solving surrounding a universal issue embodied in the story. Religious and spiritual themes provide salient, existential questions which could potentially activate anyone’s prior knowledge or experience, regardless of religious background. Subsequently, these themes, together with the PACE model, would constitute a suitable symbiosis in aiding learners to connect and compare the target culture and language with their own lives. For example, learners of a secular humanist persuasion could join with Muslim learners in examining how questions regarding intrinsic human worth are evident in both secular and religious references embedded within the text. Students could discuss how human life is viewed in the story. The teacher might help them consider: What definition of human life does the particular religious perspective in the story offer? How could this apply to the United Nations concept of human rights and current human rights abuses in the world today? Thus students, regardless their particular worldview, could connect moral themes from the text with real-world concerns and existential questions. Ultimately, as research suggests (Feuerverger, 2001), guiding student attention to religious themes during the SLA processes will potentially motivate students to communicate across cultural divides, and prompt understanding of those cultures, whose languages are being learned.
Chapter Summary

Thus, utilizing the interpretive mode with the PACE model and annotations, religious themes from the L2 culture can be more meaningfully highlighted, examined, and used to deepen L2 learners’ perception of the target culture. Research suggests that this deepened, religiously-informed understanding may not only increase cultural sensitivity, but also may have the potential to help bridge cross-cultural divides—epicenters of potential conflict. In turn, a clear path to successfully increase cultural sensitivity would likely assist both government actors and educators in encouraging more compassionate, insightful, and culturally-informed language use for navigating the challenges of the 21st Century.

Purpose of the Study

Thus, the purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between spiritual understanding and cultural sensitivity. This study will examine the potential of culturally-relevant, religious elements in video texts to help develop positive understanding towards, and engagement with, Russian culture in a second language. Specifically, the present study seeks to determine 1) What do open-ended student responses reveal about student engagement with religiously-themed annotations in video texts? 2) What effect may the incorporation of religious themes and content into Russian language learning have on students' cultural sensitivity as measured by the Global Perspectives Inventory (GPI)?
CHAPTER 3

Research Design & Methods

Overview of the Study

In order to understand the effect of religious themes on cultural sensitivity, university students of second-year Russian viewed and responded to an annotated video text. Leveraging the interactive user-face of Ayamel, an online video streaming platform, participants accessed extra-textual annotations by clicking on hyperlinks embedded and highlighted in the video’s subtitles. A treatment group watched the video with the instructions to access and read ten annotations that underscored religious themes already implicit within the context of the video’s story. These annotations drew participant attention to recurring themes throughout Russian literature and history in terms of spiritual and religious considerations. In the same manner, the control group viewed the same video but interacted with a different set of annotations which highlighted elements from the text that could be connected to more secular themes from Russian culture. The annotations for the control group were also linked to excerpts from Russian literature and history which embodied these themes.

Before interacting with and responding to the annotated video text, all participants completed a six-question demographic survey and a 36-question, Likert-scale survey; [the Global Perspectives Inventory (GPI)]. Additionally, after the video, students in both the treatment and the control group responded to the video intervention by answering questions. These questions, both closed and open-ended, were identical (see Appendix E). The video response questions required students to identify perceived themes and self-assess how the video may have affected their perspectives of Russian culture.
**Explanation of Methodological Framework**

As mentioned above, the PACE model provides a method for approaching a text by directing student attention to certain aspects of grammar or meaning. The PACE model was employed to direct student attention to spiritual or secular themes, depending on group to which participants were assigned. The steps of the PACE model include presentation, attention, co-construction, and extension activity. As part of the presentation phase, the teacher introduced the video by giving some background information on the story’s subject matter, and explained how to use the Ayamel video platform. This explanation included a brief demonstration of how to access word glosses and how to view the annotated material.

During the attention phase, the teacher activated students’ background knowledge about contemporary Russia and Ukraine by asking them what they knew, and by instructing them to look for modern applications as they watched the video (see Appendix D: Video Assignment Introduction Script). As instructed, students watched the video out of class, and read or viewed the annotated texts embedded in the online, video platform interface. Students then “co-constructed” meaning, as prompted by the teacher, by responding to annotations via a take-home worksheet (see Appendix F: Student Response Question Sheet). For the sake of the study, the extension activity was omitted, though the post-surveys could be construed as playing the role of an extension activity.

**Participants**

All participants were third-semester university students of Russian. Participants all possessed advanced proficiency in English. The selection and the assignment of sample participants was not random. The two class sections in the sample were assigned— one to the control group and the other to the treatment group— simply for reasons of feasibility, as these
sections were available to the researchers. As much as possible, the sections used for the control and treatment group were comparable as both were fall semester sections of Russian 201 with the same teacher, though they were conducted a year apart from each other. This gap in timing resulted from the time needed to develop the video version for the control group. The control group included 10 students, and the treatment group included 14 students.

**Instrumentation.**

In this study, the construct of cultural sensitivity was measured through quantitative and qualitative means. The following instruments were used to do so: a pre-survey consisting of the Global Perspectives Inventory (GPI), an online video and questions gauging student response to it, followed by a re-administration of the GPI. Each of these instruments is described in more detail below.

**Global perspectives inventory (GPI).** The GPI (Braskamp, L., Braskamp, D., Merrill, & Engberg, 2010) is a quantitative, previously validated, 35-question Likert-scale survey for measuring cultural sensitivity. This survey helped to provide triangulation on the construct of cultural sensitivity from a quantitative standpoint. Participants completed this survey both before and after viewing the annotated video. The survey was chosen as a gauge for cultural sensitivity because it was designed to measure an orientation toward global perspectives (Research Institute for Studies in Education, 2017), defined as:

…the capacity and predisposition for a person to think with complexity taking into account multiple perspectives, to form a unique sense of self that is value based and authentic, and to relate to others with respect and openness especially with those who are not like her. (p. 3)
Similarly, in line with the purposes of the study, and in adherence to the correct use of the survey, students’ scores were not measured individually, but as an aggregate, to inform “institutional effectiveness,” and “individual student-level assessment” (Braskamp, Braskamp, Merrill, and Engberg, 2012).

**Ayamel video and annotations.** *Boris and Gleb* (a culturally authentic text that has religious significance) was used as the basis for the intervention used in the study. A video rendition of the story was made by adapting the text from the original, modern translation and adjusted to be comprehensible for students of intermediate-low Russian proficiency as measured on the ACTFL Proficiency Scale. The video was delivered through Ayamel, found at the domain [https://ayamel.byu.edu/](https://ayamel.byu.edu/). Ayamel is an online video platform that allows students to engage with a video text while making use of online dictionaries, glosses and annotations to facilitate L2 vocabulary comprehension (Todd, 2014). The study focused on participant use of the annotation function of Ayamel and did not require participants to access definitions. Students watched the video story while reading through the Russian text via subtitles, and were free to use English subtitles to facilitate understanding. The treatment group was shown how to access and view annotations through hyperlinks by clicking on highlighted portions of the Russian subtitles, as seen in *Figure 1*. These annotations showcased spiritual meanings and religious themes from Russian culture and history embodied within the text. The hyperlinked annotations included culturally authentic images, poetry, and historical and literary quotations in English. As seen in *Figure A*, the annotations appeared in the top, right-hand corner of the screen. Here, a poem by a Russian author about prayer is represented as an annotation highlighting a spiritual theme.
To maintain validity, there was a comparable version of the video provided for the control group, but the annotations focused on a broader swath of themes, including more secular socio-cultural and historical themes rather than explicitly on spiritual or religious themes. Like the treatment-group, the control group’s annotations consisted of culturally authentic texts that examine Russian cultural products, practices, and perspectives. Religious themes were still included in this more secular set as 1) a forced division of Russian cultural from all spiritual moorings was determined inauthentic, and 2) to allow students in the control group to compare different aspects of Russian culture. To view these annotations in full, as well as an explanation for their inclusion, please see Appendices F-G.

**Video response questionnaire.** Completed outside of class, this assignment constituted a qualitative means for students to focus on and respond to themes in the annotated video. Students responded to open-ended questions. These helped them co-construct themes and meaning from the story, and then independently assess their weight in Russian culture and
history (see Appendix E).

**Data Collection Procedures**

1. Administered the Global Perspectives Inventory (Braskamp, L., Braskamp, D., Merrill, & Engberg, 2010)
2. Conducted pre-viewing discussion.
3. Administered the Video & Annotation Assignment. Students watched the video in the Ayamel platform and accessed annotations outside of class.
4. Participants completed the post-intervention Video Response Questionnaire in class, and then completed the Global Perspectives Inventory a second time outside of class.

