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Research Methodologies & Context

MD-PM7001-30-SEP-NP-TRI1-2017-2018 [SITS]

7,500 words (+/- 10%)

**SONGWRITING WORKSHOPS AS A TOOL
FOR PEACE AND MEMORY
CONSTRUCTION IN THE COLOMBIAN
CONTEXT**

Exploring the Challenges, Considerations and Activities

By Alejandra Restrepo

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Acknowledgments:

This project wouldn't have been possible without the sustained encouragement of my tutor, Julianne Regan; the life long inspiration of Mónica Álvarez and Paula Ramírez, the support from César Quevedo and my family, and the generous human beings that informed this research, my endless gratitude to all of them.

Abstract:

After more than 50 years of war, Colombia is in desperate need of peace and memory construction, peace to change the mind-set of violence that permeated every layer of our culture and memory to avoid repeating our own history. Several approaches can be taken for this purpose, but I'd like to make a proposal related to my field of work. As a songwriter, I'd like to create Songwriting Workshops for communities that have been affected by war. The question would be: How to develop culturally appropriate workshops that would assist in the healing of historic trauma and construction of peace and memory? In order to provide an answer to this question, literature on Colombian history, ethnomusicology, creative arts and music therapy will be consulted. To fill in the gaps that haven't been answered by the secondary sources, the expert opinion of five interviewees will provide relevant information regarding the challenges, considerations and activities that will allow the materialization of this tailored songwriting workshop.

Introduction:

This paper will start by briefly discussing the aims and sources that informed this research, to then bring about the reported benefits of Arts Therapies on communities dealing with historic trauma. In order to understand why Colombia is in need of such benefits, the impacts and consequences of the Colombian Conflict will be listed. Following this section, it seems appropriate to give name to the challenges inherent to the creation of the Songwriting Workshops and mention considerations that might provide solutions to such challenges. Lastly, a set of activities to carryout in the workshops will be suggested.

Developing a Songwriting Workshop Program in regions affected by violence, poverty and governmental neglect supposes many challenges, among them, are 1) the administrative, which include finding funding and adequate facilities; then are 2) the humane, which include being able to gain the trust of the participants, prepared to open spaces for vulnerability, ready to face moments when the participants establish boundaries and mindful about creating safe spaces for grief (Archibald et al., 2012, p. 33), without mentioning the self-care measures the practitioner must cultivate in order to serve best. And last, but not least, there are 3) the cultural challenges. These are particularly important since the process of

healing historical trauma requires “reconnecting with family, community, culture, and traditions.” (Archibald et al., 2012, p. 27).

The objective of this research project would be to find ways to face the aforementioned groups of challenges in order to bring to life, the creation of songwriting workshops capable of engaging the participants in a creative and healing practice. To begin the exploration of the literature, this text will start by addressing the sources that inform about the Colombian context.

Literature Review and Methodology:

Considering the locations where the workshop will take place, it's relevant to explore the dynamics of the Colombian Conflict to get a grasp of what the population went through and what is needed from the programme. This exploration was done through *¡Basta ya! Colombia: memorias de guerra y dignidad*, a study conducted by the Group of Historic Memory to understand “the causes, dynamics, consequences, transformations and continuities of the Colombian armed conflict” (Arevalo M, 2014). Although the full report contains valuable information, the fourth chapter is particularly significant to this project, since it collects the testimonies of several survivors to portray the damages caused by war. As previously mentioned, getting an insight into this context generates an idea of what needs to be addressed in the workshop, so the next question would be how to do it. For this purpose, Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux and Magdalena Smolewski's research seems particularly useful.

Historic Trauma and Aboriginal Healing widely studies how colonization in Canada generated the intergenerational transmission of historic trauma in Aboriginal people. By describing the violence and policies directed to the First Nations, Inuit and Métis, this study provides a comprehensive view of the events that caused this type of trauma. The similarity with certain incidents lived by the Colombian Conflict survivors lends itself to believe that the pathway described in this study to overcome historic trauma might also be appropriate for Colombia. According to Wesley-Esquimaux and Smolewski

“The only way to address the healing needs of Aboriginal people is to open culturally-appropriate avenues for producing change in existing memory structures and belief systems that will allow Aboriginal people to regain

their collective strength” (Wesley-Esquimaux and Smolewski, 2004, p. 80).

Seeing the importance of this statement, but considering that this study focuses mainly in the traditional rituals and clinical approaches that accomplish this healing process, another approach is needed. Such approach should integrate this statement into creative therapies in order to be relevant to the context of the workshops; this is where Linda Archibald’s research comes into play.

Dancing, Singing, Painting, and Speaking the Healing Story: Healing through Creative Arts is a three-phase study on the influence of arts therapies on Canadian Aboriginal people. The first phase provides an overview of the Indigenous and Western Approaches to art and healing. Through surveys to the participants, practitioners and organizations involved, the second phase aims to find what happens when “creative arts become part of community-based Aboriginal healing programs” (Archibald et al., 2012, p. 1). The reported results are exactly what would be desirable in the Colombian songwriting workshops. In addition, some light was shed upon the issues experienced by the practitioners in their interaction with participants. Despite the importance of this information, it would be useful to find out how practitioners have dealt with such challenges in the Colombian context.

The third phase in Archibald’s investigation is a study case based in a “five-day residential art therapy workshop called Honouring Your Grief” (Archibald et al., 2012, p. 55). This study case is focused on reporting the benefits of arts therapies, and since it also contains descriptions of the visual arts exercises performed during the sessions, it provided ideas for dynamics that could be transferred to the songwriting arena. Regardless of how invaluable is this information when it comes to designing a songwriting workshop, there is still a question left unsolved: If Archibald highlights that in most cases, the workshop facilitators shared a common cultural background with the participants -which allowed them to “recognize and understand symbols or nuances that are unique to their culture and history” (Archibald et al., 2012, p. 66)- what happens when the practitioners and participant communities don’t share the same cultural context? Would it be possible for an outsider to overcome or narrow the cultural gap? If so, is there a method that would facilitate the process?

