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Traditional Cultural Artmaking Practices and Their Impact on Wellness

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**Traditional Cultural Artmaking Practices
and Their Impact on Wellness**

by

Rochelle Le Heux, Isabel Maddahi, Christina McCue, Lala Minassian, Martha-Lucia Orozco,
Devika Parmar, Vivian Rodriguez, Ruth Sze, and Shannon Thomas

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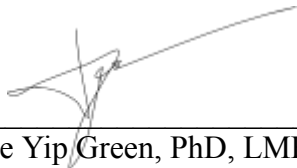


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Abstract

This study explores the impact that traditional artmaking can have on the wellness of individuals who continue to practice their traditional crafts. Limited research has explored how culturally adapted art therapy practices and culturally relevant materials can promote wellness and alleviate emotional and acculturation challenges for multicultural populations. This research included a case study approach that invited five participants who regularly engaged in a traditional artmaking practice to continue their practice for four consecutive weeks and reflect on their sense of wellness after each traditional artmaking engagement. Over the four weeks, participants completed an initial survey to assess their baseline sense of wellness, weekly surveys that included the WHO-5 Well-being Index, and a final interview over Zoom web conferencing. Through a thematic analysis of the qualitative data, the researchers recognized two overarching themes: (1) the sense of wellness through experiencing a connection to culture, and (2) connection to heritage and present-moment awareness. The survey results revealed that environmental stressors often impacted the participant's ability to rate wellness in connection to their artmaking practice and that their practice was a helpful distraction that positively impacted wellness. This research suggests that engaging in traditional cultural art practices can increase an individual's sense of wellness through a deeper connection to their culture and their present-moment awareness. Further studies regarding traditional cultural artmaking practices and their impact on wellness may inspire and support art therapists in decolonizing therapeutic approaches and empowering multicultural communities and individuals.

Keywords: traditional art making, wellness, cultural art, traditional art material, art therapy

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Introduction

Study Topic

This study utilizes an arts-based case study approach to examine how traditional and cultural artmaking practices influence wellness in individuals who continue to practice their traditional art. Traditional art, as defined by the National Endowment for the Arts, includes crafts, music, and visual art within the community of a culture whose members share common traits, including but not limited to ethnic heritage, language, or geographic region (NEA, 2023). The ultimate hope for this paper is to disseminate how individuals from self-identified cultural backgrounds use these types of traditional cultural practices and materials and how they may have an effect on their overall wellness. This study seeks to empower communities and individuals within the art therapy field to incorporate varied cultural materials and art practices to promote well-being across multicultural populations.

Significance of Study

As art therapy students in the United States, the researchers of the present study receive their training through a Westernized lens, often not inclusive of traditional cultural artmaking practices. Traditional art is a form of tacit knowledge passed down through generations, influenced by culture, family, ethnicity, and era (Niedderer & Townsend, 2014; Pöllänen, 2015, as cited in Gopura & Wickramasinghe, 2022). Training through a Westernized lens may be limited by the beliefs, ideologies, and cultural practices of the dominant group (McDowell & Hernández, 2010). Through this research, the researchers hoped to uncover a deeper understanding of art practices and materials from cultures outside of the United States and their essential role in art therapy. Researchers sought to explore how practicing traditional art can

potentially strengthen community ties and affect one's identity, sense of belonging, and self-esteem, which may enhance their overall well-being. Traditional cultural artmaking practices and their impact on wellness may provide information to assist art therapists in decolonizing therapeutic approaches and empowering multicultural communities and individuals in the future. Decolonizing approaches can include methods that consider the impact of systemic oppression, racism, and generational trauma on individuals and communities and seek to promote values of diversity, social justice, and collective healing (McDowell & Hernández, 2010).

This research utilized the World Health Organization Well-Being Index (WHO-5) and individual interviews to explore how traditional artmaking can support individuals' emotional expression and self-reflection on their wellness. While there is still limited information in the currently available literature and research, there is promising support for using culturally adapted art therapy practices and culturally relevant materials to increase a connection to the artmaking process and promote a sense of wellness. As the literature supports, culturally adapted art practices may help foster community and improve connection within one's culture (Jauraz Mendoza, 2020; Linesch, 2014; Ter Maat, 1997). Engaging in cultural art practices may increase connection to culture, both family connection and country of origin, and introduce a sense of present-moment awareness, increasing introspection and mind-body connection.

Background of the Study Topic

Culturally considerate therapeutic practices have become more important to consider in the therapeutic practice as studies and communities engage in discussions regarding the impact of colonization and discrimination (Lu & Yuen, 2012; McDowell & Hernandez, 2010). McDowell & Hernandez propose a framework for supporting decolonizing practices that "reflect values of human diversity, collaboration and participation, distributive justice, and self-determination" in mental health education (McDowell & Hernandez, 2010). Lu & Yuen propose an art therapy framework that seeks to integrate traditional art practices into the healing journey. The researchers sought to further the conversation by examining the literature and exploring the question: How have traditional and cultural artmaking practices influenced wellness?

Through reviewing the literature, researchers noticed the limitation in studies that examine how traditional art practices and materials may impact an individual's overall sense of wellness. The literature review in the study provides promising support that the artmaking process can support multicultural populations in navigating stress, exploring individual and collective identities, and engaging in emotional expression and self-reflection. However, the research is limited in exploring the use of traditional cultural art materials in art therapy sessions with multicultural populations, exploring its potential benefits to collective healing and reconnection to the homeland. The intention of the study is to further contribute to the limited research that explores specifically the benefits of traditional cultural artmaking and its impact on wellness in individuals.

Literature Review

This literature review examines the research available to determine how traditional cultural artmaking practices may contribute to wellness. The research involves identifying peer-reviewed articles and other literature available, including books and dissertations, that discuss through both quantitative and qualitative studies the benefits of traditional cultural artmaking. Databases used in the research include EBSCO, Art Full Text, ARTstor, Ethni, and ERIC. Keywords used in the research included a combination of art therapy or artmaking and the following: wellness, healing, U.S. immigration, global immigration, refugee, culture, traditional art, and mental health. More specific search terms emerged upon further research conducted within research subgroups and exploration of different cultures and geographic regions. This literature review is not exhaustive of all cultures, territories, and populations. Given that research is limited within the field of art therapy, the cultural artmaking practices and materials were chosen collectively by researchers given the available research. Some sections below are organized around a geographic location while others represent artmaking associated with a specific identity; these headers were determined based on the research findings.

East Asia

Some studies have shown that artmaking and art therapy can be effective tools to help East Asian immigrants navigate acculturation challenges and stress. In a study done with three Korean boys from immigrant families, the art created in art therapy sessions revealed themes such as role reversal in immigrant families, being locked out of opportunities, and communications in the parent-child relationship (Lee, 2015). Results from the study indicated that their sense of enjoyment and fulfillment during the flow experiences of art in sessions

increased the participants' sense of competence and abilities to deal with challenges and contentious relationships with parents (Lee, 2015). Kim (2015) also explored how art therapy can be a therapeutic mental health intervention that supports Korean immigrant youth as they face communication challenges and stress from acculturation. Art therapy sessions were conducted to create a safe space for participants to share their immigration experiences and any stress related to adjustments to a new culture. Outcomes of the study revealed that the participants' depression levels lessened after art therapy sessions, where they used art to process ways to integrate two cultures and maintain a connection with their country of origin (Kim, 2015). The studies by Lee (2015) and Kim (2015) focused on exploring the benefits of the artmaking process and not precisely the benefits of a particular art medium, thus participants were allowed to choose from various art materials such as clay, plaster, and other tactile media.

Traditional Art Materials from East Asia

A limited number of studies explore using traditional art materials in art therapy sessions with East Asian populations. In a study done with individuals with schizophrenia, participants joined an art therapy group that provided the use of a variety of traditional Chinese art mediums such as Chinese calligraphy, painting, embroidery, beading, and facial makeup to explore themes of happy memories and successful experiences (Tong, 2021). The results showed increased self-efficacy and social function in individuals, improving their communication skills and ability to manage daily tasks (Tong, 2021). Sojung (2021) explored the therapeutic value of using art materials within a client's culture, which may provide therapists with insight into the client and deepen the therapeutic efficacy. She explored the philosophical aesthetics of East Asia and the use of brushes, *Hanji*, a traditional Korean paper, and *Meok*, an ink stick primarily used in Korea.

Further studies can be done to explore the benefits of incorporating traditional art materials in art therapy sessions to support connection with culture and identity in East Asian populations.

South Asia

Studies on handicrafts, art therapy, and wellness are limited within South Asian populations. Using the search criteria '*south Asian or Bangladeshi or Bengali or Gujarati or Indian or Sri Lankan or Pakistani or Punjabi*' alongside the search terms *handicrafts and crafting, wellness or wellbeing, and art therapy* yielded single-digit results on the American Journal of Art Therapy and the following databases: Art Full Text (H.W. Wilson), ARTstor, PsycINFO. Additionally, the search term "Indian" yields results for both Native Americans and those from India, further complicating the search. The nonstandardized landscape of art therapy within South Asia countries may contribute to the need for more research. Potash et al. (2012) explore the potential development of culturally adapted art therapy standards in India, stating that although the field of art therapy has existed in India for two decades, no long-term training or education programs existed at the time of his research. He notes India's long-standing art traditions, connected mainly to religious practices, and the prevalence of arts education within schools (Potash et al., 2012). The connection between arts and spirituality could also contribute to the lack of research since art traditions exist primarily within the home. Potash et al. (2012) believe this helps position art therapy as a healing intervention, given its integrated role. In researching indigenous art traditions in South Asia, three materials were identified: *rangoli* (powdered ground drawings), *mehndi* (natural temporary tattoos), and weaving. The majority of sources come from authors who identify as South Asian.

Rangoli

Potash et al. (2012) names *rangoli*, also known as *rangavalli*, *kolam*, or *alpana* (Gode, 1947) as an example of the indigenous Indian art practice with religious roots. *Rangoli* describes the process of decorating the ground with colored powders. Gode (1947) explains that in some parts of India, this tradition is carried out daily at one's doorstep, and in other parts, *rangoli* is practiced solely during special occasions. Two chapters from Lauren Leone's book *Craft in Art Therapy* include the facilitation of *rangoli* in a group art therapy setting (Leone & Iyer, 2021; Leone & Jhaveri, 2021). Given the limited availability of research, *rangoli* appears to be one of the most commonly adapted indigenous Indian art forms for art therapy use.