**Data Analysis Procedures**

**Global perspectives inventory.** This quantifiable, previously-validated test was administered before and after the video treatment for both groups. The pre-test scores were compared with the post-test scores for the control group and for the treatment group. Subsequently, the cultural sensitivity score for participants from the treatment group was compared with the score for participants from the control group, and the change in scores from pre to posttest, and between groups, was measured as the dependent variable, with the pre-test as the covariate.

**Video response questionnaire.** This survey served as the main response to the Ayamel video text. Open-ended responses from this survey were coded for themes and then trends. Particular attention was given to how participants responded to the use of religious elements, to indications of cultural empathy, and to how participants connected the video content to extra-textual knowledge and previous knowledge. Emergent trends in the responses were identified for both the control group and the treatment group on a question by question basis. To determine
these trends, the responses to each question were analyzed in each group to 1) to identify common terms that participants in a certain group used, 2) to identify common trends, 3) to specify exact quantities of how many students used these terms and added to these trends. These trends were then examined by comparing both groups, in how they similarly or differently exhibited these trends.
CHAPTER 4

Findings

This chapter will review the quantitative results from the Global Perspectives Inventory (GPI), and the qualitative findings from the Video Response Questionnaire. The findings from each of these data pools will be presented question by question, and subsequently the findings will be examined according to overarching trends.

Quantitative Results

The composite GPI pre-test scores for the control and the treatment group differed from each other with the Control Group receiving a composite pretest score of 109.92 and the Treatment Group receiving a composite pretest score of 124.33, as seen in Table 1 below. However, this held no statistical significance. The control group’s composite GPI score rose by .75 points on the post-test, and the treatment group’s composite score rose by 2.25 points on the post-test. Likewise, this yielded no statistical significance for either group. Similarly, in comparing the composite scores for individual questions between the pre-test and post-test, no statistical significance was found for the control group or for the treatment group on 34 of 36 questions. Thus, the administration of the GPI after the instrumentation of the video indicated no significant changes in cultural sensitivity on most constructs.

Table 1:

| Pre_post | Group     | Estimate | Standard Error | DF  | t Value | Pr > |t| |
|----------|-----------|----------|----------------|-----|---------|------|---|
| Pre      | Control   | 109.92   | 3.1695         | 16  | 34.68   | <.0001 |
| Post     | Control   | 110.67   | 3.1695         | 16  | 34.92   | <.0001 |
| Pre      | Treatment | 124.33   | 2.8274         | 16  | 43.97   | <.0001 |
| Post     | Treatment | 126.58   | 2.8274         | 16  | 44.77   | <.0001 |
However, a statistically significant (though minor) inverse interaction emerged in how the treatment and control groups responded to two GPI variables: Question 10 “I feel threatened around people from backgrounds very different from my own,” and Question 23 “I do not feel threatened emotionally when presented with multiple perspectives.”

The Likert-style scale listed five choices from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree,” and these were converted to numbers 1-5, respectively, for scoring purposes. Question 10 constituted one of seven questions on the GPI with a score of 5 indicating a lower degree of cultural sensitivity and a 1 representing a higher degree of cultural sensitivity. For the sake of consistency, the scale for these questions was reversed during analysis to pair higher numerical responses to questions with a “higher” cultural sensitivity score and visa-versa.

On each of these questions, the control group scored lower on the post-test than they did on the pre-test, and the treatment group scored higher on the post-test than they did on the pre-test. This indicated an overall higher cultural sensitivity score for the treatment group on these two questions after the video intervention, and an overall lower cultural sensitivity score for the control group on these same two questions after intervention, as seen in Tables 2 and 3, and Figures 1 and 2 below. Essentially, this meant that for these two questions alone, the scores of the treatment group showed more cultural sensitivity after viewing the videos than before viewing, and the scores of the control group showed less cultural sensitivity after viewing the video than before.
**Table 2:**

Pre-post comparison of Control and Treatment response to GPI Question 10: I feel threatened around people from backgrounds very different from my own

| Pre-post | Group | Estimate | Standard Error | DF  | t Value | Pr > |t| |
|----------|-------|----------|----------------|-----|---------|-------|---|
| Pre      | Control | 4.4180   | 0.1998         | 16  | 22.12   | <.0001 |
| Post     | Control | **4.2650** | **0.1998**     | 16  | 21.35   | <.0001 |
| Pre      | Treatment | 4.3333 | 0.1723         | 16  | 25.15   | <.0001 |
| Post     | Treatment | **4.5833** | **0.1723**     | 16  | 26.60   | <.0001 |

*Figure 2.* Pre-post comparison of Control and Treatment Global Perspectives Inventory (GPI) scores Question 10: I feel threatened around people from backgrounds very different from my own.
Table 3:

Pre-post comparison of Control and Treatment response to Global Perspectives Inventory (GPI) Question 23: “I do not feel threatened emotionally when presented with multiple perspectives”

Mixed Procedural Analysis

| Pre_post | Group   | Estimate | Standard Error | DF   | t Value | Pr > |t| |
|----------|---------|----------|----------------|------|---------|------|----|
| Pre      | Control | 4.5000   | 0.1995         | 16   | 22.56   | <.0001 |
| Post     | Control | 3.6250   | 0.1995         | 16   | 18.17   | <.0001 |
| Pre      | Treatment | 4.4167  | 0.1629         | 16   | 27.12   | <.0001 |
| Post     | Treatment | 4.6667  | 0.1629         | 16   | 28.65   | <.0001 |

Figure 3. Pre-post comparison of Control and Treatment response to Global Perspectives Inventory (GPI) Question 23: “I do not feel threatened emotionally when presented with multiple perspectives”
Qualitative Findings

The Video Response Questionnaire provided a more open-ended, qualitative gauge for answering how participants were affected by interaction with religious themes. Each of the six questions on this yielded data both complex and unified, touching several constructs. Each of them will be presented separately, and then in terms of overarching trends. Analysis of control and treatment group responses are likewise given here separately.

**Question 1: What do you perceive the moral of the story to be?**

In both the control and the treatment groups, participants identified a dichotomy between what they saw as two different paths of behavior, often identifying a choice between something lesser and a “higher way.” This pattern was especially evident in the treatment group, where it was evident in the responses of 13 of the 14 participants. In both groups, these dichotomies included choosing the right (often connected with Christ’s example and virtue in the treatment group) despite some sort of adversity, elevating self-sacrifice and personal harm over doing harm to others, and asserting the power of God or love over earthly power.

**Question 2: What relationship (if any) did you see between religion and Russian culture in this video?**

Control Response: All participants in the control group perceived strong ties between religion and Russian culture, history, society, and government. Many speculated as to why they think religion plays the role it does in Russian culture. These hypotheses revolved around themes such as faith, unity, social bonds, national identity/patriotism, and humble acceptance of God’s will or one’s fate. Several intimated at previous personal experiences and anecdotal comparisons, such as citing that, in their experience, Russians or Ukrainians “would pray and ask each other to pray for them,” or that “Of the religious Russians I have met, compared to this
video, it seems that they are willing to let God's hand guide them,” and “the church is very much a part of the Russian culture. They don't necessarily go that often, but there is a church within walking distance in every city (at least in Ukraine)...”

Treatment Response: Three participants focused on the concept of martyrdom as a manifestation of the relationship between religion and culture, and one seemed to assert the overall pervasiveness of religion throughout Russian culture. Again, the treatment group tended to fixate on a dichotomy of choice as 10 of the 14 highlighted a mostly competitive distinction between spiritual/religious motivations and political motivations. Six participants more overtly identified this dichotomy while others subtly intimated, as in the following comments: “the king baptized the Russian people, and Boris and Gleb both showed the humble qualities of Christ when they died,” and “they understood Christianity, especially Christ’s death and they wanted to be like Him. They both prayed for strength. This is impressive to me because Christianity had not been in Russia long (their father Vladimir brought it in).”

Both of these comments seem to suggest that in contrast to a politically-motivated religious act (the baptism of Ancient Rus), the story’s main characters demonstrated sincere religious commitment. The following comments express dichotomy more overtly—either between political and religious motivations or expressed simply between good and evil, as represented by the dichotomy between Boris and Gleb and their brother, Sviatopolk: “these men were very religious and in the end they were revered, not their brother who sought power and not God,” “religion drove the brothers to do what they did rather than fight back,” and “religion helped Boris and Gleb love their brother despite his evil intentions, and Russians today have tight-knit families.”
Some comments did not demonstrate this trend in identifying a dichotomy, but instead, by implication associated religion in Russia with government and with honor: “it was of foremost priority to members of a governing family, aside from Святополк,” and “death is an honorable thing.”

Ultimately, most participants drew a connection between the video text and religion and Russian culture. The treatment group differed in that most on the participants in this group identified a dichotomy either two choices or between competing trends. Whereas none of the control group clearly identify a choice or dichotomy.

