



Journal of Arts & Humanities

Volume 09, Issue 03, 2020: 44-56

Article Received: 20-01-2020

Accepted: 04-03-2020

Available Online: 18-03-2020

ISSN: 2167-9045 (Print), 2167-9053 (Online)

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18533/journal.v9i3.1849>

Fostering Acculturation by Embracing Music: A Case Study of Refugee Youth

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ABSTRACT

Refugee children face a myriad of obstacles on their path towards acculturation. Often, they face role reversals, instability, loss of identity, communication and language barriers, discrimination, and socio-emotional issues. Studies have shown that music can be beneficial in aiding the acculturation process. Though few studies have examined how the incorporation of music in schools that are predominately composed of refugee children affect the children's well-being and the overall school culture. This study examined a Northeast University sponsored music series that provided a platform for performances at both the University and at a local grade school (K-8th) that was comprised of a high refugee population. Qualitative data were collected from students and teachers, as well as observation from performances. Key findings shed light on how the school's participation in the music series exposed students to familiar and different cultures, offered socio-emotional benefits, and enhanced a school wide culture of music appreciation. Implications of the current study shed light on the importance of funding music programs for diverse study bodies.

Keywords: Music, refugees, acculturation, education, school culture, youth.

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Acknowledgment of Outside Assistance

The current study would not have been made possible without funding from the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Penn State Behrend and involvement from the Susan Hirt Hagen Center for Community Outreach, Research, and Evaluation.

1. Introduction

Since 1980, approximately three million refugees have resettled in the U.S. (Krogstad & Radford, 2017), with a total of 10,000 total refugees settling in northeast Pennsylvania (PA Refugee

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Resettlement Program, 2017). Yearly migration rates fluctuate with a low of 27,100 refugees immigrating into the U.S. in 2002 to a yearly high of 207,116 in 1980 (PA Refugee Resettlement Program, 2017). Within the year of 2014-2015 alone, 3,056 refugees resettled in Pennsylvania (PA Refugee Resettlement Program, 2017). Many of these refugees arrive in their resettlement city as children (McBrien, 2005) resulting in an influx of young refugees enrolled in schools throughout the relocation areas.

Refugees face a myriad of challenges when they are displaced from their country of origin and later resettle in a new and unfamiliar country, making the process of acculturation, or assimilating to a new country, very hard (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006, p. 305). This experience can be especially difficult for children. In the home, refugee children tend to master their new language faster than their parents. Often, this creates a role reversal where children take on adult responsibilities, such as accompanying their parents to doctors' visits and serving as a translator, or paying bills (Zhou & Bankston, 2000). At times, these children may also take on being the head of household and caretaker of younger siblings (Boyden et al., 2002). Zhou and Bankston (2000) argue these role reversals may create identity issues making acculturation to America more difficult.

Refugee children also experience difficulties in school. Often, they experience school-placed bullying, language barriers, and racial discrimination (Fazel, Reed, Panter-Brick, & Stein, 2012; McBrien, 2005). Studies indicate that discrimination specifically affects academic achievement and motivation (McBrien, 2005; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Portes and Rumbaut (2001) argue that discrimination may be the biggest factor that affects refugee acculturation. Further, rejection and discrimination may lead to school dropout (McBrien, 2005).

For refugee youth to have academic success, it is paramount that schools meet the psychological needs that are specific to this group, which include "a sense of safety, a sense of self, and an adjustment to cultural expectations of a new country" (McBrien, 2005, p. 339; see also Sinclair, 2001). The best way to achieve this is through maintaining a connection to a refugee's cultural heritage (McBrien, 2005). Music may be a key solution to combat these hardships while embracing biculturalism, which is assimilation to a new culture while retaining elements of one's culture of origin (McBrien, 2005). This article examines how a school's involvement in a music series has created positive outcomes for youth who are refugees or children of refugees. Specifically, we discuss how a music series introduces refugees to familiar and diverse cultures, increases socio-emotional well-being, and fosters a new way to communicate in the classroom, which may positively impact the school culture.