To come up with answers to these questions, it seemed pertinent to consult texts on ethnomusicology such as *Ethnomusicology and Music Education: Crossroads for Knowing Music, Education, and Culture*. In this text Patricia Campbell addresses

"The influences of ethnomusicological theory and method on scholarly and practical aspects of music education... as well as the nature of music education's impact on the scholarship and teaching by ethnomusicologists." (Campbell, 2003, p. 16)

The idea of consulting Campbell's examination was to find out how the ethnomusicological method was used by researchers interested in teaching music that didn't belong to their culture. This would be a key aspect, considering that –in order to apply the principle of cultural appropriate avenues- the practitioner/ outsider would have to be familiar with the musical and cultural traditions of the participants to create and lead songwriting activities that were appropriate for the group and their culture. However, the article didn't address this aspect in depth. Being a historic revision on the mutual influence between ethnomusicology and education, Campbell focused on examining the texts that prove "the influence of ethnomusicologists and educators on the scholarship practice of each other" (Campbell, 2003, p. 17). In this sense, she points to the work of scholars such as Bruno Nettl's *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Twenty-Nine Issues and Concepts* and Helen Myers', *Ethnomusicology. An Introduction*, writings that are relevant to this research.

Myers' chapter on Fieldwork provides useful information because throughout it, she gathers the reflections and experiences of renowned ethnomusicologists, not only to expose the methodologies, key definitions and exercises for the inexperienced researcher, but also to mention the challenges they will have to face on their first fieldwork practice. Aside from this, she joins Nettl in his concerns regarding the fact of being an outsider, a concern that is particularly relevant to this research for the aforementioned reasons.

Another pressing issue would appear to be the length of stay in the field. From a purist point of view, an ethnomusicologist should remain in the field for a whole year, but other opinions suggest that a seasoned researcher can engage in a 6 to

12 week sprint (Myers, 1992, p. 36). This makes sense, considering that the span of their research is wider and the reports on their investigation talk about something as complex as the relationship between music and culture (Nettl, 1983, p. 131). But in the case of a songwriter –whose final outcome isn't this type of report- it would be reasonable to believe that other type of preparation programme can be tailored. Perhaps the opinion of primary sources can give insight into the applicable and non-applicable aspects of the ethnomusicological method to the songwriting workshops.

Seeing that none of the mentioned texts provide extensive information on musical or songwriting activities, there was a need to find them in texts like *Singing for Healing and Hope: Music Therapy Methods that Use the Voice with Individuals Who Are Homeless and Mentally Ill*, by Yasmine Afif Iliya and *Songwriting: Methods, Techniques and Clinical Applications for Music Therapy Clinicians, Educators and Students*, by Felicia Baker and Tony Wigram. Afif Iliya's proved to be particularly useful since it describes voice centered music therapy tools tailored for a population that has similar needs to the survivors of the Colombian Conflict, this resource contributed to the construction of a Songwriting Activities Glossary that can be consulted in the Appendices' section. Even though the described exercises can also be used as introductory phases to waken the creativity for creating songs, the need for specific songwriting exercises still needs to be attended. Baker and Wigram's book was consulted with the intention of finding this information.

The earlier sections of this book start by providing a definition of songwriting in the fieldwork of a music therapist as

“The process of creating, notating, and/or recording lyrics and music by the client or clients and the therapist within a therapeutic relationship to address psychosocial, emotional, cognitive and communication needs of the client” (Baker and Wigram, 2005, p. 16)

Afterwards they mention that the literature on music therapy based on songwriting rarely discusses anything aside from the beneficial impacts of its practice. To fill the gap created by the lack of material around different subjects, this work compiles a variety of applications of songwriting as therapy by

describing the methods and techniques used in clinical and non-clinical population (Baker and Wigram, 2005, p. 16). The methods are understood as “the approaches chosen by the therapist to achieve therapeutic change” (Baker and Wigram, 2005, p. 16); and techniques as “tools and strategies, musical ‘activities’ and concrete therapist-initiated musical experiences which are integral to the success of the applied method” (Baker and Wigram, 2005, p. 16).

Considering that every chapter discusses a different population (children at family psychiatric units, people who have suffered traumatic brain injury, children with malignant blood disease or patients at oncology wards, to name a few), it seemed pertinent to choose a chapter where the patients had similar needs to the survivors of the Colombian Conflict. For this reason, the fourth chapter seemed the most appropriate; since ‘Giving a voice to Childhood Trauma through Therapeutic Songwriting’ “provides an overview of the technique used with individuals who have experienced childhood abuse, in externalizing painful stories from their past” (Baker and Wigram, 2005, p. 83)

Despite the promising nature of its title and purpose, it wasn’t possible to find activities that could be used in the Colombian context for two reasons. On one hand, there was a strong stress in the brainstorming on the themes of the songs, which might be counterproductive when working with survivors of historic trauma, since the idea of providing spaces for artmaking with them is to “cut through the rationalizations that often mask the physical, emotional and spiritual levels” (Archibald et al., 2012, p. 72) that have been affected by war. On the other hand, the structure of their workshop appeared to be more lengthy and rigid than what the context calls for. Despite not finding the desired information on the chosen chapter, the fact of finding which considerations result important to an experienced music therapist, makes a great contribution to the present research and will be discussed further on.

Perhaps the contribution of *Songwriting Workshops as a Tool for Peace and Memory Construction in the Colombian Context* to the existing music therapy literature based on songwriting, would be to provide descriptions of songwriting tasks that can be used for healing purposes.

In order to solve the gaps that weren't covered by the secondary sources, interviews with workshop development lecturers, practitioners and songwriters were conducted in person in the form of casual conversation (Except Tony Gee's interview, which took place through Skype). A form comprised of open questions was made with the idea that the interviewees would answer the queries relevant to their field of work (the questionnaire can be found in the Appendices Section and the interview recordings are available upon request).

Aiming to obtain ideas for the songwriting exercises, Pete Bernard and Davey Ray Moore were interviewed. Both of them -being accomplished songwriters and lecturers in the Songwriting MA at Bath Spa University- were able to envision tasks that would allow practitioners to stimulate the motivation, creativity and confidence to write songs in the participants (whether they had musical training or not). In addition, their suggestions were mindful about the importance of creating culturally appropriate exercises that would build an environment of trust within the group.