**Question 3: What are some ways you think the themes of this story have played out in Russia today?**

Control Response: Only one participant did not draw parallels between the themes in the story (from ancient Russian history) and present day Russian culture. Often addressing themes of family, hardship, strength, identity, and religion, most other control group participants tended to focus on either politics or religion as a defining object of Russian culture. Three of the ten participants gave particular attention to political considerations as defining Russian culture and history, connecting power struggles with a fatalistic submission to outside coercion. Examples of this include responses such as:

The power hungry and greedy prince, one out of three, is the one who takes power. In Russia today, it's the same. They are willing to die, and let the evil take hold (but that sounds bad... it's not meant to).

Three of the ten participants specifically identified religion or morality as an ideal or vital object of Russian culture, explaining what they saw as its continued presence and importance for national identity, as exemplified in the following comments: “I think the annotation that
described the cultural idea that Kiev has represented frames a lot of Russian decisions. A desire to somehow return to both the temporal and moral greatness of the past,” and “being a Christian and baptized into the Orthodox Church is still seen as a strength and as a sign of loyalty to one's country.”

Only one student linked these two trends by tying religion to political health and national stability: “when religion is forgotten by the powerful bad things happen.” Two of the ten participants focused on family as the main object affected by Russian history, also conjuring an element of contrast by framing the survival of the family against a history of oppression.

Treatment Response: Eight of the fourteen participants highlighted some form of choice, conflict, or contrast. For some, this contrast was between the culture advocated by the tale of Boris and Gleb (as portrayed in the video) and their perceptions of modern Russia with its leaders and politics. These are embodied by responses such as: “I have no idea [how the themes of this story have played out in Russia today] - Boris and Gleb don’t really remind me of modern Russian leaders like Putin,” and “I can only think of the ongoing corruption within the Russian Federation’s government… I wish I knew of the humility and sacrifice there.”

The remaining six treatment participants, whose comments did not intimate at a conflict between competing forces or trends, tended to focus on an overall, common element between the story and modern Russian culture. Two associated a connection between the text and contemporary Russia with political corruption: “a theme I see is that people will kill for power or to stay in power which Soviet communists weren’t afraid, or Putin too,” and “I think that people that are in the government now in Russia did not do it without killing/dishonesty.”

Similarly, two other participants asserted a connection between the text and religion in contemporary Russian culture: “I think that many Orthodox Russians today are very devoted to
their Christian beliefs, and would not imagine changing their beliefs.”

The remaining two students perceived a continuity of other cultural elements, such as the Russian tendency for “blunt, up-front, tell it like it is personalities,” or that “Russians love to celebrate/remember their heroes and martyrs… Russians never want to forget the sacrifices of their people.” Overall, though the control and treatment groups coincided in the types of themes addressed in their responses, the treatment group tended to mix thematic elements more often by highlighting either a choice, contrast, or conflict between varying (or opposing) cultural currents.

**Question 4: Has anything in your understanding/opinion of Russia/Russian culture changed as a result of the video? If so, what?**

**Control Response:** Nine of the ten participants identified a change in understanding or opinion. Of these nine, all indicated a positive affirmation or change in their perspective. Four of the nine focused on non-religious themes, and five offered an implied or overt assertion of Russia’s religious aspects. These included both simple and complex perspectives, such as the straightforward assertions, “Russians are strong Christians,” and “maybe this story is why identifying as Orthodox is still such an important thing for Russians,” and the more nuanced response:

I think it's interesting how back then they seem to have been more religious and now many Russians just aren't. Many say they are atheist in fact. It makes me think more about their history and the Soviet times and I pity them for everything they have been through that has turned them away from God. I really do appreciate though how important the family is to them.
This last response seems to identify competition in the forces that constitute Russian culture and history, as well as a contrast between perceptions of former Russia and modern Russia. Additionally, this response demonstrates empathy with Russian culture over some shared sense of good. Though the notion of “the Good” here is loosely associated, at least, with God and family, such empathy is likewise explicitly expressed in the four responses that did not focus on religious aspects. One of these four participants asserted that the video for them was “a reminder that there are incredibly good Russian people, not just villains as our media show.” Another seemed to underscore a sense of commonality by saying that “what was conveyed, from the very little that I understood, is universal. A closer sense of unity, though slightly. Over time this will only increase.” Overall, the control group participants focused on a positive contribution to their perception of Russian culture, addressing religion, understanding, and empathy as objects of their focus.

Treatment Response: One participant reported that they were “unsure” as to how their understanding/opinion may have changed after the video intervention. Five reported no change in their understanding or opinion. One of these specifically cited previous knowledge, saying “I was already familiar with the story or something similar.” Another one of these intimated at previous knowledge but elaborated on what the video intervention reinforced for them: “I knew they were a religious people. Many are peaceful at heart. This video confirmed that for me.”

The remaining eight of the fourteen treatment group participants all reported a change in their understanding/opinion after intervention, with four of these referencing previous knowledge. While one of these participants mentioned historical fact as the object of change, the remaining seven specifically focused their responses around Russian culture’s religious aspects or the values of sacrifice and humility, often suggesting an unexpected, positive discovery, as
shown in the following responses: “It makes me think of Russians as more peaceful and God-fearing people,” “I didn’t expect a Russian folk tale to be about giving up your kingdom and dying as a martyr and I was pleasantly surprised,” and “I didn’t know before how grounded in religion (especially Christianity) Russia was. This brought me more respect for the values and culture of Russia.”

Once again, the responses of the treatment group, like the control group responses, seem to reflect a degree of empathetic identification with Russian culture. Participants identified common elements between themselves and their perception of Russian culture from the video intervention.

Question 5: To what degree has the video given you a more positive or negative outlook on Russia and Russian Culture?

This question was presented in a 5-answer, Likert-scale format, with answers ranging from “Extremely Negative” to “Extremely Positive.”

Control Response: Six of the control group participants (60% of the group) reported “Neither Positive nor Negative” change in their outlook on Russia and Russian culture after video intervention. Two (20%) reported a “Somewhat Positive” change, and the remaining two (20%) reported an “Extremely Positive” change (see Table 4, below).

| Table 4 |

<p>| Control Group Self-Reported Change in Outlook |
|---------|----------------|----------------|
| Answer                           | %              | Count |
| Extremely positive               | 20.00%         | 2     |
| Somewhat positive                | 20.00%         | 2     |
| Neither positive nor negative    | 60.00%         | 6     |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Somewhat negative</th>
<th>0.00%</th>
<th>0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely negative</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Treatment Response: Five of the treatment group participants (35.7% of the group) reported “Neither Positive nor Negative” change in their outlook on Russia and Russian culture after video intervention. Five (35.7%) reported a “Somewhat Positive” change, and four (28.6%) reported an “Extremely Positive” change.

Here participants’ responses to the open-ended Question 4 offer some possible insights as to the rationale behind the changes they reported. Of the four treatment group participants that reported an “Extremely Positive” change in their outlook (see Table 5, below), three cited a change of some sort in their understanding or opinion of Russia and Russian culture as a result of the video intervention. Two of these four who reported the “Extremely Positive” change on Question 5, also experienced a validation of previously held knowledge. The rest reported no change.
### Table 5

*Treatment Group Self-reported Change in Outlook*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely positive</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat positive</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither positive nor negative</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat negative</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely negative</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Trends in the Data**

The qualitative data from the open-ended post-test questions, and the quantitative data from the global perspectives inventory (GPI) post-test, together revealed three general trends. First, though the control and treatment group free responses appeared comparable in their fixation on various themes (including religious elements), overall they diverged in how they portrayed Russian culture as a whole. This dichotomy formed around the tendency to perceive Russia and its culture either as a monochromatic in the control group, or as a multi-vectored, multifaceted entity in the treatment group. Second, both the control and the treatment group tended to exhibit a desire to push beyond popular media perspectives of the people and culture of Russia. Lastly, both groups exhibited an emotional response after the intervention, diverging from one another in their quantifiable cultural sensitivity score, as captured by the GPI post-test. Overall, three trends were identified because of their persistent presence across multiple
questions and even from qualitative to quantitative data sets. Potential reasons for these trends are discussed below.

**Uncovering the unexpected.** Both control and treatment group participants generally discussed focusing on deeper understanding of Russian culture. They suggested a desire to debunk perceived, superficial biases attributed to popular American culture, and media. Such sentiment is intimated by comments from the control group, such as: “I don't normally think about Russians as being religious as a stereotype, which is funny, because I know they have a long history of it,” and “a reminder that there are incredibly good Russian people, not just villains as our media show.” This desire to for deeper understanding is likewise suggested in the treatment group: “I believe the Russian people are somewhat misunderstood, but they try to show who they really are- humble and kind people who have been through much hardship (Sochi olympics for example).”

