

Pieces of Place: Finding Meaning through the Material and Process of Artisanal Craft in Central Mexico

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Estados Unidos

Michoacán

Oceano Pacífico

Golfo de México

Centro
América

MÉXICO

Rural Life



Objectives



1

Understand the 3 aspects of PLACE, and how individual and collective memories influence IDENTITY

2

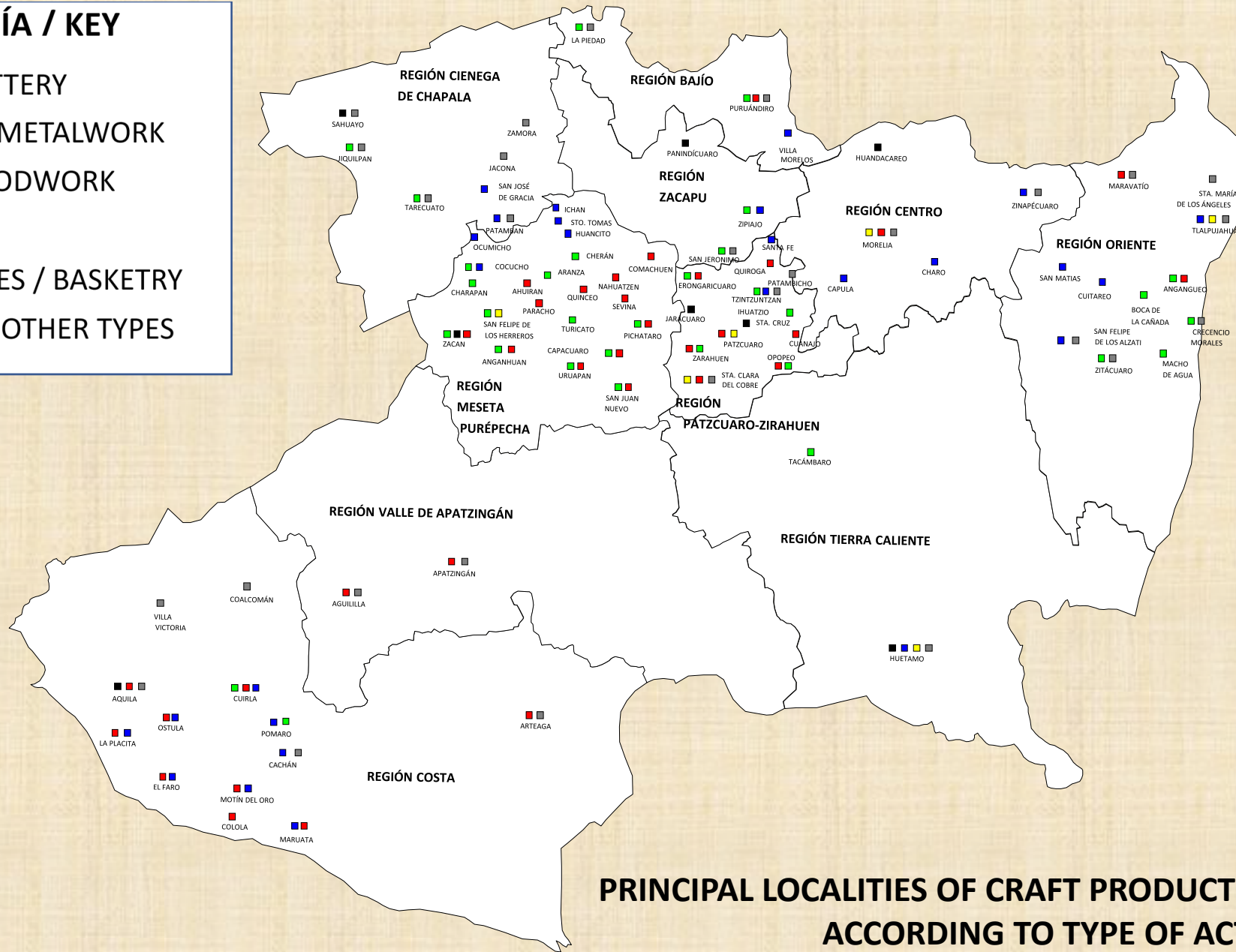
Describe how TEXTILE ART—the act of stitching and storytelling—enhance cultural connection and increase wellbeing

