

ART-BASED HEALING STRATEGIES IN COLOMBIA IN THE CONTEXT OF
COLLECTIVE TRAUMA: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

ART-BASED HEALING STRATEGIES IN COLOMBIA IN THE CONTEXT OF COLLECTIVE TRAUMA: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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In Colombia, a country severely impacted by centuries of violence, many communities resorted to the use of art to overcome their collective trauma. The present research answers the question: “What is the existing literature that supports arts-based healing knowledge that has been developed in Colombia?” This research collects relevant data on the topic, gathered from professionals of different academic fields and reflects on it through an art therapy lens. Art-based healing strategies are reported in the literature associated with social and economic empowerment, reconnection of social fabric, transformation of social patterns and construction of hope. The present research highlights the ways in which art makes this possible. The findings of this paper build theoretical foundations that can be used in the integration of art-based healing strategies into existing therapeutic structures.

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Introduction

I was born and raised in Colombia, a country full of resources, as well as full of challenges and unmet needs. Colombia's population has been constantly exposed to all forms of violence for over 50 years, which includes armed political conflict, high rates of homicide, gang activity, and prevalent gender-based and intra-familial violence (Chaskel et al., 2015). It became more important for me to address the Colombian conflict when I left the country to study Art Therapy in Canada. Distance gave me the perspective and the safety that I needed to reflect on the Colombian war.

During my early years as an art student, my work was permeated by Colombia's conflict. Then, as an art therapy student, my academic curiosity about the relationship between art and conflict grew. I discovered that some authors had already studied this link, for example, Rubiano (2015b) a Colombian sociologist and art researcher, stated that the relationship between art and violence in Colombia has existed for many years; according to him, it became evident approximately in the mid-1940s, and was characterized by its expressiveness and the theme of the bipartisanship dominant in those years. With the current post peace agreement context in the country, saturated by the concepts of victim, witness, memory and an agenda of symbolic reparations, the Colombian art products have now evolved into what Rubiano calls "art as symbolic healing", art practices characterized by their focus on intervening in the real realm, with a close relationship with communities (Rubiano, 2015b, p.1-2)

This concept resonated within me and stood out while I was in the process of completing my MA degree at Concordia University. I discovered that there was a fair amount of literature written about participatory art practices in Colombia in the context of the post-agreement of peace, that were being recognized for their healing properties. This literature, which is mostly written in Spanish, had addressed these emergent participatory art practices from the perspective of different fields of knowledge, such as fine arts, anthropology, sociology, and law. But, although these artistic practices have been called therapeutic (Luna-Gómez, 2016) and been cataloged as "art as symbolic healing" (Rubiano, 2015b, 2017), there were no links that establish a connection between them and art therapy academic literature.

Filling this existing gap is as significant for Colombians as noteworthy for the field of art therapy. As Rubiano (2015b) states, artists in Colombia are intervening through participatory art practices in the collective trauma of its people.

Trauma, defined as the psychological damage caused by uncontrollable and terrifying life experiences (Van der Kolk, 1987), has become related to mental health and a central

notion in the art therapy profession. Trauma-informed therapies have been more commonly related to the understanding and treatment of individual clinical pathologies in both Colombia and Canada, however, other approaches have been emerging that advocate for trauma to be understood from a more systemic perspective (Goodman, 2015; Karcher, 2017; Watkins and Shulman, 2008).

The present paper examines the existing literature about arts-based healing practices in Colombia and establishes a dialogue between them and art therapy, especially linking and contrasting these practices with art therapy approaches that explore the concept of collective social and symbolic trauma in communities. Finally, this paper drafts a way in which these practices can be validated as actual means of treatment, based on the research methodologies of “community-defined evidence” (Martínez, Callejas & Hernández, 2010).

Methodology

This theoretical inquiry collected, organized and now discusses the information needed to answer the question: “What is the existing literature that supports art-based healing knowledge that has been developed in Colombia?” And as subsidiary questions, “What alternatives exist to make this new knowledge more formally accepted as a part of art therapy practice in Latin America?” and “How can these ways of working be integrated with the existing clinical therapeutic structures in the ethical practice of art therapy?” (Salom, 2017, p.73).

To answer these questions, it was appropriate to take a qualitative and theoretical approach that involved the systematic search in databases for the most current and relevant literature (Blair, 2016).

Data Collection and Analysis

The data for this theoretical research were books, academic texts, journal articles, newspapers, videos, documentaries, and art exhibition catalogs. The academic texts and journal articles were collected through search engines such as Google Scholar or CLUES Library Catalogue, the Concordia University libraries engine.

Specific databases in English and in Spanish were consulted such as Dialnet, SciELO Tandfonline, Research Gate, and Proquest Dissertation. The researcher used peer-reviewed material and gave preference to material produced in the last ten years.

The keywords, in English and Spanish, that guided the selection of the literature, were a combination of the following: “Art”, “Art therapy”, “Colombia”, “Violence”, “Conflict”, “Healing”, “War”, “Collective Trauma” (“Arte”, “Arte Terapia”, “Colombia”, “Violencia”, “Conflicto”, “Curación”, “Guerra”, “Trauma Colectivo”). Secondary sources were identified

within and accessed when possible, and reference lists of articles were consulted for additional texts.

Once the majority of literature was collected, I carried out the data evaluation, as proposed by Randolph (2009). The researcher extracted and evaluated the information in the articles that met the inclusion criteria by creating a system of codes and categories guided by the research specific goal (Randolph, 2009). The codes, meaning the type of data that was extracted from each article, were pre-defined (Randolph, 2009); these codes were further organized in categories or themes for analysis by comparing, contrasting and making links between them. Finally, the researcher reflected on the extracted data by analyzing and integrating it in the Discussion section (Randolph, 2009).

Ethical Considerations

According to Tracy (2010), in qualitative research “ethics are not just a means but a universal end goal” (p. 846). As proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994) the ‘rightness’ or ‘wrongness’ of the actions of the qualitative researcher must be considered in relation to the people whose lives are being studied, colleagues and sponsors (p.288).

For this study, the researcher took into consideration: (a) procedural ethics, by committing with accuracy and avoiding fraud or omission; (b) situational ethics, by frequently reflecting on, critiquing, and questioning one's ethical decisions; (c) relational ethics, by recognizing and valuing mutual respect, dignity, and connectedness between researcher, researched, and the communities involved; and finally (d) exiting ethics, by reviewing the final document for potential distortions or misreadings in the data (Tracy, 2010).

Validity and Reliability

In qualitative studies, Golafshani (2003) states that validity and reliability are conceptualized as trustworthiness, rigor, and quality. For the sake of obtaining significant results, this meant eliminating the researcher bias and increasing their truthfulness (Golafshani, 2003).

It was vital to be alert of my personal bias during this study. A bias I held was the perspective that this research could provide significant data for defining the healing potentialities and limitations of the art participative practices being developed in Colombia. It was important to be aware of this bias while conducting the data selection and analysis because it allowed other possibilities even when they did not agree with this predisposition.

Concerning art therapy, I was aware of my belief that art is therapeutic, which was useful because it motivated me to search ways to triangulate with different sources the

effectiveness of the artistic practices that were reviewed. Additionally, I was conscious of my belief in the complementarity of the public healing practices through art that have been developed in Colombia and the public practice art therapy (Timm-Bottos, 2017). Being conscious of this bias helped me remain open to different possibilities.

Finally, the last important bias that I was aware of and managed carefully was my political view on the Colombian conflict as a Colombian researcher, which did not permeate unknowingly in the results of this study.

Projected Outcomes

According to Tracy (2010), a study must be timely, significant, interesting or evocative, to be worthy and a quality qualitative study. What makes this study relevant and significant, is the possibility that the results can benefit both Colombian and Canadian population in the development of their public practices for community wellness.

In Colombia, this study may aid a range of professionals, like artists, art therapists, psychologists, and social workers, to help them to have a clearer understanding of the therapeutic benefits of the artistic public strategies that they are gradually adopting. Additionally, it is expected that this study can offer some theoretical notions to fill the gaps that they may have had in their attempts to heal communities through arts.