However, beyond desire for deeper understanding, a trend among treatment group responses suggested that they were forced to consider something which they could not see before. Comments exhibiting this tendency revolved around new perceptions of Russian culture that differed from previously held perceptions. Citing the story’s heroes and their values, a few treatment group participants particularly drew attention to the fact that some textual elements from the intervention significantly conflicted with their current understanding of Russian culture: “I have no idea [how the themes of this story have played out in Russia today] - Boris and Gleb don’t really remind me of modern Russian leaders like Putin,” “I can only think of the ongoing corruption within the Russian Federation’s government… I wish I knew of the humility and sacrifice there,” and “I was not aware that abstention from earthly power was so culturally valuable”
Ultimately, though a general trend to focus on deeper meaning spanned both groups, the treatment group displayed a greater tendency to highlight drastic discoveries and departures from previous, personal perspectives.
**Monochromatic vs. multifaceted understanding.** The treatment group, in comparison with the control group, seemed to more consistently perceive dichotomy within Russian culture. Whereas, on Question 1, only three of the ten control group participants exhibited fixation on the concept of “choice” between two competing paths, 13 of 14 treatment group participants identified a dichotomy between what they saw as two different trends of behavior, often further defining this as a choice between a lesser and a higher way. This is exemplified by responses such as: “even though Sviatopolk killed both his brothers and ‘won’, Boris and Gleb were humble, faithful and loving until the end,” “the power of love is greater than the love for power,” and “each person gets what they desire the most. A kingdom on Earth or in Heaven.”

This pattern continued in Question 2. The control group responses seemed almost entirely to cast religion as a natural and inseparable part of Russian culture, with little intimation at competing trends. This is shown by such as comments as: “the church is very much a part of the Russian culture,” and “it seems to be highly integrated into the social construct of Russian culture, in the universe that this video depicts. Almost inseparable.”

Yet even with more explicit attention drawn to Russia’s religious aspects, the treatment group, once again, identified cultural currents in competition to religious feeling and action. Ten of the fourteen participants drew some sort of contrast between cultural choices, with religion as a deciding impetus. Examples of these include responses such as: “these men were very religious and in the end they were revered, not their brother who sought power and not God,” “religion drove the brothers to do what they did rather than fight back,” and:

I thought it was interesting how religious Boris and Gleb were. They understood Christianity, especially Christ’s death and they wanted to be like Him. They both
prayed for strength. This is impressive to me because Christianity had not been in Russia long (their father Vladimir brought it in).

In this last comment especially, rather than assuming a monolithic Russia with inseparable religious and political faces, a participant was able to perceive a subtle, yet significant contrast between a seemingly religious action with political motives, and a sincerely religious action that contradicted political motives. Only a few comments in the control group, collectively gathered from responses to all the open-ended questions, highlighted the same sense of dichotomy as discussed by the treatment group: “it is better to die than fight against family,” “holding Christian values over natural instincts,” “a desire to somehow return to both the temporal and moral greatness of the past,” and “when religion is forgotten by the powerful bad things happen”

**Emotional response.** Self-reported, qualitative participant responses and quantifiable data from the Global Perspectives Inventory evidenced a change in the affective aspect of participants’ cultural sensitivity. Question 5 of the Video Response Questionnaire (“To what degree has the video given you a more positive or negative outlook on Russia and Russian Culture?) was designed to measure an emotional response to the video text. This question captured a self-reported, positive change in individual outlook across both groups, with no participants reporting a negative change and the treatment group reporting a more positive reaction overall.

Yet despite the fact that control group participants reported no negative change, and only exhibited slightly less positive reactions to the intervention than the treatment group participants, the data gathered by the GPI pre and post-tests reveal slightly more of an emotional dichotomy between the two groups than the self-reported answers. This is evidenced by the inverse
interaction between the control and treatment groups on the same two questions: Question 10 and Question 23 of the GPI. As outlined in Chapter 4 of this study, the control group collectively indicated a “lower” culturally sensitivity level for these two questions after intervention than on the pre-test, whereas the control group scored “higher” after intervention on these same two questions than they did on the pre-test. Rather than reporting a mere discrepancy in increase, the GPI indicated a slight negative reaction to the intervention by the control group and a slight positive reaction by the treatment group.
CHAPTER 5

Discussion and Conclusions

Reasons for variation in individual and collective reactions to the intervention seem to center around how the video and its differing thematic versions affected participants emotionally, and how the participant groups differed in their overall conclusions. The element of emotion is implied in how participants reacted to Question 5 of the Video Response Questionnaire. The fact that their self-reported change in outlook did not strongly correlate with purported acquisition of new knowledge indicates that perhaps this question tended not to gauge a cognitive construct. Rather, this could have a more emotional construct that did not necessarily undergo positive increase in correlation with increased knowledge.

Emotion again serves as a possible explanation for why an inverse interaction occurred for Questions 10 and 23 on the Global Perspectives Inventory (GPI) while the post-test rendered no statistical significance for the other questions. Inasmuch as emotion may represent a more fluid construct, questions that particularly leveraged this construct may have provided a more sensitive gauge for fluctuations in attitude. Thus, since Questions 10 and 23 stood apart as uniquely affective questions, they may have provided this relatively responsive gauge. In contrast, the other questions may have elicited little change, perhaps because they represented more static constructs. These more “static” constructs were represented in the Knowing, Identity, and Social Responsibility scales pertaining to cultural development. They focused more on one’s own culture and include such skills as complexity of thinking, self-acceptance and purpose, and interdependence and social concern (Braskamp, L. A., Braskamp, D. C., Engberg, 2014). Speculation aside, these yielded statistically-insignificant results after exposure to a relatively brief intervention (about five to seven minutes).
However, feeling threatened by people from different backgrounds (Q 10) and being threatened emotionally by multiple perspectives (Q 23) indicate emotion as a common denominator in the answers where the inverse interaction occurred. Question 10 was included in the survey as one of three of the core 35 items that did not factor into the total composite score, according to the correct administration of the survey. Question 23 represents one of five Affect questions within the survey, meant specifically as a gauge for the Affect aspect of the intrapersonal subscale and informed by intercultural communication theory (Braskamp, L. A., Braskamp, D. C., Engberg, 2014) as seen by Figure 4 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Cognitive Scales</th>
<th>Intrapersonal Scales</th>
<th>Interpersonal Scales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural development</td>
<td>Knowing: complexity of thinking</td>
<td>Identity: self-acceptance and purpose</td>
<td>Social Responsibility: interdependence and social concern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercultural communication</td>
<td>Knowledge: knowledge of multicultural issues</td>
<td>Affect: respect and acceptance of cultural difference</td>
<td>Social Interactions: engaging with difference and cultural sensitivity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 4. Breakdown of Cultural Sensitivity Values (Braskamp, L. A., Braskamp, D. C., Engberg, 2014)*

Note that in this breakdown of Cultural Sensitivity values, dealing with cultural difference is delineated as a matter of the Affect. Affect in cultural sensitivity is defined (Braskamp, L. A., Braskamp, D. C., Engberg, 2013) as the:

… Level of respect for and acceptance of cultural perspectives different from one’s own and degree of emotional confidence when living in complex situations, which reflects an “emotional intelligence” that is important in one’s processing encounters with other cultures (p. 5)
Fittingly, Questions 10 and 23 both explicitly inquire how cultural difference may affect one emotionally. Thus, emotion as a fluid construct seems to stand as a potential explanation for how such a divergence could occur on the same two questions. However, it does not explain why the participants had the disparate emotional reactions that they did. These can perhaps be explained by two factors.

First, the apparent disparity in how students reacted emotionally to the control or treatment version of the video intervention may be likely connected to the religious leanings of the participants, and the subsequent degree to which they could spiritually empathize with the religious elements in the text. This likely presents a significant limitation to the study, and suggests further research should be conducted with treatment groups of varying religious persuasions, or of no religious persuasion.

Second, the story aspect of the intervention may have provided a more versatile instrument. In examining harsh realities of feudal life, and a sad history of violence between family members, the story of Boris and Gleb may provide sufficiently strong, emotional subject matter to cause divergent reactions when viewed through varying thematic lenses. Exposure to the story itself, unadorned, may have stirred an unconscious, negative emotional reaction. Or simply, negative elements in the story (such as violence, greed, and power-grabbing) may have confirmed participants’ previous apprehensions surrounding Russian culture. This is embodied by control group participant responses to Question 3: “What are some ways you think the themes of this story have played out in Russia today?” Such responses include: “if someone is seeking to take power let him have it. If anyone is in the way of your power get rid of them,” “war seems to be a constant thing with Russia. Many have lost family members to war and most men are enlisted at some point. Russia is their military,” and:
…the power hungry and greedy prince, one out of three, is the one who takes power. In Russia today, it's the same. They are willing to die, and let the evil take hold (but that sounds bad... it’s not meant to).

