"The More We Get Together the Happier We'll Be"?
Piloting a Song-Based Intervention to Develop Cross-National Ties

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Executive Summary

The title of this paper—a lyric from a traditional song used as part of this study's song-based intervention—expresses hope for a peaceful and interconnected world. In reality, however, increasing global transmigration seems to be stimulating raised political tension regarding how to relate across differences in national background, throughout the world and within the United States. Xenophobia and separatism—malignant outgrowths of competing for economic resources and cultural dominance—can negatively impact refugee and immigrant mental and physical health as well as economic potential and can subtract from overall societal security. Historical precedent and modern practice point toward music as a potential medium for connecting individuals from different identity groups or national backgrounds in developing the cooperation necessary to address societal issues. The study at hand investigates the feasibility and acceptability of an intercultural song circle intervention in engaging U.S.-born and non-U.S.-born residents in a process of connecting through simple song. English practice is also integrated into the six-session intervention model piloted by this study.

Through a process research and formative intervention research approach, the study follows the unfolding of this intervention from its preparation phases through the fourth of six song circle sessions, assessing feasibility and acceptability through quantitative and qualitative data. The study reveals unanticipated difficulty in recruiting refugee and immigrant individuals to participate in this intervention, explores potential reasons for this difficulty, and notes that its U.S.-born attendants seem highly open to connection across national backgrounds and desiring to contribute to those from other countries. Based on themes in the qualitative data, more community-participatory, community-integrated, and potentially long-term approaches to this song circle intervention are suggested for the future. Findings additionally highlight the importance of making song-sharing interventions sensitive to refugee and immigrant

individuals' everyday needs and of ensuring that intercultural events facilitate genuine empathetic encounters that expand understanding and move beyond potentially self-gratifying displays of intercultural interest or tolerance.

Issue Background

Fear of—and challenge in figuring out how to engage with—those from a variety of different national backgrounds is a pressing problem in the United States. Societal anxiety about foreign nationals has taken form in Donald J. Trump's campaign promise of reducing the migration of Muslim individuals into the U.S. (Trump, 2015; Wang, 2017) and early movements by his administration to restrict immigration, refugee resettlement, and the use of services by foreign nationals in the U.S. At a time when warfare is displacing record numbers of families and individuals in the world (according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], an "unprecedented 65.3 million people around the world" are forcibly displaced from their homes [UNHCR, 2017]), actions by President Trump and other world leaders reflect concerns of native-born residents about whether they can plan for economic and security needs while showing consideration to those seeking new homes as immigrants or refugees.

Such fear can unfortunately manifest in separatism and xenophobia—"attitudinal, affective, and behavioral prejudice toward . . . those perceived as foreign" (Yakushko, 2009, p. 43). Hjerm and Nagayoshi (2011) demonstrate that xenophobia increases 1) in populations experiencing economic competition, and 2) where there is a sense of being taken over by those culturally different from oneself. Biases such as xenophobia may be unperceived by those who hold them (Harro, 2000; Project Implicit, 2011); yet cross-national discrimination worsens societal outcomes in several crucial ways.

Xenophobia Diminishes Refugee and Immigrant Well-Being

Yakushko's review of relevant literature (2009) suggests that xenophobia is likely to increase disturbances in psychological functioning among refugees and immigrants. Moreover, it may in part constitute the assimilation stress which at high levels can lead to suicidality among some immigrants

(Hovey as cited in Yakushko, 2009, p. 51). Many new residents already face a unique blend of historical trauma, integration stress, and economic disadvantage with toxic impacts on their well-being. Refugees, for example, experience elevated risk of psychological distress (Fazel, Wheeler, & Danesh, 2005) and stress-related chronic physical disease (Palinkas et al., 2003).

Separatism Reduces Refugee and Immigrant Economic Success

Moreover, societal separatism reduces economic integration, a key marker of successful resettlement for refugee and immigrant individuals. Extensive and ethnically diverse social networks are correlated with increased chances of economic success among immigrant and refugee populations (Allen, 2009; Bergson-Shilcock & Witte, 2015; De Vroome & Van Tubergen, 2010; Kansas & Van Tubergen, 2009; Majka & Mullan, 2002), and interventions that have focused on building social networks to improve refugees' economic integration have been associated with improvement in employment benchmarks (de Vroome & van Tubergen, 2010; Kansas & van Tubergen, 2009). This is critical, as refugees in the U.S. tend to lag behind U.S.-born populations in economic well-being (for example, earning hourly wages less than half the average hourly wage of the general U.S. population [USDHHS ORR, 2015a]); this difficulty economically integrating is a key source of psychological distress (A. Ingrassia, personal communication, September 29, 2015; Das-Munshi, Leavey, Stansfeld, & Prince, 2012; Georgetown University Law Center Human Rights Institute, 2009; Refugee Mental Health and Wellness Initiative [RMHWI], 2014; UNHCR Policy Development and Evaluation Service [PEDS], 2013). Social ties across backgrounds are often exactly the step needed for refugees and immigrants to the U.S. to economically integrate.

Segregated Identities Increase Societal Risk

The cost of social separatism based on national background must also be examined with a broader view. Research (Denny & Walter, 2014) reveals that violent domestic discontent within nations is often fought along lines of ethnicity, which bears relation to national background. Transnational funding for civil unrest frequently flows based on commonalities in ethnic or religious background (and conflicts funded

in this way typically take longer to settle and end) (Salehyan, Gleditsch, & Cunningham, 2011). The issue of group identity—of remaining segregated in a new nation versus finding a place in a new whole—has broader implications for societal peacefulness. With civil violence responsible for five times as many civilian casualties as interstate warfare across the second half of the twentieth century (Fearon & Laitin, 2003), developing approaches for understanding and identification between those living in the same areas but from various national backgrounds seems an important investment in national peace.

Relevance to the Triangle Region of North Carolina

North Carolina (NC), the site of the current pilot intervention, resettles the twelfth highest number of refugees of all states in the U.S. (United States Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families Office of Refugee Resettlement [USDHHS ORR], 2015b; USDHHS ORR, 2016). The Triangle Region of Central NC (the region of this intervention) comprises one of the most popular areas in the state for refugee resettlement and is home to four resettlement agencies, including US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants Raleigh, the agency with the highest refugee enrollment in the state of NC (USDHHS ORR, 2015a). The counties that compose the Triangle Region (Orange, Wake, and Durham Counties) are progressive politically, but surrounding counties supported then-candidate Trump in the November 2016 presidential election ("Presidential Election Results," 2017), evidencing potential support for policies limiting immigration and refugee resettlement in the U.S. and region.