On Bernard's suggestion, the director of School of Workshop, Tony Gee was interviewed. With more than 25 years of experience of touring workshops, the author of *Workshop- A Moveable Feast* and *A Workshop Handbook*, provided invaluable information regarding key aspects of leading a workshop. His extensive knowledge provided an overview of the stages of workshop, an input on how to invite the participants to embrace the challenges implied in creation, and ideas on how to make the best out of the preparation, deliverance and recovery phases.

In regard to the challenges portrayed by Myers, Archibald and Nettle, the interview with Paula Ramirez was indispensable. Ramirez is a Colombian anthropologist specialized in Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies. Her experience includes working "with refugees in body-centered interventions with organizations such as Earth Rights International and the Tibetan Government in Exile." ("Breathe," n.d.). She has also done extensive fieldwork focused in the implementation of BREATHE in Community, a program tailored for the victims of the Colombian armed conflict. ("Breathe," n.d.). Her testimony definitely shed light into how to deal with the previously mentioned challenges within the Colombian context, without

mentioning that her formation and line of work provided resources to integrate the principles of the ethnomusicology to the general dynamics of a workshop.

Then there is the testimony of Diana Tovar, a Colombian songwriter and lawyer who (to quote her words in an e-mail sent on the 22nd of November 2017) “offers gender focused singing workshops as an identity recovery action... for the victims of the armed conflict and communities affected by displacement and cultural uprooting.” Her knowledge of the Colombian legislation regarding reparation and justice coupled with her active practice as a songwriter, has allowed her to lead culturally appropriate workshops. Having developed her musical career around folk music from the Colombian Atlantic Region, she gave an input on how to prepare if you want to conduct culturally relevant musical activities.

The Impacts of War and the Effects of Creative Arts Therapies:

As previously mentioned, Lisa Archibald’s research on the effects of Creative Arts Therapies on the survivors of the Residential School System led me to believe that there was something I could do for my country as a songwriter. After all, the Canadian Aboriginal Communities and the Colombian Armed Conflict survivors have experienced circumstances that caused historic trauma, and various members of the former have reported that engaging in creative activities has assisted them in the healing process. Hopefully similar results can be achieved in the Colombian context.

To begin understanding the contextual similarities, historic trauma is described as grief passed from generation to generation due to unresolved traumatic experiences that have been repetitive, normalized and incorporated into the cultural expressions and expectations. The generated impacts will be felt within families, communities and individuals until they’re addressed on the mental, emotional, physical and spiritual levels (Wesley-Esquimaux and Smolewski, 2004, p. 3). According to research conducted by the AHF, abused individuals learn behaviours and defence mechanisms that –on one hand, allow them to survive atrocious situations, but on the other- cause dysfunctional responses by-product of the lack of trust, balance and self blame for the experienced abuse (Wesley-Esquimaux and Smolewski, 2004, p. 3).

In the case of Canadian Indigenous Communities, historic trauma derives as a consequence of losing their lands, their economic and political sufficiency, suffering sexual abuse and incarceration in residential schools. Without mentioning the fact that colonization and imposed hegemony deprived them from ceremonial methods (such as dancing and singing) that would have allowed them to grieve and express their losses (Wesley-Esquimaux and Smolewski, 2004, p. 4). Since the creation of the AHF in 1998, great efforts have been made to promote and maintain healing processes in the indigenous communities. Research and evaluation have been included as part of this labour, revealing that arts-based “cultural activities are legitimate and successful healing interventions” (Archibald et al., 2012, p. 1). It seems pertinent at this point to include their findings and point out that the purpose behind the creation of these Songwriting Workshops is not to substitute the work of psychologists and social workers, but to create an additional (musical and story-telling) tool that can assist in healing historic trauma.

After surveying more than 100 AHF funded healing projects, the benefits reported by the residential school legacy survivors, healers and therapists were the following:

On an individual level, participants reported that creative activities –aside from providing a space for enjoyment, happiness and laughter- assisted them in the relief of tension and stress, which lead to the reduction of depression and stimulation of wellbeing and comfort. In addition to that, the use of creativity allowed them to look at things from a different perspective, improving their problem solving skills (Archibald et al., 2012, p. 26).

Transitioning from the individual to the collective level, there is an enormous benefit derived from fulfilling artistic tasks. The fact of creating something (whether it’s a song, a poem, a story or a drum) and being able to present it in public provides a sense of accomplishment, pride and pleasure that supports the healing process (Archibald et al., 2012, p. 26). Since “the core experiences of psychological trauma are disempowerment and disconnection from others, recovery, therefore, is based upon the empowerment of the survivor and the creation of new connections” (Archibald et al., 2012, p. 34).

Attending to collective workshops and presenting the artistic achievements to the community serves the dual purpose of building individual self-esteem and the creation of new relationships. These begin to permeate the collective sphere because they promote a bond between participants, granting them the possibility of mutual support and guidance (solidarity). In turn, they feel more inclined to talk to each other or look for psychological help during critical moments, instead of finding refuge in drugs and alcohol. Aside from this, partakers reported that since the arts therapy intervention, there was more youth presence in community activities and an improvement in family relationships (Archibald et al., 2012, pp. 34–35).

Despite the distance between Canada and Colombia and the difference between the parties involved in the historical situations, it would seem that the survivors involved in both countries went through similar circumstances and could benefit from creative arts therapies in similar ways. To understand this statement, a brief context of the Colombian Armed Conflict seems relevant. Considering the complex nature of a war that has evolved and ramified since 1958, the following section will focus not on the historic events, but on the impacts generated by several armed groups on rural populations.