These statements constitute three of the ten responses for Question 3. In contrast, the treatment group, for the same question, more often identified other redeeming qualities in contrast to the bad. This is evidenced by such responses as: “some people will do whatever it takes to achieve power while others sacrifice for their country and loved ones,” “they become martyrs, therefore good examples for people who knew who they died for,” “anyone that has spoken out against socialism/communism and been punished or killed for it is like the true brothers,” and “I think people’s actions are greatly influenced by religion in Russia. People don’t want to fight.”

Thus, while the treatment group’s participants were also exposed to the potency of the story’s darker elements, they seemed more likely to frame these with a fuller understanding of what Russians “actually” value. Participants in this group also tended to focus more on the “good” brothers in the story as the harbingers of truth, rather than focus on the “bad” brother as the main cultural display. This may be because participants in the treatment group had more exposure to an explicit connection between the noble actions of Boris and specific supporting evidence from Russian culture. An example of this is seen in the reactions of treatment group participants to a quote by Fyodor Dostoevsky (Dostoevsky, 2009), which was hyperlinked to the point in the text where Boris pleads for God to forgive his murderous brother, Sviatopolk:

…Judge the Russian people not by the abominations they so frequently commit, but by those great and sacred things for which, even in their abominations they constantly yearn. Not all the people are villains; there are true saints, and what
saints they are: they are radiant and illuminate the way for all! Do not judge our People by what they are, but by what they would like to become.

In answer to Question 2 of the Video Response Questionnaire, “What relationship (if any) did you see between religion and Russian culture in this video?” (see Appendix G), one treatment group participant reacted by hinting that Dostoevsky’s quote facilitated a connection which she or he would otherwise have not been able to see. They attest: “It was hard for me to see a relationship. I liked Dostoevsky’s quote to not judge the people for what they are, but for they want to be. I think Russian culture is heavily influenced by religion, but political actions don’t always display that.”

It seems that this particular annotation, which explicitly underscored a religious understanding of mercy in the middle of brutal political intrigue, helped at least one treatment group participant to consider Russian culture in a different light. The story text alone, which is very arguably rife with religious overtones, may have led this participant to the same conclusion. However, this specific reference to the annotation provides some insight into how the treatment and control groups may have had different reactions.

Likewise, the qualitative data for the treatment group, paired with the inverse interaction between both groups on the GPI, seem to assert the positive emotional effect of the annotations. Overall, the treatment group’s responses suggest that their particular set of annotations provided a culturally-authentic condemnation of depictions of violence and greed within the text, which may have otherwise gone un-challenged. Religious themes may have constituted the vehicle to communicate this contrast, and thus may have offered a fuller, more approachable, and emotionally redemptive perspective of Russia for the treatment group.
Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

One of the main limitations to this study concerns the participant sample. For the sake of feasibility, all participants came from BYU, which constituted a particularly homogenous population in terms of religious belief. Accordingly, this homogeneity constitutes a particular limitation on the study’s external validity. A more diverse sample taken from a variety of different institutions would have strengthened the applicability of the findings. In any case, the limitation invites additional research to be conducted among different populations, be they homogenous in ways different from BYU, or merely more heterogeneous.

Additionally, participants were not randomly selected, nor were they assigned randomly to the control and treatment groups. Rather for the sake of feasibility, participants belonged to course sections available for research. This led to conducting the study for both groups with the same instructor over a year’s expanse, raising the threat of instrument decay. The sample likewise presents other threats to the study’s validity, including a small sample size of 24 students, total, who completed all the study components, and an uneven division of participants: 10 in the control group and 14 in the treatment group.

Further limitations include the instrument itself. Though the story of Boris and Gleb provided a platform sufficient to elicit varying student responses between the control and the treatment group, it still constitutes a limited presentation of only certain elements of Russian culture. Additionally, on a pedagogical level, the study inserted the video text and its attendant activities into an existing curriculum as an unconnected element. Though the pre-viewing questions and surveys helped scaffold the inclusion of these activities, the course sections in which they were conducted did not accommodate them as part of an existing unit. This invites additional studies, in which the exploration of religious themes are more organically knitted into
the cultural education of a language curriculum. Such studies could explore other authentic texts within Russian culture (or another target language culture) that vary as to which particular religious and cultural themes they relate to, and that vary in how explicitly they portray these themes.

**Pedagogical implications.** In reviewing the national standards of Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities—also known as the Five C’s of standards-based instruction—multiple applications from this study arise. As part of the Communication standard, the annotated video and questionnaire required students to “understand, interpret, and analyze ...a variety of topics” (The National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015). Religious themes and content in the target language culture might not only represent one topic, but could introduce an array of beliefs and competing ideas, as indicated by respondents.

The study likewise demonstrated a way to help students “share information, reactions, feelings and opinions.” (ibid) In regards to the Culture standard, the annotation assignment of this study explicitly requested students to “investigate, explain, and reflect on the practices and perspectives of [Russian] culture” (ibid) by asking them to discuss how the themes in the story were manifest in modern times. Participants often reacted, seeking to construct new explanations for the behaviors and ideas encountered in the story, connecting this with modern Russian and Ukraine and their own previous experience. Thus, the standards of Connections and Comparisons were embodied in how students critically approached the problems and moral dilemmas of the story. It is connection and comparison that likely factored into the type and degree of emotion that participants exhibited in response to intervention. A deeper spiritual perspective, and an engaging annotated narrative, could utilize these standards for future
language learners as a springboard for finding commonality with a foreign language and culture. Ultimately, feelings of unity and empathy, expressed by the participants, inform the Communities standard, in that students seemed more prepared after interacting with and reacting to religious to “interact and collaborate in their community and the globalized world” (ibid).

**Conclusions**

Despite limitations, this study produced clear findings that hold strong implications, at least for the academic community at Brigham Young University, and that can appropriately inform pedagogical practice and ideas for further research elsewhere. Just as in Feueverger’s (2001) ethnographic study of the Israeli-Palestinian School for Peace, participants across both the control and the treatment groups seemed to identify a precious intersection of core beliefs between Russian culture and their own culture. This discovery is embodied in this response to Question 4 by a control group participant: “the very little I understood, is universal. A closer sense of unity, though slightly.” That realization assisted participants in developing the empathy component of cultural sensitivity, or seeing commonality with another culture (Cushner, 1986). The common moral framework that was enhanced by religious themes may have provided the cognitive leverage to engage critically with the text and to make inferences and judgments that extended beyond the scope of Russian culture. These included perceiving universally-accepted, positive qualities, such as righteousness, faith, sacrifice, humility, a higher way, and the power of love, and weighing these against universally-accepted, negative qualities, such as selfishness, violence, and lust for power. The degree to which participants perceived this commonality of thematic values seems to have correlated with their tendency to view the culture in a clearer, more critical light, and to experience more positive emotional reactions to the text.

Thus, it was the treatment group participants, who interacted with the religious
underpinnings to Russia’s culture that tended to express a multifaceted understanding of Russia. They were able to perceive separate cultural currents that often competed, and tended to identify a dichotomy between religious and political motivations. Ultimately, the limited quantifiable data of this study reinforced these trends on an affective level, indicating a decreased sense of threat and an increased level of comfort with otherness.

Such a finding, though small, could inform language curricula for diplomatic and peace-making efforts. How can those trained for cross-cultural conflict resolution more fully strengthen their positive emotions toward other cultures and eliminate innate biases? Exposure to religious themes of the target language culture, during the nascent stages of language learning, could broaden these affective horizons and dissolve two-dimensional biases and negative associations with political activity. In the example of Russian language learning and this study, exposure to religious themes seemed to have helped convey participants beyond the Russia of the world-stage to a more relatable, favorable Russia that seemed to counter all perceived villainy shown on the exterior. Fittingly, Russian philosopher, Nikolai Berdyaev asserts that:

It is necessary to bring to bear upon Russia the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity in order to comprehend her… [because] from the empirical point of view there is so much that repels in Russian history. (Berdyaev, 1992, p. 19)

This idea, that Russia can be better understood by accounting for its religious heart, in no way excludes a study of Russia’s myriad traditions which are both secular and non-Christian. Rather, this study suggests that examining and comparing deeply held belief, in general, can render a fuller perspective and positive, emotional returns. Likewise, under the assumption that much academic knowledge is already secular in nature, this study highlights the usefulness of exposing the non-secular. In so doing, the treatment group seemed particularly enabled to
perceive cultural multiplicity and contrast within Russian culture. Accordingly, this study suggests that language classes might examine cultural content to highlight how current political trends within a given socio-linguistic boundary may contradict long-held beliefs. For inasmuch as