In Canada, it is expected that this study will impact the development of the theories of art therapy and the public practice of art therapy, and add global and de-colonializing perspectives to its scope. In Colombia, it is expected that communities will be able to see themselves represented in the art therapy literature, recognized for their efforts to work together to transform their futures, and advance in seeing themselves as creators, who dialogue peer-to-peer to professionals in other countries. To also recognize that they hold the answers for their own communities within themselves, far from imitating Eurocentric psychologies (Watkins & Shulman, 2008). Hopefully, it will be possible that real connections can be established to collaborate between countries.

Literature Review

Art therapy has its origins in North American and European traditions, and has been exported to different parts of the world with the consequence of replicating colonial patterns of domination (Kapitan, Litell, & Torres, 2011). This reality hinders the practical application of art therapy in populations with realities that diverge from the northern-western ones, such as in Latin American.

Colombia is a country where the needs of the population exceed the limits of intrapsychic approaches and therefore, systemic, community and social perspectives become necessary to understand and intervene in this country's reality.

The present section will address firstly the concept of collective trauma and the approaches of psychologies of liberation with its subsequent impact on art therapy. Next, the Colombian context will be key to understanding in which conditions its participatory art healing practices have emerged, as well as, a description of the current situation of the art therapy profession in the country. Later, the data gathered about art healing practices in Colombia will be presented and finally, community-based ways of gathering evidence will be explored, as a possible bridge to answer the question of how to integrate the Colombian participatory art practices and the therapeutic structures that are widely accepted nowadays.

Art Therapy, Collective Trauma, and Psychologies of Liberation

Art therapy is defined by the American Art Therapy Association as an integrative mental health and human services profession that improves people's lives through art-making, creativity, and applied psychological theory, within a psychotherapeutic relationship (AATA, 2017). In this profession, trauma has become an important concept to study because of its capacity to offer an alternative appropriate treatment for patients who have experienced trauma, due to its wordless and nonverbal nature (Schouten, DeNiet, Knipscheer, Kleber, & Hutschemaekers, 2014).

Trauma is defined as the mental damage caused by overwhelming life experiences (Van der Kolk, 1987), but has often been linked with its impact on the individual. Nevertheless, many other authors have strived to view this phenomenon from a more systemic perspective (Papadopoulos, 2005; Watkins and Shulman, 2008). Such is the case of Papadopoulos (2005) who emphasizes the social element of trauma and defines it as a product of social construction. He states that the traumatic quality of an event depends entirely on the individual's or group's context, and their interpretation of it (Papadopoulos, 2005). This definition is relevant to many of the Colombian realities in the contexts of its political conflict. In this country, not just one or two individuals are affected, but an entire collective experiences overwhelming and life-threatening events. For these cases, the concept of social trauma is crucial. Social or cultural trauma is defined as a wound generated by life-threatening events, that affect the basic tissues of social life and generates a gradual community understanding that there is no longer a source of social support (Erikson, 1976 in Watkins and Shulman, 2008).

Hirschberger (2018) adds to this definition by stating that in the case of collective trauma the tragedy is represented in the collective memory of a group, which includes an ongoing reconstruction of the trauma in an attempt to make sense of it. He describes that collective memories persist beyond the lives of the direct survivors of the events, and is remembered by group members that may not have lived through them, themselves. In that way, according to Hirschberger (2018), collective trauma transforms into a collective memory and finally into a system of meaning that leads groups to redefine who they are and where they are going (p.1).

Ignacio Martín-Baró was a psychologist and Jesuit priest who lived and worked in Latin America who was critical of traditional and Eurocentric psychologies and their emphasis on individualism (Watkins and Shulman, 2015). He created the basis for what is called “psychologies of liberation”, which emphasizes (a) the links between the individual suffering and the social structures that surround it, (b) the abandonment of the authority role of the psychologist and its replacement for one of a skilled facilitator and questioning listener, and (c) an orientation towards pragmatism and the capacity to learn from local organic histories (Watkins & Shulman, 2015, p. 26-27). Martín Baró (1990) coined the concept of “psychosocial trauma” and emphasized in the dialectical character of the wounds caused by the prolonged experience of war. These wounds, according to Martín-Baró, are dependent on each individual’s experience, which in turn is conditioned by their socio-economic background, their degree of participation in the conflict and their personality and life experience. Martín-Baró also highlights two other aspects related with psychosocial trauma: (a) The wounds are produced socially so its roots are to be found in a societal level and not in an individual one; (b) Psychosocial trauma is nourished and maintained in the relationship between the individual and society (Martin-Baró, 1990, p. 10). According to Martín-Baró, this has obvious and important consequences in determining what should be done to overcome these traumas (Martin-Baró, 1990, p. 10).

Martin-Baró dedicated the last years of his life to the civil war in El Salvador, writing about its traumatic effects and how to heal its wounds before his assassination in 1989 by the Salvadoran Army (Gondra, 2013). One remarkable accomplishment was the founding of the University Institute of Public Opinion (IUDOP) an academic organization that through objective surveys, gave a voice to people who up to that point had none (Gondra, 2013).

Continuing on this thread, it is valid to ask the questions of what is happening in Colombia in terms of mental health and collective trauma? and what is the current stance of art therapy in the country on these topics? The answer will be addressed in the next section.

Colombian Context, Participatory Arts and Healing

Uncountable ways of healing through creative means have emerged from the Colombian conflict and it is significant for the profession of art therapy to learn from them. To understand these art-based healing efforts, this section will first, describe the social and political context in which they have emerged, secondly, present the situation of the art therapy profession in Colombia, and finally describe in-depth six cases of art-based healing strategies encountered in the literature.

Colombian context and collective trauma.

The international press and the current historiography on the Colombian armed conflict, tends to suggest that the cause of the social processes of violence in this country was the establishment of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in the year of 1964, along with the formation of other guerrillas, and the flourishing of communist ideologies in Latin America (Wallace, 2013; Melo, 2017).

When considering other sources, however, one can find that such a perspective is reductionist, and that this violent episode was preceded by many more. The creation of these guerrillas arose also from the people's non-conformism with a political covenant called the National Front (Melo, 2017); and the National Front itself, was a political coalition that happened in 1956 to end the military dictatorship of Gustavo Rojas Pinilla (Melo, 2017). He, in turn, became president by a coup d'état, in 1953, which intended to end with a previous period known as "La Violencia" [The Violence] (Melo, 2017).

Likewise, "La Violencia", was one of the most violent periods in the history of the country that lasted approximately ten years, starting in 1946 (Bello-Montes, 2008). This too was preceded by a series of nine bipartisan civil wars between liberals and conservatives that lasted almost 100 years during the 19th century and started right after the independence from the Spanish colonies (Zambrano, 2010). In summary, the conflict in Colombia seems to be part of a historical process of war and political violence that has its roots in the Spanish colonization (Kline, 2003), resulting in the cultural trauma caused by it and by the processes of miscegenation with indigenous and African people.

Colombia is again going through a critical social, political and economic moment in which social action is needed. This country is attempting to end its most recent civil war, an internal conflict that for the larger half of a century has been "complexly composed of paramilitary groups, drug lords, criminal organizations, corrupt government, and guerrilla groups who have lost all their idealism" (Lobo-Guerrero, 2013, p.1).

The current process of significant change that is happening in the country includes (a) Signing of the peace agreement between Colombia's government and the Revolutionary armed forces of Colombia (FARC) guerrilla group, that happened in 2016; (b) The demobilization of other army groups as the paramilitary united self-defenses of Colombia (AUC), which occurred between 2003 and 2006; and (c) the establishment of the legal framework for peace (Congreso de Colombia, 2012). This process of transformation generates significant political, legal, social and economic challenges for the changes to be permanent and for avoiding the return to the situation of internal armed conflict (Ayala-García, Rodríguez-Angarita & Osorio-Sánchez, 2016). Almost three years after the peace agreement was signed, these challenges are not being addressed and “many of the promises made are not being honored, and the prospect of a true, lasting peace now seems far from certain” (Cassey, 2019, p.1).