3

Learn key components of ART-BASED RESEARCH within the context of INDIGENOUS THEORY

SIMBOLOGÍA / KEY

- ALFARERÍA / POTTERY
- METALISTERÍA / METALWORK
- MADERAS / WOODWORK
- TEXTILES
- FIBRAS VEGETALES / BASKETRY
- OTRAS RAMAS / OTHER TYPES



PRINCIPAL LOCALITIES OF CRAFT PRODUCTION IN MICHOACÁN, ACCORDING TO TYPE OF ACTIVITY

FUENTE: UKATA, Revista de Arte Popular, Casa de las Artesanías del Estado de Michoacán, 1998.

Tela Bordada: Embroidered Story Cloths of Santa Cruz



Core Question

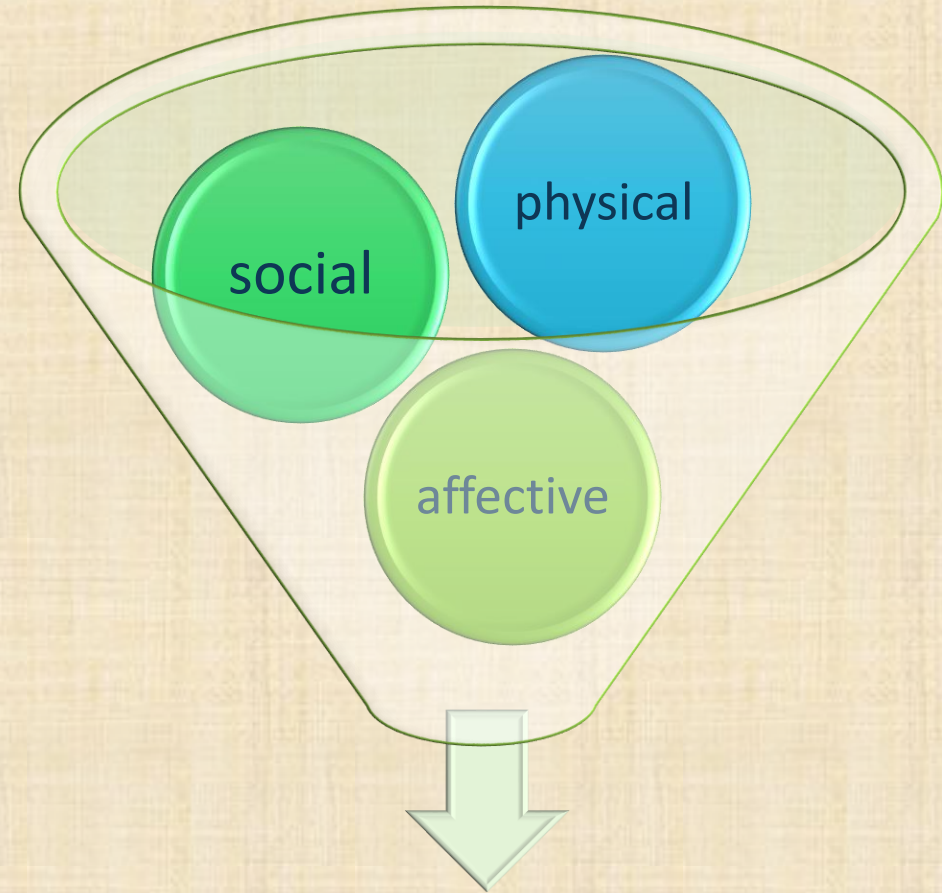
What is the **experience** of engagement in *tela bordada*?

Mental Health Concerns Identified during Pilot:

- Reluctance to seek mental health services
- Lack of resources and access
- Domestic violence
- Substance abuse
- Identity disorders

How am I
defining **place**?