Jhaveri and Iyer practice art therapy with *rangoli* and explore its role as a healing and clinical practice (Leone & Iyer, 2021; Leone & Jhaveri, 2021). Within their research, they refer to the practice by its regional name, *kolam*. Jhaveri brought the indigenous practices of *kolam* into a cross-cultural learning group with local Tamil women in South India and visiting graduate students from the School of Visual Arts in New York (Leone & Jhaveri, 2021). Jhaveri's population and setting differ from Iyer, who explores *kolam* at St. Vincent's Home in Singapore with a group of predominantly Chinese Singaporean older adults aged 66 to 95 from low SES backgrounds. Iyer chose to use *kolam* because of the widespread Indian population within Singapore, thus exploring the use of indigenous crafts with multicultural populations. The use of indigenous Indian art practices with two different contexts and populations suggests that these practices are not limited to just Indian populations within India. Both Jhaveri and Iyer chose these art materials to integrate culture-specific craft traditions as a way for participants to connect more deeply with their personal and collective identities (Leone & Iyer, 2021; Leone & Jhaveri, 2021).

Jhaveri and Iyer both explored the use of *kolam*; however, there were differences in their work. Jhaveri facilitated the use of *kolam* on the ground as traditionally practiced, while Iyer adapted the art form onto tables for increased accessibility. Jhaveri used traditional powders, while Iyer used tactile materials such as feathers, varied colored pebbles, and shells. Jhaveri introduced traditional *kolam* designs while Iyer drew a grid with dots that linked all the participants' designs with one another (Leone & Iyer, 2021; Leone & Jhaveri, 2021). In this way, the research shows two different facilitations with the same art material that both yielded positive results. Jhaveri and Iyer found that using *kolam* facilitated social connection, fostered a sense of purpose, and served as a tool for self-care.

Mehndi

Mehndi, also known as *henna*, is another material referenced in the literature. *Mehndi* describes a dried and powdered leaf that leaves behind a rust-red color when interacting with human skin (Basas, 2007). Like the religious underpinnings of *kolam*, the use of *mehndi* is mainly ceremonial and originates within the ancient sacred texts of Hinduism, the Vedas. However, Jhaveri notes the international use of *mehndi*. At the same time, it may have originated in Asia, but this material has spread across the world by trade and has been used by Christians, Jews, Muslims, and Hindus across Asia, the Middle East, and Africa (Leone & Jhaveri, 2021). Basas (2007) also notes the international use of *mehndi*. However, she states that widespread use occurs in Sri Lanka and India, where depictions of Hindu gods were found on cave murals as early as the 4th and 5th centuries. Today, *mehndi* is used in Indian society to commemorate auspicious occasions. (Basas, 2007). Within the literature, Jhaveri explored the use of *mehndi* for a mixed-gender youth art therapy group in South India (Leone & Jhaveri, 2021), while Kaimal

(2015) incorporated the use of *mehndi* in her artwork as an Indian immigrant to the United States.

Within a group therapy setting, Jhaveri directed youth members to sketch their *mehndi* designs and then apply them to themselves and others (Leone & Jhaveri, 2021). She found this art form beneficial in exploring personal symbols while providing a revitalized connection back to one's own culture. Her facilitation of individual and partnered *mehndi* allowed for increased connection through the alternating of giving and receiving. Jhaveri advocates that *mehndi* could benefit clients with physical injuries to relate differently to scars and injuries on their bodies. Overall, Jhaveri found *mehndi* effective for self-expression and self-care (Leone & Jhaveri, 2021).

Kaimal (2015) used her artmaking practices for self-care, sense-making, and insight after arriving in the United States as an Indian immigrant. Her artwork allows her to explore her identities as an immigrant, a minority, a person of color, a higher education student, and an art therapist. With a background in textiles and traditional crafts, Kaimal (2015) states that she actively experimented with new art materials that she could not find in India, such as acrylics, foam boards, dry pastels, oil pastels, and clay. In several of her art pieces, *mehndi* can also be found alongside these new materials. While Kaimal does not explicitly note or describe her use of *mehndi*, her inclusion of this material may be one of the traditional crafts she references throughout the article, especially given its lack of widespread use in the United States. In her pieces *Wild Grasses* and *Trees of Life*, she combines henna and oil pastels on canvas. This mix of traditional materials with new materials serves as an exploration of her identity. She writes that her artwork combines her roots in textiles and traditional crafts with incorporating new media and found objects, thus holding both her identities. Between Jhaveri's facilitation of the use of

mehndi and Kaimal's practice with new and old materials, *mehndi* is referenced as a connection to one's cultural roots.

Weaving

Weaving is an internationally practiced craft and tradition in South Asia, specifically in Sri Lanka. Despite the widespread use of weaving, academic searches within this geographic area with the terms "*handloom or loom*" and "*wellness*" were limited. In one identified research article, Gopura & Wickramasinghe (2022) explore the socio-emotional impacts of weaving for three handloom artisans in Sri Lanka. This article does not contain the words 'healing' or 'wellness,' pointing to differences in language and critical terms across cultures since, through an industrialized lens, 'socioemotional impacts' may often speak to an experience of wellness. Gopura & Wickramasinghe (2022) conducted their research through the lens of the textile industry, seeking to understand the experiences of the artisans to advocate for a more human-centered product development approach. Gopura & Wickramasinghe (2022) conducted their research via semi-structured interviews with 27 selected participants from different handloom communities across three provinces of Sri Lanka. Then, an art-based practice was employed to create a 27-yard textile piece with each participant working on one yard over three months. The latter aspect of the research still needs to be completed due to Covid-19. Artisans described feeling happy, relaxed, or free when engaging with their craft (Gopura & Wickramasinghe, 2022). They also expressed that when faced with difficulty, the artisans often channeled their emotions into their experience, intertwining yarn and creating patterns. Thus, the experience of weaving was central to both the artisan's identities and emotional processes.

The exploration of *rangoli*, *mehndi*, and weaving in South Asian populations demonstrates the centrality of cultural identity and the role of indigenous crafts as a means of connecting with that identity. Many of the authors above acknowledge larger systems that affect the perception and practice of indigenous art forms, including a belief that indigenous crafts are seen as primitive and inferior (Gopura & Wickramasinghe, 2022; Leone & Jhaveri, 2021). However, contrary to the societal messages that devalue these practices, the authors found that indigenous crafts contribute to wellness and hold immense value within society.

Native Americans

Arts and crafts practices are integral to a vast number of Native American communities and identities and relate to healing, wellness, culture, and tradition (Archibald & Dewar, 2010; Bleau & Lansall, 2022; Pepic et al., 2022). Native Americans have been subject to a history of having their cultural practices stripped from them, which has caused historical trauma (Archibald & Dewar, 2010). Mental health programs for Native Americans frequently incorporate traditional practices, including artmaking, smudging, prayer, singing, drumming, and grounding techniques (Archibald & Dewar, 2010; Bleau & Lansall, 2022; Lu & Yuen, 2012; Pepic et al., 2022). Traditional views of healing are holistic, thus the inclusion of all parts of Native American culture is critical (Archibald & Dewar, 2010). Furthermore, due to the historical trauma related to the loss of culture, Native American populations have found learning their traditions reconnected them to their culture, improved self-esteem, and created a sense of belonging and cultural pride, all of which contributed to healing (Archibald & Dewar, 2010).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Indigenous community-based practitioners Bleau and Lansall (2022) found that Indigenous communities had worsening mental health issues and increased difficulty accessing mental health services. They worked with individuals and communities to determine what was needed rather than simply prescribing treatment. Community members specifically asked for more cultural arts to be incorporated into the therapeutic process. The authors developed and led online programs alongside community elders. The indigenous communities felt reconnected to one another, particularly members who were off-reserve and typically unable to attend in-person programs. The programs helped members to include art, creativity, and wellness in their lives weekly.

Non-Native American practitioners Lu and Yuen (2012) facilitated a three-day arts-based workshop with eight Native American women involved with a support center for women and children affected by abuse. The researchers were sensitive to their position as non-natives and continually worked with the community to ensure the program was appropriate and effective. They opened the workshop with a women-led ceremony incorporating smudging, prayer, drumming, and singing. Each woman created a life-sized body map of their own body and incorporated an image to represent their support network in the artwork. The images were decorated to show areas of pain, healing, strength, and support using combinations of indigenous practices and materials and Western practices and materials. Outside of the body and support images, the life cycle was represented circularly “using the traditional native life cycle based on the medicine wheel” (p. 195). The artworks were then exhibited for a week in a local gallery where the woman led another opening ceremony, celebrated, talked about their artwork, and shared their stories. Many women felt empowered, more creative, and “able to see the future ahead” (p. 199) at the end of the experience.

Pepic et al. (2022) found that a 12-week after-school program for 50 Native youth that utilized a “culturally oriented art therapy curriculum” (Pepic et al., 2022 p. 43) decreased stress and improved mood. Because there was no control group, it is difficult to say whether the culturally focused curriculum was an essential factor in the improvements or whether the results were purely from the art therapy and/or the after-school program. Although Bleau and Lansall (2022) and Pepic et al. (2022) highlighted that Native Americans are resilient, primarily due to their cultural connections, these can be strengthened through traditional art practices. Bleau and Lansall (2022) and Pepic et al. (2022) found that group work, rather than individual work, fostered a sense of community and improved feelings of connection within one’s culture.

Whether the practitioners are Native Americans or not, creating and leading mental health programs with community members is essential to empower communities, decolonize therapeutic practices, and ensure they are beneficial and sensitive to the specific community (Bleau & Lansall, 2022; Lu & Yuen, 2012; Pepic et al., 2022).

Africa

Globally, African worldviews have often been overlooked and undervalued (Jackson et al., 2021). There is limited research on artmaking and art therapy within the African immigrant population. Some studies have found that implementing traditional artmaking may help African immigrants connect to their cultural identity and navigate a new culture. Further understanding African immigrants’ traditional art and artmaking practices may help therapists understand their clients. These efforts to reclaim African art and culture can be integral to healing and mental health practices for African Americans (Blount & Brookins, 2022).

Printmaking

One prominent cultural art tradition in Africa is Adinkra symbolism. Adinkra symbols originated from the Akan people of Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire and represented different proverbs, philosophies, thoughts, wisdom, values, and principles essential to the Akan people (Jackson et al., 2021). Blount and Brookins (2022) conducted a multiple-case, qualitative study examining how the use of these symbols in printmaking impacted the cultural identity and development of five young Ghanaian adults. Engagement in the indigenous cultural experience of learning Adinkra symbols allowed participants to feel more secure in who they were, revealed and enforced their cultural identity to negotiate challenging moments and engage in emotional expression, hope, and positive attitude (Blount & Brookins, 2022).

Blount and Brooks (2022) found that among the Ghanaian youth who participated in this study, traditional printmaking was an explicit cultural message that contributed to their positive cultural identity. Within a clinical setting, therapists working with Ghanaian clients can mention Adinkra printmaking in the hopes of sparking conversation or reflection. Similar to how art acts as a means of communication in art therapy, Adinkra symbols might act as an easily accessible proxy for African values and principles (Jackson et al., 2021), allowing clients to connect to their cultural identity or history.