…religious people and institutions seek to say or do something (or refuse to say or do something) that runs counter to the philosophy or goals of those in power, including political majorities… religion is often countercultural and thus unpopular. (Oaks, 2011)

Thus, the results of this study can serve to inform how a language curriculum could leverage religious themes and content to more fully inculcate a cultural understanding that prepares language learners to recognize, appreciate, and respond to the rich human diversity that utilizes their chosen language of study.
REFERENCES


Mark, D. (2016, January 14). *What politics can learn from the family: Jews, Latter-day Saints and the case for religious freedom*. Address presented in Brigham Young University,


Appendix A

Global Perspectives Inventory (GPI) Online Interface

Q1
When I notice cultural differences, my culture tends to have the better approach.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Q2
I have a definite purpose in my life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Q3
I can explain my personal values to people who are different from me.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Q4
Most of my friends are from my own ethnic background.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Q5
I think of my life in terms of giving back to society.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Q6
Some people have a culture and others do not.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Q7
In different settings what is right and wrong is simple to determine.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Q8
I am informed of current issues that impact international relations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Q9
I know who I am as a person.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Q10
I feel threatened around people from backgrounds very different from my own.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Q11
I often get out of my comfort zone to better understand myself.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Q12
I am willing to defend my own views when they differ from others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Q13
I understand the reasons and causes of conflict among nations of different cultures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Q14
I work for the rights of others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Q15
I see myself as a global citizen.

Strongly agree  Somewhat agree  Neither agree nor disagree  Somewhat disagree  Strongly disagree

Q16
I take into account different perspectives before drawing conclusions about the world around me.

Strongly agree  Somewhat agree  Neither agree nor disagree  Somewhat disagree  Strongly disagree

Q17
I understand how various cultures of this world interact socially.

Strongly agree  Somewhat agree  Neither agree nor disagree  Somewhat disagree  Strongly disagree

Q18
I put my beliefs into action by standing up for my principles.

Strongly agree  Somewhat agree  Neither agree nor disagree  Somewhat disagree  Strongly disagree

Q19
I consider different cultural perspectives when evaluating global problems.

Strongly agree  Somewhat agree  Neither agree nor disagree  Somewhat disagree  Strongly disagree
Q20
I rely primarily on authorities to determine what is true in the world

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Q21
I know how to analyze the basic characteristics of a culture.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Q22
I am sensitive to those who are discriminated against.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Q23
I do not feel threatened emotionally when presented with multiple perspectives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Q24
I frequently interact with people from a race/ethnic group different from my own.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Q25
I am accepting of people with different religious and spiritual traditions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Q26
I put the needs of others above my own personal wants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Q27
I can discuss cultural differences from an informed perspective.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Q28
I am developing a meaningful philosophy of life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Q29
I intentionally involve people from many cultural backgrounds in my life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Q30
I rarely question what I have been taught about the world around me.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Q31
I enjoy when my friends from other cultures teach me about our cultural differences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Q32
I consciously behave in terms of making a difference.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Q33
I am open to people who strive to live lives very different from my own life style.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Q34
Volunteering is not an important priority in my life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Q35
I frequently interact with people from a country different from my own.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Appendix B

Video Assignment Introduction Script

(Teacher has video platform ready for demonstration)

Class, what do you know about ancient Russian history?

(Teacher allows some time for response)

Today we are going to watch a video about a story from Russian history— the story of

*Boris and Gleb*. These were two princes from early Russian history.

The video is on a website that allows you to use subtitles, look up words, and explore annotations that share additional information. You will watch the video in Russian, with Russian and English subtitles.

As an assignment, you will click on the highlighted words to access additional information. These will include pictures and short texts from Russian culture and history. Take time to look at these. Then record your thoughts on this worksheet.

As you watch, look for ways in which this story has affected Russian culture and modern Russian history.
Appendix C

Control and Treatment Group Annotations with Explanations

Control Group Annotation 1: “в Киеве” (in Kiev)

“Reduced to its simplest outline, Russian culture is a tale of three cities: Kiev, Moscow, and St. Petersburg. In the words of the popular proverb, Moscow was the heart of Russia; St. Petersburg, its head; but Kiev, its mother.”

-James Billington

Researcher’s Explanation

All quotations were provided in English. This scholarly quote (Billington, 1970), was used for its historical and emotional worth. As the control group annotations needed to be comparable to the treatment group annotations, elements of emotion, duty, and historical connection needed to be reflected equally.

Control Group Annotation 2: “захватил трон” (took the throne)

“A Tsar that is meek and humble in his reign will see his realm impoverished and his glory diminished. A Tsar that is feared and wise will see his realm enlarged and his name praised in all corners of the earth...A realm without dread is like a horse beneath a tsar without a bridle.”

—Attributed to Ivan IV

“The ‘true tsar’ of the peasant and Cossack folklore was thus a combination of benign grandfather and messianic deliverer: batiushka and spasitel’. He was a ‘real, rustic man’ (muzhitsky), the true benefactor of his children, who could come to their aid if only the intervening wall of administrators and bureaucrats could be torn down.”

- James Billington

Researcher’s Explanation

These two quotations from James Billington’s The Icon and the Axe (Billington, 1970) help deliver varying perspectives on the role of the Tsar in Russian culture. The first quotation was used to historically connect Sviatopolk’s action as king to the understanding of Ivan IV. The second quotation was meant as a counterweight, demonstrating the benevolent behavior expected of Russian rulers. This was intended to allow students to reflect on themes pertinent to the text but to have a more diverse view when drawing connections.
Control Group Annotation 3: “Кiev” (Kiev)

“From...unceasing battles great patriotism and love of country were born in the Russian people. It was during the chivalrous days of Kiev that the beloved and poetic concept of the “Russian Land” was born, of not merely territory but a motherland. Like a litany, over and over it appears in all the songs, legends and sagas of old Russia. The glory of Kiev, with its generous spirit of nobility and freedom remained the golden dream of the Slavs, a poignant memory of what once was and might have been.”

-Suzanne Massie

Researcher’s Explanation

This scholarly quotation (Massie, 1982), like Control Group Annotation 1, was meant to insert an emotional connection comparable to the emotional annotations found in the treatment group set of annotations. It was likewise meant to further cement the recurring theme of the influence of the Kievan period, once again, represented by Kiev in Control Group Annotation 1. This recurrence of a theme in multiple annotations was meant to mirror the treatment group’s annotation set, which has several annotations dedicated to a single theme.

Control Group Annotation 4: “его воины” (his soldiers)

“Boris was said to have been loved by his soldiers because he fought alongside them. This painting “Hunters at rest” (1871) by Vasily Perov shows how everyday tasks like hunting brought people together across class divides.”

Researcher’s Explanation

This annotation consisted of a brief explanation by the researcher, written above, of how an element of the story (Еремин, 1957) connected with a piece of Russian art (Perov, 2015) in representing a certain theme—in this case, of meekness and unity between classes.
Control Group Annotation 5: “вредить” (harm)

The painting “St. Nicholas Saves Three Innocents from Death” by Russian painter Ilya Repin, was chosen as a modern depiction and echo of the theme demonstrated by Prince Boris. In the story, Boris as a Christian hero shows mercy, and thus reminds of Repin’s work for its Christian connotation of showing mercy. This annotation was also intended as a cross-over annotation with the control group, as it seemed a fitting common theme to represent both the secular and the religious aspects of Russian culture. In the treatment set of annotations, this image represents one of two pictorial annotations.

Control Group Annotation 6: “убейте” (kill)

“The future generations of the Orthodox may know the bygone fortunes of their native land, remember their great tsars for their labours, their glory, their good actions, and humbly implore the Saviour for their sins, their dark deeds.”

-Aleksandr Pushkin

Researcher’s Explanation

This literary quotation (Obolensky, 1976) was carefully placed to ensure that the control group set of annotations was not too contrived in ostensibly avoiding all religious aspects of the story and Russian culture. Furthermore, it served to frame the negative aspects of the story in such a way so that participants could see counter perspectives to political violence.
Control Group Annotation 7: “убежал” (run away)

“To run away could show cowardice. This is why Peter the Great’s son, Alexei, returned to Russia after fearing his father’s accusation of treason. The court later found him guilty and sentenced him to death.”

Researcher’s Explanation

This annotation consisted of informed analysis on part of Researcher, based on information from Religion and Orthodoxy (Ellis, 1998), and a linked image of Nikolai Ge’s 1871 painting “Peter the Great Interrogating the Tsarevich Alexei Petrovich in Peterhof” (Ge, 1871)
Control Group Annotation 8: “прости” (forgive)

“At the centre of [Dostoevsky’s] faith was the notion of humility, which Dostoevsky argued was the truly Christian essence of the Russian peasantry - their ‘spiritual capacity for suffering’. It was the reason why they felt natural tenderness towards the weak and the poor, even towards criminals, whom villagers would help with gifts of food and clothes as they passed in convoy to Siberia. Dostoevsky explained this compassion by the idea that the peasants felt a ‘Christian sense of common guilt and responsibility towards their fellow-men’.”