Testimonies gathered by the Group of Historic Memory (GMH) expose how armed groups committed crimes loaded with cruelty to control the population and the territories throughout humiliation and terror. The malicious modes of violence named below caused individual and collective impacts. To get a glimpse of what rural communities have endured for decades, the GMH provides us with this partial summary of atrocities:

They were forced to observe tortured bodies displayed for public derision and brutal murders of relatives or neighbours. They were victims of threats, kidnapping, illegal recruitment and forced to collaborate with a determined armed group. Women of all ages were victims of sexual violence as attacks to their bodies and dignity... (Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación (Colombia), 2013, p. 261)

Aside from this, people saw how the world became a dangerous place and how the communication, trust and solidarity once shared with neighbours was shattered. Since armed groups accused civilians of collaborating with enemy forces, tagged individuals not only suffered brutal punishments for it, but also became outcasts within their community. This situation triggered feelings of paralyzing fear and anxiety, causing illness, eating disorders, drug and alcohol abuse, mutism and isolation. Uncertainty, nostalgia and sadness arose in the face of forced disappearance, kidnapping and tagging. The loss of material possessions was also linked to these emotions and additionally implied the suffocation of life projects. Happiness was replaced by shame to move on after facing the murder of loved ones or after feeling unable to impede sexual abuse. This, without mentioning that the repressed anger and hatred -awakened by humiliation and injustice- was redirected towards the most vulnerable members of the family (Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación (Colombia), 2013, pp. 260, 262, 263, 264, 274).

Moving on to the collective domain, the damages imparted by armed actors aimed to destroy the resources and fundamental relationships that allow people to face their own lives and adversity. To do this, victimizers scornfully depreciated the community's religious beliefs and cultural practices; controlled and transformed the modes of life through the prohibition of communal traditional activities; murdered leaders that played the role of spiritual guide; and desecrated gathering locations, turning them into grounds for massacres and torture. As consequences of this cultural uprooting, communities lost the possibility of performing rituals that would allow them to process grief and death; transmission of culture and identity were interrupted or destroyed; and the bonds that allowed members of a community to feel identified and connected to each other were ripped apart (Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación (Colombia), 2013, pp. 270, 272, 274, 275).

Taking into consideration that the dynamics of war blocked every possibility to cope with these traumatic events –thus unleashing reactive and violent responses among the victims- the need of creating spaces where the survivors can elaborate their experiences and emotions is confirmed. Not only because those who have suffered the conflict deserve an environment for individual wellbeing and release,

but because there's a need to repair the relationships of solidarity that once existed in the communities. If there's a desire for peace construction, dealing exclusively with the armed actors won't suffice. It's also necessary to have a process in which civilians realize that fellow citizens are neither a threat nor an enemy (and that it's not necessary to treat them as such). Hopefully this will diminish the reactivity linked to our day-to-day violence.

Since the victimizers intentionally destroyed cultural bonds to fracture the social structures, it would seem relevant to repair the cultural avenues as a way of bringing people together, as a way of regaining trust, solidarity and compassion. The question would be how to assist in this cultural reconnection while being an outsider?

Challenges and Considerations:

At the earlier stages of this research, it was suspected that the answer to this question would be found in the ethnomusicological method, given that ethnomusicology is concerned with the study of music as related to culture and mostly practiced by fieldworkers who were outsiders within the studied communities (Nettl, 1983, p. 131). However, interviews with Paula Andrea Ramirez, Tony Gee and Diana Tovar proved that even though certain aspects of this discipline were applicable to the creation of the workshops, others weren't so suitable. A dialogue between the description of the ethnomusicological method and the interviews might assist in discerning what's better for the workshops.

To begin with, ethnomusicological fieldwork is described as an activity that involves the intimate observation of people and their music in their original context (Myers, 1992, p. 23). To do so, researchers engage in participant observation by living in the community for an entire year and partaking in the daily life of the community and their musical events (Myers, 1992, p. 29). Their length of stay is determined by the complex nature of their research and a particular challenge they must overcome in order to get a closer approach to the studied culture: the challenge of being a stranger who needs to gain the trust of the community in order to report about it accurately and respectfully.

Before conducting the interviews, the idea was to do this kind of fieldwork to gain insight into the music, culture and pedagogical methods of a community. To then co-create a songwriting handbook with the collaboration of the local musicians as a structured tool that could be used by the community at any given moment. An interview with Paula Ramirez changed this expected outcome. Based on her experience as a facilitator, she has seen that the cultural elements that rebuild solidarity among the participants is only possible if the elements come from within the community and are not an imposition from the practitioner. She mentioned working with two different groups of women from the South Pacific Colombian region. Even when they shared a common history and traditions, each group was bonded by a different element. One was connected by the patterns of the *marimba de chonta*, the other, through the lyrical and vocal aspects of the *arrullos* and *alabaos*. The recommended flexibility seems perfectly suitable in this setting and also in a context where the community feels reluctant to return to their traditions because they're a reminder of a cruel past. In such case, a cultural bond comprised of new elements will be responsible for creating cohesion among the group (Ramirez, 2017).

This new input renders unnecessary the idea of doing previous fieldwork on the site for a year, and further more, of writing a rigid handbook for the workshops. However, Ramirez, Gee and Tovar highlight the importance of preparation through research before delivering the workshops. This becomes a point of agreement with one of the requirements of ethnomusicological method, in which the fieldworker is expected to master the literature in the area (Myers, 1992, pp. 29–30). Since the idea is to build culturally appropriate activities for the community, the practitioner must be informed about the characteristics of the group and be familiar with contextual elements such as the historic events that triggered the trauma, the myths of origin, literary and ritualistic traditions proper of their culture and the musical elements characteristic of the region. For the later, ethnomusicological texts can be valuable, but not as much as one of the cornerstones of ethnomusicology: the relationship with an artist/teacher, from which the researcher can learn -through lessons, practice sessions and performances- the music, its meaning and its function in the society (Campbell, 2003, p. 23).

For the purpose of creating workshops, this encounter with the informant/teacher can happen sporadically in the rural areas with a rural musician and/or in cities like Bogotá, Medellín, Cali or Barranquilla, where rural and urban musicians that play Colombian folk music, have found spaces to live the cultural traditions of different regions. This is the case of Diana Tovar, who first developed a student/teacher relationship with Urian Sarmiento (a renowned urban musician who has devoted part of his life to study, play and promote Colombian Traditional music and musicians), to then study in the municipality of Maríalabaja with the *cantaora* and composer of *bullerengues*, Ceferina Banquez.