Drumming

Just as traditional printmaking can be a source of connection to cultural identity for African American folks, African drumming may have similar effects. The Trauma Healing Club is an after-school support program for African refugees and their families, utilizing an existing evidence-based trauma intervention framework, pyramid mentoring, and African drumming

(Elswick et al., 2021). Results from the study indicated that the adaptation of the trauma-responsive intervention was effective and supportive of the families. The reported outcomes support the fact that the adapted CBITS intervention and African drumming were successful in developing healthy coping skills within this population while also decreasing PTSD symptomology reported by the refugee student population.

Reviewing direct quotes from participants (Elswick et al., 2021), it is clear that the traditional drum circle stood out as beneficial within the study. This added intervention focused on valuing refugees' cultural knowledge and experience, enforcing the need for clinicians to be aware of the cultural values and artifacts among the population with whom they are currently working. Pyramid mentoring, which was designed to contribute to cultural socialization, cultural identity, and cognitive development through modeling and social support (Elswick et al., 2021), proved to accompany the drumming in creating an opportunity for participants to connect to positive aspects of their cultural heritage.

Another example of traditional African healing practices within the art therapy context is Sarah McGee's work. Like Elswick (2021), McGee used traditional African drumming in her work and found her drumming was a healing device that calmed children exposed to trauma. Many individuals McGee worked with found that her drumming echoed the heartbeat of life (Doby-Copeland, 2019). McGee's holistic and culturally responsive approach aided clients in their connection to their artmaking and self-reflection.

Pottery

Similarly, Greenfield et al. (2019) found that African values can be carried through artmaking and art objects among immigrants. Their qualitative, interdisciplinary study focused

on seven Ethiopian potters who immigrated to Israel in their adulthood. Their cultural products (clay sculptures), direct interview, and archival photographs show how these women carry their African values, such as procreation, family closeness, sharing, and respect for elders, as well as express these values within their artwork (Greenfield et al., 2019). This study also highlights the contrasting cultural values the women met as a part of Israeli society and the stylistic changes in their pottery. While their sculptures express values in their Ethiopian villages of origin, the interviews show the awareness of a radically different ecology and the struggle of the seven participants to adapt to a new set of values (Greenfield et al., 2019).

Through researching traditional African artmaking with immigrants, it is clear that cultural artmaking can help one connect to their cultural identity and help those who have left their homeland navigate the connection between self and a new society.

Latinx/e/o/a Cultures

Acculturation and Wellbeing

The process of acculturation offers challenges to immigrant communities from Latin American countries. Acculturation is a process that happens when two cultural groups encounter one another. As mentioned before, wellness is satisfaction with life. It is crucial to consider person-environment interactions to enhance acculturation well-being. Immigrant parents need to learn a new language, keep their language, and or adapt. This issue can lead to stress and depressive symptoms caused by acculturation processes, perceived discrimination, and an unfavorable environment where they want to create a better life yet feel powerless or incapable of doing so. Losing one's identity, which many immigrants go through after leaving their place of origin, can be among the many psychosocial issues they face as they integrate into the host

society (Lorenzo-Blanco et al., 2017). Montreuil, Bourhis, and Vanbeselaere (2004) indicate that interpersonal and familial conflict frequently originates from the concordance between immigrants and the host majority (Linesch, 2014). These factors can adversely impact family functioning, leading their children to have low self-esteem and increased substance use (Lorenzo-Blanco et al., 2017). How immigrants maintain their cultures and adapt to a new culture is essential in reducing acculturation stress. They suffer less acculturative stress in supportive communities that allow them to adapt to a different culture while maintaining elements of their culture as they deem fit, also referred to as their personal environment fit (Buckingham, 2019). This study used a constructivist grounded theory to focus on generating new theories through inductive analysis of data as well as pathway analysis to assess the effects. Through this method, the study shows that Latinx/e/o/a immigrants who acculturate in the methods they prefer experience better well-being (Buckingham, 2019).

Expressive Arts and Immigration

The use of expressive arts helps Latinx/e/o/a children and adults express their thoughts and feelings about growing up in exile, their immigration journey, and their acculturation experience. Guatemalan and Argentinian political refugees and immigrants who suffered traumatic events caused by political violence and repression have found solace in “Técnicas creativas,” which allows for sociodrama and role-playing to examine their history and culture (Miller, 1994). This intervention model offered workshops that provided a therapeutic setting for kids to share their ideas and feelings about how Argentina's estate terror has affected their lives. In addition to regaining their capacity for play and spontaneous expression, children who participate in the workshops also receive a sense of self-efficacy, which supports overcoming the

"culture of terror's" restrictions on their creativity (Miller, 1994). In another study, data was collected from Latinx/e/o/a youth and immigrant women and analyzed to see how art therapy can be used to facilitate sharing their layered cultural stories (Linesch, 2014). Participants could explore and think about their acculturation tales through the artistic process (Linesch, 2014). The participants appreciated using art supplies in these introspective studies, as seen by their artistic processes and the group art display. The complicated nature of acculturation in families is expressed best with art therapy. In a study with Chilean exiles, participants employed art-based ethnographies, where "art is an embodiment of feeling that inspires intellect," to convey their stories. Art is "in the acquisition and transfer of ethnographic knowledge" (Degarrod, 2013). As a Chicano (an American of Mexican origin or descent) artist in Chicago, Gonzales discusses the "call to become a real Chicano and join the *lucha* [or struggle] of the Chicano movement" (Gonzalez, 2020). He produced political art by fusing designs from commercial art with illustrations with Mesoamerican influences. He illustrates a tale of happiness, hope, burden, pain, and recovery from physical adversity. Chicana artists created both genuine and made-up locations for their visual stories, and they examined how they portrayed different transitions through time and space that were connected to the experiences of crossing boundaries (Nielsen, 2020).

"Desahogo" in Community Artmaking

A collective *Desahogo*, which means catharsis or relief, occurs in community artmaking with traditional and non-traditional artmaking in Latinx/e/o/a communities. The use of *testimonio*, or personal stories, art provides healing through collective memory (Juárez Mendoza, 2020). As a healing and restorative technique of acknowledging oppressions and wishes,

testimonio art relies on indigenous traditions of testimony. Most of the world's finest art touches with the most basic human difficulties. It is helpful to use art to work through life's complexities, beauty, and difficulties. (Juárez Mendoza, 2020). Since verbal communication can be challenging, "universal" imagery can address and control emotions, promoting greater self-awareness and reconciliation (Ter Maat, 1997). Latina women expressed immigration stories through group art directives revealing feelings of longing and loss. Art can provide meaning, *desahogo* and manage emotions to help resolve issues of immigration and acculturation. The empowerment-promoting qualities of the creative process can give a sense of voice, community, and relief from psychological difficulties. (Linesch, 2014).

Community Healing

Traditional and non-traditional artmaking can help Latinx/e/o/a immigrants find support and a sense of community, which is vital in their collectivist cultures. *Aztlán*, an Aztec origin myth, is a part of a larger mythos, a living metaphor for Mexicans and Chicanos searching for identity and place. *Indigenismo's* or indigineity's political and cultural foundations drive Mexican nationalism in Mexico and the United States. It merged with the Chicano Movement and the idea of *Aztlán*, the Mexica people's mythical homeland (Nielsen, 2020). An increasing number of Mexican-American musicians in the United States perform Aztec music on authentic and replica Indigenous Mesoamerican instruments (Nielsen, 2020). To harness collective tales of Mexican unity and provide an ethos of cultural survival, the Mexica and the Aztecs continue to function as national ancestors. Feelings of connectedness can replace feelings of isolation.

Some also view themselves as "art warriors" who believe that art has the power to educate, enlighten, uplift, and even manipulate society (Gonzales, 2010). In addition, artmaking

among Latinx/e/o/a immigrants can allow them to see they are not alone. Through the use of storytelling textiles, Latina women join together to assist one another as they navigate their difficulties (Cohen, 2013). Through group art therapy, Latinx/e/o/a adolescents from El Salvador and other parts of Central America feel connectedness (Ter Maat, 1997). A repatriation experience may occur, where they process inhibited self-awareness and social assimilation factors, such as abandonment and loss, isolation from non-immigrant adolescents, lack of control in their lives, and anger toward the adults that forced them to move. These adolescents are challenged with self-identification and social integration. They invoked generative imagination and nuanced discussion about radical possibilities through collaborative inquiry and dialogue about shared experiences in community contexts. Through the creative process of art, individuals can liberate their imagination and begin a healing process. Community-based efforts move the communal spirit toward resolving generational traumas as well. Creating a traditional Day of the Dead communal altar allowed Latinx/e/o/a youth to experience the power of collective memory (Juárez Mendoza, 2020). The creative process can also empower participants by giving their experience a voice, providing community, and decreasing psychological stress (Linesch, 2014).

Narrative Art and Textiles

Traditional and non-traditional artmaking provides an opportunity for Latinx/e/o/a immigrants to tell their stories (Narrative Art Therapy), which offers opportunities for healing from gender-based violence and other traumatic events. *Cuentos* or stories, make space for healing through multi-modal storytelling. Graphite, ink, and intricately crafted artifacts made of glass, stone, clay, wood, fiber, and paint images are used by artists to create narratives and to tell stories (Leimer, 2019). In this study, they mixed media sculptural installation as their formal

method to craft intricate and multivalent border stories (Leimer, 2019). The use of plants specifically for their medicinal qualities that met the basic needs of the migrants for survival was also a common theme. Contemporary Latinx/e/o/a artists' works depict a spiritual memory of losses from colonialism's destructive project and its aftermath (Perez, 1998).

The choice of fiber allows artists to work directly to address themes of travel, immigration, and border control as well as the preservation of the natural world, indigenous cultures, and time-honored spiritual traditions (Leimer, 2019). Traditional textiles, such as *arpilleras* are made in many cultures worldwide and offer a therapeutic value. Women use fabric, sewing, and embroidery techniques on burlap cloth to tell their story and create a narrative textile. Survivors of trauma unburden themselves with memories that haunt them and *arpilleras* allow them to reduce the pressure of verbalizing their trauma (Cohen, 2013). Latina women come together to sew and tell their stories in a community where they support each other, while they deal with challenges. Narrative textiles help quiet the nervous system by stitching familiarly, and the practice helps with focus and to slow down the mental process. Traditional textile artmaking offers engagement in a repetitive and rhythmic motion. This process creates opportunities for stress reduction, self-expression, team building, processing traumatic experiences, building resilience, and building self-esteem (Cohen, 2013). A pilot program with Colombian refugees in Ecuador, who were survivors of gender-based violence, combined psychotherapeutic activities to develop coping skills for healing (Cohen, 2013). Participants used indigenous healing rituals, relaxation training, breathing, and guided imagery. Analogous textiles are used around the world including Peru, Chile, Democratic Republic of Congo, Bosnia, and South Africa. There is a need to tell stories of trauma and loss (Degarod, 2013). Another group, a burlap cloth project with Latinx/e/o/a immigrants, offered an opportunity to express feelings of

longing and loss often felt by the immigration experience, which may cause traumatic consequences (Linesch, 2014).