-Orlando Figes

Researcher’s Explanation

Again, this scholarly quote (Figes, 2002, p. 336) was included to avoid an unnatural avoidance of religious material, but differed from treatment group annotations in that it was about religious feeling rather than an experience of religious feeling.

Control Group Annotation 9: “горько заплакал” (he wept bitterly)

“The father loves his child, the mother loves her child, a child loves its mother and father. But this is not the same, my brothers; a beast also loves its young. But the kinship of the spirit, rather than the blood, is something only known to man. Men have been comrades in other lands too, but there have never been comrades such as those in the Russian land… No, brothers, to love as the Russian soul loves - that does not mean to love with the head or with some other part of you, it means to love with everything that God has given you.”

-Gogol

Researcher’s Explanation

This quote by a famous Russian literary personality (Gogol, 1835) was meant to bring emotion and love again to the attention of control group participants, so as to not deprive them of any overt affective elements available to the treatment group. Again, religion, by way of Deity, is mentioned here, though not as overtly as in the treatment group annotation set.
Control Group Annotation 10: “мученик” (martyr)

“The religious formation of the Russian spirit developed several stable attributes: dogmatism, asceticism, the ability to endure suffering and to make sacrifices for the sake of its faith whatever that may be, a reaching out to the transcendental, in relation now to eternity, to the other world, now to the future, to this world.”

-Nikolai Berdyaev

Researcher’s Explanation

This annotation was meant to also address the overt religious themes in the text with a more secular approach. The quotation by Russian philosopher Berdyaev (Berdyaev, 1960) contextualizes Russian religious feeling in more general, anthropological terms.
**Treatment Group Annotation 1: “христианскую веру” (the Christian faith)**

“What has been the thought of the Creator about Russia... It is necessary to bring to bear upon Russia the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity in order to comprehend her...[because] from the empirical point of view there is so much that repels in Russian history.”

- Nikolai Berdyaev

**Researcher’s Explanation**

This annotation (Berdyaev, 1992) was intended as an introduction to viewing the story through the lens of religious themes, and explains to the participants why a religious perspective is invaluable to understanding Russia.

**Treatment Group Annotation 2: “вредить” (to harm)**

![Image of painting](image)

**Researcher’s Explanation**

The painting “St. Nicholas Saves Three Innocents from Death” by Russian painter Ilya Repin (Repin, 1888), was chosen as a modern depiction and echo of the theme demonstrated how Prince Boris. In the story, Boris as a Christian hero shows mercy, and thus reminds of Repin’s work for its Christian connotations. This annotation was also intended as a cross-over annotation with the control group, as it seemed a fitting common theme to represent both the secular and the religious aspects of Russian culture. In the treatment set of annotations, this image represents one of two pictorial annotations.
**Treatment Group Annotation 3: “ради Христа” (for Christ’s sake)**

“Christian themes have been strong in poetry in the post-Stalin period. Irina Ratushinskaia’s openly religious poetry contributed to a lengthy prison Sentence from which she was released only after International protests in 1986, on the eve of the Gorbachev-Reagan Summit in Reykjavik. The Nobel Prize winner Joseph Brodsky, who died at an early age in January 1996, though not formally a Christian, and a Jew by birth, was described as a ‘Christian poet’ by Lev Pokrovskii, and W. H. Auden noted the importance to Brodsky of the question of Christianity and culture. For Brodsky and his generation, and for younger poets such as Ol’ga Sedakova, the inspiration of Anna Akhmatova, a steadfast Christian resolutely opposed to political terror as well as a major poet, was crucial in finding expressions of belief that went beyond facile pieties.”

- Jane Ellis

**Researcher’s Explanation**

This scholarly quote (Ellis, 1998) was chosen to provide a synthesis of modern Russian figures that represented Christian resistance to evil and oppression. Thus, the annotation was linked to Prince Boris’ words from the story: “As Jesus Christ came to the Earth to suffer for our sins, and gave Himself to be killed on the cross, so am I ready to accept suffering and death for Christ’s sake.”

**Treatment Group Annotation 4: “прости” (forgive)**

“Judge the Russian people not by the abominations they so frequently commit, but by those great and sacred things for which, even in their abominations they constantly yearn. Not all the people are villains; there are true saints, and what saints they are: they are radiant and illuminate the way for all! ...Do not judge our People by what they are, but by what they would like to become.”

- Fyodor Dostoevsky

**Researcher’s Explanation**

This quotation by Russian writer, Fyodor Dostoevsky (Dostoevsky, 2009), was meant to echo the forgiveness exercised by Prince Boris in the story towards his brother, Sviatopolk. This annotation was the most mentioned by the treatment group participants, and seems to have influenced the trend in their responses to assert the goodness of Russian culture, especially when misunderstood by the West.
Treatment Group Annotation 5: “Помолившись” (Having prayed)

The Prayer

When faints the heart for sorrow,
In life's hard, darkened hour,
My spirit breathes a wondrous prayer
Full of love's inward power.

There is a might inspiring
Each consecrated word,
That speaks the inconceivable
And holy will of God.

The heavy load slips from my heart—
Oppressing doubt takes flight,
The soul believes, the tears break forth—
And all is light, so light!

Researcher’s Explanation

This translation of Mikhail Lermontov’s poem, The Prayer (Lermontov, 1839), was meant to call viewers’ attention to the recurring role of prayer in Russian culture, as represented by the story. It was linked to the words “having prayed” in the story’s narration, to echo how prayer may have consoled Prince Boris at a time of great distress.
These Poor Villages

These poor villages,
This meager nature:
Long-suffering native land,
Land of the Russian people!

Proud foreign eyes
Will not notice nor grasp
The light that shines through
Your humble barrenness.

Worn by the weight of the cross,
The Heavenly King in the guise of a slave
Has passed through all of you,
Native land, blessing you.

Researcher’s Explanation

This poem (Obolensky, 1976) was selected as a popular Russian, literary representation of humility as a profoundly Christian, and noble trait—especially within the context of Russian culture.
**Treatment Group Annotation 7: “смиренно” (humbly)**

“Foolishness for Christ… refers to behavior such as giving up all one's worldly possessions upon joining a monastic order, or to deliberate flouting of society's conventions to serve a religious purpose—particularly of Christianity. Such individuals have historically been known as both "holy fools" and "blessed fools". The term "fool" connotes what is perceived as feeblemindedness, and "blessed" or "holy" refers to innocence in the eyes of God. The term fools for Christ derives from the writings of Saint Paul.”

**Researcher’s Explanation**

This quotation from public domain (Foolishness for Christ, 2018) was chosen to introduce the Russian idea of the “Holy Fool” for its tight synthesis as well as its expression of the idea of rejecting societal convention for Christ. Thus, it was linked to the word “humbly” in the lines of Prince Gleb from the story: “Pray for me, brother, that I might, like you, humbly receive death as a martyr.” However, as this annotation is not tied to particular scholarly work, it may represent a limitation on the part of the study.

**Treatment Group Annotation 8: “обманом” (by deceit)**

**Researcher’s Explanation**

This annotation included a visual of Christ before the Grand Inquisitor from Dostoevsky’s *Brothers Karamazov*. It was chosen to emphasize the idea communicated by Dostoevsky, that Christ has no deceit in him before the world, and will not trade his power for the world’s power. Thus, this annotation was embedded in the word “обманом,” meaning “(by the means of) a lie,” in the words of the Prince Gleb, who says “For it is better to die and live with you, than to live a lie in this world.” Unfortunately, the linked image has since become irretrievable to the researchers, as the image has been removed. Furthermore, though this annotation’s accessibility was tested immediately before it was presented to participants, not all participants viewed the video at the same time, and the possibility of the image becoming inaccessible may have occurred during intervention, in which case, not all participants may have had a chance to view it. This presents a instrument-decay threat and a limitation to the study, as this annotation constituted one of two pictorial annotations for the treatment group.
**Treatment Group Annotation 9: “к Богу” (To God)**

Flowers, and bees, and grass and wheat  
And azure, and midday sun.  
The time will come — the Lord will ask His prodigal dear:  
Were you happy on earth, my son?  
And forgetting all else, I’ll only recall,  
The footpaths mid wheat ears and grass,  
And with sobs so sweet, without answer I’ll fall,  
To His merciful knees at last.  
- Ivan Bunin, 1918

**Researcher’s Explanation**

Just as Prince Gleb, in the story, peacefully accepts brutal death and goes to God, this poem by Ivan Bunin, taken from a collection (Obolensky, 1976), and translated by the researcher, was chosen to represent the concept of returning to God after implied suffering.