The Orange County Health Department reports that Orange County—home to Chapel Hill, NC, and Carrboro, NC, and the site of this intervention—has recently resettled refugees from Syria, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burma, Iraq, Iran, and several other countries (S. Clifford, personal communication, August 18, 2016). The county also has a significant presence of Latine immigrants. Providers of services to refugees and immigrants work together through the Refugee Health Coalition and Latino Health Coalition, projects of the Orange County Health Department which meet quarterly to coordinate. Nevertheless, refugees in Carrboro speak of being "without a voice" (anonymous Burmese

refugee, personal communication, September 11, 2016) and service providers in the Carrboro and Chapel Hill area notice signs of fear and acculturation stress (J. Hinson, personal communication, March 20, 2017; various providers at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Social Work [UNC-CH SSW] Latinx Caucus Immigration Teach-In meeting, personal communication, March 20, 2017; various providers at Orange County Refugee Health Coalition meetings, personal communication, November 17, 2016 & January 26, 2017; various providers at UNC-CH SSW Post-Election Diversity Check-In Session, personal communication, November 14, 2016). This pilot project attempts to give refugees, immigrants, and U.S.-born residents around them in Orange County an opportunity to voice their own perspectives and connect with others' perspectives using song.

Intervention Background

Research documents music as an expression and medium of cultural change and cultural resource. Community gatherings centered on music have existed far back, and for many purposes, in cultures of communities around the world. (See, for example, Ingram's 2012 description of Kam Big Song performance in Southwestern China and Hoffman's 2002 account of song as an expression of displacement among Berber women in Moroccan mountains.) Music expresses cultural change (for example, the preservation of past cultural realities and development of new ones among resettled refugees [Baily, 2005]) and drives it (as depicted in Tumas-Serna's 1995 description of how popular music in Cuba catalyzed a re-evaluation of past forms of socialism, or Ho's 2006 analysis of the role of song in the development of Chinese nationalism). Power relationships between politically dominant and subordinate cultures manifest in music's forms and expressions. (Music, for example, may express a minority identity [Niewiadomska-Bugaj & Zeranska-Kominek, 1993], represent cultural reclamation following atrocity [Mamula, 2008], or serve as a realm for potential state control as in 'Inner Asia' [During, 2005] or Turkey [Yarar, 2008].) Around the world, interventions have attempted to alter cultural norms

using music—with sometimes predictable and sometimes unanticipated results (see McConnell, 2016; Morgan, 2015; Seman, 2010).

Community gatherings around music have catalyzed and strengthened social movements in the United States. Musical gathering and sharing were utilized as key pieces of organizing textile laborers in the Southern U.S. in the 1930s (Roscigno, Donaher, & Summers-Effler, 2002). Additionally, through the Highlander Research and Education Center (then the Highlander Folk School), music-based "cultural organizing" played a prominent role in uniting people from various backgrounds to press for policy changes during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s (Bledsoe, 1969; Highlander Center, n.d.). The Highlander Center's cultural organizing approach uses cultural expression such as song to:

- generate critical dialogues in order to increase analytical understanding of societal issues based on the Freirean popular education principle that people have the most relevant knowledge to address and improve their own situations (see Martinson & Su, 2012) and
- develop a sense of kinship and of hope and willingness to work together toward common solutions that engage multiple populations (Bledsoe, 1969).

This approach is utilized by community organizers today (Alternate ROOTS, n.d.; Highlander Center, 2014).

The author of the current study identifies Highlander's cultural organizing approach as a tool that may be useful in alleviating fears of differences among populations of different national backgrounds in the U.S. and may help refugee, immigrant, and non-immigrant populations to develop connections that can enable them to address economic, community, and security challenges together.

Use of music in work with refugee populations is not new: Providers have utilized music to therapeutically assist people resettled worldwide to express loss and pain and to productively engage with trauma and acculturation stress. (See, for example, Skidmore's 2016 article on helpful uses of music in schools with refugee children in Canada, Aaslid Enge's 2015 article on the regenerative potential of musical performance among refugee children in Norway, and Jespersen and Vuust's 2012 quasi-

experimental study utilizing music to improve sleep quality for refugees experiencing trauma-based disruptions in sleep.) Comte (2016) thoughtfully provides an overview of existing research on music therapy work with refugees, summarizing several key lessons learned such as:

- the necessity of attending to refugee people's other cultural identities beyond that of "refugee" and
- the need for reflective awareness of ways "specific musical elements constitute meaning within the musical culture of the refugee person" ("Musical Improvisation" section, para. 5).

The use of music to build peace across groups of different ethnicities or identity groups is also not new. Alongside the example of the Highlander Center's cross-racial, cross-ethnic organizing work during the Civil Rights Movement, modern analogues emerge. Bodner and Bergman (2016) demonstrate that different types of national songs can enhance or reduce cross-group prejudice and cross-group empathy among Jewish and Arab residents in Israel; Greitemeyer and Schwab (2014) reveal that in an experimental setting, lyrical content can reduce prejudice and aggression toward members of perceived outgroups. Gottesman (2017) uses shared musical performance and songwriting to connect Israeli, Palestinian, and Israeli-Palestinian youth in "challeng[ing] their socialization" and "reimagin[ing] their role in society" ("Abstract" section, para. 2), utilizing principles of Freirean popular education as described above.

The pilot intervention at hand—using a series of song circles to build connections and to increase attitudes of openness between U.S.-born residents and non-U.S.-born residents in Central North Carolina—is unique primarily for: its technique of song sharing across cultures using a consistent, repeated community gathering format, and its overarching intention to connect immigrant and refugee individuals with non-immigrant populations for the purpose of developing affiliation with one another and increasing openness to others from various national backgrounds, using song. This research project aims to answer the question: What is the feasibility and acceptability of an intercultural song circle series engaging non-U.S.-born and U.S.-born individuals in connecting through shared singing of simple songs?

The author is a U.S.-born, white, female-identified graduate student of community-focused social work and international conflict resolution. She is a musician on the side. Her experiences as a mental health provider with refugee individuals in Central North Carolina in 2015-2016 led her to desire for other U.S.-born residents to have experiences of close connections with foreign-born individuals and influenced the design of this intervention.

Method

Study Design

This mixed-methods research study focuses on process and is a formative evaluation. The evaluation is pre-experimental: it does not utilize randomization or a control group yet lays the groundwork for future evaluations that could. Note that while this intervention lasted for six sessions, this report was concluded at the end of the intervention's first four sessions.

Development Process

In addition to drawing from the above research and her experience, the researcher conducted extensive key informant interviews, a coalition site visit, and a focus group in the months leading up to the research study. She engaged refugee individuals and professionals with expert knowledge in refugee services, healing use of arts, community social work, evaluation, and community song. A comprehensive record of insights from these interviews is beyond the scope of this report but significantly shaped this intervention's formation. A list of interview subjects and inquiries addressed is provided in Table 1.

Song Circle Intervention

Song circle approach.

Community singing professional Matt Watroba describes community song circles or "community sings" as "the simple act of regularly gathering groups of singers—of all levels—to share songs" (n.d., "What is a Community Sing?" section, para. 1). Annie and Peter Blood (n.d.)—song circle supporters and

creators of the songbook *Rise Up Singing*—describe a basic suggested format for song circles, including shared leadership: going around the circle and giving everyone who is interested a chance to lead a song.

This study's song circle intervention.