(Barwin, et al., 2015; Gufstason, 2001)



Place Identity

“Identity is shaped and affected by landscape interactions ...
a visceral connection.”

(Russell, 2012, pp. 405-406)

Methodology

- *Art-Based Research* – art as data & way of knowing

Art Making

Embroidered story cloths: personal experiences in context with place

Backstrap weaving: data analysis

- *Mixed Method* – qualitative & quantitative data

Reflective Journaling

Written experiences and insights from participants

Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM)

Self-report of identity strength

Methodology

Theories

- *Phenomenology* – experiences
- *Indigenous* – community relationships & storytelling
 - indígena* = Indian, Indigenous
 - mestizo* = mixed-race, Spanish-Indigenous decent

Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure: Scores Based on Group Membership

Characteristic	<i>n</i>	Exploration			Commitment			Ethnic Identity		
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>K-W(F)</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>K-W(F)</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>K-W(F)</i>
Self-identity				.877(.730)			4.378(.075)			2.611(.296)
campesino	1	3.40	-		4.29	-		3.92	-	
indígena	7	3.47	1.08		4.41	.77		4.04	.84	
mestizo	5	2.84	1.17		3.26	1.01		4.04	.84	
University				.087(.807)			1.961(.183)			.537(.497)
UNLA	5	3.12	1.08		3.51	1.09		3.35	.98	
UIIM	8	3.29	1.13		4.23	.87		3.85	.94	
Age				.465(.549)			2.039(.175)			1.834(.206)
18-24	10	3.08	1.03		3.73	1.01		3.46	.95	
25-44	3	3.70	1.25		4.71	.38		4.33	.67	

Note. *N* = 13. *K-W* = Kruskal-Wallis test; *F* = Fisher's Exact test; MEIM = Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure. MEIM items 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, and 12 assess exploration; Items 1, 2, 4, 8, and 10 assess commitment. The response options were on a Likert 5-point scale response survey (*strongly disagree* = 1 to *strongly agree* = 5, with 3 as a neutral position). The score calculated as the mean of items on each subscale (Exploration and Commitment) and of the scale as a whole (Ethnic Identity). If a participant was missing data for an item, the means calculation was adjusted for the actual number of items reported. Adapted from "Propiedades psicométricas y estructura factorial de la Escala de Identidad Étnica Multigrupo en español (MEIM) [Psychometric properties and factorial structure of the Spanish Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM)]," by M. Esteban Guitart, 2010, *Revista Latinoamericana de Psicología*, 42(3), p. 409. Copyright 2010 by Revista Latinoamericana de Psicología.