After many years of continuous conflict, many wounds in the Colombian population have accumulated. An understanding of the collective quality of these wounds is crucial for its healing because this understanding impacts how mental health professionals intervene. Now, again we can ask, how a mental health profession, such as art therapy, is approaching social, collective and cultural trauma in Colombia?

Art therapy in the Colombian context.

Art therapy is still a new field in Colombia that requires professional trainees to migrate and study at established international programs (Gómez-Carlier & Salom, 2012). Thus, new art therapists returning to the country are making efforts to develop the profession and have encountered a polarized situation on the ground (Salom, 2017; Gómez-Carlier & Salom, 2012).

On one hand, psychologists in Colombia associate arts-for-healing practices with informality, and had expressed concern regarding non-psychologists offering counseling without regulatory oversight (Salom, 2017, p. 69). And on the other hand, Colombian artists, who recognize that symbolic ways of healing have traditionally been part of Colombian communities, question why there should be a need for importing and professionalizing art therapy (Salom, 2017, p. 68).

Salom (2017), a pioneer art therapist in Colombia, states that embracing this polarity could produce constructive synergistic solutions regarding trauma, peace, and memory; but as she also mentions, there is still a gap between popular art-based knowing and therapeutic structures, ethical practices and academic research in Colombia, that need to be filled (p. 73).

Creative Arts and Healing Initiatives in Colombian Literature

To contribute to filling the above mentioned gap, this section will present the findings in the literature that support the arts-based healing knowledge developed in Colombia.

The power of music in the women prayers of Pogue.

Colonization and miscegenation left deep wounds in Colombia and other Latin-American countries, but it also brought enormous cultural richness to them. The current presence of invaluable rites and traditions that came with the mixing of Spanish, African and Indigenous people, and that are preserved in some regions of Colombia, ensure the continuity of its cultural diversity.

Such is the case of the Afro-Colombian ethnicities in the Department of Chocó. In their worldview, the damage has an inherently collective dimension and the pain needs to be sung (Quiceno, Ochoa & Villamizar, 2017). In Pogue, a small village in the Colombian Department of Chocó, women traditionally accompany death rites through “alabaos”, ancestral collective songs with mostly religious contents, that have been maintained since colonial times and have been transmitted through generations by oral tradition (Castro-Sardi, 2019). These songs are the main component of Pogue’s vigils and its function is to grieve, say goodbye to the deceased, and facilitate their passage to the other worlds (Castro-Sardi, 2019). These songs also have a healing function, that has been publically recognized as a successful means by which the community accompanies relatives to alleviate their suffering of the loss of their loved ones (Quiceno et al., 2017; Castro-Sardi, 2019).

This municipality, like many others, was impacted for decades by the conflict between the guerrilla and the paramilitaries, who disputed its territorial domain. In May of 2002, hundreds of civilians died, in an event known as the Bojayá Massacre, due to a cylinder bomb that was thrown into the church where the people were sheltering (Centro Nacional de Memoria Historica CNMH, 2015; Castro-Sardi, 2019). In addition, after this episode, more than a thousand families were displaced from their land, which is especially wounding for this population because this territory plays a crucial role in Pogue’s rituals, cultural and spiritual life (Castro-Sardi, 2019; Quiceno et al., 2017).

These harsh conditions transformed the oral contents of Pogue’s alabaos as the people of Pogue started to get together and sing every day until they built a singing collective called “The Pogue’s Muses” (Centro de Estudios Afrodiaspóricos - CEAF | Universidad Icesi. (CEAF), 2017). This group, mainly women, started creating new verses that served to elaborate their complex suffering and worked as strategies to cope with the abandonment of the Colombian government (Quiceno et al., 2017; Castro-Sardi, 2019).

The popular interest generated by these new songs, expressing conflicts, complaints, and issues of common interest of Pogue's community, gave the Muses the opportunity to be invited to deliver their messages personally to those for whom they were written (Quiceno et al., 2017). The Pogue's Muses were invited to sing both to the president of Colombia during the celebration of the national victim's day, and to the FARC guerrillas, their perpetrators, at the signing ceremony of the final agreement between them and the National Government in Cartagena (Quiceno et al., 2017).

Quilting as a way to reconstruct destruction: Mampuján Weavers.

Las Brisas and Mampuján, are localities in the Colombian Atlantic coast that were the scene of a cruel massacre and mass displacement, carried out by paramilitary groups in 2000 (Pérez 2018; Sánchez-Blake & Luna-Gómez, 2015). These rural areas are located in "Montes de María", a strategic territory known for being fertile, having several hydrographic sources nearby, and including exits to both seas (Ruiz, 2017).

This natural wealth and the abandonment of the Colombian government made these territories desirable for the use and exploitation of illegal armed groups. Therefore, in the 1990s, guerrilla groups settled there and carried out illegal actions, such as drug and arms trafficking, and hostage retention (Fundación Puntos de Encuentro, 2016; Ruiz, 2017). Subsequently, paramilitary groups wanted to dismantle the power that guerrilla groups allegedly had over the area, and through torture, public collective massacres, sexual violence, and the massive displacement of their inhabitants, they effectively managed to install terror and dominate these lands (Belalcázar & Molina, 2017; Ruiz, 2017).

Violent actions such as these, in the context of war, are intended to nullify the enemy not only physically but also symbolically, making immeasurable the consequences of these acts (Belalcázar & Molina, 2017). The wounds left on the inhabitants of Las Brisas and Mampuján were not only at an individual but at a community level (Belalcázar & Molina, 2017).

According to Juana Ruiz, one of the women leaders of Mampuján, after the uprooting of the community, the families couldn't continue their prior ways of maintenance, based on fish, hunting and subsistence agriculture (Ruiz, 2017; Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2016). Also, trust among the members of this population was shattered, making it impossible to build community in their new lands and severe tensions caused by their economic and productive situation were leading to the repetition of violence within the families (Vogt, 2015).

Weary of the situation, women of Mampuján got together to talk and think about ways to overcome their circumstances and work towards peace; they decided to ask for help from local religious organizations for their psychosocial recovery (Ruiz, 2017). The Mennonites who happened to work in this region, contacted Teresa Geiser, a psychologist who had recently been serving in similar circumstances in El Salvador (Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2016; Shepard, 2019). Between 2002 and 2004, Geiser taught the women of Mampuján, strategies to overcome trauma and increase resilience through quilting (Ruiz, 2017; Shepard, 2019).



Figure 1. Mampujan’s Tapestry. [Screenshot]. Universidad Externado de Colombia (2016)

In the beginning, the Mennonites traditional geometric technique seemed boring to the women of Mampuján, but it was a starting point that helped them ask for the possibility of using the same technique to tell their own stories (Ruiz, 2017; Shepard, 2019). Geiser agreed, and these women created their first tapestry (Figure 1) that represented the cruel events they

suffered (Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2016; Fundación Puntos de Encuentro, 2016; Ruiz, 2017). It is important to clarify that, although this group of women chose to call themselves “Weavers”, the art form that they use is actually sewing patchwork tapestries.

In their own words, the informal art making process first elicited harsh feelings of sadness and pain, but with time, the artistic exercise resulted in a cathartic experience that allowed them to talk about the events without feeling pain (Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2016; Fundación Puntos de Encuentro, 2016; Ruiz, 2017).

Ruiz narrates how making art about the tragedy was a way of externalizing and transforming their pain:

...tú lo sacas de allí y lo pones en una segunda persona, entonces ya no ves que eres tú, ya tú lo puedes manipular, lo puedes cortar con la tijera, lo puyas con los alfileres, lo puyas con la aguja, lo coses y lo vas sacando de ti, y te va permitiendo hacer esa catarsis [You take it out of there and put it in a second person, then you don't see that it's you anymore, and you can manipulate it, you can cut it with the scissors, you push it with the pins, you push it with the needle, you sew it and you get it out of you, and it allows you to do that catharsis] (Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2016, p. 17).