2. Background

2.1 Acculturation in the United States

Acculturation is the "process of cultural and psychological change" for individuals who migrate to a new country (Berry et al., 2006, p. 305). It is the process of taking on or assimilating to the elements that belong to the new dominant culture (Lara, Gamboa, Kahramanian, Morales, & Bautista, 2005). Acculturation involves revising and reassessing one's personal traditions, customs, music, language, food, political aspects, and economical changes in light of the host country (Berry et al., 2006; Lara et al., 2005). The process is heavily influenced by how much a refugee wants or is capable of adapting to their new culture, as well as to what degree they want to retain their cultural identity (Berry et al., 2006). Previous literature viewed this process as unidimensional where acculturation was linear (Lara et al., 2005). A person would start at zero (no acculturation) and over time acquire the host country's culture until fully acculturated (Lara et al., 2005). Newer models view acculturation as bidimensional, where acquiring a new culture is independent of keeping one's cultural heritage (Lara et al., 2005).

Portes and Rumbaut (2001) argue that successful assimilation into a new country varies due to demographic factors such as age, gender, race, religion, new neighborhood setting, and economic background (see also Berry et al., 2006). Specifically, those with highly preferred human and social capital (being able to speak English, wealth, and education) assimilate faster in the United States than those who lack these skills and resources (Lara et al., 2005; see also Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Portes and Rumbaut (2001) make the argument that human capital along with historical timing and how the

citizens of the new country view an immigrant's country of origin can impede a refugee's ability to assimilate to her new country.

2.2 Resiliency in the face of Trauma

Much of the research on acculturation prior to 2000 focused on refugees and trauma, using Western models of diagnostic disorders (Hart, 2014). This approach is based on two underlying assumptions. The first being that if refugee children experience events that Western countries deem negative, then these events will have negative effects on these children (Hart, 2014). Second, the solution to ending the assumed suffering is through the intervention of experts, namely, Western medical and psychological doctors (Hart, 2014). Hart (2014) notes that this model has come under fire for its "mechanistic" approach (p. 386).

A newer model, with a focus on resiliency, removes the cause and effect of experiencing an event and how the child reacts to it, and instead examines environmental factors that may mediate the experience. This means that a child could experience what the West considers a damaging event and actually be okay in regard to mental health (Hart, 2014). Children may be resilient, which can greatly impact their ability to acculturate into a newer culture.

2.3 A framework for acculturation

Those who acculturate to a new culture do so by navigating barriers and desires to both maintain their cultural identity and to participate in their new culture. Berry (1997) developed a conceptual framework that incorporates both cultural maintenance, the degree to which a person feels their cultural identity is important, and contact and participation, the degree to which the person becomes involved with other cultural groups. Within this framework are four possible strategies to acculturation. Assimilation refers to a person who does not feel the need to maintain their cultural identity and instead decides to participate in a new culture (Berry, 1997). Conversely, separation is when a person desires to maintain their cultural identity while not participating in a newer culture. Integration refers to individuals who both maintain a cultural identity while also participating in a newer culture (Berry, 1997). Lastly, marginalization refers to individuals who may decide not to maintain their cultural identity but may also not participate in a new culture through choice, discrimination, or exclusion from the new culture (Berry, 1997).

Berry (1997) notes that not all those who acculturate to a new culture have the ability to choose how they acculturate. Those who are marginalized may be forced to assimilate to the new culture and then forced into segregation (or forced separation). Further, an individual can only truly choose integration if the newer culture allows for them the agency to do so (Berry, 1997). Berry (1997) refers to this as a mutual accommodation where both the newer culture and the individual are accepting of both groups.

Portes and Rumbaut (2001) also discuss a framework of acculturation that focuses on the parent and child dynamic and has three possible outcomes. One such outcome is dissonant acculturation where a child adapts to the dominant culture faster than her or his parents, which may cause role reversal in the household and increased instability for the child (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). A second outcome is a consonant acculturation where children and parents assimilate at the same rate, which allows for the parent to maintain parental authority over the children (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). A final outcome is selective acculturation, or biculturalism (McBrien, 2005), where both children and parents acquire elements of the dominant culture while retaining parts of their heritage (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). This outcome is most similar to Berry's (1997) discussion of integration. Portes and Rumbaut (2001) argue that selective acculturation helps second-generation immigrants become upwardly mobile in their assimilation. As such, selective acculturation integration (Berry, 1997) may be one of the better outcomes for successful acculturation into the United States.