Given uniquely pressing material needs of many resettled refugees and immigrants in the U.S.,[1] this researcher aimed to increase relevance of this song circle intervention to immigrants' and refugees' daily experiences by integrating an English practice element into a basic song circle format. The resulting intervention comprises a series of six approximately biweekly events, with each event including the following elements:

- Introduction Time—Participants share names around the circle. Facilitator provides a brief overview of the song circle format then leads a vocal/musical warm-up.
- English Practice Through Song—Facilitator teaches and enables practice of English vocabulary as participants jointly learn and sing simple songs in English.
- Sharing Songs Across Cultures—Going around the circle, attendants are invited to share songs with the group from their backgrounds or cultures, in any language, and to teach the songs to the group. Other artistic forms of sharing—e.g., poetry, acting, and dance—are also welcome.
- Discussion—The facilitator invites group members to discuss the experience and the songs shared and to provide feedback. This portion may lend itself to critical, collective discussion of life circumstances, part of the Freirean approach to popular education (see Martinson & Su, 2012).

The song circle events were held in a community recreation center without a religious affiliation. In-person interpretation was provided and lyrics of songs chosen for the English practice portion were translated into other languages based on the availability of volunteer interpreters and translators. Vocabulary and lyrics to English practice songs were taught using posters with illustrations of vocabulary

[1] In a qualitative study conducted in NC's Triangle Region, employment and monetary concerns composed 40% of factors contributing to refugees' emotional distress (RMHWI, 2014), and English skills multiply chances of success among immigrant job-seekers in the U.S. (Bergson-Shilcock & Witte, 2015).

words and by motions, song lyric sheets, and demonstrations of the songs. During around-the-circle portions in which attendants were invited to share songs across cultures, attendants taught songs using a variety of means. See Appendices A, B, and C for examples of song materials used throughout this intervention. Songs were accompanied by guitar, rhythm instruments were provided for attendants, and attendants were invited to bring other instruments.

As this intervention was taking place for the first time and the researcher anticipated a tenuous development of trust between non-U.S.-born and U.S.-born participants, she planned to unfold the pilot intervention in two phases. The first phase would focus on engaging refugee and immigrant individuals in the intervention, trying the activity components of each session as described above, gathering feedback on feasibility and accessibility, and adjusting the intervention accordingly. This phase would last for the first three sessions of the six-session intervention. In the second phase, during the fourth through sixth sessions, the researcher would hold other elements of the intervention constant while focusing on additionally engaging U.S.-born residents in the song circle events. By implementing the intervention in two separate phases, the researcher hoped to build trust with refugee and immigrant attendants before opening the intervention more broadly, and to avoid taking up all of the venue's limited space with an initial rush of cross-culturally interested U.S.-born residents she pictured might want to join.

Proposed phases of the intervention's development, preparation, implementation, and research are depicted in Table 2. Because of difficulty engaging refugee and immigrant participants to attend, an altered timeline was utilized, also depicted in Table 2. Differences between the timelines include:

- elimination of a second phase focusing on engaging U.S.-born individuals in the intervention, as instead all weeks were focused on engaging refugee and immigrant participants and
- alterations to quantitative research approach and advertising/engagement approach (discussed in further sections of this paper).

Sampling & Engagement Approach

This study used purposive sampling, combining convenience sampling and snowball sampling. The researcher used convenience sampling: She reached out through the network of her existing contacts with organizations that interface with the populations she sought to engage. She used snowball sampling: She asked organizations and song circle participants to spread the word about the events to others within the populations she hoped to recruit. No exclusion criteria applied. Children and adults were welcome.

The study proposed to use the above sampling approaches to reach three populations: 1) volunteer translators and interpreters (who were recruited during the implementation preparation phase to begin work on translating flyer, song, and evaluation materials during this time), 2) refugee and immigrant community members (to be recruited during the implementation preparation phase and first song circle phase and to participate throughout the intervention), and 3) U.S.-born community members (to be recruited during the first song circle phase and to participate during the second song circle phase). (See Table 2 for detail on proposed and actual phases of this intervention.) Because of difficulty in recruiting refugee and immigrant community members, active recruitment of U.S.-born community members was never carried out, as the researcher chose to focus on recruitment of non-U.S.-born community members throughout.

The researcher utilized the following recruitment activities:

- To recruit interpretation and translation volunteers, the researcher targeted language departments at two local universities, sending emails to approximately twenty university faculty or staff members as well two classes of graduate students regarding the opportunity to volunteer. She asked them to volunteer or spread the word.
- Flyers advertising the opportunity—targeted toward immigrant and refugee residents—were translated by a combination of volunteer and paid translators into seven languages. Details about the event including flyers were emailed approximately five times to: a large coalition of

community organizations (consisting of over 200 members) serving refugees and immigrants in Orange County and three smaller groups of refugee and immigrant providers in the area. Individual email conversations were held with eight providers. The researcher requested providers share event details and flyers with immigrant and refugee clients and offered to drop off printed flyers if needed. The researcher posted flyers in these seven languages at 10 key locations in Orange County and also gave flyers to attendants of the song circles to share and post locally. See Appendix D for flyers used to advertise this song circle intervention.

- After the first few weeks of the intervention: Feedback had suggested to the researcher that she connect with refugees and immigrants in ways that more fully utilized the opportunity of community groups already formed (see Results section). The researcher delivered stacks of printed flyers to eight community providers through organizational visits and presented briefly about the events at three refugee and immigrant community groups (an approach she terms a "warm handoff" approach).

Data Gathering & Analysis Approach

Data gathering approach.

In planning this study, the researcher originally aimed to gather not only information about the feasibility and acceptability of this intervention, but also initial data regarding its potential impact on attitudes of openness to, affiliation with, comfort around, and care toward individuals from different national backgrounds. Pursuant to these goals, the researcher collected data in several ways:

1) Through notetaking, basic demographics of attendants were taken at each intervention session. Attendants were not asked to fill out forms with detailed demographics as providers had noted such forms can trigger traumatic re-experiencing for some refugees and immigrants (J. Hinson & L. Garlock, personal communication, August 26, 2015).

2) Quantitative surveys regarding attendants' openness to, affiliation with, comfort around, and care toward individuals from different backgrounds were administered at the beginning of the first, fourth, and sixth sessions of the song circle intervention. Survey responses remained anonymous.
3) Qualitative feedback was sought at the end of each of the six song circle sessions regarding the feasibility and acceptability of the song circle intervention approach.
4) Given difficulty in recruiting refugee and immigrant individuals, the researcher adapted her plans during the second half of the intervention to include additional qualitative research: She contacted targeted community providers for email interviews regarding the acceptability of the intervention, which resulted in three email interviews about acceptability. Qualitative data addressing the study's research question was also gathered from emails from two volunteers.

Measures.