Indigenous Healing Rituals

Latinx/e/o/a communities combine traditional art with indigenous healing rituals. *Tlacuilo*, or glyphmaker, and the *Tlamatini*, or sage and decoder of the glyphs, artists structure their work similarly to Mesoamerican scribe-painters, especially those who worked in the years immediately following the Spanish invasion, in that the glyphs they trace are similar to those painted by the Nahua *tlacuilo* (Perez, 1998). Chicana artists who engage in pre-Columbian Mesoamerican notions of art and artmaking see themselves as healers or *curanderas*. They focus on recovering and reformulating spiritual worldviews that empower them as women while reimagining the societal function of art and the artist (Perez, 1998). Often, indigenous healing practices are passed down from generation to generation by relatives (Leimer, 2019) through oral transmission or recognized as *el don* or a gift the person possesses when still a child. The Toltec or artist uses teaching and healing to promote more significant spiritual development and well-being of the observer (Perez, 1998). The pilot study combined Narrative textiles with indigenous rituals, using candles in opening and closing circles, cleansing rituals with herbs, chanting, and incense to add a spiritual dimension (Cohen, 2013). Latinx/e/o/a adolescents used the rituals of building an altar to incorporate the indigenous traditions of Día de Los Muertos. (Juárez Mendoza, 2020).

Gaps in the Research

There are holes and gaps in the current research regarding using indigenous and traditional artwork in Latinx/e/o/a communities. Co-opting Indigenous cultures and erasing current Indigenous communities has occurred historically. Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Mexicans encounter Anglo-American oppression and discrimination. The historical choice of shedding Indigenous ethnic identities and culture to gain social mobility in Mexico and in dominantly Western culture societies has allowed for indigenous erasure (Nielsen, 2020). However, in light of the growing number of Mexican-Americans questioning the erasure of their Indigenous heritages, “Aztecness” has evolved into a foundation for greater pan-Indigenous understandings of Indigenous music, culture, and the past. Los Angeles-based musicians argue that the twentieth-century Mexican nation-building project of Aztecness is a valuable model for combating the Eurocentrism that Mexican-Americans experience, fostering a sense of community, and making a silent past audible (Nielsen, 2020). Most dancers and musicians who play Aztec music in the United States do not identify as Aztecs and are not all from Central Mexico. In actuality, a combination of Chicano/a, Mexican, and Indigenous heritages and identities are shared by both musicians and dancers (Nielsen, 2020). Though this serves to unify people from a specific part of Latin America, it also contributes to the erasure of indigeneity and indigenous practices. Instead of being Mixtec, Nahua, or Maya, music, culture, and people become ordinary people and cultures with a shared national heritage and past.

Middle East

The COVID-19 pandemic was crucial in developing and integrating art therapy in private practices throughout Dubai, UAE. Adapting services to telehealth provided an opportunity to increase access to art therapy for individuals not only in Dubai but outside of the UAE by

providing a private space where clients can complete their sessions from home (Carlier et al., 2020).

Although art therapy is relatively new in this region, art therapists must increase cultural awareness to improve their services. The COVID-19 pandemic had a tremendous impact on mental health in Dubai. Early published reports reference psychological effects ranging from moderate to severe depressive symptoms, stress, anxiety, and increased concern about loved ones' health (Carlier et al., 2020). When therapy sessions were conducted virtually, art therapy relied on materials that clients could easily access in their homes. The therapist had to adapt their art directives to include those materials available to their clients. According to clients in Dubai, artmaking during the pandemic provided comfort to the hardships they experienced from the pandemic by allowing them to remain occupied and stopping them from dwelling on their sadness. (Carlier et al., 2020). Since the pandemic, clients' spirituality has increased and can be seen prominently in their artwork, with written prayers incorporated in their artwork. Heightened spirituality and prayers can increase one's well-being by increasing resilience to help people adjust to challenges, such as sickness, displacement, and other negative events. The use of prayers and reflection facilitated by the Qur'an help individuals to cope with their hardships (Moeini et al., 2016).

Calligraphy

Islamic calligraphy was developed as an art form inspired by the Arabic language and Islamic heritage. Calligraphy in Islam represents the highest form of visual culture and a spiritual connection with God. Islamic calligraphy expresses the Arabic language in a unique art form through traditional and contemporary painting techniques (Alashari et al., 2020). Calligraphers in

the Islamic culture use calligraphy as a sacred and spiritual form of art by incorporating verses from the Qur'an and historical poems in their artwork (Alashari et al., 2020). References to spiritual themes are present in calligraphy artwork. Calligraphy is a traditional form of art in Islamic culture that dates back to the early years of the Qur'an, the holy book of Islam. Kufic Script, one of the main types of scripture in the Qur'an now known as Eastern Kufic, holds various aseptic principles. Kufic contains two differences: early Abbasid and new style, groups formed out of particular letters, and previous methods developed by other scholars (Quaritch, 1995). As this art form developed, scripture was separated into smaller groups, and subcategories developed. New and different styles were constantly being created, such as various lengths, thicknesses, angles, and pen strokes to depict words, letters, and characters. Calligraphy in Islamic culture must conform to Arabic writing, which has strict rules and writing principles that include specific tools and techniques.

Another form of calligraphy, contemporary calligraphy painting, shows the spirituality and the aesthetic of the Arabic language in a particular style by representing the form of the letters. (Alashari et al., 2020). One client noted that since they started participating in calligraphy sessions, they felt more connected with their spirituality as they pondered questions about their faith that came up during the process (Carlier et al., 2020). Calligraphy art in Islamic cultures demonstrates a sense of spirituality and presents the sacred language that preserves the word of God (Alashari et al., 2020). Islam-based spirituality incorporates Quranic verses and narratives written in calligraphy. Their work depicts a story of each individual's journey where they merge their past in Syria with their present settlement by using symbols from their culture to connect memories and recent experiences to remember their past (Khatib & Potash, 2021). Therapists can

assess and determine the progress of individual healing and well-being by observing and noting what symbols their clients use to express their experiences.

Narrative Art Journaling

According to The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees UNHC (2021), a refugee is defined as "someone who has been forced to flee their country due to persecution, violence or war" (Khatib & Potash, 2021). The use of visual journaling, a narrative-based art therapy technique, helped record their journey from their homeland and address the challenges of maintaining their identities while adapting to a new culture of another country. One of the most considerable benefits of narrative-based art therapy is allowing refugee children to explore their stories while learning how to process traumatic memories they may have experienced. Art therapy, with the effective use of structure, can diversify emotional responses, reduce trauma symptoms, promote storytelling, and support the assimilation of culture for young refugees (Khatib & Potash, 2021).

Spirituality

In an open studio art therapy workshop, individuals have been able to explore what is important or of interest to them (Khatib & Potash, 2021). One individual incorporated the Qur'an in their work to reflect and discover the importance of maintaining their spiritual identity (Khatib & Potash, 2021). Using the Qur'an in their art allowed individuals to demonstrate resilience and to envision their future. Religion served as a source of support and created a connection to their culture after experiencing relocation and isolation (Khatib & Potash, 2021).

Art therapy in an open studio, using trauma techniques, can provide a safe environment to explore traumatic memories. When working with young refugees, art therapy proved to be beneficial in helping them regulate and develop emotional expression, and in minimizing behavioral difficulties (Khatib & Potash, 2021). Many participants engaged in art therapy, hoping it would allow emotional expression. The use of a culturally competent approach that amplifies the importance of incorporating spirituality and religion has successfully reduced depressive symptoms in children, adolescents, and adults (Khatib & Potash, 2021). Traditional artmaking allows individuals to merge their culture with art using traditional materials, techniques, processes, or content. The studies illustrate that incorporating spirituality in the art and therapy with religious text and calligraphy techniques facilitates a spiritual connection to their healing process (Khatib & Potash, 2021).

Bedouin Women

Not allowing the freedom to express themselves, verbalize one's needs, and advocate for themselves while struggling can adversely affect one's mental health. In many countries in the Middle East, women are oppressed and denied these freedoms. Traditional artmaking has played a prominent role in giving women a voice and an opportunity to express themselves, improve their self-esteem, and facilitate their identity formation.

In a study with marginalized Bedouin women experiencing rapid cultural transition while crossing cultural borders, Huss (2019) used art to help the participants express themselves and collect data. The art of facilitated communication, disclosing personal problems verbally and directly, is not normal for Bedouin women (Huss, 2019). Using questionnaires and interviews was impossible because Bedouin women communicate information differently than in Western cultures and are not in line with Western-style verbal articulation (Bowler, 1997, as cited in Huss,

2009). Instead, data collected from the art can help therapists learn more about a client and their culture. Data equips the therapist with more insight into their client's feelings and emotions and supports in incorporating cultural humility. Art can fill in gaps of limited verbal information in order to provide effective therapy (Huss, 2019). Huss (2019) references how art enabled Bedouin women to express themselves, providing the researcher an opportunity to come closer to the pain, dilemmas, conflicts, and solutions of the Bedouin women and understand their constant negotiation within their hybrid social realities (Bowler, 1997, as cited in Huss, 2009).

Embroidery and Weaving

Another factor impacting mental well-being is identity. Anderson (1990) says, "All cultures and societies obtain their coherence and their identity through the reminiscence of their ancestors" (Anderson 1990, as cited in Khorrami, 2007). The values of collective culture and the tendency to maintain the harmony of the collective (Cole, 1996; Joseph, 1999, as cited in Huss, 2009; Tal, 1980, 1995; Suad, 1997) can be embodied in traditional crafts. Embroidery and weaving, as the aesthetics of abstract design, convey the importance of balance, measure, spacing, and overall harmony, with parts fitting into a collective whole (Irving, 1997, as cited in Huss, 2009; Vogel, 1992). One study by Khorrami (2007). shows how a multigenerational family member's sense of self and identity was developed through traditional art practiced in the region (2007).

Community

Traditional cultural artmaking can be a group experience. Group members learn about the universality of their challenges and find possible solutions to their problems through interaction

with other group members. Women's groups were created as a result of practicing traditional art (Vogel, 1992, as cited in Huss, 2009). Furthermore, they are essential in cultures where women are oppressed and not given a voice in the presence of men (Vogel, 1992, as cited in Huss, 2009). These artmaking groups allow individuals to practice in small groups, where they learn how to behave and conform to the norms and rules of their culture, maintain a sense of self, and exercise the learned elements in their communities. In addition, participants in Khorrami's (2007) study, participating in traditional artmaking in a group setting, indicated that these groups provided opportunities for socializing that improved and elevated their moods (Khorami, 2007).