2.4 The importance of music for refugee youth

Children who emigrate (either as a migrant or refugee) may experience academic and social challenges that peers in their new host country do not typically encounter. Refugee youth have often experienced trauma in their country of origin (e.g. war, environmental disasters, death of loved ones) and been forced to travel to different countries en route to their final resettlement city (Mendenhall,

Barlett, & Ghaffar-Kucher, 2017). Many face instability, disruption in regular routines, and religious non-acceptance (Marsh, 2015). Through these transitions refugee children may develop delays in academic functioning, aggressive behavior, or other psychological and emotional symptoms (Fazel & Stein, 2002; see also Marsh, 2015). As a result, the transition to their host country is often riddled with a multitude of challenges. For many of these children, school offers the first salient introduction to their host country, new language, and new culture (Mendenhall et al., 2017). In this context, schools are key in aiding a refugee through the process of acculturation and thus affecting a refugee's emotional and psychological development (Derluyn & Broekaert, 2007).

Previous studies have found that one salient way to address various social and academic challenges is to incorporate intercultural teaching, which focuses on linguistic and cultural diversity (Hoti, Heinzmann, Muller, & Buholzer, 2017). One way to do this is through music, which may fulfill social, emotional, and cognitive needs for youth (North, Hargreaves, & O'Neil, 2000). While many studies have noted the importance of music education for homogeneous populations of youth, others examine how refugee populations can especially benefit from exposure to music (Marsh, 2012). Music can have a great impact on one's memories and emotions (Bailey & Collyer, 2006). Specifically, "...music is not only a ready means for the identification of different ethnic or social groups, it has potential emotional connotations and can be used to assert and negotiate identity in a particularly powerful manner" (Bailey & Collyer, 2006, p. 173; original source see Baily, 1994, p. 48). For refugee youth in particular, exposure to music has the ability to give them a sense of belonging, empowerment, strengthen their language skills (Crawford, 2017; Marsh, 2012; Lenette, Weston, Wise, Sunderland, & Bristed, 2016; see also Karlsen, 2013), as well as connect them to their cultural origins (Baily & Collyer, 2006; Karlsen, 2013).

One barrier for successful acculturation is language and communication. Reyes (1999) argues that music can provide another means of communicating for refugee youth while also enabling them to retain their country of origin ties (Reyes, 1999). For example, refugee camps serve as an especially influential time and place for refugees to assimilate aspects of new cultures while embracing their own. Reyes (1999) found that by encouraging Vietnamese refugees to share their culture through song and dance, they were able to infuse their folklore, words, and songs into traditional Western hymns and music, thereby assimilating to Western culture and language while simultaneously embracing their original songs and culture.

Another barrier for successful acculturation is improving emotional development. Heidenrich (2005) argues that therapeutic programs for refugees may not define music as an important element for success; however, many programs incorporate music in therapy. Therapeutic programs that include music enable refugees to express emotions and increase self-esteem and self-respect. Music programs provide a safe environment for group play that is free from judgment (Heidenrich, 2005). As a result, such programs increase communication while reducing anxiety, depression, and aggression (Harris, 2007). This shows to be especially impactful for young Sierra Leone and South Sudanese boys. For example, Harris (2007) found that the use of dance and drumming allowed for young Sierra Leone and South Sudanese youth to reconnect to their own culture while integrating to their new host country. Music and dance allowed the boys to express, process, and reflect on their emotions and memories of being former child soldiers. This helped them overcome stigma while successfully connecting to their new community (Harris, 2007).

The social, emotional, and cognitive benefits of music for refugee populations have been well documented (for examples, see Lenette et al., 2016; Crawford, 2017; Marsh, 2012); however, few studies have focused exclusively on how exposure to a diversity of musical performances influences multicultural populations of youth, as well as the school culture. Therefore, this case study is twofold. It aims to address the benefits of music for children, specifically those who are refugees or children of refugees, as well as how music may influence the school culture. This reciprocal relationship may help the transition for many refugee children into their new resettlement cities.

3. Methodology

3.1 Design

This case study sought to explore how participation in a music series affected students, most of whom were refugees and children of refugees, and their school culture. To fully understand this case, we examined the history of the music series, different contextual aspects (e.g. locations of performances), the physical settings, and other related cases (see Stake, 2005). Our main research questions included:

1. How does participation in the music series impact students' social and emotional needs?
2. How does participation in the music series impact the school culture?
3. Which acculturation strategy is evident in children who participate in the music series?