The researcher designed a quantitative survey to assess attendants' interest in, affiliation with, comfort with, and care toward individuals from different national backgrounds. These variables related to her theory of change: If sharing songs together helped attendants to develop these attitudes, this could enable them to view one another as teammates rather than opponents in dealing with complex social challenges (see the description of the Highlander Center's cultural organizing approach in the Intervention Background section). While scales measuring similar variables had been previously developed, existing scales used multiple items for each construct, and the researcher chose to ask a small number of questions targeting exactly the attitudes she wanted to assess. She believed this simplicity would be crucial in a busy, multilingual, multigenerational environment. Four items were developed, one assessing each variable. Each consisted of a statement with which respondents could express level of agreement along a four-point Likert scale enhanced with visual illustration, where scores of 1 represented low agreement and 4 represented high agreement (see Appendix E). The quantitative survey was piloted for

comprehension with two volunteers and translated into five languages by a paid translation service to ensure accuracy.

The quantitative survey in English, guidelines for taking demographic notes, guidelines for qualitative feedback sessions during each song circle, and guidelines for qualitative interviews of targeted providers are included in Appendices E, F, G, and H.

Data analysis approach.

Using demographic notes from each event, descriptive statistics were calculated using Excel.

While the researcher initially hoped to compare quantitative survey scores from the first, fourth, and sixth sessions of the song circle intervention using t-tests to compare differences between baseline, midline, and endline scores, this was not practical due to low sample size at the fourth session. Rather, descriptive statistics were calculated based on responses recorded on all completed quantitative surveys.

Qualitative analysis was performed on all notes from qualitative feedback sessions at the end of each song circle event and on targeted provider email interviews and relevant emails from two volunteers. These notes and emails were typed into Excel and separated by the researcher into 49 different input statements, then coded manually. The researcher specifically sought to use this qualitative data to understand: What made this event positive or appealing to individuals? What made this event challenging or less appealing to individuals (possibly different by population group)? How could this event improve in the future? Accordingly, she divided input statements into Benefit statements, Challenge statements, and Suggestion statements. To develop codes for the data, the researcher used open coding strategy as described by Rubin and Babbie (2013); codes were not set by pre-existing theory. In developing codes grounded in the data, the researcher found it useful to develop codes that were not limited to any of the above three statement categories and could thus be used to code statements in any of those three categories as needed. See Table 3 for resulting codes. Coded data was analyzed for themes using frequencies and with attention to causes, as Rubin and Babbie (2013) suggest.

Results

As this report was written following the fourth session of this six-session intervention, these results are based on data from only the period up to and including the fourth song circle session.

Demographic Descriptive Statistics

Across four song circle events, a total of 14 attendants were engaged. Ninety-three percent of the sample (n = 13) were U.S.-born residents and 7% (n = 1) were born in other nations. Ninety-three percent (n = 13) identified as speaking English as their first language; 7% (n = 1) did not. While flyers welcomed families, 100% (n = 14) of attendants were adults over the age of 18. Figures 1-3 illustrate the demographic breakdown of attendants.

Quantitative Survey Descriptive Statistics

The quantitative survey designed for this study generated four variables: interest across national background, friendship across national background, comfort across national background, and care across national background (each represented by one survey item). Descriptive statistics were calculated for responses on each variable on the ten quantitative surveys completed (n = 10) with a possible range of answers from 1 (low) to 4 (high). Means for the variables were as follows: interest across national background was 3.8 (SD = 0.42) out of 4 possible points, friendship across national background was 2.9 (SD = 1.10) out of 4 possible points (with a response of “2” indicating a respondent endorsed that they had 3-5 friends with origins in different countries, and “3” indicating that a respondent had 5-10 friends), comfort across national background was 3.2 (SD = 1.07) out of 4, and care for others across national background was 3.9 (SD = 0.32). These statistics are displayed in Table 4 and represented graphically in Figure 4.

Qualitative Interview Themes

Qualitative data was divided into 49 qualitative input statements, which fell into the following categories of input statements: 49% Suggestion statements (n = 25), 27% Challenge statements (n = 14),

and 24% Benefit statements (n = 12) as depicted in Figure 5 (with 2 of 49 input statements double-coded across two categories). Codes derived from open coding and their frequencies are displayed in the codebook provided in Table 3.

Frequent themes included advertising (n = 7, 28% of Suggestion statements and 14% of overall input statements), song learning (n = 7) and song selection (n = 4), and language (n = 4). Respondents mentioned a wide variety of potential barriers to attending, most consistently mentioning as barriers prioritization of work and related aspects of basic survival (n = 4, 29% of Challenge statements and 8% of overall input statements), transportation (n = 4, 29% of Challenge statements and 8% of overall input statements), timing (n = 3 [timing was mentioned 4 times, 3 times as a barrier and once as a facilitator to participation]), and a political climate of fear (n = 2). Suggestions frequently included reference to community (n = 5, 20% of Suggestion statements and 10% of overall input statements), utilizing groups existent within the community (n = 4, 16% of Suggestion statements and 8% of overall input statements), and participatory practice (n = 3, 12% of Suggestion statements and 6% of overall input statements). Benefits mentioned ranged broadly and were all emotionally focused, including emotional expression, connection/community, and, the most frequently expressed benefit, being able to help (n = 2, 17% of Benefit statements and 4% of overall input statements). Participants frequently suggested ways for the intervention to be culturally inclusive (n = 7) or culturally sensitive (n = 2), together comprising 36% of Suggestion statements and 18% of overall input statements. Example quotations are included below.

Discussion & Future Directions

Immigrant, Refugee, and U.S.-Born Resident Attendance

Despite extensive advertising purposefully aimed toward engaging refugee and immigrant residents in this song circle intervention, nearly all attendants during the first through fourth sessions of the intervention were U.S.-born residents. Participation in a standalone song circle series focused on English language practice and sharing songs across cultural backgrounds does not seem to be a feasible

and accessible intervention to immigrants and refugees. The fact that 14% of overall qualitative input statements (n = 7) had to do with advertising suggests that participants who attended and providers interviewed for additional feedback realized the study was failing to meet its initial aims in recruitment. Additional qualitative themes give further input regarding barriers.

Possible Barriers to Participation

With most input statements regarding barriers focused on immigrant and refugee experiences, the most commonly suggested barriers appear to be: 1) prioritization of other aspects of survival, 2) transportation challenges (in spite of the geographically central location of this particular intervention), 3) timing (though there was not consensus regarding what times would work better), and 4) a political climate of fear. One provider candidly shared by email interview:

> For folks who have to spend most of their waking hours working to make ends meet and put food on the table, carving out time to do non-critical things like this is hard. . . . The few free hours parents have are spent either sleeping—recovering from their graveyard shift work or having to work 2-3 jobs—in an ESL class, or with their children doing activities in their own communities.

A second provider speculated, “People may be frightened to be out and about because of arrests and deportations.” A third explained, “I have had difficulty all year getting refugee people to attend groups of any kind.”