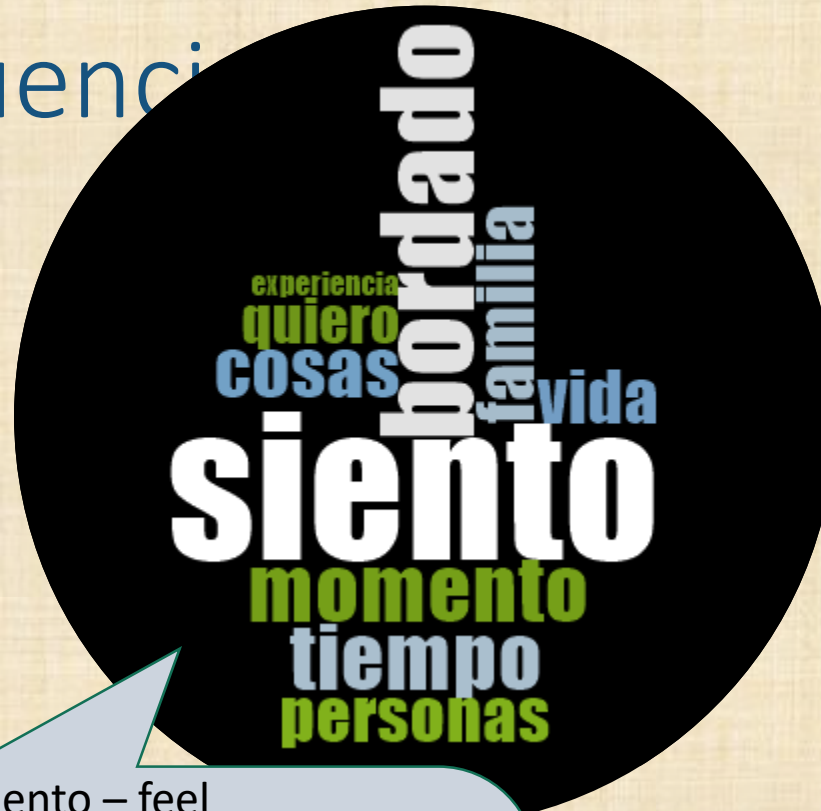
Nvivo Word Frequency

1. tiempo – time
2. siento – feel
3. familia – family
4. vida – life
5. experiencia- experience
6. bordar – embroider
7. historia – story
8. momento – moment
9. siempre – always
10. donde – where

UJIM



1. siento – feel
2. bordado – embroidered
3. momento – momento
4. tiempo – time
5. cosas – things
6. familia – family
7. personas – people
8. vida – life
9. quiero – want
10. experiencia – experience

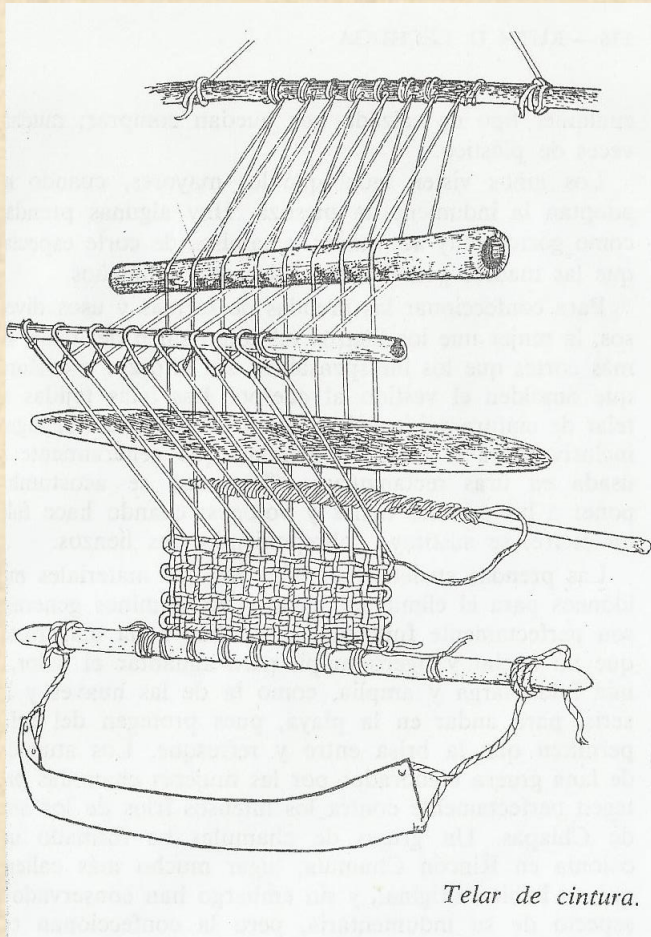


1. bordado – embroidered
2. cosas – things
3. siento – feel
4. personas – people
5. creo – believe
6. quiero – want
7. hacer – make
8. momento – moment
9. tengo – have
10. parte – part