This case study was conducted during the Spring 2017 academic semester, over three months. The research team was composed of two faculty members at a local university and five undergraduate students who were trained in qualitative research methods.

Of the various strategies of conducting qualitative research (such as ethnographic, phenomenological, or grounded theory), we employed a case study strategy. Case studies are an important research tool in educational studies (Yin, 2003). Stake (2000, p. 436) argues that a case study can be defined as such when the sample is "a specific, unique, bounded system" (see also Mertens, 2005). Following in Stake's (2000) recommendations, we examined the nature of a music series, the historical background, the physical setting (both at the University and the local participating school), other contexts that influence the series (funding and partnerships), other related cases, and those who participated in the event. For the purpose of this article, findings from teachers, staff, and students at the participating school are included; findings from attendees to the University performances and the history of the music series are omitted.

A case study strategy was best fitting to answer our research questions because we sought to understand how a music series impacted one school. This particular grade school is unique in that it is composed primarily of refugees and newly arrived immigrants. Given its unique composition, those who were participants could be considered part of a bounded or closed sample. It was our interest to understand how the music series might impact other dimensions of the children's lives specific to their school culture.

3.2 Sampling

The research team purposefully sampled people who were directly impacted by the case under investigation (see Mertens, 2005), which primarily included students, most of whom were refugees and newly arrived immigrants, teachers, and staff from the participating elementary school.

The elementary school was located in a small metropolitan city in, Pennsylvania, which is one of five major resettlement cities in the state. The student body is composed of children native to America, as well as refugees and children of refugees. The student body is composed of students originating from 24 different countries and there were over 15 different languages spoken at the school. In light of the school's diversity, an ESL (English as a Second Language) program was available for students. The elementary school participated in a chamber music series, which was a free university-sponsored program. This music series included six performances throughout the year. Visiting musicians offered a performance at the university and then traveled to the local grade school and performed for teachers, staff, and students.

3.3 Procedures

Qualitative data from this study were composed of observations and field notes, semi-structured interviews, and group interviews. Upon agreeing to participate in the study, participants were given both confidentiality and informed consent statements in accordance with the request of the University's Institutional Review Board and students under 18 years old were given permission to participate in the study by their parents, as requested by the school district.

Upon receiving permission to gather data in the elementary school from the school district, researchers were informed that, so as not to conflict with instruction time, students in grades 6-8 (middle school) could be selected to partake in-group interviews immediately following the musical performances. A total of 23 students participated in group interviews, which were each composed of 4-6 students. Though many of the students were refugees, children of refugees, or other newly arrived immigrants, they were all proficient in English; English as a second language did not impede the

integrity of the group interviews. In accordance with satisfying school district regulation, identifiable information from children was not recorded. Therefore, pseudonyms were not created for children and instead, direct quotes reflect data from group interviews. Teachers and staff (n=11) were interviewed individually during the performances. The group and individual interviews were transcribed verbatim by the research team. The transcriptions were double checked by the PIs, to ensure that the words, tones, vocalizations, and pauses that the participants used were transcribed with accuracy.

The research team observed two performances at the school and three performances at the university. Field notes from the observations were compiled and checked by the PIs for consistency. Data from the observations were used to complement narratives offered by participants.

3.4 Analysis

Using a line-by-line coding structure, the PIs analyzed the data. To identify themes and document code development, the PIs met frequently to ensure inter-coder reliability. Each transcript was read a number of times to look for patterns (i.e., themes) that emerged from the first readings. Once themes were identified and agreed upon, the data were analyzed and key quotes were selected to represent each theme. Internal homogeneity was achieved by reading each category multiple times to verify that each unit of analysis was in the appropriate theme (Patton, 2002). These thematic interpretations stem from a deeper level of abstraction than the first step of the process in that the words of the text were captured in succinct phrases that captured the essence of the interviews themselves. This process was coupled with critical questions the research team asked themselves (and of the text) in order to be cognizant of emerging themes within the transcripts. External heterogeneity was ensured by reviewing the categories multiple times to verify each category was independent of other categories (Patton, 2002).