Political climate makes particular sense as a barrier to this author, in the context of insights shared by three graduate and postdoctoral researchers focused on issues Latine immigrants face in North Carolina (F. Arriaga, J. Garcia, & L. Villa-Torres, personal communication, March 20, 2017). They described how immigrants’ use of services, including even critical medical services, tends to go down rapidly in times of increased immigration enforcement, due to fear of deportation. They referenced the research of Hacker, Anies, Folb, and Zallman (2015); Hagan, Castro, and Rodriguez (2010); and Toomey et al. (2014).

Participatory Planning, Use of Existing Community Groups, & Long-Term Investment

While the researcher attempted to take refugee and immigrant individuals' perspectives into account in the development of this song circle intervention, she agrees with respondents that a more participatory approach would do a better job at shaping such intervention approaches in the future. The prospect of connecting with and building the song circle concept into existing refugee and immigrant community groups already frequented by people from these populations also sounds promising. The researcher tried to move in this direction during the latter phase of the intervention through reaching in to existing refugee and immigrant groups, including one "Song Share to Go" session when a provider invited her to lead a refugee and immigrant parent group in a brief exercise in English practice through song onsite at their group. One more such session is planned. Building the song circle concept into community provider frameworks with which immigrants and refugees already interact has the added benefit of overcoming politically-driven fears of engaging with community services, as those participating in these groups (e.g., English or parenting groups) have demonstrated an openness to engaging in services.

Two Suggestion-focused input statements reflected the concept of long-term investment, a concept on which the researcher reflected as she conducted this pilot intervention. As one respondent put it, "This group could start much more if you did it for a long time, like years. It would grow." The researcher, who is finalizing graduate coursework and does not know where she will find a job afterwards, also noticed that she was less likely to invest in developing an infrastructure and ongoing community connections for this intervention due to her uncertainty about her geographic future. It reminded her of the numerous writings of author Wendell Berry regarding the ethical importance of living in one location long-term in order to invest in that location deeply.

Interest of U.S.-Born Residents in Cross-Cultural Song-Based Engagement

Descriptive statistics clearly demonstrated that U.S.-born residents were very interested in this intervention's activity, even without a phase focused on their recruitment. Those who attended were very

willing to provide input statements on logistics (in total, n = 7), advertising (n = 7), and selection and learning of songs (in total, n = 11). Of even more interest to the researcher was the high number of Suggestion-focused input statements received regarding cultural inclusivity and cultural sensitivity (in total, n = 9, 36% of Suggestion statements and 18% of overall input statements), indicating that these values are a priority for U.S.-born individuals who attended. Quantitative survey results depict an attendant group with consistently high openness to and desire to contribute to individuals from other national backgrounds and slightly lower and more variable experience in friendships with and comfort around those from other national backgrounds. These results suggest availability of a set of open and willing U.S.-born participants, who believe they have something to gain from participating in an intercultural song circle and may be interested in cross-national song-based interventions in the future.

Relatedly, cross-cultural music educators warn about toeing a fine balance to ensure that cross-cultural musical exploration goes beyond a self-congratulatory exercise in which those exploring the music focus on building self-identities as tolerant and experienced, and, rather, enables genuine connection around deeply held musical traditions and possibly changes perspectives (Hess, 2013). Schmidt (2007) proposes that it is only through genuine empathetic connection that cross-cultural music sharing can increase understanding regarding one another's political realities, going beyond exercising tolerance. The present author believes that, had attendants from a broader range of national backgrounds attended, the song circle events could have translated the openness and care expressed by attendants into increased understanding of the current realities experienced by those from other national backgrounds.

Future Directions

Future continuations or adaptations on this intervention concept are encouraged to take a participatory approach to development and, when mutually desirable, to build onto the existing frameworks of community groups of which refugee and immigrant individuals are already a part. Locating the song circle within existing refugee- and immigrant-focused community groups while finding ways to

incorporate the design's intent of also engaging non-U.S.-born residents in the intervention to establish cross-national ties may be a challenge. Engaging and targeting U.S.-born participants with lower levels of openness or care toward non-U.S.-born individuals, while maintaining a supportive intervention environment, is another critical consideration for future studies.

Conclusion

This study addressed the feasibility and accessibility of an intercultural song circle intervention in engaging non-U.S.-born and U.S-born individuals in building connections across different national backgrounds through the sharing of simple song. It assessed a six-session pilot of this intervention approach using mixed-methods data collection and analysis. After four of the six sessions, findings seem to indicate that the intervention is not attended by refugee and immigrant individuals but is attended by U.S.-born individuals highly committed to connecting with and contributing to those from different national backgrounds. Barriers preventing accessibility to refugees and immigrants include work and survival priorities, transportation, timing, and political climate. Future adaptations of the cross-national song share idea might improve on this pilot by addressing the above barriers as well as taking a more participatory approach to development and locating the intervention within existing community groups. Given the benefits cited by attendants and their expressed motivation, along with the potential expressed by the literature for political transformation seeded by cross-national connection, there may be potential to carry forward the idea of a song-based intervention building cross-national ties, if it could be enacted in a form much more responsive to the needs of immigrant and refugee members of the community.

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Tables

Table 1

Key Informant Interviews, Focus Group, Coalition Site Visit

Type of Interaction	Date	Individual or Group	Justification for Expertise	Topics of Interview
Key Informant Interview	10/14/2016	Professor Josh Hinson professor at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Social Work- Chapel Hill, NC	15 years experience in refugee & immigrant mental health & community work	acceptability & feasibility of song share idea
Coalition Site Visit	11/17/2016	Orange County Refugee Health Coalition- Chapel Hill, NC	service providers serving refugees & immigrants in intervention county	soliciting general feedback & interest in collaboration
Focus Group Session	11/20/2016	Burma Women's Group combined program of Art Therapy Institute & Refugee Mental Health & Wellness Project- Carrboro, NC	lived experience as refugee individuals, and experience in cross-ethnic arts-based group	acceptability & feasibility of song share idea
Key Informant Interview	12/29/2016	Matt Watroba community singer & song leader- Detroit, MI	experience starting song circles across the U.S. & using song to bridge divides around race in urban Detroit	advice on leading a song circle & getting a group of people comfortable with singing songs
Key Informants Interview	1/26/2017	Nora Spencer & Beth Lowder macro-focused Master of Social Work students at Univeristy of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Social Work- Chapel Hill, NC	interns with a university-based center focused on social innovation	advice on applying principles of 'Design Thinking' & rapid prototyping into song share intervention
Key Informant Interview	1/27/2017	Marie Weil professor at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Social Work- Chapel Hill, NC	decades of experience in community social work practice & community-based research	advice on approach to evaluating song share intervention
Key Informants Interview	3/6/2017	Nathalie Robelot & Lindy Chicola master's-level experessive arts therapy interns at Art Therapy Institute- Carrboro, NC	master's-level training & experience in expressive arts therapy, including music & including with refugee groups	advice on warming a group up to singing together; cultural competency