Traditional artmaking is symbolically used to ease the navigation between cultures. The use of embroidery by Bedouin women has increased, and its application has shifted. Embroidery has helped Bedouin women to understand the cultural changes they are going through (Huss & Cwikel, 2007, as cited in Huss, 2009). It also invites them to be flexible in adapting to the changes. Due to the familiarity of traditional artmaking, embroidery can be an excellent choice to make a "transitional object" during rapid cultural, social, financial, and geographical transitions (Huss, 2009).

Notably, healing has been the byproduct of practicing traditional cultural artmaking. For example, carpet weaving is a traditional artmaking technique practiced to generate income. Financial security can lower stress and anxiety on a personal, family, and community level (Khorrami, 2007). The reasons why traditional art or any art is practiced can also affect the felt experience. For example, to help with family finances, women in Eastern Azerbaijan in Iran were forced to quit school to weave carpets full-time (Khorrami, 2007). Denial of access to education is considered a form of violence. Preventing women from having access to education

and reducing their social interaction can make them more susceptible to a decline in mental health (Sohrabizadeh et al., 2017).

Artmaking requires creativity, which supports problem solving and increases resiliency. The positive effects of creativity fade when an individual creates art for the purpose of generating income. Creating from imagination seems to strengthen identity. Weavers now follow designs that are perfected to guarantee sales and generate income, therefore “the individual has become a laborer instead of an artist” (Khorrami, 2007). The lack of personalization may challenge the healing process. However, some find meaning in their work: weaving shapes their identity and helps alleviate their felt emotional pain. Out of seven participants in Khorami’s study, only one talked positively about weaving. One sibling had won national awards as a blind weaver, appeared with confidence, and unlike the rest of her family, who felt trapped, unhappy, frustrated, and dissatisfied with weaving. She was proud and seemed to have found her purpose through weaving. Her worldview was different from the others. She felt privileged and hopeful for what the future held for her, which could be due to a disability. Another positive experience around weaving described by others included having time to oneself without being bothered, which allowed time to reflect on feelings and life. Concentrating on weaving allows participants to decompress, daydream, and plan for the future, which instills hope. In addition, participants reported that working with colors and designs was relaxing (Khorrami, 2007).

Other ways in which the practice of traditional artmaking can enhance wellness is in the opportunity for the therapist to learn about the client's culture, and gain cultural humility and cultural competency. Traditional artmaking can promote the therapeutic alliance by allowing the therapist to honor traditional art and artmaking, centering the client as the expert of their culture. Traditional artmaking puts the client in a position of power and promotes self-esteem.

Conclusion

Research indicates that the artmaking process can support multicultural populations in navigating acculturation stress, exploring individual and collective identities, and engaging in emotional expression and self-reflection. The literature reviewed provides promising support for using culturally adapted art therapy practices and culturally relevant materials to increase a connection to the artmaking process and promote a sense of wellness in multicultural populations. More studies can be done exploring the use of traditional cultural art materials in art therapy sessions with multicultural populations, exploring its potential benefits to healing and reconnection to the homeland for those who may have experienced relocation and acculturation challenges. Additional research on traditional cultural artmaking practices and their impact on wellness can provide information that better equips art therapists in decolonizing therapeutic approaches and empowering multicultural communities and individuals.

Research Approach

Researchers conducted this case study using quantitative and qualitative data collection. Quantitative data was collected from a weekly Who-5 Well-being Index, self-administered by each of the five (5) participants at the beginning of the study and the end of each week of the four-week study. The qualitative method approach in this study collected data from an initial survey and final interviews conducted at the completion of the study. This qualitative case study methodology was chosen because it provided tools for researchers to study complex phenomena within their context (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

The research team explored the following question: “How have traditional and cultural artmaking practices influenced wellness?” The research question was relevant in examining “how” the artmaking process may support multicultural populations in navigating acculturation stress, exploring individual and collective identities, and engaging in emotional expression and self-reflection. “How” and “why” questions are best studied using a case study approach (Yin, 2013). In addition, the study of complex phenomena has been associated with the efficacy of a case study approach (Yin, 2013). The research case study approach facilitated a detailed examination of five (5) individual participants and could allow researchers to gain a deeper understanding of a particular case. Qualitative case study can facilitate an “in-depth analysis of a case, activity, or process, of one or more individuals” (Creswell, 2014).

This case study approach allowed the researchers to study a complex phenomenon, traditional and cultural artmaking and its influence on wellness, that could not be easily reduced to a single variable or cause-and-effect relationship. The research group wanted to be able to identify patterns and themes and relationships that could inform future research in the field that could only be identified through qualitative case study (Baxter & Jack, 2008). In addition, the

research group hoped the study could also provide details about each specific participant to identify themes and inform practical application for art therapists and help us identify best practices and recommendations (Yin, 2013).

Methods

Definition of Terms

Traditional Artmaking: Traditional art is a form of tacit knowledge passed down through generations, influenced by culture, family, ethnicity, and era (Niedderer & Townsend, 2014; Pöllänen, 2015, as cited in Gopura & Wickramasinghe, 2022). An alternate definition of traditional art from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) is as follows: "The folk and traditional arts, which include crafts, dance, music, oral traditions, visual arts, and others, are those that are learned as part of the cultural life of a community whose members share a common ethnic heritage, cultural mores, language, religion, occupation, or geographic region."

Wellness: According to the World Health Organization in 1948, wellness is defined as an individual's possible physical, mental, emotional, and social skills. In addition to its ties to medical and health-related aspects, well-being now also implies quality of life. It also assumes the joining of both physical and emotional health (Alarcon, 2021).

Design of Study

This study is a case study using (1) initial and ongoing surveys (2) a closing interview of participants who engage in regular traditional artmaking. This research was approved by the Institutional Review Board at Loyola Marymount University, Protocol number LMU IRB 2023 SP05-R (see Appendix A). All surveys were sent by email and all data was stored on Qualtrics or Box accounts provided by Loyola Marymount University. All participants signed an informed consent form (see Appendix B).

Sampling

Participants were recruited via social media, flyers (see Appendix C), and word of mouth. Criteria for inclusion in the study were to be adults age 18 or older and self-identify as traditional artmaking practitioners. Those who submitted interest came from the personal networks of the researchers and all engaged in traditional artmaking for between less than one year to thirty-five years. All five research participants identified as female, aged between 23 and 52 years old, and are of the following ethnicities: Arab, Asian, Hispanic, Japanese, and Indigenous to Central America. Two participants are registered art therapists and work in the field. Participants identified their traditional artmaking to include Kolam (a floor drawing made from colored rice flour, and is used for ornamental or ceremonial design during traditional Indian festivities), painting, embroidery, Mokuhanga (Japanese woodblock printing), calligraphy, and ceramics.

Gathering of Data

The research team utilized a case study approach that combined attributable surveys—containing the WHO-5 Well-being Index—and closing interviews to examine the ongoing effects of a regular traditional artmaking practice on the participant’s sense of wellness throughout one month. Given that each participant was already engaged in traditional artmaking at varying regularity, participants were asked to make art at least once per week for the four weeks of the study, without limitations on the duration of artmaking. The duration that each participant made art was recorded in weekly surveys and analyzed alongside other data collected. This study included an initial survey to assess each participant’s baseline sense of wellness, continued with weekly surveys, and concluded with a final interview over Zoom web conferencing. The WHO-5 Well-being Index was selected for its use to positively phrase

questions that avoid symptom-related language, as well as its widespread use across disciplines. Given the diverse background of the study participants, generalized statements related to wellness were favored over symptom-related language that typically centralizes American vernacular and diagnoses. The WHO-5 is a short, generic, and global self-reporting questionnaire consisting of five questions that measure subjective well-being. This measurement was chosen for its validity in assessing psychological well-being (Topp et al, 2015). Participants rate each of the following five questions according to a scale ranging from five (all of the time) to one (none of the time): (1) ‘I have felt cheerful and in good spirits’, (2) ‘I have felt calm and relaxed’, (3) ‘I have felt active and vigorous’, (4) ‘I woke up feeling fresh and rested’ and (5) ‘My daily life has been filled with things that interest me.’

Initial and Weekly Surveys. Participants completed an Initial Survey including participants’ personal information, the name and number of years they have practiced their traditional art, an initial assessment of the WHO-5 Well-being Index, and the following six questions to understand how the participant conceptualizes wellness and the role of traditional artmaking in their life. Additionally, weekly check-in surveys were emailed to participants each week. They included the WHO-5 Well-being Index and a question about how many minutes the participant spent making art that week.

1	How do you define wellness?
2	Do you practice any form of wellness? If yes, please explain.
3	How do you define traditional art making?
4	Why, how often, and how long do you practice (your traditional artmaking practice)?
5	Do you receive any benefits from (your traditional artmaking practice)? If so, please explain.

6	On a scale of 1-5, How would you rate the significance of using materials or techniques from your cultural/ethnic background in your artmaking?
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Closing Qualitative Interviews. At the end of the study, researchers invited participants to participate in a final interview over Zoom, where they were asked the questions below. One researcher interviewed the participant, while another researcher transcribed notes and key quotes. Transcriptions were uploaded to an encrypted storage database utilized by the university. Semi-structured questions included:

1	Has this experience influenced your artmaking? If so, how?
2	Has this experience changed your perspective on the relationship between artmaking and wellness? If so, how?
3	What role does your artmaking play in your well-being?
4	Is there anything else you would like to share that might be useful?

Analysis of Data

The research team triangulated the qualitative and quantitative data from surveys, with semi-structured interview data to explore and understand how participants' traditional and cultural artmaking practices influence wellness. Themes were primarily derived from the interviews and qualitative responses from the surveys, with the quantitative data providing key contextual information that confirmed or contextualized participants' responses.

Qualitative Data. Researchers conducted a collaborative iterative analysis of the data. “Collaborative data analysis” is used to describe procedures in which more than one researcher comes together to focus on and communicate about a common set of data in order to arrive at a shared interpretation (Cornish et al, 2014). This process allowed researchers to integrate different perspectives (Cornish et al, 2014). Researchers began by reviewing the qualitative data, responses to open-ended questions in the initial survey, and transcriptions of the closing interviews, all of which provided insight into the role of artmaking on each participant’s wellness. A thematic analysis was utilized to identify patterns and themes within the qualitative data (Braun & Clark 2006). Thematic analysis is a relativist method that details each participant’s realities, meanings, and experiences (Braun & Clark, 2006). Researchers were primarily interested in how the participants described their traditional artmaking practices and their impact on wellness.

Researchers began analyzing the data by performing an initial scrub of the data. Responses to the surveys were consolidated into a single spreadsheet for side-by-side comparison. Utilizing both the interview transcriptions and survey responses, researchers split into groups and independently assessed individual themes for each participant. The research team then compiled their findings to review and refine their themes, beginning to look at the data in the aggregate. In all, researchers met as a group on three occasions to discuss the developing recognizable themes, distinct, non-overlapping themes that were individual to each participant, and saturated themes that were repeated across most of the five participants. The researchers then decided on two overarching themes (see Appendix D). The equal participation of all researchers in this process helped to strengthen the reliability of the two final identified themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Quantitative Data. Researchers utilized quantitative data—specifically their responses to the WHO-5 Wellbeing Index and the duration of each participant’s weekly artmaking—to contextualize their responses. Responses to the WHO-5 Well-being Index data were imputed into a chart to analyze any decrease, increase, or maintenance in participants’ well-being over the four-week research period. Researchers then observed the graphs and the durations of weekly artmaking to assess possible connections between artmaking and wellness (see Figures 1-5).