4. Findings

Three overarching themes emerged from the data. These include how participation in the music series offered students' exposure to familiar and different cultures, offered students socio-emotional benefits, and positively impacted the school culture.

4.1 Exposure to familiar and different cultures

Teachers reflected on how the music series offered them and their students' exposure to an array of music genres, that they would not likely get elsewhere. Given that much of the student body at the school was composed of children who come from countries outside of America, participants particularly embraced this exposure. A student explained,

I think it introduces some kids that, like, they, they never been around, like, instruments or like, they're, they couldn't afford to, like, buy instruments. It, um, expands their learning of instruments so they get to hear new instruments. And it occupies them, too.

Often times, students could identify with musicians who came from their country of origin or played familiar instruments. As one teacher described, "... during the last series, we had a percussion group and my students loved hearing the African drums. They just perk up because they're so excited that they get to hear something from their culture." Similarly, a learning support teacher explained,

Our school, in particular, has so many different cultural backgrounds that it gives the kids, not only a connection to different kinds of music, but there are kids who have been from those areas that [the musicians are] talking about. So it's kind of nice that they can stand proud that day.

Students mirrored these comments, as one student explained,

Um, I learned a lot about other um, countries, and different places that um, I grew up learning about, myself. And hearing the music, it kind of made it really interesting, 'cause it took, kind of tells, told me a little bit about the, about where it's from.

Not only were students exposed to an array of performances, but the importance of their cultural heritage was validated when they could personally identify with where musicians were coming from.

In addition to being exposed to culturally diverse musical performances, students were also exposed to a new culture; a university setting. A single grade for each performance is invited to see a second performance at the university. Giving refugee students the ability to visit a university campus

offered many benefits. A teacher said, “I think the other aspect of it is when we bring one class up to [the college]... It also gives our uh, students exposure to college, you know, to what a college campus looks like, to what happens up there. You know just that experience alone is huge!” Another teacher elaborated and explained,

And I think being able to go to to [the college] is good for a variety of reasons, not just listening to music, but I think just, ya know... seeing a college. We get to go to [the college], so like, you get to be there and... just see the campus. See the kids going to college, I mean, like, some of them might end up going there, it might feel like “oh, this is a warm place I like” and just being at the [campus] is just a good experience for them, so, I like that, too.

It was evident that students at this local school were exposed to music but that music opened the door for multiple experiences. First, students were exposed to new music and instruments that they may have never seen or heard before. These experiences piqued the curiosity of these students and their excitement for music as some students expressed their new desires to learn how to play an instrument. Second, some of the refugee students got to experience music from their home country, which provided an opportunity for them to be proud of their heritage by sharing parts of their home culture and identity with other students. As Berry (1997) notes in his framework, when a new culture provides the space for acceptance of the individual’s culture, integration as a form of acculturation could occur. Though not known from these data, the introduction of new cultures could increase acceptance of other cultures inside the school, increasing the likelihood of integration. Lastly, these students were introduced to a new school culture by attending a performance at a local university. Teachers noted that the positive experience for the students could influence the students to envision themselves as college students one day, which could positively affect their current academic performance.

4.2 Socio-emotional benefits for students

Previous research has outlined the numerous social and emotional benefits that music has for its listeners, performers, and students (see Barrett & Bond, 2015; Petress, 2005; North et al., 2000). Responses from students and teachers in this study reflect these benefits, noting how attending the performances offered a calm environment. Specifically, students stated that the performances were “peaceful,” “fun to listen” to, and “entertaining.” Many refugee, as well as non-refugee students stated they felt better after listening to the music. Students explained,

I like it so much because if you had like a long day in class and then you get to go to this, like, show or whatever and then you get to hear all this music and it brings you to life and everything and it makes you want to go back to class and learn some more.

I don’t know, um like, its very, it’s like, maybe, it’s important to learn because um maybe you’re in a rough time, and maybe music, it’s the thing that calms you down. And listening to it makes you feel better.

Many students pointed to the calming nature of music and how it made them feel better. They felt more alive and excited to return to class after attending a performance. One student noted how performances relieved frustrations:

It calms you down from all that stress and makes you be like, after the music then you can go back to class and feel like you’re ready for whatever, that comes. It makes you like, like unfrustrated, like you, you’re not frustrated anymore.