Table 2

Proposed and Actual Phases of Song Circle Project

Proposed Phases	Implemented Phases
Oct 2016-Jan 2017	Oct 2016-Jan 2017
Research & Development	Research & Development
-Key informant interviews	-Key informant interviews
-Refugee focus group	-Refugee focus group
-Coalition site visits	-Coalition site visits
-Review of past methods	-Review of past methods
-Review of data on region	-Review of data on region
Jan 2017-Feb 2017	Jan 2017-Feb 2017
Implementation Preparation Phase:	Implementation Preparation Phase:
-Engagement of translation & interpretation volunteers	-Engagement of translation & interpretation volunteers
-Idenficatication & securing of venue	-Idenficatication & securing of venue
-Creation, translation, & dissemination of flyer for advertisement	-Creation, translation, & dissemination of flyer for advertisement
-Hanging flyers around town	-Hanging flyers around town
-Disributing flyers through community partners (email & print)	-Disributing flyers through community partners (email & print)
-Advertising to refugee & immigrant participants for Phase I	-Advertising to refugee & immigrant participants for Phase I
-Preparation & translation of quantiative survey form	-Preparation & translation of quantiative survey form
-Preparation & translation of song materials for English practice	-Preparation & translation of song materials for English practice
Mar 2017- Apr 2017 (Song Circles 1-3)	Mar 2017- Apr 2017 (Song Circles 1-3)
Phase I of Song Share:	Phase I of Song Share:
-Engaging refugee and immigrant participants	-Engagement of refugee & immigrant participants
-Focus on English practice through song	-Focus on English practice through song
-Focus on sharing songs across cultures	-Focus on sharing songs across cultures
-Adaptation based on participant feedback	-Adaptation based on participant feedback
Phase I of Research:	Phase I of Research:
-Collecting baseline quantitative survey data	-Collecting quantitative survey data
-Collecting qualitative feedback	-Collecting qualitative feedback
Advertising to U.S.-born participants for Phase II	Cont'd advertising to refugee & immigrant participants
Apr 2017-May 2017 (Song Circles 4-6)	Apr 2017-May 2017 (Song Circles 4-6)
Phase II of Song Share:	Phase I of Song Share Cont'd
-Added focus on engaging U.S.-born participants	Additional Steps to Engaging Refugee & Immigrant Participants:
-Cont'd focus on English practice through song	-Targeted feedback solicited from providers
-Cont'd foucs on sharing songs across cultures	-'Warm handoffs'- flyer visits to providers
-Adaptation based on participant feedback	-'Warm handoffs'- community group visits
Phase II of Research:	Phase II of Research:
-Collecting midpoint quantatative survey data	-Collecting quantatative survey data
-Collecting endpoint quantatative survey data	-Collecting qualitative feedback
-Collecting qualitative feedback	-Analyzing, synthesizing, reporting findings
-Analyzing, synthesizing, reporting findings	Planning possible adapted approach for future

Table 3

Codes Developed From Qualitative Data and Their Frequencies

Codebook for Coded Themes	Frequency (within 49 input statements)
Advertising	7
Barrier- disinterest	1
Barrier- fear/politics	2
Barrier- not leaving home	1
Barrier- transportation	4
Barrier- work/survival/priorities	4
Benefit- connection/community	2
Benefit- comfort	1
Benefit- cultural exposure	1
Benefit- emotional expression	1
Benefit- help	2
Community	5
Community groups	4
Culture- inclusivity	7
Culture- sensitivity	2
Language	4
Logistics- location	1
Logistics- other	2
Logistics- timing	4
Long-term investment	2
Participatory	3
Song- instrumentation	1
Song- learning	7
Song- selection	4

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for Quantitative Survey Responses

Descriptive Statistics	OC Interest	OC Friends	OC Comfort	OC Improve
Mean	3.8	2.9	3.2	3.9
Standard Error	0.133333333	0.348010217	0.326598632	0.1
Median	4	3	3.5	4
Mode	4	4	4	4
Standard Deviation	0.421637021	1.100504935	1.032795559	0.316227766
Sample Variance	0.177777778	1.211111111	1.066666667	0.1
Kurtosis	1.40625	-1.23582671	0.945870536	10
Skewness	-1.778781184	-0.387645245	-1.240564978	-3.16227766
Range	1	3	3	1
Minimum	3	1	1	3
Maximum	4	4	4	4
Sum	38	29	32	39
Count	10	10	10	10

Note. Each of the four variables asks for level of agreement with a statement. OC Interest: "I am interested in meeting and learning from people who are from different countries than I am." OC Friends: "I have friends who are from different countries than I am." OC Comfort: "I feel comfortable when I am spending time with people who are from different countries than I am." OC Improve: "It is important to make life better for those who are from different countries than I am." Four levels of agreement are possible for each item. 4: Extremely (for OC Friends, 10 or more friends). 3: A lot (for OC Friends, 5-10 friends). 2: Some (for OC Friends, 3-5 friends). 1: A little (for OC Friends, 0-2 friends).

Figures

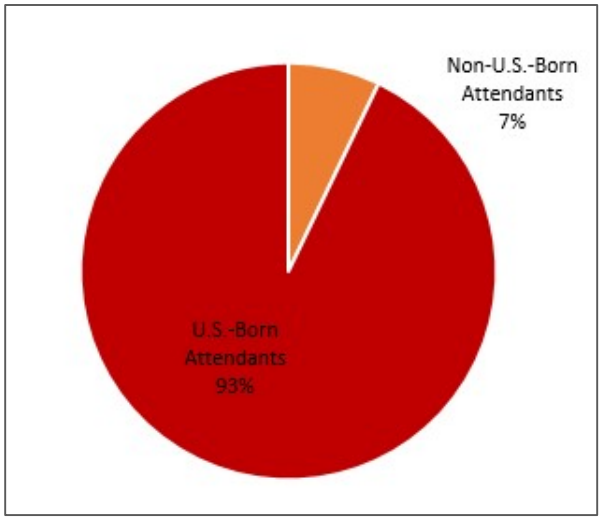


Figure 1. National background of attendants.

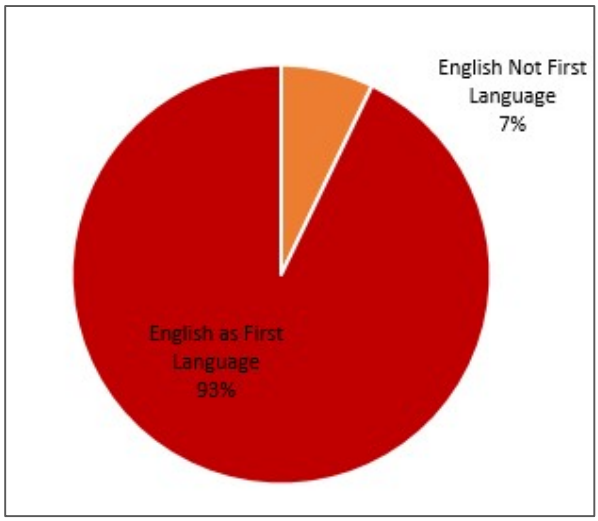


Figure 2. Linguistic background of attendants.