Results

Presentation of Quantitative Data

Figure 1

Participants' responses to the first question of the WHO-5 Wellbeing Index, "I have felt cheerful and in good spirits."

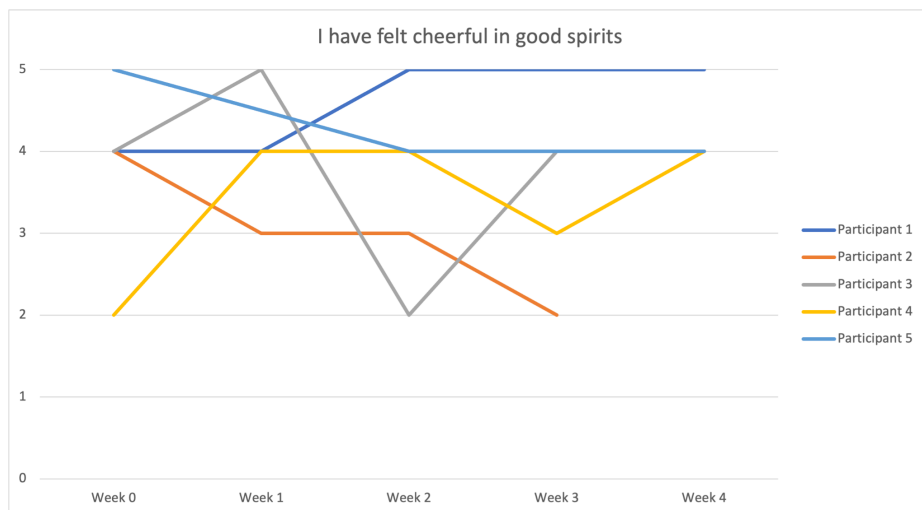


Figure 2

Participants' responses to the first question of the WHO-5 Wellbeing Index, "I have felt calm and relaxed."

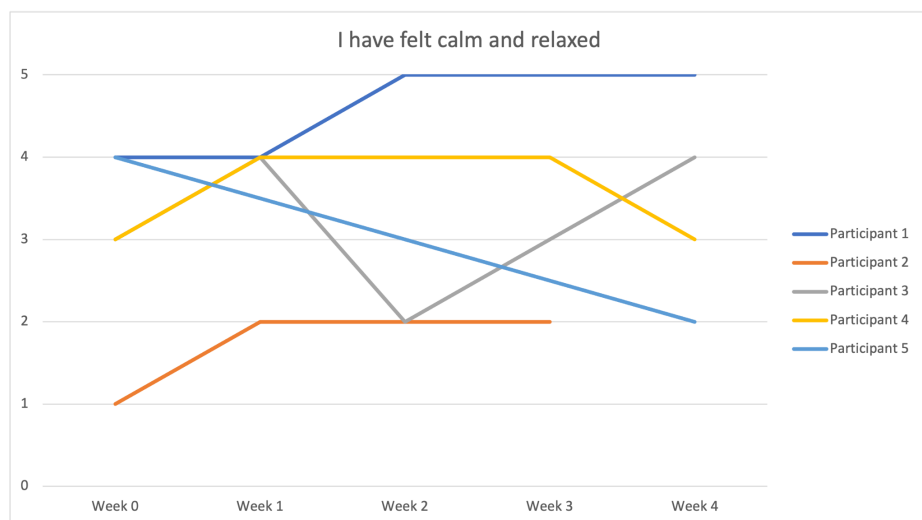
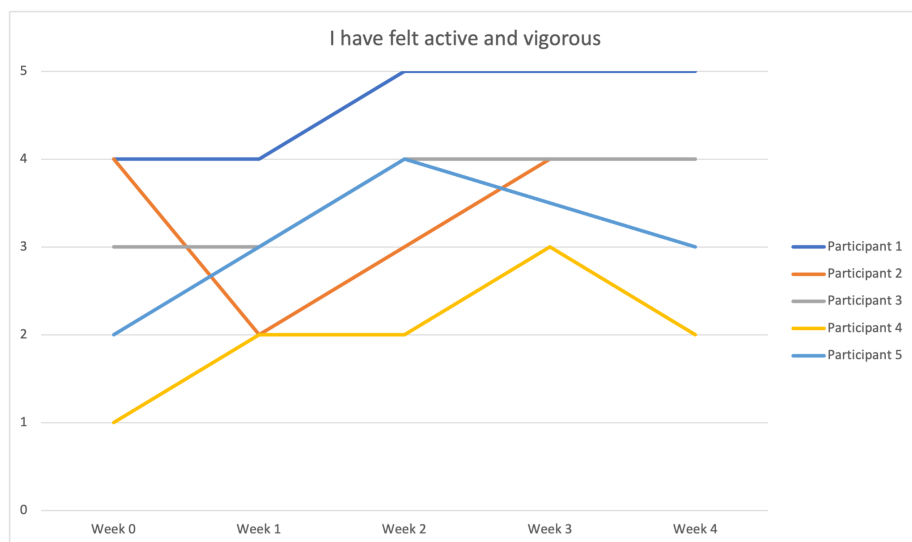


Figure 3

Participants' responses to the first question of the WHO-5 Wellbeing Index, "I have felt active and vigorous"

**Figure 4**

Participants' responses to the first question of the WHO-5 Wellbeing Index, "I woke up feeling fresh and rested."

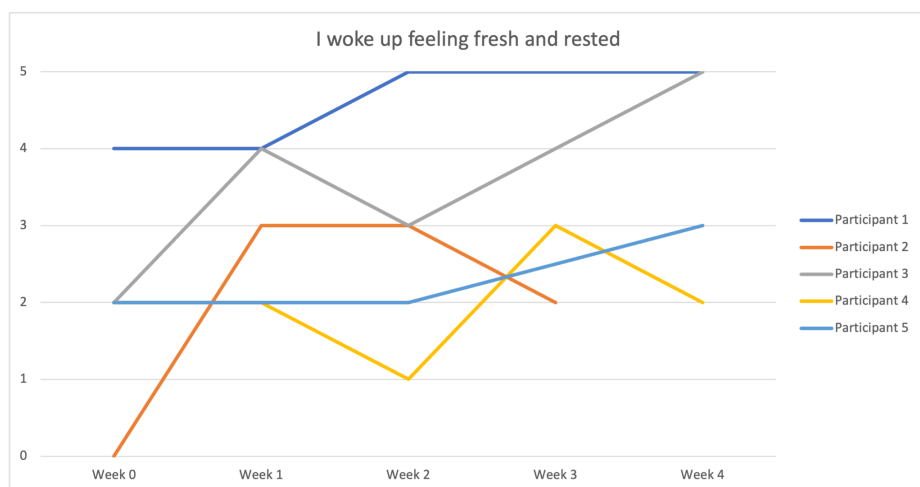
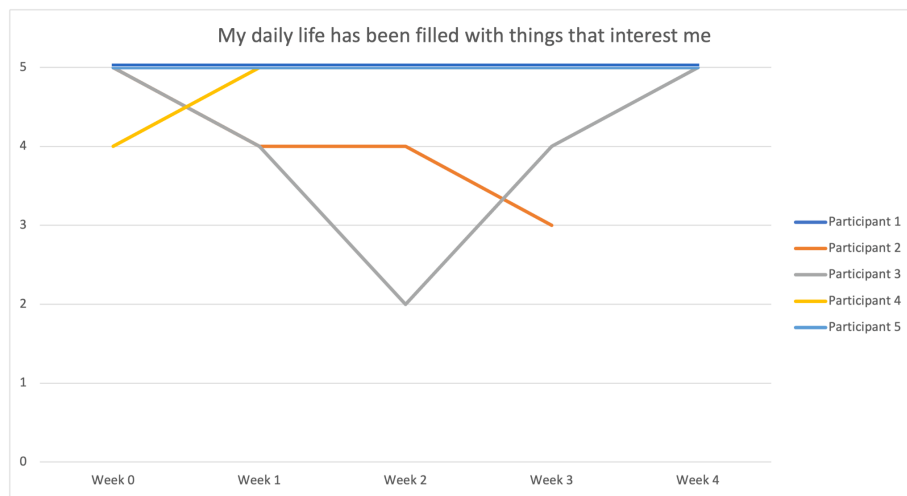


Figure 5

Participants' responses to the first question of the WHO-5 Wellbeing Index, “My daily life has been filled with things that interest me.”



Analysis of Data

Qualitative Findings

Researchers found through the thematic analysis that two common themes emerged (see Appendix D). All five research participants completed their interviews. Two overarching themes surfaced from the thematic analysis corresponding to how participants made meaning of wellness through traditional artmaking practices. The themes and sub-themes (see Appendix E) were extracted from the participants' written and verbal responses, including the initial survey, weekly check-ins, and closing interviews.

Findings from the Initial and Weekly Surveys

In the initial survey, quantitative data was obtained from the WHO-5 Wellbeing Index and one open-ended question that asked about the significance of using materials or techniques

from one's cultural/ethnic background in artmaking. On a scale of 1 to 5—between low significance and high significance—all participants rated the significance as 4 or 5. However, those who rated the use of the significance as a 5 engaged in more artmaking, as measured by minutes per week, throughout the study than those who rated significance as 4. Meanwhile, the weekly survey results from the WHO-5 Wellbeing Index showed no correlation between time spent making art and wellness level.

Researchers examined each participant's weekly surveys and tracked changes over time. Participant closing interviews with open-ended question responses were also examined. In an examination of all the quantitative data, researchers revealed that artmaking was not the only factor that influenced each participant's wellness ratings. Individual interviews revealed that some participants experienced various life stressors during the time of the study. Three out of the five participants identified challenges such as health issues and life stressors occurring while in the study. Participant 3 stated that "Week 2 or 3 was tough" and that she had "one of those weeks [that] felt like my world was falling apart". But then she engaged in her traditional artmaking practice and felt it "reinforced her path." She stated, "this is where you are at, and this is where you are supposed to be."

Researchers found some correlated information when analyzing the quantitative data and comparing it to information gathered in final surveys. The stressors made it difficult to rate wellness in connection to the actual artmaking experience. Still, they may have also influenced the responses to the five questions of the wellness questionnaire. Researchers found that it specifically affected the rating score for the question, which asked participants to score for feeling active and vigorous after an art making experience. However, even though life stressors

impacted participants' sense of wellness during this study, one participant shared that artmaking was a helpful distraction and, as a result, positively impacted her wellness.