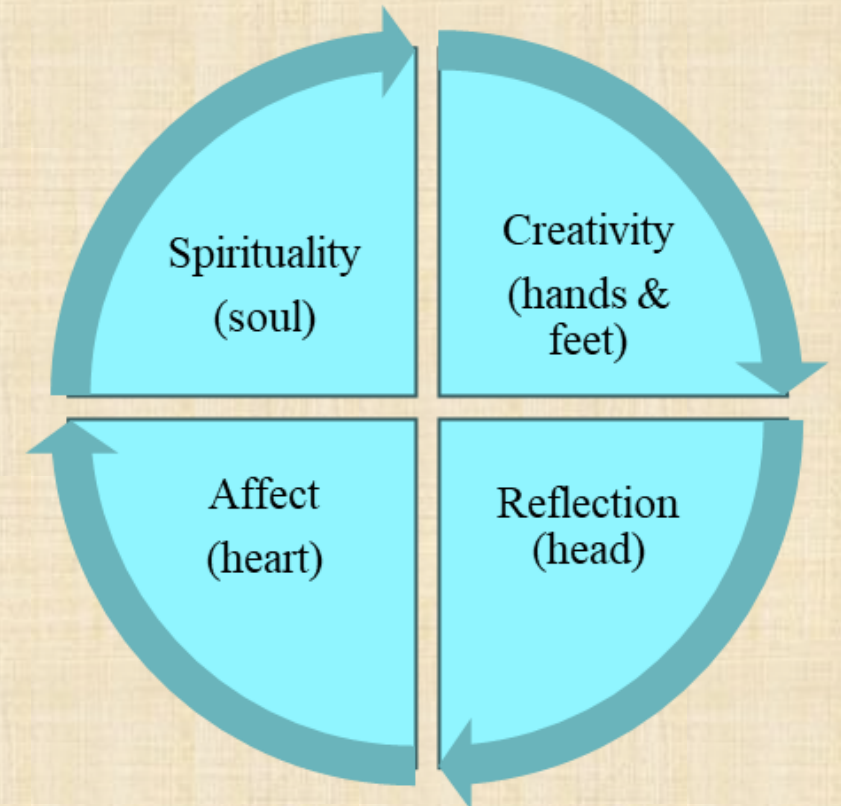
UNLA



Gaining Understanding through Backstrap Weaving



P'urhépecha Way of Knowing:
Tepeni tsipekua



Replication of Pilot Themes

- Wellbeing
- Identity
- Gender issues
- Expectations
- Experiences of place and time

Traditional handicrafts cross cultures

- Increased wellbeing
- Family and/or community connections
- Processed difficult memories
- Symbols = individual and collective identities
- ***Slow***: mindful reflection, time for self vs. brief, solution-focused

con·text

the circumstances that form the setting for an event, statement, or idea, and in terms of which it can be fully understood and assessed.

Context (n.d.). In *Oxford's online dictionary*. Retrieved from <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/context>

in·dig·e·nous

originating or occurring naturally in a particular place; native.

Indigenous (n.d.). In *Oxford's online dictionary*. Retrieved from
<https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/indigenous>

Language matters

- ***Indigenous*** = "local" or "natural" vs. reductionist – exclusionary
- ***First Nations / First Peoples*** = elevation and recognition of specific tribal knowledges
- ***Natural*** = inclusion of non-Western cultural values

Education matters

- How we value "academic knowledge" vs. "natural knowledge"
- **Indigenous, critical race, and post-colonialism paradigms:**
focus on injustices, marginalizing and “othering”
- ***Natural* paradigm:**
 - Restoration and respectful use of all cultures’ local knowledge systems
 - Lens for all research

Arts matters

Use of the arts, not only for arts-based research, but also for:

- Immersion in local knowledge for **planning** and **design**
- **Define goals, needs, identities:**
 - Language or identity portrait vs. demographic questionnaire
 - “Tell your story” vs. interview
 - Research as listening, conversation, storytelling

Research matters

Conventional qualitative-quantitative methods

- I was influencing the data

Arts-based knowledge through weaving

- Data were influencing me

Limitations and Missteps

- Acquiescence and/or social desirability (participants)
- Confirmation bias (researcher)
- Specific locality and sample size hindered generalization
- Failure to solicit perceptions of the researcher as an outsider
- Possible implications of research if offered by an insider
- Validity of MEIM weakened by context and sample size



Implications



- Stories emerged through tela bordada
- 2-month introspection vs. “quick fix”
- Using traditional craft, *artesanía*, to partner with community and connect to culture
- Increasing access to mental health services

If the dominant paradigms continue to be the norm, how will new ways of knowing be encountered?