Preparation also includes developing the following personal skills: observation and the ability to conduct interviews in the form of relaxed conversations. To develop observation skills, Myers recommends practicing explicit awareness at home in order to note and remember particular details of daily life. Being ready for interviewing in the field requires transcribing interviews to discover if there are flaws in the approach, such as *talking too much, interrupting, leading the conversation away from topics that are important to the informant or feeling uncomfortable during pauses when the informant is trying to elaborate his or her ideas. When this happens, she recommends repeating the subject's last remark* (Myers, 1992, p. 31,37,38), a resource also used by music therapists to promote the feeling of acceptance, support and validation in the participant (Afif Iliya, 2011, p. 19).

Gee confirms the importance of observation by mentioning that great part of his job as a facilitator is to develop a radar to pick on the non-verbal language of his participants (Gee, 2017). Ramirez backs this affirmation and adds that it's crucial to feel the pulse of the group, for some might be driven, others, slower or more difficult (difficult groups often have problematic members within). Embracing the collective dynamic will prevent the practitioner to fall into frustration; failing to do so, will negatively impact self-esteem, motivation, and will bring down the energy and trust levels of the group. To monitor the fluctuation of rhythm, Ramirez logs her impressions on two separate journals, one is meant for the group; the other, for each individual. This way she can modify the activities and strategies for the forthcoming sessions (Ramirez, 2017).

When asked what happens when a participant is difficult to work with, Ramirez comments that she makes sure of providing him or her with more attention. She does it through casual conversations after the sessions (asking them how they felt about the activities and validating their answers), granting them more participation in the collective exercises or assigning them small tasks (like helping her pick up the working materials). She does this because she has realized that uncooperative participants usually need to be seen, for one of the greatest pains of mankind is feeling unacknowledged (Ramirez, 2017).

Observation and conversational skills are also useful when participants don't seem connected with an activity. Ramirez uses an example from her own practice to portray how naming and welcoming events in the workshop, generates a shift in the participant.

"If during the body scan someone seems restless, perhaps moving and scratching a leg, I might say something like: If someone is feeling an urge to move or scratch, observe how this feels. For the acceptance of whatever arises, allows the participant to embrace and be able to name rising emotions, which is a fundamental part of healing, and a skill that promotes compassion and self care."(Ramirez, 2017)

Aside from building personal skills and contextual knowledge, the practitioner should also prepare the equipment and materials that will be used in the workshop. Myers suggests to test the recording equipment at home and to avoid buying recording devices on the way to the location, for these may not work when desired (Myers, 1992, p. 31). This will be true for the workshop facilitators, considering that it might be desirable for certain groups to record the songs that result from the workshop. Media players and speakers must also be tested beforehand, in case the practitioner wants to use pre-recorded material for any of the activities.

As mentioned before, dealing with the fact of being an outsider is a major concern for an ethnomusicologist; this is also true for facilitators, which need to create an atmosphere of trust within the group in order to invite the participants to share and create. Ethnomusicologists gain the trust of the community through an

amicable relationship with the artist/teacher and during an extensive stay (Nettl, 1983, pp. 261, 265). In most cases, practitioners don't get to spend that amount of time with the participants, so they need to make sure of becoming reliable through a different approach.

According to Ramirez and Gee, there are two elements that will make this possible. The first of them would be to feel at ease with the fact of being an outsider, because this is something the participants will notice. If you feel comfortable in your own skin, they will feel comfortable with your presence; likewise, if you're judging yourself for not being an insider, they will mirror your behaviour. The second element would be the preparation of a structured roadmap comprised of activities around topics that are relevant to the community. This structure will allow the practitioner to freely improvise around them and also to invite the community to perform adjustments. Previously informing the group about the structure and schedule of the workshops and inviting them to have an input on the direction of the journey, creates a feeling of belonging and also a sense of security, empowerment and control in the participants. This is particularly important, since the dynamics of war seized this sensations from the people (Ramirez, 2017)(Gee, 2017).

Holding space for the participants is certainly one of the most important aspects of building this kind of workshops; however, the practitioner should always remember to apply the principles of self-care, for the success of the workshop greatly depends on her or his wellbeing. To sustain a state of welfare it's important to take care of the emotional and physical health, as well as general safety.

Taking into account that the workshop will be directed to communities affected by violence, it's likely that narratives containing their complex experiences will surface as part of the healing process. As mentioned before, practitioners must be skillful listeners and while doing their job, they'll be exposed and affected by such narratives. Even though it's assumed that they must be shielded against challenging emotions, Ramirez's experience proves otherwise. During her work with Tibetan monks, she pretended not to be affected by the signs of torture in their bodies. She wanted to be strong in order to hold a safe space for them. A year later she was suffering a breakdown due to the sentiments that weren't

processed in the moment. After this episode, she realized it's not only healthy, but also coherent to embrace, observe and process the emotions that emerge from sharing with others. In some cases, allowing herself to cry with the participants was healing for both of them; in other circumstances she perceived it was pertinent to be there exclusively for them, but after the session was over, she would attempt to elaborate her feelings through writing, movement or meditation (Ramirez, 2017).

Moving on to other aspects of self-care, it's relevant to address the topic of travelling to rural locations, which might expose the practitioner to extreme weather conditions, unfamiliar eating habits, reduced standards of hygiene and different cultural norms. This context might induce loss of health, cultural shock and subsequent loss of motivation, (Myers, 1992, p. 33,35). To avoid feeling disheartened by the inconveniences in the field, Ramirez tries to constantly remember her purpose with the group. She knows that without that in mind, she'll probably feel lost and would give a greater dimension to the elements that cause cultural shock. When it comes to keeping her good health, she claims that preparation, constant contact with her doctor and recovery are essential. Before going to the field, she always schedules an appointment with her doctor, who makes sure to strengthen Ramirez's immune system. During fieldwork and being ill with malaria, typhus and zika, it has been key for her to follow medical advice to recover sooner. Upon her return, she makes sure to go back to her doctor's office and get a rebalancing treatment (Ramirez, 2017).