**Treatment Group Annotation 10: “как его брат” (like his brother)**

“For centuries, Boris and Gleb were the patron saints of Russia and the greatest popular heroes. They were called the “Passion-bearers,” symbolizing voluntary acceptance of suffering and death and peaceful non-resistance to injustice. This meekness and acceptance of fate in imitation of the deeds of Christ is an essential Russian ideal that runs like a golden thread through Russian life and art up to our own century. The Russians were the first to stress the humble aspect of Christ’s nature.”

-Suzanne Massie

**Researcher’s Explanation**

This scholarly quotation (Massie, 1982), like the first annotation, was meant to provide some conclusion to this religious thematic experience, providing more explicit explanation of the connections between the story of *Boris and Gleb* and Russian religious culture.
Appendix D

Texts for Boris and Gleb

D.1 Russian Translation. The text of the story used in the video is taken from a modern Russian adaptation (Еремин, 1957) of the story Boris and Gleb, from ancient Russian history. The text below has been further adapted to facilitate understanding for non-native Russian speakers.

Жил давно в Киеве царь Владимир. В это время было много войн. Владимир хотел принести стабильность Русскому народу. Поэтому Владимир хотел, чтобы у русских людей была вера, и он крестил их в Христианскую веру.

У Владимира было три сына: Борис, Глеб и Святополк. Киевляне любили Бориса и Глеба больше, чем они любили Святополка. Святополк очень хотел быть царём, и когда его отец умер, он пошёл на Киев и захватил трон.

Но Киевляне любили других сыновей Владимира. Поэтому Святополк решил дать киевлянам подарки. Но народ всё ещё любил Бориса больше, потому что Борис сам защищал свой народ в битве, вместе с воинами. Когда Борис вернулся с армией в Киев, он узнал, что его отец умер. Борис плакал, потому что он очень любил своего отца. В этот момент его воины говорили ему:

«Вот, трон твоего отца—твой трон! Это твоё право. Иди в Киев и займись место твоего отца! Воины и войска Киева хотели, чтобы Борис, а не Святополк, был Царём. Поэтому они были готовы сражаться за него. Но Борис сказал: «Я не хочу вредить моему брату Святополку. Раз уж мой отец умер, Святополк теперь будет моим отцом».

Услышав это, войска ушли, а Борис вернулся к своему шатру. Но Святополк был недоволен. Он не мог успокоиться, пока его братья жили потому что он боялся, что люди будут сражаться за Бориса или Глеба. Так что он собрался убить Бориса, так же, как Каин хотел убить своего брата. Итак, ночью, тайно, придя к своим воинам, он спросил у них: «Преданы ли вы мне»? Они ответили «Да». Когда Святополк узнал, что они преданы ему, он сказал: «идите и убейте моего брата, Бориса». Солдаты согласились и пошли исполнить волю Святополка.

Придя к шатру Бориса, воины Святополка услышали, как Борис молится. Борис уже услышал от посланника, что воины Святополка придут убить его. Однако Борис не убежал, но стал молиться Богу. Сначала он попросил Бога спасти ему жизнь, но потом он сказал:

«Как Иисус Христос пришёл на землю, чтобы страдать за наши грехи, и Сам дал Себя быть убитым на кресте, так и я готов принять страдания и смерть ради Христа. Пожалуйста, прости моего брата, Святополка. Ибо он– не враг мой, а брат мой». 
Помолившись, Борис лёг на свою постель. Как дикие звери, воины Святополка напали на него. Так умер Борис, и стал царём на небесах.

Но Святополк ещё был недоволен. Он думал: «Вот, убил я Бориса; как бы убить Глеба»? Тогда Святополк послал посланника к Глебу, говоря: «Приезжай сюда в Киев. Твой отец сильно болеет и зовёт тебя».

Глеб немедленно послушался и отправился на корабле в Киев. Но скоро дошла до Глеба весть: «Не ходи в Киев. Твой отец умер и Святополк убил твоего брата, Бориса».

Когда Глеб услышал это, он горько заплакал. Он плакал за отца и за своего брата, говоря:

«О мой брат, зачем я остался один? Где твоё ангельское лицо? Где твой тихий голос? Где твои мудрые слова? Помолись за меня, брат, чтобы я мог смиренно принять смерть как мученик; так, как ты. Ибо лучше умереть и жить с тобой, чем жить обманом в этом мире».

Потом он помолился Богу. Тотчас воины Святополка пришли, взяли Глеба и убили его как невинного агнца. Итак Глеб тоже был принесён в жертву Богу, и отошёл к Богу и своему брату, Борису, и, как его брат, стал царём на небесах.
D.2 English Translation of Adapted Russian text.

Long ago in Kiev there lived King Vladimir. At that time, there were many wars. Vladimir wanted to bring stability to the Russian. Therefore, Vladimir wanted the Russian people to have religion, and he baptized them in the Christian faith.

Vladimir had three sons: Boris, Gleb, and Sviatopolk. The Kievans loved Boris and Gleb more than they loved Sviatopolk, (but) Sviatopolk very much wanted to be king, and when his father died, he set out for Kiev and took the throne.

But the Kievans loved Vladimir’s other sons. Due to this, Sviatopolk decided to give the Kievans gifts. But the people still loved Boris more, because Boris himself defended his people in battle, together with the warriors. When Boris returned with an army to Kiev, he found out that his father had died. Boris cried because he loved his father very much. At this moment, his soldiers said to him:

“Behold, the throne of your father is your throne! It is your right. Go to Kiev and take the place of your father!” The soldiers and troops of Kiev were ready to fight for him. But Boris said: “I don’t want to harm my brother, Sviatopolk. Inasmuch as my father has died, Sviatopolk will be my father now.” Hearing this, the troops left, and Boris returned to his own tent.

But Sviatopolk was not satisfied. He couldn’t rest while his brothers still lived, because he was afraid that people would fight for Boris or Gleb. Thus, he began making plans to kill Boris, just as Cain wanted to kill his own brother. And so, at night, he secretly went to his soldiers and asked them: “are you loyal to me?” They answered, “yes.” When Sviatopolk knew that they were loyal to him, he said “Go and kill my brother, Boris.” The soldiers consented and went to fulfill the will of Sviatopolk.

Coming to Boris’ tent, Sviatopolk’s warriors heard Boris praying. Boris already from a messenger that the soldiers of Sviatopolk were planning to kill him. However, Boris didn’t run away, but began to pray to God. At first he asked God to save his life, but then he said:

“Just as Jesus Christ came to the Earth to suffer for our sins, and gave Himself to be killed on the cross, so am I ready to accept suffering and death for Christ’s sake. Please, forgive my brother, Sviatopolk. For he is not my enemy, but my brother.” Having prayed, Boris laid down on his bed. Like wild beasts, Sviatopolk’s soldiers fell on him. So died Boris, and became a king in heaven, having received a crown of eternal life from Christ.

But Sviatopolk still was not satisfied. Thought he: “Behold, I have killed Boris; how to kill Gleb then?” Then Sviatopolk sent a messenger to Gleb, saying: “Come here to Kiev. Your father is very ill and calls for you.”

Gleb immediately obeyed and departed on a ship for Kiev. But soon the news came to Gleb: “Do not go to Kiev. Your father has died and Sviatopolk has killed your brother, Boris”. When Gleb heard this, he wept bitterly. He wept for his father and for his brother, saying:
“O my brother, why have you left me alone? Where is your angelic face? Where is your quiet voice? Where are your wise words? Pray for me, brother, that I might humbly receive death as a martyr, just like you. For it is better to die and live with you, than to live a lie in this world.

Afterwards, he prayed to God. Right then, Sviatopolk’s warriors came, took Gleb and killed him like an innocent lamb. And thus, Gleb also was sacrificed for God, and went to God and his brother, Boris, and like his brother, became a king in heaven.
Appendix E

Video Response Questionnaire

*Boris and Gleb* Video Student Response Sheet

School______________, Section Number______________,
Assigned Number___________ Ayamel Username_____________________

1. Which annotation (additional material) was most interesting to you? Why?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

2. What do you perceive the moral of the story to be?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

3. What relationship (if any) did you see between religion and Russian culture in this video?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

4. What are some ways you think the themes of this story have played out in Russia today?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

5. To what degree has the video given you more positive or negative outlook on Russia and Russian culture? (Circle one)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extremely positive</th>
<th>Somewhat positive</th>
<th>Neither positive nor negative</th>
<th>Somewhat negative</th>
<th>Extremely negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