Teachers echoed the experiences of the students by offering stories of specific students or situations, which made the performances especially positive for their students’ socio-emotional needs. Examples from teachers illustrate that the effects of the music series on the students were visible by others. One teacher noted;

You’ll look in the audience sometimes and you’ll see these kids, like a couple of them like sleeping. And I don’t know if... they’re really used to, like, that calming environment. You know? ...It makes you feel calm, it makes you feel, you know, safe. So I really, I do enjoy this, a whole lot! Even the kids, that uhm, it’s hard to keep their attention. Those kids, if you look around, they are engaged. They’re peeking around, trying to see how things are working and things like that.

Whereas some teachers might interpret such behavior as disrespectful, this teacher considered an alternative perspective when viewing students sleeping during performances. The teacher was

appreciative that the musical performances created a safe space for students, which allowed them to let down their guard and relax. Teachers also discussed how students who were often hyperactive in the classroom took on a calm demeanor when listening to the performances.”

Another teacher provided an example of how the music series allowed a new student to the school, to open up to peers and feel safe. The teacher stated:

She [new student to the school] wasn't here at the beginning of the year, she's never been involved with the [music series], never seen anything like it... Her first day was seeing the Logan series and she just lit up. She was quiet, she was meek, she didn't know anybody- but then she saw the music and she had something to talk with her peers about when we had recess. So I think it, it helped invite her into the school because it was something low-key, relaxing, something she could share.

As noted above, music provided an outlet for a new student to feel accepted and to connect with her new classmates. Another teacher offered an example of how music provided an outlet for a student who had a speech impediment; therefore, allowing for the student to communicate in a new way to other students. The teacher explained:

Uh, uh, well, in particular, I have a student that stutters, and she's in chorus. And it's, it just gives them some --other outlet. It gives them some other way to connect. Ya know, whether it be to something they're learning in class or whatever. There's a lot of teachers that bring in music, not in music class, but bring music into the classroom, and kids just relate to that. They just, you remember things. You can remember every song you've ever heard, ya know. And if you can relate it to education, kids remember.

Two socio-emotional benefits stood out from the music series. First, the school's involvement with a music series created a safe space for its students. Students and teachers provided examples of how the music series provided a place that stood in contrast to the environments from which some students were from. Providing a safe space for refugee youth may increase successful acculturation. Having members of the new culture provide a space for students suggests that some of teachers understood that acculturation may involve various means and outlets. Being understanding of this process and not pushing students to assimilate could increase the success of acculturation through integration.

Secondly, the music series was able to provide a bridge for students struggling to connect with others. Students who were new to the school or had various elements that blocked them from connecting with other students were able to use music to formulate new friendships. This is a vital part of increasing a young student's well-being. This opportunity provided a two-way street where students learned about new music and listened to music they were familiar with, which opens the opportunity to integrate new culture with their own culture.

4.3 Impact on the school culture

The third theme that arose from the data related to participants' discussion of the overall impact and importance of music within the school culture. The presence of the music series was only part of a larger school wide appreciation of the arts. Prior to the music series, the school had an appreciation for music; however, the addition of the music series broadened the schools' understanding and use of music within their curriculum. As a result, the music series strengthened the school's ability to provide opportunities for teachers to collaborate and enrich their curriculum while also teaching students important social skills. Teachers enjoyed the inquisitive nature of their students, who often had many questions after performances, as one teacher said,

It is a nice talking point and jumping off point for afterwards that they can talk about, ya know, cause the kids will always say that. If they're from an area that the people [musicians] talk about, they'll bring that up later and so then it's a nice, ya know, and I'm sure that all teachers love that- that they can have conversations about those things.

Similarly, another teacher explained,

A lot of it [the music series] impacts... how I teach. I'm one, I'm not straight from the book. I try to look at creative ways for kids to learn cause they are at different needs, and everybody's at different levels. That um, I know throughout the years we've tried doing arts infused, which tied in a lot with music in the program. [When I teach], I try to touch base with our music teacher, sometimes our art teacher, to work with them as well as, um other components in the building, just to touch base, like if

we're doing ancient Egypt to tie in different things there. Music, as well as arts... and then if there's something I know that for the [music series], I'll make sure to touch base with the kids and say "Hey, this is coming up soon and it's gonna tie right in with our curriculum."