Considering that the impacts of war are still present in the rural regions, the safety of the facilitator continues a concern. Being linked to a nongovernmental organization (NGO) proves to be useful in this scenario and plays an important role on other administrative factors that directly influence the workshops. To begin with, NGOs working in certain regions will be the initial contact between the group and the facilitator. They're in charge of informing the practitioner about the characteristics of the group: age range, gender, problems faced by their community, the resources available to them and the work they've done with previous practitioners (this is of great importance, since knowing about the process of the group and commenting it in the sessions, gives the participants a sense of continuity and of being properly taken care of) (Ramirez, 2017). NGOs will also be responsible of finding a proper location for the workshops, arranging an

accommodation for the practitioner, give an alert and follow a protocol when there's a security threat and in some cases, define the length of the workshop. But even when they're invested in this administrative tasks, funding might not always be their responsibility, in most of the cases, the facilitator should seek for private or public funding in order to develop the project with the NGO.

Going back on the length of the workshop, there are several opinions about the ideal amount of time, but despite the differences, most of the sources agree on the fact that the purpose of a workshop cannot be fulfilled in a single session. While some suggest a timeframe comprised between 8 and 12 weeks (Ramirez, 2017)(Baker and Wigram, 2005, p. 85)(Afif Iliya, 2011, p. 16), Archibald's study case lasted 5 days, Tovar claims that the span of her workshops have been determined by the organizations she's worked with (3 days) and Gee expresses that "there is no correct answer to how long a workshop should last, for it can last for an hour, or for an hour every week during 15 years" (Gee, 2017). Considering the variety of the answers, it might be wise to determine the length depending on the context. However, it's important to remember that the number of sessions should be fixed before the workshop begins, given that participants feel in control when they know in advance, about the length and structure of the programme.

Suggested Activities:

Now that the challenges have been addressed, it's time to discuss the parameters of the activities that can be done during a workshop of this nature (for detailed information on the underlined activities, consult the Appendices' section). To begin with, two considerable factors point out that it's recommendable to base most of the tasks around the voice. On one hand, the economical struggles of certain Colombian regions might make other musical instruments unavailable, whereas the voice is accessible for anyone, unless there's hearing or vocal fold impairment. On the other hand, voice centred music therapy facilitates the fulfilment of the healing purposes of the workshop, which are: to nourish the participant's self-esteem, to promote self-expression (given that the voice is the primary means for communication since early childhood), to provide opportunities to socialize (considering that collective singing is considered in many cultures, a way of sharing events and emotions with others) and to reconnect the mind to the

body through the awareness of the breath, posture and the vibration of the voice in different parts of the body (Afif Iliya, 2011, p. 14,15, 16).

The interviewees and secondary sources revealed that there are three stages during the course of the workshop. On the first one, it's crucial to build a safe environment and a sense of trust within the group. This can be challenging, since traumatic experiences create obstacles in the social interactions due to a heightened sense of suspicion, fear and isolation (Afif Iliya, 2011, p. 15). 2) After a collective feeling of safety has been established, the second stage can explore the emotions, physical sensations and effects of the trauma on the victim's daily life. However, it's important to clarify that the facilitator shouldn't directly enquire the participant about the detailed events that created the trauma, but it's possible that at some point, the participants might feel like sharing them as part of their healing process (Archibald et al., 2012, pp. 57–58; Baker and Wigram, 2005, p. 84). The third stage must be comprised of activities that give closure.

From the gathered information, it's safe to say that due to the different nature of the stages, each of them must contain a different set of tasks, although there are some exercises that function well in every phase of the workshop, these are: body awareness, chanting and toning. In my experience as a Somatic Voicework teacher, scanning the body while doing simple vocal warm-up exercises allowed my students to observe what happened in their bodies while singing and would also cause their emotions to surface. This makes sense since trauma -or any unprocessed emotion- lives in the body (Archibald et al., 2012, p. 28). Recognizing this can assist throughout the process of healing and diminishing levels of reactivity. Being able to locate and name the effects of an emotion in the body – and discovering which movements or sounds allow it to be processed and transformed- enables people to mindfully choose how they want to act upon it (Ramirez, 2017). Toning and chanting also prove to be useful, since “simple and preverbal structures (that use) sound and movement provide greater awareness of feelings than verbal language alone” (Afif Iliya, 2011, p. 14). This without mentioning that they also foster the connection between mind and body (Afif Iliya, 2011, p. 19).

First stage: To build a safe environment in which trust is possible, the practitioner must begin the first session by sharing the structure of the workshop with the group and inviting the participants to suggest adjustments (Ramirez, 2017). After that, it's important to ask the participants to mention if they expect to achieve anything in particular with the workshop (Archibald et al., 2012, p. 59; Baker and Wigram, 2005, p. 85; Ramirez, 2017), an exercise that could result in collaborative songwriting, when done in couples (Bernard, 2017). This way, both the participants and the facilitator get to know the starting point and the finish line, but what comes in the middle, might be a surprise for the entire group. Thus, it's important to remember the flexibility principle previously discussed, for the order or dynamic of the planned activities will most likely have to be adjusted by the upcoming needs of the group (Gee, 2017).

Before dealing with painful emotions, it's advised to engage with laughter through games (Moor, 2017). Playing allows the participant to build trust relationships and socialize, without mentioning that games promote the use of a symbolic language with which the participant can convey important messages in an indirect and safe way (Archibald et al., 2012, p. 10). While Gee and Bernard suggest the use and making of Puppets and the creation of collective songs about happy memories or favourite words, Archibald asked the participants to draw and describe themselves as kitchen utensils. Considering how important is a journal for a songwriter and how significant is to create an artistic object to cultivate self-esteem, I would invite the participants to customize a notebook meant to be used as a space to process emotions and record the development of their musical ideas, life projects or anything relevant to them.

To promote relaxation, socialization, self-expression, self-esteem, communication skills, creativity and a sense of collective enjoyment, individual singing for public display is recommended (Afif Iliya, 2011, pp. 16–17). Taking into account the significance of reconnecting to culture in the healing process of historical trauma, the practitioner should judge if it's wise to ask the participants to sing traditional songs such as lullabies or work songs (Tovar, 2017).