Findings

Theme One: Connection to Culture and Heritage

This theme highlights how research participants made connections to their cultural heritage and how this impacts their idea of wellness. Researchers found that all five participants made connections to their heritage in the process of engaging in their traditional artmaking. As revealed from the interviews, participants described their connection to culture as a sense of affinity and intimacy with customs, practices, and characteristics of ancestors or others in a similar ethnic group. Participant 5 stated, "It is super healing to feel I am connected to my culture. Connected in so many ways." Two sub-themes emerge within the Connection to Culture and Heritage theme, illustrating how traditional and cultural art making practices connect participants to their culture and consequently influence their wellness. The sub-themes are Connection to Heritage/Cultural Origins and Connection to Family.

Connection to Heritage/Cultural Origins. Most of the participants reported that their artmaking practice facilitated a connection to their heritage, culture and their country of origin. Participant 4 said, "It solidifies the connection to my cultural roots". Another participant added that engaging in the practice of kolam provides her with "instant happiness" and allows her to enjoy reminiscing on the "knowledge passed on for generations." Participant 4 also emphasized the importance of practicing her cultural art making (Japanese mokuhanga printmaking) away from her home country by stating "I feel it is more important to do my printmaking here in the

U.S, than if I lived in Japan because it keeps me “connected” to my culture. It is my “home away from home.” Participant 3 reported that her practice helps her experience a sense of connectedness to the Mexican culture she was born and raised in that differs from the German culture she was immersed in at school. After learning from her mother that *tenangos*, a style of Mexican embroidery, was often employed by her ancestors, she began her style of embroidery that is influenced by that. “There's something more to strings. There's a sense of connectedness and heritage and just being held.”

Connection to Family. Other participants described ties to their family through their practice, similar to how participant 3 learned about her genealogical heritage through communicating with her mother about her art practice. Participant 2 pointed out the potential of connecting with the future generation through artmaking by stating “It [artmaking] also allowed me to bond with my daughter. Although she's 7 months old, showing her my tools and allowing her to play with paint created a bond I can't really explain.” Participant 1 connects her practice with her family during the study as she recalls childhood memories of her and her late mother discussing the craft of Kolam. Participant 1 said, “[my artmaking] gave me a way to reconnect to my mom and to my childhood.”

Theme Two: Present-Moment Awareness

The second overarching theme that arose illustrates each participant's sense of presence, or simply put, they felt focused and engaged in the here and now and not distracted. From the participants' interviews, the theme of present-moment awareness can be defined as feeling attuned to one's emotional and physical state and mindful of one's current actions. The implicit

message from participant's responses was that artmaking creates a space of solitude where the only time is now and they can reconnect with themselves. Savoring the moment conceptually coincides with mindfulness primarily in that it involves experiences that are happening right now and calls for some awareness of a pleasurable experience that could be relished (Bryant and Smith 2015; Bryant and Veroff 2007 as cited in Kiken, Laura G., Kristjen B. Lundberg, and Barbara L. Fredrickson. 2017). Merriam-Webster defines present as "the fact or condition of being present" (Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Presence. In Merriam-Webster.com dictionary. Retrieved April 7, 2023, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/presence>). The participants were able to remain present while engaging in their art form in a variety of ways, but the two main strategies emerge as the following sub-themes: *introspection* and *mind-body connection*. These will be discussed as follows.

Introspection. Being present can help one to regulate emotions and perhaps an overall better mood as well as increased energy levels. All are beneficial to one's wellness. In this study, researchers observed that four of the five participants made this connection while participating in their traditional artmaking practices. One participant stated, "It brings me a sense of calmness and takes me to a space of solitude." This same participant reported that her practice made her aware of the fact that she was operating on "autopilot." The study provided a space for her to reflect. (Participant R) Another participant noted, "Also allowing me to really focus on my craft and try to zone out the outside world." Participant 3 reported how engaging in the study during the first week allowed her to "clear [her] mind and find solutions to different work-related problems." This same participant identified her experience as "grounding" on two occasions,

allowing her to connect with her emotions and thoughts. Lastly, another participant described how engaging in her practice throughout the study allowed her to focus on her experience.

Mind-body Connection. While most participants discussed being present in the form of introspection, others reported engaging in mindful practice physically. When describing the mindfulness she experiences when engaging in her art practice of Mexican Indigenous pottery, Participant 5 reported, "It's just me and the clay not thinking about other things...It's kind of meditative." This same participant reported feeling "happy to use [her] hands" and creating art that brings her pride that positively impacts her self-esteem. Participant 3 reported how her art practice of intuitive embroidery allows her to engage in the sensory and kinesthetic qualities of string and beads. She further discusses the repetitive motion of embroidery and how she connects her emotional and mental state with her body, which supports a holistic sense of wellness. Participant 2 reported focusing on being in the moment as being able to "zone out the outside world."

Discussion

Based on the preceding analysis, the research group chose to discuss and further explain how the connection to culture and heritage improves wellness by having a positive impact on a sense of self and how the practice of traditional cultural art fosters awareness of one's bio-psychosocial processes. The researchers discussed why such approaches are important and how they could be applied when working as art therapists with specific demographics, drawing from the research results and literary analysis findings.

Connection to Culture and Heritage

As seen in the analysis of the quantitative results of the study, a person's connection to their culture and history can have a substantial impact on their wellness. Culture is made up of one's beliefs, customs, rituals, and traditions that are passed down from generation to generation within one culture, which includes language, music, and religious and spiritual practices. Cultural heritage can have a significant impact on wellness by offering a sense of identity and belonging. Those who feel connected to their cultural history may have a stronger sense of who they are and where they came from, which can aid in developing self-esteem and confidence. Participant 5 in the study indicates that creating art brings her pride that positively impacts her self-esteem. This can be especially essential for members of marginalized communities, as cultural history can create a sense of pride and resilience.

Connection to Family

Cultural legacy can also give people a sense of belonging to a broader community as seen when passing down traditions from one generation to the next, further promoting connection.

Two of the participants observed that their artmaking provided mother-daughter connections. Participant 1 was able to connect with her mother and other past generations through the traditional Indian art of kolam. Participant 2 indicated that in the process of practicing calligraphy, she was able to connect and bond with her daughter. Participation in cultural events and activities can make people feel empowered and uplifted by making them feel like they contribute to a greater cause than themselves. The results of the qualitative analysis indicated that some of the participants felt happier and uplifted, focused, and connected. Individuals facing isolation and loneliness may benefit from this sense of connection, support, and community. This study demonstrates that connecting to culture and exploring one's cultural history can have a significant impact on wellness, both emotionally and physically.

Connection to Country of Origin

When practicing traditional artmaking, this qualitative study results indicate that the participants seem to also share a connection to their country of origin. Three participants expressed an explicit connection with their countries of origin: Japan, Mexico, and India. All five participants practiced traditional art making practices indigenous to their family's country of origin: kolam, Japanese mokuhanaga printmaking, embroidery, pottery, and calligraphy. Many artists, like the participants in this study, may be influenced by the values and traditions of the culture in the society in which they were raised or by their country of origin. As such, these values and traditions may be reflected in and upheld by the art they create as demonstrated by the type of traditional art that the research participants chose to practice daily.

Importance of Materials

According to the initial survey at the beginning of the study, all participants rated high on the importance of materials for traditional artmaking and craft. Participants who rated the use of cultural material's significance the highest engaged more time in artmaking. Participant 1 shared that the rice powder she uses to create the kolam designs feeds the animals in her habitat.

Traditional materials may also have cultural significance, as they may be associated with specific regions or communities. Using these materials can be a way of honoring and preserving cultural traditions and connections that may increase wellness. As mentioned in the literature review, studies have shown that traditional textile artmaking offers engagement in a repetitive and rhythmic motion. Such practices as creating narrative textiles may quiet the nervous system, reduce stress, offer opportunities for self-expression, and build self-esteem (Cohen, 2013).

Participant 3 referred to the cultural connectedness that string provides when engaging in her art practice of intuitive embroidery. For Participant 5, her art material allowed her to engage in mindful practices, which allowed her to be present as she focused on using her hands to throw clay. Due to their importance in these findings, the research group suggests further study into traditional art materials and their potential influence on well-being to better inform art therapy practices.

“Present-moment awareness”

The qualitative study indicated that four out of five participants experienced present-moment awareness as a type of introspection when making their art, while other participants described being present as a form of mind-and-body connections, and some experienced both. Participant 3 shared that her art practice "really helps me feel at peace with

myself." Participant 4 expressed how engaging in traditional artmaking kept her grounded and described it as "it's a place I come back to."

The findings suggest that individuals from different cultures may have unique and individual experiences of engaging in the present. Some cultures may engage in art and creative expression as a way of connecting with the present moment. This can involve activities such as painting, collective art making such as embroidery or quilting, music, dance, storytelling, and drumming, which allow individuals to express themselves and engage with the world around them meaningfully. Some cultures may engage in celebration and ritual as a way of connecting with the present moment. These can include religious or spiritual ceremonies, as well as secular celebrations such as weddings or holidays. Some indigenous cultures emphasize connecting with nature as a way of engaging in the present moment, which can involve engaging in natural settings, outdoor activities, and participating in rituals that honor the natural world. Some cultures, such as those with a Buddhist influence, emphasize mindfulness practices through meditation, breathing exercises, and other techniques designed to bring a person's attention to the here and now. It can also increase self-awareness by allowing individuals to reflect and understand thoughts and emotions (Newland P. & Bettencourt, B.A., 2020).

The analysis of the qualitative results of the study shows that participants experienced a variety of these present-moment experiences through their traditional artmaking process, both physical and introspective, including but not limited to meditation, mindfulness, and grounding. In addition, scheduled artmaking required in the study may have facilitated the participant's ability to be present and focused in the here and now which, as indicated in the results of the quantitative analysis, served as a helpful distraction to environmental stressors and, as a result, positively impacted wellness.

Recommendations

Culturally competent art directives and considerations that explore a person's culture and heritage can play an important part in the development and advancement of wellness. It is recommended that the art therapist be aware of clients' defined culture and their level of exposure to art or traditional art creation or crafts to optimize treatment and promote healing. In addition, by exploring clients' exposure to traditional artmaking, art therapists validate and recognize the clients' cultural heritage, showing interest, curiosity, and willingness to explore how traditional cultural artmaking may help therapists improve the therapeutic alliance. The use of traditional artmaking can promote the therapeutic alliance because it allows therapists to honor traditional artmaking and the client's expertise of their own culture. Allowing the client to become an expert in their culture throughout the therapeutic process may promote self-esteem (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005).