Lastly, participation in the music series enabled students to learn social skills in which teachers felt were important for success in the American educational system. For students who started and ended their education at the school, they would have had the opportunity to hear 54 different performances. Performers noted that all students, across grades Kindergarten through 8th, were respectful and quiet during musical performances. Teachers also appreciated students learning proper audience etiquette, as the behavior carried over into the classroom. One teacher explained, "We're teaching [students] how to behave in a concert and what that looks like, and even teaching social skills, you know, and how to respond when guests come in." A teacher elaborated,

Uh, I absolutely love it. I think it [the music series] teaches my kids a lot. It gets them those social norms that they might not learn at home, or in other cultures. Such as - when someone's performing, you need to use your listening skills, you need to sit quietly, hands in lap, you need to pay attention, be respectful, and it really helps with that. I've never seen a group of students sit so well... for an assembly. Usually I'm used to fidgeting cause the students aren't used to... seeing these types of performances. And they get really engaged and interactive.

It should be noted, however, that the teacher perspective of etiquette is taken from a strict assimilation approach, where refugee children are taught the new culture, in this case, American audience etiquette, which removes less opportunity for integration. As such, this finding is both supportive in helping refugees understand a new culture's norms, but at the same time, leaves little room to maintain their cultural identity. As a result, this could reduce the likelihood of full integration.

By discussing the impact of the music series with teachers, it was clear that teachers felt the school changed its way of teaching and connecting with the students. Teachers were able to use music to create lesson plans to introduce new topics into their classes. Because students' classroom lessons were complemented with music, refugee students were provided the opportunity to maintain their culture. As a result, teachers noted that students felt comfortable discussing new topics and enjoyed offering information about their heritage when a performer was from their country of origin. Furthermore, teachers noticed that the music series provided an opportunity to illustrate proper audience etiquette. Teachers felt this was important for the refugee children even though from an outsider's lens this may seem unidirectional and potentially limiting for acculturation. In accordance with Berry's (1997) work, this may push the refugee students towards assimilation and away from integration.

5. Discussion and conclusion

School often serves as refugee youths' primary introduction to a new culture. Therefore, it is imperative that schools serve as an institution that offers these students safety, familiarity, and acceptance without forcing refugee youth to choose a new culture over maintaining their own culture. One way to accomplish this may be the inclusion of diverse music programs. It is acknowledged that this program was not an intense music therapy program; however, the data suggest to some extent, that it may be possible to create small safe spaces that extend beyond intensive therapies and provide opportunities for refugee children to maintain their cultural identity and participate in a new culture. Therefore, findings from this study help shed light on the important role that music plays in promoting an accepting and safe school environment for children who are refugees.

The music series opened the door for students to attend music performances at both a local university and at their own school. These performances were multifaceted. In one aspect, the series connected some refugee students to their own culture, as many of the performers were from the countries in which the children were from. At times, this made students feel proud and excited to be re-connected to their country of origin. This also introduced other students to various and diverse music that they were not familiar with, which opened the door to new conversations and possible acceptance of other children in the school. By doing so, the school was increasing the likelihood that some of the refugee youth would be able to integrate by maintaining a part of their culture while participating in aspects of a new culture (Berry, 1997). Given that the data are not longitudinal, we are unable to verify

that is the end result; however, the school is providing the foundation for possible acculturation through integration.

Through this process students were introduced to a new and exciting environment: the university. Here, students learned about college and interacted with college students and members of the local community. In doing so, the music series provided the opportunity for biculturalism, where acculturation to a new country is made easier by infusing new cultural experiences while retaining values or customs of their country of origin (McBrien, 2005). Many younger refugees (those in elementary school) were allowed the freedom to bop up and down, air drum, and sway their bodies to the music, which was noted to be a typical part of how some have traditionally connected with music. They were allowed this agency while in a new Americanized institution. This provided a positive opportunity of acculturation into a new culture while promoting a healthy well-being for refugees (Rudmin, 2003).