Second stage: Having attained an environment of trust and cultivated awareness of the body through body scans, toning and chanting, the ground is set for exploring emotions. A relevant homework would be to ask the participants to

monitor their feelings and the effects on their bodies and try to choose a song through which they can express such emotion. Ideally, it would be sung in front of the group. This activity also has the potential to become a songwriting exercise used to elude the paralyzing fear of the blank page and as an initial tool for acquiring songwriting skills. The idea of scaffolding is to generate fresh lyrics from existing written material, by removing some of the original words in the song and replacing them with lyrics that allow the participant to express him or herself better (Bernard, 2017; Moor, 2017).

If the group doesn't feel confident writing songs on their own, the practitioner can prepare material like chord structures and melodies, so that the participants can add the lyrics. If they feel comfortable with the chord structure, they can create the lyrics and melody through vocal improvisation (Bernard, 2017). To address the cultural aspect that's essential for healing historic trauma, the prepared material can be related to the musical traditions of the group. Using the cultural elements can also be applicable to a resource used by Gee, Ramirez and Bernard to inspire the group to participate. Before they begin an activity, they read poetry and myths of origin related to the topic that will be worked on.

When participants start feeling comfortable with naming their emotions and confident about writing songs, the facilitator can invite them to turn that emotion into a poem through an exercise named rambling and subsequently, to a song (Bernard, 2017; Moor, 2017).

Third stage: As the final session approaches, it would be suitable to have a space where every partaker can name the resources that will allow him to face challenging emotions after the workshop. Other activities such as rituals or writing letters have proven to be useful to extend the effects of the workshop into the future (Archibald et al., 2012, p. 64). Considering the positive outcomes that result from publicly sharing the crafts made in an Arts Therapy program, the practitioner must judge if the group is ready to make a concert or recording to present the songs.

Conclusions:

Conducting this research did provide an insight into how to develop culturally appropriate songwriting workshops for the Colombian context. The next logical step would be to carry out the songwriting workshops, aiming to implement the activities and follow the advice given by the different sources. This could lead to a new research meant to measure the extent to which the suggested activities can be applied and their impacts on the communities. Considering that the length of this project wouldn't allow to fully elaborate on the information provided by the sources, it would also be satisfying to develop a series of articles to approach the given information in detail.

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Appendices

Appendix 1:

Questionnaire

- Talk a little bit about your project
- Time management. How do you organize your workshop schedules?
- How do you manage the fact of living in a different city?
- How do you deal with lack of funds, human resources, physical space, and materials and supplies?
- How do you fund your work?
- How do you face the difficulties of being an outsider?
- How do you take care of yourself during/after the interactions with the participants?
- How do you deal with cultural shock? (Food, hygiene, habits of the locals that are different to yours and that seem harsh to you)
- How to build trust for the participants to talk about their grief?
- When the participants don't feel ready for the activities, how do you adjust the practice to respect their boundaries?
- If silence became a defence mechanism, how would you invite the participants to experience something different?
- Reading the report made by the Centro de Memoria Histórica, they mention that anger is censored and repressed because it's associated with resentful people, incapable of forgiveness and nobleness. Have you experienced the same in your workshops? If so, how do you deal with this?
- How to help people overcome the fear they have regarding their own neighbours?
- Have you come up with cases where young participants admire armed strangers more than their ancestors? If this has happened, how have you dealt with it?
- While being in the field have you felt in danger? What are your red flags? What have you done to find shelter or protection?

Appendix 2:

Glossary of Activities

Disclaimer:

The following glossary is comprised by activities or tasks that have been developed by the interviewees or the consulted secondary sources. Direct quotes from the literature and paraphrasing fragments of the interviews will be used.

Chanting and Toning:

(Full Excerpt From: Singing for Healing and Hope: Music Therapy Methods that Use the Voice with Individuals Who are Homeless and Mentally Ill)

“Chanting is the repetition of a simple melody within a steady rhythm, and a chant can be created from a short phrase of a familiar song, a simple melody that comes to mind with no words, a spiritual mantra, a poetic verse (Geller, 2002). To chant, Geller asks individuals not to think too much, and instead allow themselves to experience being in a repetitive rhythm and melody, and feel “feel the vibration of tone in their bodies” (p.158), which is an important part of the mind-body connection made in singing. The goal of chanting is to demonstrate a method of self-care that the participants can themselves do through singing simple repetitive melodies, “initiating care from the self” (p.159). Through the rhythmic repetition, chanting can access altered states of consciousness for deep spiritual healing and has the power to “elevate the mood and to activate deep emotional connections and memories... inducing a sense of vitality and hope” (Nakkach, 1999, para. 13).

Adaptations of the formal method of chanting meet the needs of the clients at the CSS/CTP Program in the following ways. All the variations of chanting were used while the men were standing up, in a circle, in order to more greatly involve their bodies, and therefore strengthen their needed mind/body connection. Often the group mirrored an individual’s chant, which was socializing because it indicated that the group heard the individual. When

an individual feels heard through mirroring, he can feel accepted and acknowledged by others and that may increase his own self-acceptance and self-esteem. Finally, self-expression occurs because the individual is using his own voice to chant, expressing how he is feeling or his own name using intimate and personal voice sounds. Adaptations of toning occurred when clients sustained pitches during these chanting exercises.” (Afif Iliya, 2011, p. 19)

Collective Songs and Group Singing:

(Full Excerpt From: Singing for Healing and Hope: Music Therapy Methods that Use the Voice with Individuals Who are Homeless and Mentally Ill)

“In group singing, self-expression can be achieved while lessening the need of perfection that could arise in a person singing alone (Justice, 1994). In group music therapy for adults with mental illness, de ‘Etoile (2002) included group singing as one of the methods designed to “positively modify affect, allow for identification and expression of feelings, and provide opportunities for group members to interact with one another” (p.70). Patients reported that the most significant therapeutic factor was group cohesion, which Yalom and Leszcz (2005) determined was a necessary condition for effective group therapy”. (Afif Iliya, 2011, pp. 18–19)

Concerts and recordings:

Taking into account that publically displaying an artistic object increases the levels of self-esteem in the individuals who created it, it would seem important if the individuals involved in creative arts therapies, could end up with a recording or final concert. According to Tony Gee it’s important to be mindful about how adults that have experienced trauma are most likely going to reject the idea of performing in public, since being on stage can make the participant feel extremely vulnerable. However, he highlights that the role of a good workshop leader is to get the group to “do a little bit more than what they think they can do... to get them to discover or remember something about themselves that they didn’t know or had forgotten” (Gee, 2017). In that sense, the practitioner should use judgment to determine if the group is ready for a recording or concert; if it is, instead of

directly asking the group if they want to do it, the practitioner should find a proper way of challenging, inviting and motivating the group to do the concert. Telling them something in the lines of “I think you’re ready to perform and I think you’re going to be fantastic” will probably encourage the participants to sing their songs in public (Gee, 2017)

Couple exercises:

Participants would be asked to gather in couples. Each person would take a turn to talk about a given topic, for example what do they expect to achieve with the workshop or what are their dreams. The other person should listen attentively. When they have both shared and listened, each of them should write a short song inspired on what their partner told them (Bernard, 2017).