The art meetings of the women of Mampuján allowed them to reflect on many topics while searching for new themes for their quilts; an important series was on Africanity. Women of Mampuján reflected on how to end with the cycles of violence that were hitting them and analyzed that historically this was not the first time that they were displaced (Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2016). While recognizing themselves as direct descendants from Africans they discovered that slavery was the cause of their first historical displacement (Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2016; Fundación Puntos de Encuentro, 2016). The women of Mampuján represented in their quilts their imagery of the harshness of slavery times (Figure 2), intending to recognize, memorialize and denounce what had happened to their people for centuries with the hope of breaking impunity (Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2016; Fundación Puntos de Encuentro, 2016).

Women of Mampuján are conscious that their art is an act of resistance (Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2016). Even when at the time it was forbidden to talk about the conflict, they decided to share their work by visiting other women in the region and replicate the same exercise (Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2016). In 2008, when their exhibits were still very private, these women met a renowned Colombian artist, Juan Manuel Echavarría in a regional meeting for victims of political violence (Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2016). He got interested in the project and started assisting them to commission

and publicize their works by exhibiting their art in many different countries (Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2016). This result was particularly timely because of the warnings they were receiving to keep their work quiet if they didn't want to become a military target (Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2016).



Figure 2. Tapestry Detail. [Screenshot]. Universidad Externado de Colombia (2016)

Sharing and exhibiting their art, even on a small scale, played a crucial role in the life of women of Mampuján. It allowed them to meet and associate with Echavarría, an influential artist who provided support and funding to keep producing their expressive art. In their words, “He gave them back hope” (Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2016, p.18) With his influence, Echeverría allowed the Weavers to leave the circle of Mampuján and be known in different places of the country and the world (Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2016). Support, such as this, motivated the women of Mampuján to establish themselves as a civil association and to receive acknowledgments, like winning the national peace prize in 2015 (Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2016).

Global recognition allows the women of Mampuján to break the boundaries of distance and isolation. One important example is the exhibit that was made in 2016 in Bogotá at the Externado University, one of the most prestigious universities in Colombia.. In the catalog of this exhibit, there are excerpts from the visitor's book and from the press that are proof of the impact of displaying the artwork of women of Mampuján in the capital of Colombia (Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2016). Most visitors identified themselves as students of law, finance, and international relations and expressed feelings of gratitude,

solidarity and the need to make changes so that communities like Mampuján can have a better country (Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2016).

The women of Mampuján have recognized the fact that they are now acknowledged as strong, independent and capable women; entrepreneurs and workers, who sell their products and teach how to weave (Ruiz, 2017). Women of Mampuján express that they found again a way of subsistence which at the same time is a way of forgiveness, and they are clear in mentioning that now, they find themselves in a state of mind that is way beyond pain and victimization (Ruiz, 2017).

From crafts to the white cube, from the countryside to the city.

Art in Colombia has been used to adapting and undergoing the cultural challenges that affect diverse social and academic spheres of the country (Salom, 2017). The two cases presented above, the singing prayers of Pogue and the Weavers of Mampuján, could be considered expressive folk art because both come from regions and people directly affected by the armed conflict in remote areas of the country. But, in other social classes as in the so-called fine arts, there has also been a huge influence of the Colombian armed conflict.

A trend in the Colombian art establishment is “art as symbolic healing” characterized by intervening in the realities of the country through participatory efforts (Rubiano, 2015b). Juan Manuel Echavarría, renowned plastic artist and Colombian photographer, who was mentioned earlier in this paper for his work as a supporter of the Weavers of Mampuján, emerged as a strong connection point in the present research.

First, Salom (2017) briefly mentions his work while defending how the transformative capacity of art has touched both folk and fine art in Colombia. This art therapist highlights the work that Echavarría has done facilitating artistic workshops with individuals affected by the conflict (Salom, 2017). “The War That We Have Not Seen” is a historical memory project that now archives 480 paintings made by ex-combatants of the main armed groups that are protagonists of the conflict in Colombia (Fundación Puntos de Encuentro, 2020). The objective of this project was not to teach painting, but to generate safe spaces for a conversation that allowed participants to express their personal stories of war (Fundación Puntos de Encuentro, 2020). As an outcome of this project, the organizers remarked about the collective transformation that occurred in these spaces through emotional expression, listening, and the possibility to communicate the unspeakable through painting (Fundación Puntos de Encuentro, 2020).

Another important aspect that stands out in Echavarría’s work is the river, which symbolically and geographically connects diverse populations affected by the conflict in

Colombia. “Bocas de Ceniza” [Mouths of Ash], is a video art installation of the same artist, that is part of the Latin American collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMa) (Museum of Modern Art, 2020), whose title refers to the geographical point of junction of the Magdalena River and the Colombian Sea (Rubiano, 2019). This video gathers *a capella* testimonial chants of victims of different Colombian massacres, along with close-ups of their faces over a white background (Figure 3). With this format, Echavarría manages to exhibit these difficult and diverse Colombian realities in museum halls and galleries, such as the MoMa, delivering their message to more people than their authors could ever imagine. Echavarría, who has as his purpose to break the walls of his art studio, encountered this cultural expression through a displaced person from the Bojayá massacre he met in Barú in 2003, and who affected him for his ability to transform “his deep pain into a song” (De Nanteuil, 2011, p.8). In the words of Rubiano (2019), “Bocas de Ceniza” is an example of the change that Colombian art has undergone, from metaphor to reality.



Figure 3. Mouths of Ash. [Screenshot]. Echavarría (2011)

In essence, the characteristic that stands out from the work of Echavarría and which is crucial for the present research is his ability to find popular and marginal artistic expressions, and take them to central spaces of dissemination and education, such as museums and capital galleries of the country and the world.

Finally, it is important to mention that the work of Echavarría is just a small but outstanding example of more than a hundred creations that have been done in Colombia about the conflict, and that are mostly listed in the Museum of Memory of Colombia (Museo de Memoria, n.d.); which, unfortunately, could not be reviewed for the present study due to time and space limitations.

Places of Commemoration.

Another relevant category in the data, found through the present research, was the construction of artistic spaces that allowed memory and healing in Colombia. Two outstanding examples are described below.

Trujillo Memorial Park.

Between the years 1988 and 1994, in the Colombian municipalities of Trujillo, Bolívar, and Riofrío, 342 people were victims of homicide, torture and forced disappearance (Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 2008). The strategic geographical location, the fertility of the lands and the variety of climate zones, made this region an attractive place for different actors of the Colombian armed conflict, like the National Liberation Army (ELN), Drug traffickers and paramilitary groups (Garzón, 2019).

The farmers of the region, tired of a state oblivion, organized into associations and cooperatives with the help of the municipal parish headed by Father Tiberio Fernández (Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 2008). Unfortunately, this type of community organizing gave rise to these civilians being branded as guerrillas of the ELN; a guerrilla that effectively had a presence in the region and had already extorted drug traffickers and killed military men in the area (Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 2008).

On April 29 of 1989, there was a demonstration in which the peasants required the state to meet the needs of the region in terms of roads, health, education and employment (Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 2008). This demonstration was decisive for the social movements, promoted by Father Tiberio Fernandez, to be associated with the insurgency and therefore, to be repressed by state forces (Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 2008). Thus, drug traffickers and paramilitary in alliance with agents of the Armed Forces of Colombia unleashed a continuing massacre under the pretext of a counterinsurgency strategy (Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 2008). These armed forces were motivated by the need for territorial control, and humble peasants, including Father Tiberio and his family, became a hindrance in their way, and ended up tortured, murdered and disappeared (Garzón, 2019; Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 2008).

After the massacre, there was a long period in which these events remained in total impunity (Garzón, 2019; Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 2008). Considering this, in 1994 the religious Javier Giraldo, with the help of the artists Carlos Ulloa and Stella Guerra, documented dozens of cases that allowed initiating the legal processes to search for justice (Garzón, 2019). Finally, in 1995, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (CIDH), generated a final report in which the Colombian state was responsible for its action and omission, in the victimizing acts of 34 of the Trujillo's victims (Garzón, 2019; Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 2008).