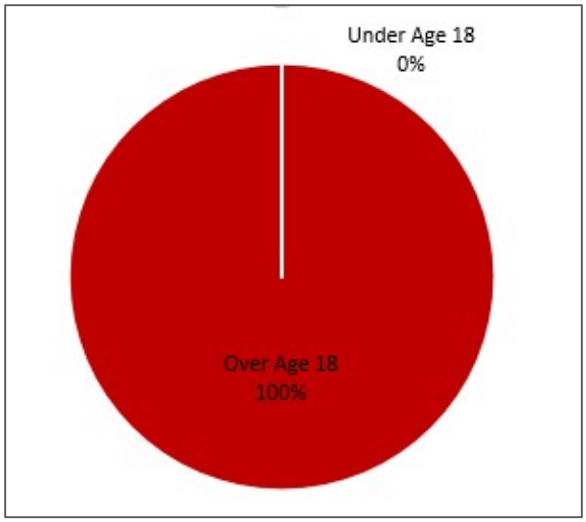


Figure 3. Age of attendants.

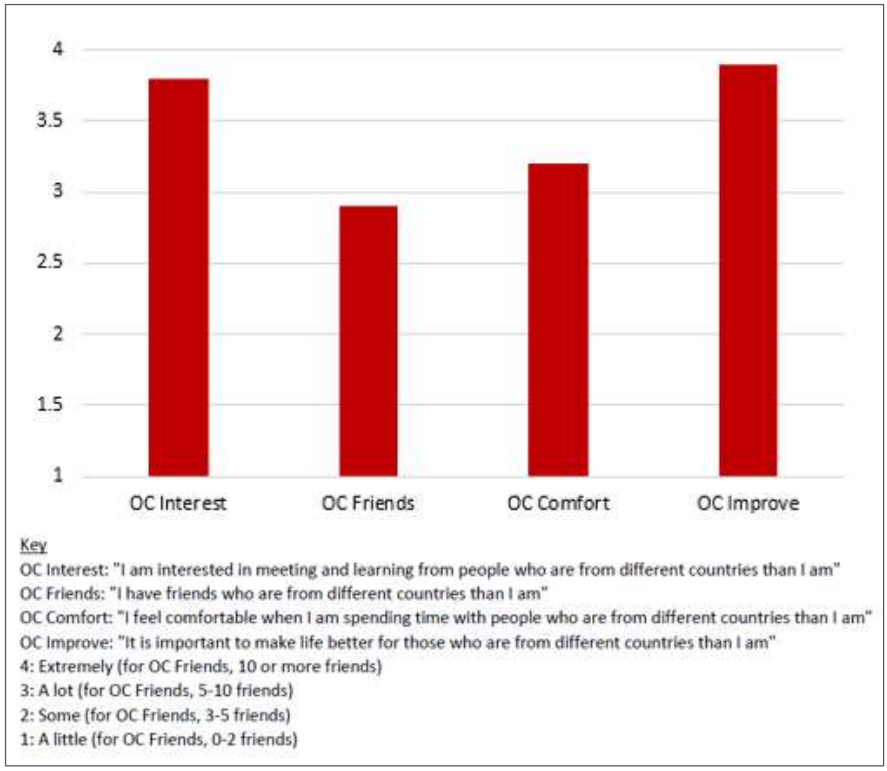


Figure 4. Mean level agreement with quantitative survey items.

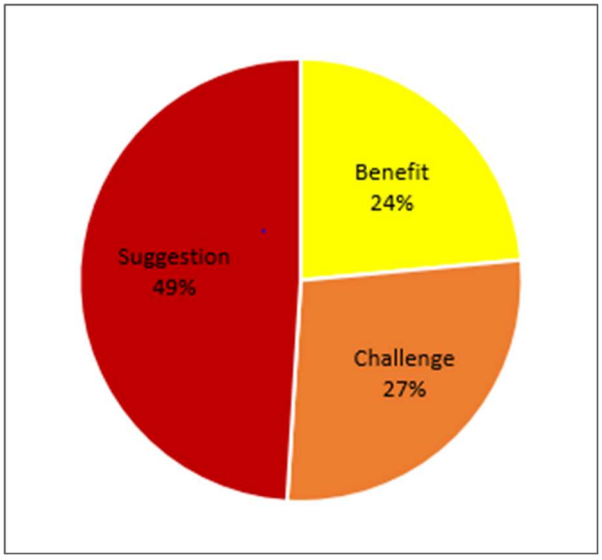


Figure 5. Qualitative responses: Frequency of input statement type. This breaks down the input statement types within the 49 input statements received, including 2 statements which were double-coded.

Appendix A

Song Lyrics for English Practice Through Song, Session One

Peace Will Come

C F C
Peace, peace will, peace will come
C G C
Let it begin with me
C F C
We, we need, we need peace
C G C
Let it begin with me

F C
Oh, my own life is all I can hope to control
F C G
Oh, let my life be lived for the good of the soul, Let it bring

[return to first verse]

C F
Peace will come, oh, peace will come, oh
C
Peace will come
C G C
Let it begin with me
C F
Peace will come, oh, peace will come, oh
C
Peace will come
C G C F C G C
Let it begin with me

Welcome Table

C
I'm gonna sit at the welcome table
F C
I'm gonna sit at the welcome table, one of these days, Hallelujah
C Am
I'm gonna sit at the welcome table
C G C
I'm gonna sit at the welcome table, one of these days

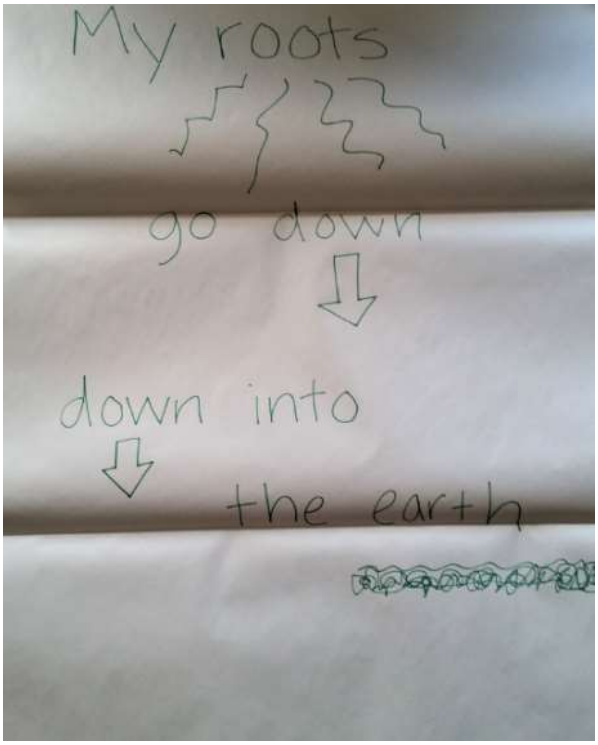
I'm gonna feast on milk and honey
I'm gonna feast on milk and honey, one of these days, Hallelujah
I'm gonna feast on milk and honey
I'm gonna feast on milk and honey, one of these days