Individual singing in collective setting:

(Full Excerpt From: Singing for Healing and Hope: Music Therapy Methods that Use the Voice with Individuals Who are Homeless and Mentally Ill)

(Afif Iliya, 2011, pp. 18–19)

“In a group music therapy setting, Baines (2000) used a method of individual singing, in which participants with mental illness chose to sing personally meaningful pop songs while the remainder of the group accompanied on percussion instruments. The clients reported that singing, listening to and accompanying their requested songs increased the participants’ senses of relaxation, socialization, self-expression, self-esteem, communication skills, creativity, and enjoyment of the group”. (Afif Iliya, 2011, pp. 16–17)

Letters:

(Full Excerpt From: Dancing, Singing, Painting, and Speaking the Healing Story: Healing Through Creative Arts) This is the account of a closing ritual performed at the Honouring Your Grief workshop.

“participants were asked to write a letter to themselves that would be inserted inside the card and mailed two weeks later. Carrie had mentioned earlier that people often leave the workshop in high spirits but were prone to feeling low a couple of weeks after returning home—the letters had

proven to help recapture some of the positive effects of the work they had done in the workshop.” (Archibald et al., 2012, p. 64)

Rambling:

Participants are asked to imagine and remember a scene and then give themselves 15 minutes to write about it, aiming to create a description that uses all the senses (sight, sound, taste, touch, smell, movement). The rules are: Don't stop until the 15 minutes are over, don't edit, don't judge and let your subconscious do the writing (Moor, 2017).

Rituals:

(Full Excerpt From: Dancing, Singing, Painting, and Speaking the Healing Story: Healing Through Creative Arts) This is the account of a closing ritual performed at the Honouring Your Grief workshop.

“On Thursday morning, participants chose, from cardboard boxes of varying sizes and shapes, a container to represent the self. It was to be decorated inside and out and brought to the group room for presentation. Elvis selected a milk carton and attached cardboard arms that were intended to reach forward to symbolize his ability to receive—something he had been struggling with all week. Instead, the arms curled upward and he laughed, saying that this too was okay because it meant he was embracing what he receives. JR's container was cylindrical and filled with items that represented her auntie. Joyce had filled her container with special words and objects, non-tangible qualities and gifts as well as qualities she aspired to such as strength and release. Attached to the outside was a tangled clump of coloured string that she identified as her mixed feelings. Carrie asked what it might feel like if the cluster of string was removed. Joyce expressed satisfaction with the result once she removed the clump.

Participants were asked to write four things they noticed about their container, and then Carrie moved around the circle with a brown bag she said was filled with magical gifts that would be exactly what each person needed at that moment. The coloured stones and glass gems they received were placed carefully inside or on top of each container. These symbolic

gifts brought smiles to many faces and the words they shared suggested inner strength, peace, and healing. Expressive arts therapist and philosopher Stephen Levine (1997) has written about how ritual, rites of passage, and gifting can work as metaphors in a healing process that includes the artist, the therapist, and the community. Among First Nations people of the West Coast, gifting may take on a symbolic significance far beyond the value of the actual gift because of the layers of tradition associated with the Potlatch, a ceremonial feast that includes distributing gifts to all in attendance.”(Archibald et al., 2012, p. 63)

Scaffolding:

Participants are asked to find songs, poems or lines that express their emotion, then cut, paste and transform key words.

Toning

(Full Excerpt From: Singing for Healing and Hope: Music Therapy Methods that Use the Voice with Individuals Who are Homeless and Mentally Ill)

“Toning, an approach to vocalization used by music therapists, involves singing sustained pitches on open vowels such as “Rah”, “Oh”. “Eh”, and “Eeh” (Austin, 2009; Keyes, 1973). On a molecular level, singing is thought to create inner vibrations that break up blockages of energy, healing the body and restoring it to a state of balance. Therapeutically, toning can relieve emotional stress and encourage a stronger mind/body connection. To effectively tone, the individual must begin to look inward and “feel the pulsation of life within: heartbeat, flow of blood, the rhythm of breathing – the one-ness with all life” (Keyes, 1973, p.29).

(Afif Iliya, 2011, pp. 18–19)

Vocal Improvisation

(Full Excerpt From: Singing for Healing and Hope: Music Therapy Methods that Use the Voice with Individuals Who are Homeless and Mentally Ill)

“Vocal improvisation occurs when the client spontaneously vocalizes in a music therapy setting, using free flowing lyrics. Austin’s (1996, 2009) free

associative singing method involves the therapist playing two chords on piano, providing a simple, repetitive and predictable structure for the client and the therapist to improvise. The two chords Austin utilized provide a container for the client's exploration of emotions, and Priestly (1994) stressed the importance of a container in preventing a client from feeling exposed and alone in the experience. In spontaneous singing, individuals use lyrics for further-self expression (Derrington, 2005). In this sense, songs become a narrative, communicating one's ideas, feelings and experiences, using every day language. Clients may view expressing themselves using words in music as a nonthreatening way to open up and share feelings, seeing that "words in the form of lyrics can be easier and less confrontational to handle than conversation, especially if they are thinking about and wanting to share difficult issues" (Derrington, 2005, p.71). When a client sings lyrics spontaneously, the melody and the lyrics emerge simultaneously in the moment. (Afif Iliya, 2011, p. 20)