In this same report, the CIDH recommended the construction of a memorial park as a reparation measure for the victims of Trujillo, which began to become a reality in 1998, when the architect Santiago Camargo co-constructed its designs together with the community (Garzón, 2019). The Trujillo monument park was intended to help in grieving, and reconstructing the social ties broken by the violence that was experienced in that area (Garzón, 2019). The memorial also symbolized the demand for justice and truth, and thereby dignifying and empowering the victims (Garzón, 2019). Garzón (2019) who worked together with the relatives of the victims in a patrimonial valuation of the monument park, states that through the memorial, the survivors were able to channel their pain, reinvest it and, in some cases, overcome it.

The relatives of the victims created a community whose discussions nurtured the memorialization process of their loved ones. In their talks, they discussed how to reach agreements regarding the description and explanation of the events that occurred during the years of terror (Garzón, 2019). Their answers were reflected in creative products such as drawings, poems, biographies, photographs, songs, and sculptures (Garzón, 2019). With these creations and the accompaniment of an architect, the victims made a scale model of their imagined park, with various areas of remembering, which, due to lack of resources, have not yet been fully built (Garzón, 2019; Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 2008).

Some of the areas of remembering in the memorial park that were actually built and are of particular interest for the present research, are the following:

1. The area of events, where symbolic references, archives and pictures, denounce impunity, recognize victimizers and victims and show the work done by the association over the years, in the search for justice, truth, and reparation (Garzón, 2019).

2. The area of life, which was previously called the burial area, and which holds 235 ossuaries (Figure 4); 66 with remains of the bodies of the victims and 169 that, in the absence of mortal remains, contain personal objects of the disappeared (Garzón, 2019).

These ossuaries were made in collaboration with a plastic artist, who proposed to make carving sculptures (Figure 5) that represented symbolically the life of the victims who died in the massacre (Garzón, 2019). These burial area is particularly attractive because, for Garzón (2019), it: (a) Allows family members, who lack the physical body of their loved ones, to use the symbols in the monument as cathartic and liberating referents for a proper grieving process; and (b) The exercise of re-presenting their loved ones, allows family members to restore their dignity since they were killed based on false versions of their lives, which were used by the perpetrators to justify their actions (Garzón, 2019).



Figure 4. Trujillo Park Ossuaries. [Screenshot]. (Rubiano, C., 2017)



Figure 5. Ossuaries with carving. [Screenshot]. (Rubiano, C., 2017)

3. The memory area which has different sections: (a) A work built by Kurdish sculptor Hoshyar Rasheed including a curvilinear wall, of ten meters long by two meters high (Figure 6). This wall has 7 niches covered with glass, that contained objects sent from various parts of the world to the families of Trujillo, as a symbol of brotherhood and solidarity (Garzón, 2019; Perdomo, 2018). The purpose of the artist was to complete an imaginary circle made with 6 more walls located in various countries at war to symbolize the strength and resistance, the feminine womb, and the universal pain of the victims (Garzón, 2019; Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 2008; Perdomo, 2018). (b) “The Mausoleum”, a place that holds the remains of Father Tiberio Fernández, the community leader murdered for his work in the organization of the peasants of the region (Garzón, 2019; Perdomo, 2018).

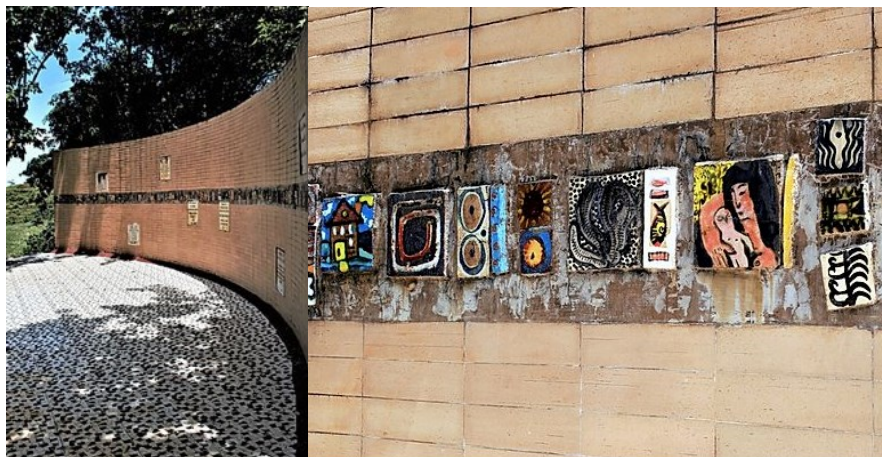


Figure 6. “La sombra del amor” Wall [Screenshot]. (Rubiano, C., 2017)

(c) This area also guards and preserves the book that was made for Father Fernández, which was handwritten by the community and contains drawings (Figure 7) and stories about his life and work (Garzón, 2019, Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 2008). This book was included by UNESCO in its record of memories of the world (Garzón, 2019). The image of the dismembered body of Father Fernandez has been represented in various artistic and craft objects (Figure 8) becoming an important symbol of this massacre (Garzón, 2019). (d) The gallery of memory, serving also as a meeting place where gatherings, rituals, masses, conferences, workshops, and other activities for the association and the general public are held (Garzón, 2019; Perdomo, 2018).

4. The planting area, allows survivors, who are mostly peasants, to rebuild their connection to the countryside and the neighborhood ties that were broken by the massacre (Garzón, 2019).

The Trujillo Memorial Park is a vital space of identity, where the community meets to create emotional bonds by holding parties, trips, pilgrimages, workshops, meetings or simply having daily conversations; a place where art and creativity are central tools to help the survivors in processing their pain and thus, in continuing with their arduous denouncing process (Garzón, 2019).



Figure 7. “Tiberio Vive Hoy” Book’s Drawing. [Screenshot]. Citizens of Trujillo (2003)



Figure 8. Tiberio Fernandez Torso, Oil painting. [Screenshot]. (Contravía TV, 2010)

Unfortunately, this place has suffered several attacks. In 2003, the monument "The shadow of love" was attacked with a burst of shots and in 2004, after repair, it was knocked down to pieces; in September of that same year an attack and desecration was carried out on the tomb of Father Fernández and in 2005 there were two attempts to burn the park (Garzón, 2019; Perdomo, 2018). These attacks occur because history does not have a single narrative, and unfortunately, the perpetrators, who remain in the area, need to perpetuate a conservative narrative, that maintains their power and the status quo (Garzón, 2019).

Salón del Nunca Más.

Continuing on the category of places of commemoration, the present paper will expand on a similar site in Granada, Antioquia. In this municipality, there was a space dedicated to building memory which helped the survivors to symbolize their loss through public rituals (Rubiano, E., 2017). As in many regions of the country, the fight between armed groups of the guerrillas (FARC) and the paramilitaries (AUC) left 400 victims, between selective homicides, tortures, and disappearances; facts that caused the displacement of more than 60% of its population (Rubiano, E., 2017).

The *Salón del Nunca Más* [Room of Never Again], is composed of images: a mural of pictures of people killed and disappeared (Figure 9), journals (Figure 10), pictures of the work done by the community, documentary photography and infographics of the armed conflict in the region (Rubiano, E., 2017). Nevertheless, far from being a static museum, this place is enlivened by the community that is united by the loss (Rubiano, E., 2017). The journals contain pictures of each one of the deceased or disappeared and blank pages for people to write and communicate symbolically with them (Rubiano, E., 2017).

The "Room of Never Again" arose from a social initiative of reconciliation in the east of Antioquia (Rubiano, 2017), where interdisciplinary groups (Promoters of life and mental health, PROVISAME), sponsored by international NGOs (Ramírez, 2007), worked with groups of victims in the promotion of mental health and education on civil rights for the demand of truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition (Rubiano, E., 2017). E. Rubiano (2017) highlights that in these kinds of processes in Colombia, the construction of collective memory has a dual character, public and private. The traumatic events experienced by the community fracture both, the constitution of the "self" and the community ties; and, the memory initiatives, initially attempt to meet a therapeutic need, after which the community ends up also exercising its political power (Rubiano, E., 2017).