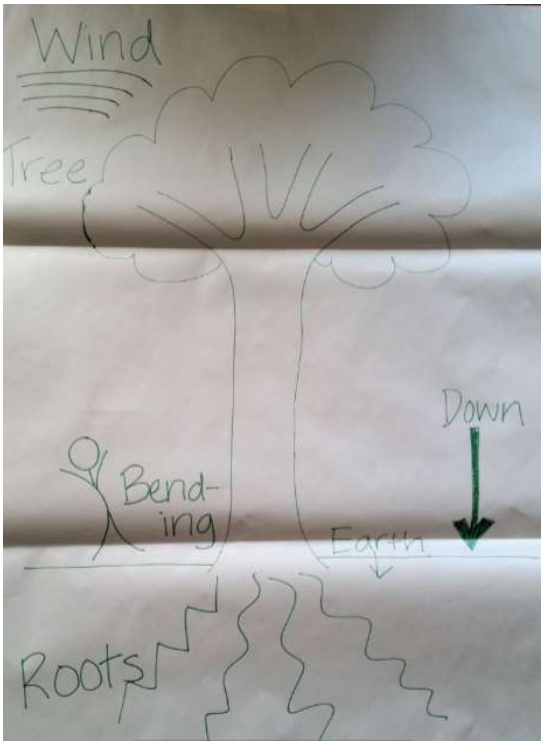
My Roots Go Down

G
My roots go down, down into the earth
C G
My roots go down, down into the earth
Em C
My roots go down, down into the earth
D G
My roots go down
G
I am a tree, bending in the wind
C G
I am a tree, bending in the wind
Em C
I am a tree, bending in the wind
D G
My roots go down

Appendix B

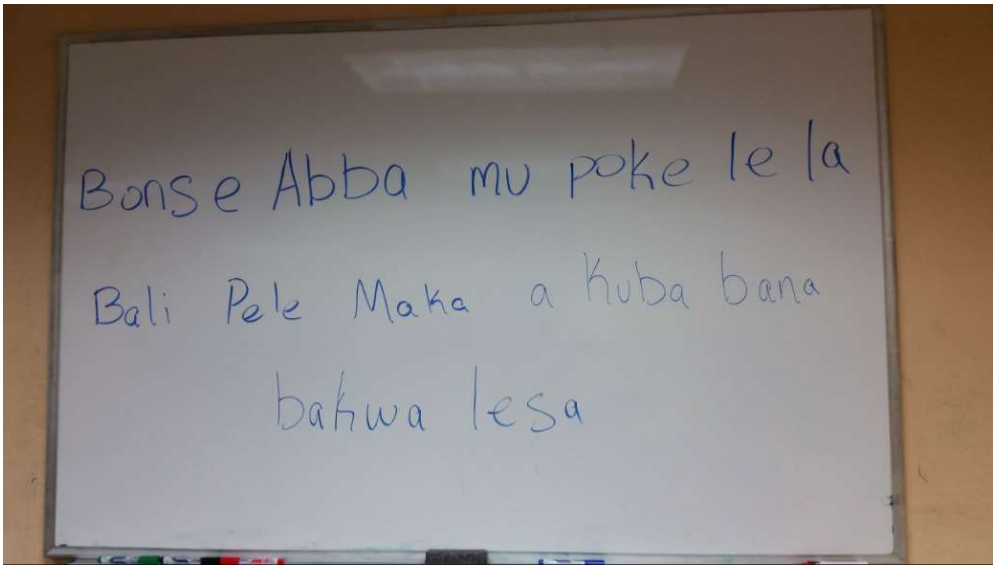
Sample Vocabulary Illustration Pages for English Practice Through Song, Session One





Appendix C

Song Taught by Attendant During Sharing Songs Across Cultures, Session One



Appendix D

Flyers for Recruitment of Refugee and Immigrant Attendants

SONG CIRCLE

Sharing & Learning Simple Songs!

- English practice using simple songs
- Chance to connect. Families welcome!
- Chance to teach others songs from your experience

- Free and open to all. No musical skill needed, though you can bring a musical instrument if you want

March 4, March 18, March 25, April 8, April 22, May 13
Downstairs in Room 2-3 at Carrboro Century Center
100 N. Greensboro St, Carrboro, NC
5-7 pm (March 25 is 4-6pm)

No need to register—simply come! Text Claire (248.910.2406) if you need more information.

Note. Song circle flyers translated into Karen, Arabic, Burmese, French, German, Spanish, and Swahili

Appendix E

Quantitative Survey Instrument, in English

If you are willing, please help us learn about our project by answering this anonymous questionnaire.

How many times have you attended this song group? (*If you this is your first time here, please put "1".)*

Please circle the answer that feels the most accurate for you.

1. I am interested in meeting and learning from people who are from different countries than I am:

A little Some A lot Extremely

2. I have friends who are from different countries than I am:

A little (0-2 friends) Some (3-5 friends) A lot (5-10 friends) Extremely (10 or more friends)

3. I feel comfortable when I am spending time with people who are from different countries than I am:

A little Some A lot Extremely

4. It is important to make life better for those who are from different countries than I am:

A little Some A lot Extremely

English is the first language I learned how to speak: Yes / No
I have lived in the United States for most of my life: Yes / No

Note. This survey was translated by paid, professional translators into five other languages.

Appendix F

Guidelines for Taking Demographic Notes at Each Song Circle

Date:
Note-Taker:

Demographics

- TOTAL number of attendants _____
- Number of children _____ (as identified by observation, approximately those under 18, but the note-taking volunteer will not be asking anyone their age as the intended experience of this group event is relaxed and community-oriented not formal and official)
- Number of participants who seem to identify as volunteer interpreters or other volunteers _____
- Number of participants who seem to identify as coming from a country of national origin outside the U.S. _____ (If note-taker has time given the situation, note in extra space below each country of national origin and the number of people from it. Particularly, this information will be evident during our rounds of introduction.)
- Number of participants who seem to identify as U.S.-born and native English speakers _____

There is a high level of fluidity and nuance around some of these concepts. Note-takers are encouraged to take as detailed notes as they would like regarding the above questions.

Appendix G

Guidelines for Qualitative Feedback Sessions at End of Each Song Circle

1. What did you enjoy or what worked well for you about this event?
2. What was a challenge?
3. What do you suggest we do differently with this event in the future?

Appendix H

Guidelines for Qualitative Email Interviews of Targeted Providers

1. Do you have ideas about why immigrants and refugees may not be attending these song circle events, and/or what might make it more useful to them?

2. Do you have any upcoming events at which it might make sense for me to share about the song events?

3. Would having printed copies of the flyers in different languages (attached) delivered to you make it more feasible to share this event? If so, let me know what languages you would like and I will be happy to give you some.

Note. The researcher added these questions to her research approach as she continued to focus on refugee and immigrant recruitment during the second half of the intervention and began using a warm handoff approach (see Table 2 for more detail of proposed and actual stages).