Certain populations that art therapists work with may benefit from using directives informed by traditional artmaking practices to allow for cultural connection. Immigrant communities or recent refugees may benefit from the use of traditional artmaking to promote this connection and decrease acculturation stress. Traditional cultural artmaking may lessen the negative effects of acculturation and can function as a tool to assist immigrants in navigating the difficulties and stress of acculturation. Acculturation is the process of adjusting to a new culture that occurs when people relocate to a new country, area, or social context. Many factors, including an individual's attachment to their original culture, can influence their ability to adapt to a new culture. In the United States, acculturation is directly linked to well-being in many immigrant communities. People who are supported in a group can feel reduced acculturative

stress, which improves their well-being (Buckingham, 2019). Though limited, studies in the literature review have shown that people who have a deep connection to their native culture are more likely to have positive outcomes during the acculturation process. For this purpose, the research group advises that further study be conducted on the relationship between traditional cultural art practices and acculturation to better assist art therapists in supporting immigrant and refugee communities. Individuals may have a greater sense of self-esteem and confidence, feel more comfortable in their identity, and experience less stress and anxiety as a result of adjusting to a new culture. Therapists may need to learn how a client's own identity and connections aid in the assessment of natural support and community.

Understanding how different cultures practice present-moment awareness can inform art therapists' practices by introducing themes, providing opportunities for exploration of meditation, and acknowledging secular and non-secular practices that may include prayer or indigenous spiritual practices that may support better connection with clients. It may provide clients an opportunity to connect with the practice of being present in their cultural context and understanding. This, in turn, may enable them to connect with their culture and heritage, promoting well-being.

Limitations

This research was subject to a number of limitations. Primarily, the sample size was small which means the findings may not generalize to the greater population. Future studies with larger samples would improve the validity of the results. Some participants were not able to complete all of the weekly surveys which may have minimally impacted the data. The sample was a convenience sample drawn from people the researchers knew and to avoid undue influence, participants were not interviewed by the researcher they knew. Two of the participants were art therapists which may have biased some of their answers, although they both noted that they tried not to let their knowledge of art therapy theory direct their answers but rather tried to speak from their personal experience. The brief timeline of four weeks for the study may not have been sufficient to track changes in the participants' well-being. Future studies may benefit from a longer time frame. Factors outside of the study such as health issues and life stressors may also have influenced participants' well-being. A control group is suggested for future studies to further explore which components of the study affected wellbeing. Most of the data trended upward which may be indicative of a demand response from the participants.

Conclusion

This study can provide a deeper understanding of the potential benefits of traditional cultural artmaking in supporting emotional and acculturation challenges in multicultural populations. It highlights the positive impact of traditional artmaking on an individual's sense of wellness through a sense of connection to culture and present-moment awareness. Connection to one's cultural heritage, family, and homeland may elevate a sense of comfort and well-being in multicultural populations. Additionally, the study provides promising support that traditional artmaking may inspire mindful introspection, self-reflection, and the mind-body connection in individuals. Based on the collected data, it may also elevate a sense of power and pride, resiliency, and cultural identity. The themes that emerged through the weekly traditional artmaking practices in the study can inspire further discussion and studies on the decolonization of therapeutic approaches that can empower multicultural communities and individuals.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval Letter

Dear Professor Green,

Thank you for submitting your IRB application for your protocol titled **Traditional Cultural Artmaking Practices and Their Impact on Wellness**. All documents have been received and reviewed, and I am pleased to inform you that your study has been approved.

The effective date of your approval is **January 12, 2023**. Please note that if there are any changes to your protocol, you are required to submit an addendum application to the IRB.

For any further communication regarding your approved study, please reference your **new IRB protocol number: LMU IRB 2023 SP05-R**.

Best wishes for a successful research project.

Sincerely,

Julie Paterson

Julianne Paterson

Research Compliance Specialist

1 LMU Drive, University Hall, Suite #1878

Los Angeles, CA 90045

Telephone: (310) 258-5465

Email: Julianne.Paterson@lmu.edu



Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

Loyola Marymount University Informed Consent Form

TITLE:	Traditional Cultural Artmaking Practices and Their Impact on Wellness
INVESTIGATORS:	Rochelle Le Heux, Isabel Maddahi, Christina McCue, Martha-Lucia Orozco, Devika Parmar, Lala Minassian, Vivian Rodriguez, Ruth Sze, and Shannon Thomas, Department of Marital and Family Therapy, Loyola Marymount University
ADVISOR:	Joyce Yip Green, PhD, LMFT, ATR-BC, Department of Marital and Family Therapy, Loyola Marymount University, 310.338.4447
PURPOSE:	You are being asked to participate in a research project that seeks to explore how traditional and cultural artmaking practices influence populations who continue to practice their art. You will be invited to engage in traditional art making over the span of one month. Participants will complete an initial questionnaire, log images of your art, complete modified WHO-5 assessment, engage in a closing questionnaire, and complete a final interview reflection. We will ask participants to send photos of the artwork created during the four weeks.
RISKS:	<i>Risks associated with this study include:</i> This is a minimal risk study. However, if you become uncomfortable or decide you no longer wish to participate in the study, you may withdraw from the study at any point with no obligation to continue. Investigators will provide support if participant becomes uncomfortable at any point.
BENEFITS:	Your participation in this study will contribute to the art and art therapy fields by exploring and expanding on how traditional art making impacts individuals. Additionally, this study may provide insight and reflection into participants' own understanding about their art practice.
INCENTIVES:	You will receive no gifts/incentives for this study. Participation in the project will require no monetary cost to you.
CONFIDENTIALITY:	Your name will never be used in any public dissemination of these data (publications, presentations, etc.). Your demographic information will be used in public dissemination of this data. All research materials, artwork and consent forms will be collected and stored digitally on a secure platform. When the research study ends, any identifying information will be removed from the data, or it will be destroyed. All of the information you provide will be kept confidential.
RIGHT TO WITHDRAW:	Your participation in this study is <i>voluntary</i> . You may withdraw your consent to participate at any time without penalty. Your withdrawal will not influence any other services to which you may be otherwise entitled, your class standing or relationship with Loyola Marymount University.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS: A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon request, estimated to be interpreted by May 2023. If you choose to request, reach out to Joyce Yip Green or lmuresearch2022@gmail.com.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT: I have read the above statements and understand what is being asked of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason, without penalty. If the study design or use of the information is changed I will be informed and my consent reobtained. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that if I have any further questions, comments or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may contact Dr. David Moffet, Chair, Institutional Review Board, Loyola Marymount University, 1 LMU Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90045-2659 or by email at David.Moffet@lmu.edu.

Participant's Signature

Date

CONSENT TO USE IDENTIFYING INFORMATION:

I give my permission for my images, demographic information, and direct quotes to be used in any presentations, publications, or other public dissemination of the research findings of this study.

Participant's Signature

Date

Appendix C

Recruitment Flyer



LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS!

**Graduate students from LMU's Art
Therapy program are researching
traditional cultural artmaking practices
and their impact on wellness**

Conducted under the direction of
Dr. Joyce Green, Ph.D., LMFT, ATR-BC

Do you practice traditional, cultural or
indigenous art or craft making? Examples
include (but are not limited to) fiber arts,
weaving, calligraphy, pottery. This would be a
commitment to use your practice once a week
for four weeks, answer short questionnaires, and
complete a conclusionary art prompt.

Please email lmuresearch2022@gmail.com if you are
interested in participating or have further questions.

Appendix D

Main Themes of the Study

	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5
Connection to culture and heritage	<p>"Art that exists part of a culture, with skills and knowledge passed down through generations, in my case as an oral tradition."</p> <p>Kolam, "gave me a way to reconnect with my mom and my childhood."</p>	<p>"It also allowed me to bond with my daughter. Although she's 7 months old, showing her my tools and allowing her to play with paint created a bond I can't really explain."</p>	<p>"It really connects both of my cultures." "The spoke with my mom and found out that our ancestors used to be embroiders. They're called <i>tenangos</i>."</p> <p>"Because it's cultural, there is something more to it. There's something more to strings." "There's a sense of connectedness and heritage and just being held."</p> <p>"There's a sense of connectedness and heritage."</p> <p>"It's art making that has its roots in cultural practices."</p>	<p>"Japanese printmaking is my "connection to my culture," to Japan, where I am from. I feel it is more important to do my printmaking here in the US than if I lived in Japan because it keeps me "connected" to my culture. It is my "home away from home."</p> <p>"A form of art that has been passed down to from one generation to the next generation; a form of art that has significance in one's culture."</p> <p>"It also connects me to others who are from the same culture or with those who value my culture."</p> <p>"It solidifies the connection to my cultural roots."</p>	<p>"It is super healing to feel I am connected to my culture. Connected in so many ways."</p>
Being present	<p>"It brings me a sense of calmness, and takes me to a space of solitude."</p>	<p>"It relaxes me and allows me to focus on the physical piece in front of me at a given moment."</p> <p>"Also allowing me to really focus on my craft and try to zone out the outside world."</p> <p>"Turning off your mind for a few minutes a day does wonders."</p>	<p>"Really helps me feel at peace with myself."</p>	<p>"It's a place "I come back to."</p> <p>"It kept myself grounded."</p>	<p>"Mindfulness is being so present, it's just me and the clay... it's kind of meditative... I'm mindful in the process and not thinking of other things."</p> <p>"I enjoy the technicality and mindfulness of using my hands and slowly creating."</p>

Appendix E

Secondary Themes of the Study

	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5
Identity as an Artist	"I am a dancer so have always seen dance and music as giving me energy and a way to release my stress. I now realize this art practice is equally the same."		"It (embroidery) "opened up my world to become the artist that I envision myself to be.""		"I've tried as an artist to keep my practice for me about me. It also made it feel more intentional."
Increased insight	Prior to this, she created art "going on autopilot mode," never reflecting on the benefits to her wellbeing.	"This month was a reminder to give myself time to focus on my art and myself. Allowing to express my feelings on paper, and realize that sometimes the little things really don't matter if you can forget about it for some time."	"If I hadn't been in this study, I might just have watched tv or eaten some chips or drank a glass of wine. But being a part of this study is a reminder - "this is what helps. This is what's good."	"I have never measured time before. I usually make art every morning but have never had to document how much time I spend making my art."	"I'm mindful in the process and not thinking of other things and being in the study gave me a sense of it."
Importance of technique (valued highly by one participant)					"Oh wow, to realize how long I spent doing the art. It was nice to go back and reflect on my artmaking and how helpful it was." "The practice of traditional technical art-making techniques. For example, with clay using traditional coil methods to hand build etc." "I use traditional techniques even as small as traditional color theory etc." "That traditional techniques are fun to try and master."

Themes Related to Wellness

	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5
Wellness as physical and mental health	"To have simple daily routine that fosters good physical and mental health."	"Taking care of yourself both physically and mentally."	"My physical body moves, my emotional realm, then cognitive and symbolic meaning, it feels very whole."	"Body, mind, and emotions well balanced."	"Focusing on one's happiness and healing wishing the mind body and spirit."
Importance of diet in wellness		"Eat clean""	"Healthy eating"	"Anti-inflammatory diet"	