Figure 9. “Salón del nunca más”. [Screenshot]. (Vásquez, 2017)

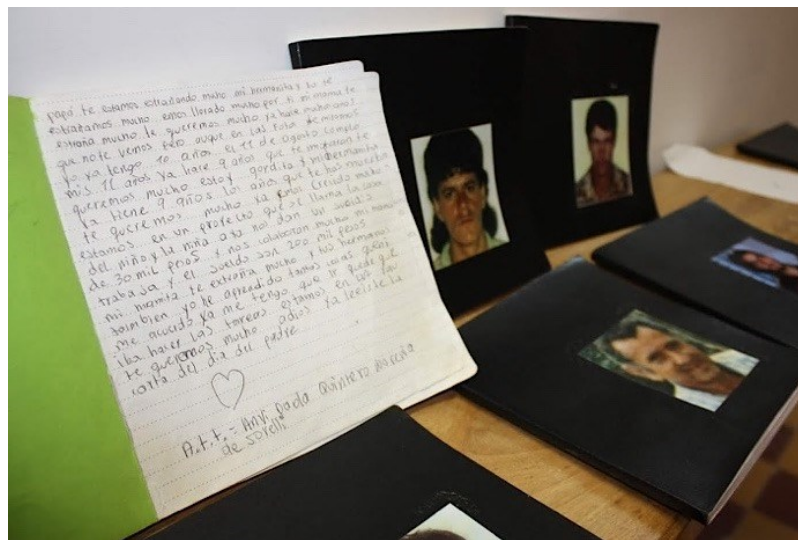


Figure 10. “Salón del nunca más” Journals. (Peña, 2019)

In this context, images and art come to fulfill fundamental roles. First, the images become a channel, which allows the victims to communicate the unspeakable, in a context in which there are no words to name the experiences lived (Rubiano, E., 2017). Secondly, images and art allow memory (Rubiano, E., 2017), to the extent that the creation of tangible products allows remembrance, with permanence. Third, images and art allow symbolization; that is, to represent, what is absent or what cannot be said in its name; also crucial in a context in which, the magnitude of violence that communities have had to endure, makes it necessary.

Finally, images and art foster the building of community, because when creating or viewing art in a collective context, the pain ceases to be individual and can be shared with

other people, who probably had lived the same, or at least become a witness of the trauma (Rubiano, E., 2017). And it is in that sense that the *Salón*, according to E. Rubiano (2017), also plays the role of a frame, meaning, a third party that testifies that the violent events occurred, and an established space in which the pain can be shared (Rubiano, E., 2017).

Resistance in cities through collective art initiatives

The conflict in Colombia not only impacts the countryside but also its cities in a different way. It is important then to include artistic initiatives that contribute to Colombians mental health and that have developed in urban areas. In this country, cities are disconnected from the countryside and its realities, but also, they are disconnected internally because of classism. In the peripheries of the cities, it's common to find low-income unregulated slums, conformed by illegal settlements of people, which in colloquial Spanish are called *invasiones* [Invasions] (Rosas, 2018). This illegal occupation of public or private spaces is usually carried out by displaced families, either from the same country, neighboring countries or even from inside the city, as a strategy of access to urban land, for the self-construction of houses (Sánchez, 2008). The newly arrived families build poorly constructed homes (Figures 11 and 12) with low-quality materials (Rosas, 2018). These processes generally take place in a conflictive environment, fighting with the state and the police. Most invasions end up being recognized and legalized years later, becoming legally established neighborhoods, but bearing problems such as: lack of access to basic services (electricity, water, sanitation, health, education), lack of employment opportunities, extreme poverty, criminality, violence and hopelessness. (Habitat for Humanity, n.d.; Rojas & Borda, 2018; Rosas, 2018; Sánchez, 2008). People in these neighborhoods are often marginalized and catalogued by other social classes, leading to a symptom that Ignacio Martín-Baró introduced called “fatalism.” Fatalism is a state of mind that keeps people on the fringes of their history, making them think that their lives are predetermined, so they believe they should maintain a passive attitude towards life (Watkins & Shulman, 2008).

In the sector known as “San Isidro-Patios” or UPZ 89 in Bogotá, citizens have organized themselves through self-management processes, to carry out social transformations (Castillo, Mellizo & Sosa, 2014). Fighting for the past twenty years, this neighborhood is characterized by its legalization issues which have had negative impacts, such as poor access to public services, reduced accessibility, and inadequate equipment or public spaces (Castillo, Mellizo & Sosa, 2014). Nonetheless, there are three active youth organizations in the area, executing concrete collective actions for its improvement, through environmental, artistic, and musical training (Castillo, Mellizo & Sosa, 2014).



Figure 11. House in “San Isidro – Patios” Bogotá. [Screenshot]. (Rosas, 2018)



Figure 12. Panoramic of “San Isidro – Patios” Bogotá. [Screenshot]. (Rosas, 2018)

First, “Casa Taller Las Moyas” is a community space that has been working for seven years through art, agriculture, and crafts, to develop the human potential of children and adults living in the area, emphasizing their ability to transform its reality (Castillo, Mellizo & Sosa, 2014). Second, “Sur del Cielo”, an organization which successfully prevents drug addiction among youth while preventing armed recruitment through music and human rights education (Castillo, Mellizo & Sosa, 2014). The third project, and in which the present text will deepen upon, is called *Guateque - Barrios del mundo*. This group uses art as a tool for

social transformation and works on the prevention of substance-use disorders with a vulnerable population. They promote cultural education and spaces such as a cinema-club, political dialogues, circus training, photography, dance, video, music and sound production (Rojas & Borda, 2018). This collective also makes public performances, through which they not only denounce their unconformities but also let people know about who they are, what they do and invite interested neighbors to be part of their processes (Rojas & Borda, 2018).

Guateque collective was initially created by an international NGO intervention called “Barrios por el mundo”, but when the financing of this project was ending, the participants decided to give continuity to it, through collective self-management, and a quest for international and national sponsorships (Rojas & Borda, 2018). The continuity of this initiative had as its objectives: antimilitarism, non-violence, free access to art and culture and an improved ability to transform member's realities (Rojas & Borda, 2018).

Rojas and Borda (2018) studied, systematized and reported the outcomes of the Guateque collective, and they concluded that its achievements are (a) the broadening of the spectrum of possibilities in the life projects of the participants, (b) the collective organization of their needs for expression, (c) raising their environmental and political awareness, (d) the dissemination of pedagogy of difficulty, which invites learning through solving daily problems, (e) the change of their perspective on the violent social values present in their society, and (f) a different experience of the neighborhood itself (Rojas & Borda, 2018).

The participants of the Guateque collective, shared with the authors, Rojas and Borda (2018), qualities that have allowed them to maintain its excellent track record.

First and foremost was the capacity for self-criticism that implies a process of constant study and debate of their methods. Second, their work for promoting horizontal relationships through ensuring that all members of the group have a voice and vote; that there is an equitable distribution of comfortable and uncomfortable tasks and the establishment of leaderships by merit and ability. Third, the creation and strengthening of networks of solidarity and affection through artistic tools; in particular, drama and performance, have given the collective the possibility of expressing their emotionality and their subjectivities, in a space of complicity. Fourth, the encounter of subjectivities and the ability to nurture the differences between them, through sincere and constructive confrontation and respectful dialogues of perspectives. Fifth, collective agreements to preserve the dignity and personal freedom of the members of the collective. And finally,

sixth, continuity is secured through generational change, in which the trained young people become trainers (Rojas & Borda, 2018).

The projects presented in this section demonstrate how, from disagreements and needs, relationships can grow. These tensions, allowed actions of solidarity and strengthened the collective capacities of the group, which in turn allowed the satisfaction of the initial needs, and the solution of their disagreements (Rojas & Borda, 2018). Likewise, it can be observed how in these initiatives, art is considered “una acción política, no violenta, que materializa el discurso en un vehículo de transformación social” [a political non-violent action, that materializes the discourse, in vehicles for social transformation] (Rojas & Borda, 2018, p.72).