(Kossak, 2013)

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Pieces of Place: Finding Meaning through Artisan Craft in Central Mexico

Throughout history and across cultures, fabric and needlework have been symbolic means to identify ethnic group and social status. Doctoral research conducted in Mexico explored the potential use of traditional craft, *artesanía*. Through the act of doing, art making became key to decolonizing an art-based research approach.

Dissertation

Homer, E. S. (2019). *Pieces of Place: Finding Meaning through the Material and Process of Artisanal Craft in Central Mexico* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database.

Abstract:

The research in this study focused on how storytelling through artmaking, specifically, narrative embroidered story cloths (*tela bordada*) has been used traditionally in rural Central Mexico. The study explored place-based identities and traditions embedded in the culture, and examined how these processes could potentially be incorporated into art therapy practice in these communities. The research question, “What is the experience of engagement in *tela bordada*?” illuminated the meaning of Indigenous theory and expanded the import of the experience of the material and process. This led to the discovery of finding meaning explicit in the participants’ experiences and implicit in the researcher’s experience of designing and conducting research, exposing a need to decolonize art-based research approaches.

Thirteen participants were recruited from individuals associated with two university programs located in Michoacán, Mexico. Qualitative data were collected through a 12-session mixed-method, arts-based (ABR), phenomenological approach using art making and reflective journaling. The approach was chosen wherein art making was utilized during data collection (embroidered story cloths) and analysis (weaving) with the inclusion of a quantitative exploration of the possible role of ethnic identity, using the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM).

Themes of wellbeing, identity, gender issues, expectations, and the experiences of place and time were evident in the participant experiences with an exploration of Slow Theory of Time, the utility of the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM), art and storytelling as research and intervention, and research methodology. Additionally, the data suggested that the concepts of intentionally making space for self-exploration, the need for creating accessible places for that exploration, and mindfully engaging self-

reflection, self-examination, self-monitoring, and shutting out external distractions with the aim of finding or creating meaning were key elements of the participant experience. Clinical application of the outcomes included possible benefits of incorporating “Slow” therapy using locally sourced materials and methods, such as artisan craft, and emphasizing relationship, hope, and intention, as viable considerations for supporting clients versus Western, formulaic, brief solution focused approaches. Additionally, the experience with the materials and process raised questions about how research approaches are represented and promoted, suggesting that ABR might be redefined as Indigenous Research.

Key Concepts from the Literature Review

Bienestar – Wellness and Wellbeing

- Physical health tied to social ills (Collier, et al., 2000; Garro, 1986; Rodriguez, 2012)
- Holistic with components of physical, social, familial, and land connections (Collier, Farias Campero, Perez, & White, 2000; Rodriguez, 2012)

Place Identity

- Physical, social, and affective place: experiences happened somewhere (Barwin, Shawande, Crighton, & Veronis, 2015; Gufstason, 2001)
- Collective memory: identities form in community (Gufstason, 2001; Halbwachs, 1950; Truc, 2011)

Slow Theory

- Locally-sourced, sustainable materials and processes
- Connection with others and mindful reflection (Honoré, 2004; Wellesley-Smith, 2015)

Storytelling

- Narrative therapy: tell our story to re-write it (Shapiro & Ross, 2002)
- Cuento Therapy: Spanish-language stories with Latino youth (Ramirez, Jain, Flores-Torres, Perez, & Carlson, 2009)
- Folktales: balance dominant and minority cultural values (Constantino, Malgady, & Rogler, 1985)

Textiles in Art Therapy

- Story Cloths: survivors of gender-based violence (Cohen, 2013; Garlock, 2016)
- Fabric Collage: childhood sexual abuse (Homer, 2015)

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