As noted earlier, the school extended this opportunity to slowly integrate Americanized norms. As the students got older, they were introduced to “proper” music etiquette. The teachers took note of the acceptance of the behavior by the students and were pleased from the results. Though this may seem like a possible avenue to acculturation, this behavior can be seen as forced assimilation (Berry, 1997). Berry (1997) states that when a refugee is forced or pushed towards a new culture’s norms without having the ability to choose to maintain their own culture, a refugee is being swayed towards assimilation instead of integration. Though acculturation is a nuanced transition, having the ability to integrate by choice increases the likelihood of a positive acculturation (Berry, 1997; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

At the same time, teachers marked a change in the school culture where teachers took it upon themselves to integrate these diverse music performances into the American educational curriculum. Students were encouraged to ask questions, talk about their own cultures, and celebrate their cultural music and dance during the school’s multicultural day celebrations. These are all examples of blending the ties of heritage for these students to new educational lessons, furthering bicultural acculturation.

Lastly, a barrier to successful acculturation is maintaining a healthy well-being for the students. The music series offered socio-emotional benefits which benefited the well-being of the students. The teachers and students commented how the music series provided a safe and protected experience. This safe environment allowed for students to feel calm and relaxed. Given the experiences some of these students faced before coming to America, a safe space may provide a student the agency to move through some of their traumatic experiences. Eisenbruch (1988) argued that schools might be able to provide programs and teachers the space for students to cope with change.

6. Limitations and future directions

Though this study has important implications, there are a few limitations that should be addressed. First, given the nature of school and the need to keep a fluid curriculum in place, researchers had limited time to interview the children who attended the performances. The researchers preferred one-on-one interviews with the children; however, the school district would only allow group interviews be used because of time. Though fruitful information was clearly gathered from these group interviews, at times, younger subjects may feed off of the answers given by other students. Researchers employed probing questions and interviewing techniques to limit the influence of responses; however, it is difficult to always separate the subjective experience.

This limited time frame also limited the amount of students researchers had access to for interviews. Given that one grade is selected for every performance, there were more students available to interview but were not accessible at the times allotted for interviews by the school. It would have also been beneficial to observe the students in the classroom after the performances to collaborate with the interviews of the teachers.

Funding is always an issue. If the program had more funding, more schools could have access to the music series. If the program would receive more funding, it would be of value to expand the study to see if similar benefits are found in other schools and among students of varying ages. It would be of interest to see the differing effects in schools based on different SES backgrounds and student populations. Further, it would be of great interest to also gather data on the other populations who attended the performances at the local university. Of note, how did they interact with the refugee and

newly arrived immigrant students and what was their perception of the how useful the music series was for local students.

Future studies could benefit by adding a quantitative component to this study. For instance, a few topics that were out of range for this particular study but would be of interest would be to examine whether rates of discrimination and prejudice acts decreased after experiencing this music series. Given that discrimination is a barrier to acculturation, and that teachers implied increase acceptance of others, it would be of value to examine a before and after effect of the series within the school for the academic school year. This quantitative component could then be expanded longitudinally to see if the effects remained over time, decreased, or increased.

Though promising information was ascertained from this study, it is not a representative sample of refugee youth and does not speak to how all youth move through the process of acculturation. Further, it is beyond the scope of the data to speak of the possible resilience of the refugee children who were apart of the study. Though we do not intend for this to be a trauma-focused perspective, we were unable to gather data on experiences prior or the well-being of the youth who were studied to accurately provide a discussion on resiliency.

Implications from this study give credence to the importance of incorporating music into refugee students' education. In light of funding cuts to grade schools in the area, as well as lack of support for the arts at a national level, this is an especially timely research topic (see Kinnicott & McGlone, 2017). At a national level, funding from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) should continue to support music education and ensure that music programs are accessible to a wide audience, especially for schools in rural or low-income areas (see Kinnicott & McGlone, 2017). At a micro-level, teachers play an important role in refugee youths' acculturation process. Teachers can make concrete efforts to incorporate music education in their classrooms and curriculum (for examples, see Kos Jr., 2018), thereby accepting and celebrating cultural differences. Evidence from the current study illustrates the widespread benefits music can have for refugee youth and their school culture, therefore teachers may positively impact their school culture by utilizing music education. Similarly, school districts should make a concerted effort to support their teachers' incorporation of music education and curriculum. This may include smaller funding for in-class resources and materials. As a result of national and micro-level efforts, music education and appreciation may become widespread in youths' education, making a significant change for children who are refugees.

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