Finally, it is important to emphasize for this collective, community work must be constant, as this generates trust and credibility both from the community and from other organizations and allows enhancing the impact of interventions (Rojas & Borda, 2018). For them, although social transformation is slow, they achieved the transformation of the local social representations of violence being the only choice for youth and also setback the stigmatization of the youth as criminal (Rojas & Borda, 2018).

Discussion

The literature review brings forward strong examples of the healing power of artistic expression for individuals and their communities experiencing collective trauma. These community-driven responses, that have not previously been a part of formal art therapy literature, has produced valuable knowledge from a country with lived experience of surviving unimaginable chronic trauma. It is my hope that by having local reference points for further study, Latin American art therapists and other mental health practitioners can turn their gaze towards their own country’s cultural accomplishments in order to build a relevant art therapy education and practice for the people it serves.

Documentation of these various projects answered the question I used that guided this research, “What is the existing literature that supports the art-based healing knowledge that has been developed in Colombia?” It was found that, the arts-based healing knowledge which has been generated in Colombia and is recorded in the literature is abundant, and has emerged from the needs of its population to self-heal its collective trauma.

This section will first summarize the outcomes of the arts-based healing knowledge that has taken place in Colombia, then summarize the characteristics of these outcomes that are particular to the use of community arts, and last review the ways in which this knowledge can be integrated with the existing therapeutic structures and ethical practices.

Outcomes

First of all, it is crucial to point out the range of psychological and social symptoms that were found in the present review. Some are individual, such as pain, grief, fatalism, and substance abuse, and others are fundamental social wounds, such as the abandonment of the state, the destruction of the social fabric, the cyclical repetition of violence, the disempowerment of marginalized groups and the nullification of human beings. In spite of that daunting panorama, the following represent the achievements obtained through art led by Colombian communities.

Social empowerment.

After collective tragedies where the victims are not only individuals but collectivities of people, victimized groups lose confidence in others and in themselves, and believe they are not capable of defining their own story. The healing strategies described in the findings of the present research, allowed the groups that have suffered damage, to regain confidence in themselves and their ability to intervene in their environment and change it to improve their well-being. Many former victims, today feel strong, and are contributing citizens and independent leaders.

The individuals who developed their own community ways of healing, describe the empowerment they obtained through art, as acts of resistance. Women in Pogue (Castro-Sardi, 2019; CEAF, 2017; CNMH, 2015; Quiceno et al., 2017; Luna-Gómez, 2016) for example, were able to express loss, anger and injustice, delivering their sorrow and expressing their needs to the president and their perpetrators. The Weavers of Mampuján (Belalcázar & Molina, 2017; Pérez 2018; Ruiz, 2017; Sánchez-Blake & Luna-Gómez, 2015; Shepard, 2019; Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2016; Vogt, 2015), visited other women in the region and transmitted their knowledge to them; they also managed to rise above their marginalized status to show their work, not only throughout Colombia but in other cities around the world, with the help of Juan Manuel Echavarría as their patron and manager. The connection between what can be considered “outsider” or “folk” art of marginalized populations, and a renowned artist who lives between Bogotá and New York, is very powerful and was possible because of the power of art. Two sides of a cultural/status spectrum found new ways of expression and connection. Guateque collective in Bogotá (Rojas & Borda, 2018), found autonomous ways for obtaining and managing their resources in order to keep their spaces for self-expression alive, and continue improving their lives and their neighborhood.

Economic empowerment.

Mampuján Weavers (Belalcázar & Molina, 2017; Pérez 2018; Ruiz, 2017; Sánchez-Blake & Luna-Gómez, 2015; Shepard, 2019; Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2016; Vogt, 2015), the victims of Trujillo (Garzón, 2019; Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 2008; Perdomo, 2018), and Bogotá arts collectives (Castillo, Mellizo & Sosa, 2014; Rojas & Borda, 2018; Rosas, 2018), are three examples of groups of people who came together and created civil associations, through which they obtain financial resources. A case to highlight is that of the women of Mampuján, (Belalcázar & Molina, 2017; Pérez 2018; Ruiz, 2017; Sánchez-Blake & Luna-Gómez, 2015; Shepard, 2019; Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2016; Vogt, 2015) who became workers and businesswomen by selling their tapestries, teaching their techniques and also, making and selling jams made with traditional fruits harvested in their territories.

Reconnection of social fabric.

Ruptures made through collective trauma go beyond the collectivities of who experienced the tragedies in first person; all the inhabitants of the country are broken in Colombia. The upper classes are disconnected from the lower classes, the city from the countryside, the left from the right parties, and so on. These are the consequences of more than a century of civil war. What did art do for us?

An important example is Pogue (Castro-Sardi, 2019; CEAF, 2017; CNMH, 2015; Quiceno et al., 2017; Luna-Gómez, 2016) as their chants began to gather the inhabitants in the municipality after the massacre, allowing the social fabric to mend at a micro level. This huge accomplishment worked to connect a village through the simple pleasure of singing. The chants of Pogue managed to unite the entire country through the stages and discomforts of unthinkable loss. The lyrics of the chants, expressing through art the despicable realities managed to reach thousands of fellow Colombians. Through collective song shared during the signing of the peace agreement shifted the status quo and many more people realized and felt the suffering as it was broadcasted on the television for all to witness.

Reflection and transformation of social patterns.

The results shown, in the case of Mampuján Weavers (Belalcázar & Molina, 2017; Pérez 2018; Ruiz, 2017; Sánchez-Blake & Luna-Gómez, 2015; Shepard, 2019; Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2016; Vogt, 2015), that the collective exercise of meeting to speak and keep creating continuously over time, led the women to reflect on their African identity and to recognize that their first displacement was the one from Africa to America in times of slavery. This reflection depicted in their tapestries made it to the national museum of

Colombia, raising the public awareness and empathy of the little known links, so that they could accompany the start of transforming these realities of Afro-Colombian people, and stop the repetition of violence with historically marginalized people.

On another note, sexism is very present in Pogue, and as mentioned in the Findings section of this paper, women in this municipality made important changes to transform this (Quiceno et al., 2017). Women in Pogue have gained independence in their families, in a traditionally sexist context. Quiceno et al. (2017) highlight how these women have managed to create feminist awareness without officially belonging to any movement of this sort. Since their songs became famous it is now acceptable, and even desirable by their partners, that women leave the town for tours and events, something that did not happen before (Quiceno et al., 2017). Also, the muses of Pogue have become a feminine symbol of strength in the community, because they have accompanied them in their most difficult moments, they had taught and transmitted knowledge to the young generations, and had denounced their situation through singing (Quiceno et al., 2017).

By achieving national recognition through the aesthetic impact of their chants, they also gained independence in an environment that was characterized by “machismo”. In this context is not easy for women to travel, and by no means without their partners. They were able to do it and also achieve recognition in their community as a symbol of strength and resistance, for having been agents of change.

Hope

The construction of hope is a very clear outcome in the case of Bogotá (Rojas & Borda, 2018). Children living in peripheral neighborhoods throughout the country often grow up with a sense of fatalism, thinking that their life projects are reduced to getting mediocre jobs in order to survive and help their families. It is difficult to expand the imaginations of this reality because usually, there are no positive leaders or figures to follow for a different kind of future.

The fact that international NGOs started this project is very valuable because it sowed seeds of social capital and established a path for these children, as well as positive leaders to follow. They built the foundations so that, in spite of losing their initial sponsor, the leaders of Guateque were able to continue their project, reconstruct the social fabric, empower themselves, and broaden their horizons for generations; dreaming together through access to artistic tools.

Art Makes Healing Possible

The above described the achievements facilitated by artistic processes that were illustrated through the literature. The following characteristics that are particular to the use of art in community will be briefly summarized.

Catharsis.

Art in Colombia has been an ideal tool to alleviate suffering, express serious conflicts to the world and tell a truth that would otherwise be silenced. In most of the projects reviewed, it was mentioned several times, how artistic actions allowed communities to express themselves, and thus reduce or relieve their pain and channel it through creative actions, or share through symbolic objects to reach the society at large.

Externalization.

In the literature it was demonstrated that creating art products allowed internal conflicts to be represented in art pieces, and thus live an external life of its own. In this way, the manipulation of tangible objects allowed their transformation on a metaphorical level, which in turn, impacted the inner world of the artists. Externalization also helps in breaking the barriers of internal repression, which is exemplified in the case of the Weavers of Mampuján (Belalcázar & Molina, 2017; Pérez 2018; Ruiz, 2017; Sánchez-Blake & Luna-Gómez, 2015; Shepard, 2019; Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2016; Vogt, 2015). The artists mentioned that, although the process of creating an artistic object using their stories was painful, it was also liberating; externalizing the pain of their experience and seeing it from a distance, allowed them to talk about the events with less pain.

Symbolization.

Two different uses of the symbolic capacity of art were identified in the cases reported in the literature. The first one, symbolization hid or disguised what couldn't be said out loud, which is especially valuable in context of violence and potential danger. The second one was that, symbolization manages to break down barriers of rejection. Disguising unconscious conflicts in aesthetic ways, allowed uncomfortable messages to get delivered to places where they would not otherwise have been able to enter.

Metaphor.

The role of metaphors is very moving in most of the cases presented in the Findings, but one I would like to highlight is the one of Granada Antioquia and the 'Salón' of never again (Ramírez, 2007; Rubiano, E., 2017), in which journals play a fundamental role in allowing the inhabitants of Granada to communicate metaphorically with those who were suddenly snatched from their lives. These journals created a constant and safe space to

express and channel the feelings of pain for the loss of loved ones, supporting the integration of the loss, in the ever-evolving impact of grief.

Synthesis.

A quality of art that was named only once in this research is its ability to synthesize. Freud, speaking of dreams, explained their ability to condense different unconscious contents into a single image, and in that way, disguise them and make them more tolerable to the consciousness (Mitchell & Black, 2017). Likewise, the creation of images even while lucid, condenses a series of issues, to help make an experience available for discussion and thus allows the artmaker to more readily communicate their experience. Synthesis happens not only through visual images and dreams but also with the imagery and metaphors in the literary figures of musical lyrics. This synthesizing capacity is mentioned in the case of Pogue, by Leyner Palacio, an inhabitant of Pogue, who says: “A mí me sorprende cómo en un canto recogen tantos temas, los ponen en discusión, los mezclan y pueden ponerlo en un escenario político tan importante como ese espacio de la Casa de Nariño” [I was very surprised of how, in a single song, they collect so many topics, put them into discussion, mix them and then, its message makes it to such an important political stage, such as the presidential house] (Quiceno et al, 2017, p. 192).

Memory.

Art has a very particular capacity for the purpose of remembering and it creates tangible or intangible things, and these creations remain as permanent products in time, which are visible and can represent what has been lost in contexts of war, such the Colombian one. Pogue's prayers created songs (Castro-Sardi, 2019; CEAF, 2017; CNMH, 2015; Quiceno et al., 2017; Luna-Gómez, 2016) that became oral history, that will be transmitted from generation to generation and will let their grandchildren know the pain they endured, but also surpassed, through the powerful ability to sing their pain.

Exhibition.

Works of art can be exhibited, seen by many people, and have an impact on them, potentially creating a greater social impact. This meant in the cases presented above, that the works of art had the potentiality to effectively reconstruct the social fabric. There are many examples: Pogue singers and their presentations that generated nationwide connections, the Mampuján tapestries and their itinerant exhibition that linked them with Echeverría who later became their patron and main sponsor, the public presentations of the artistic products of Bogota's collectives that allowed connections between neighbors, and the pictures of the disappeared people in Granada that allowed connections in the collective grief.

I want to draw attention to the power of the exhibition of the Weavers of Mampuján at the Externado University of Colombia and the pedagogic material captured within it. The catalog of this exhibition (Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2016) impressed me with its ability to collect evidence of the impact that this exhibit had on the visitors (Figures 13 & 14).



Figure 13. “Mampujan Entretejido” Catalog of Mampujan Weavers Exhibit at the Externado University Pages 1 and 59. (Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2016)



Figure 14. “Mampujan Entretejido” Catalog of Mampujan Weavers Exhibit at the Externado University, Pages 51 and 53. (Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2016)

I would risk to say that artistic mediation in museum spaces, helps to close the cycle of reconstruction of the social fabric at a macro level by enhancing the impact of the artwork on people through education. Strategies such as talks and exhibit catalogs allow the wealthy visitors in the capital of the country to empathetically connect with the women from the countryside of the north coast of Colombia.

Generation of safe spaces.

Finally, art gives the opportunity for the creation of places or spaces that bring a sense of security and confidence to be able to talk about what in another context would be scary or

embarrassing. The work "The war that we have not seen" and its painting workshops (Fundación Puntos de Encuentro, 2020), had the power of holding the expression of the perpetrators of the conflict, a group that is normally not allowed to speak.

The Trujillo Monument Park and specifically the memory gallery and its public garden (Garzón, 2019; Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 2008; Perdomo, 2018), are examples of safe physical places, co-built with the community, that encourage sharing within gatherings of people, for the reconstruction and strengthening of social ties. The 'Salon' of never again (Ramírez, 2007; Rubiano, E., 2017), encourages bonding by creating a framework for the public expression of pain. This room contains pain in a bounded space, and offers social support through offering a symbolic place to grieve in the absence of bodies after the traumatic events.

Integration of the Knowledge

After documenting and outlining characteristics from existing literature that supports the arts-based healing knowledge that has been developed over time from the communities in Colombia experiencing the traumas of war and ongoing violence, I would like to answer the following subsidiary research questions: "What alternatives exist to make this new knowledge more formally accepted as a part of art therapy practice in Latin America?" "How can these ways of working be integrated with the existing clinical therapeutic structures in the ethical practice of art therapy?" (Salom, 2017, p.73).

Systematization of experiences and community-based evidence.

It is important to find ways to systematize this knowledge, because policymakers, funders and researchers of mental health practices prioritize the promotion of evidence based practices (EBP), in an effort to ensure the best available treatment for patients (Martínez, et al., 2010). Evidence-based practices are commonly defined as interventions and treatments that are backed by empirical scientific evidence measured by randomized control trials (Martínez, et al., 2010). Despite this, Martínez, et al. (2010) affirm that most of the EBPs were not properly designed or standardized in populations of color, claiming that the existing adapted evidence "[does not] fundamentally address core values, beliefs, traditions, rituals and historical contexts of the diverse populations to which they are destined to serve" (Martínez, et al., 2010, p. 11), which is clearly the case in Colombia.

These authors propose a complimentary approach to research, that provides space for the inherent knowledge of the community, which may be more useful in the design of interventions relevant to people of color who have been marginalized from mainstream society and thus, in the Colombian context. This complimentary approach is called

Community-Defined Evidence (CDE), and it refers to the study of the practices that communities use and have generated positive results by collective agreement over time. It may or may not have been measured empirically, but the community has reached a formal level of acceptance of its highly relevant and beneficial results (Martínez, et al., 2010).

The CDE model could be applied to the Colombian context by taking one of the many arts-based healing practices that have been developed in the country, and evaluating its effectiveness through different qualitative methods.

The first thing proposed by this model, initially developed by Martínez et al. (2010) and explained in detail by Pacific Southwest Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (2019), is to document the experiences that work and how they work, and then collect data on their relevance, viability and effectiveness, through observations in the field and/or listening circles within communities.

The present study presented the first step in the collection and documentation of these practices, their usefulness for the community and how they work with respect to the theories of art therapy. Future studies could continue by developing a case study of each one to develop the necessary evidence.

Integration with existent practices.

The reality in some Latin American countries, such as Colombia, is complex and requires that researchers and academics in the mental health and human services fields, make efforts to develop their own ways of understanding, and developing from interventions that offer solutions. This is difficult because art therapy as a profession is just starting in Colombia, and to call yourself an art therapist requires you to migrate and study in a foreign country (Gómez-Carlier & Salom, 2012), which means bringing back mostly North American and European traditions of individualized approaches coming from the medical model.

Hopefully after presenting the Findings of this study, one can see how the medical model appears helpless when confronted with responding to the massive numbers of victims and the needs of the communities affected by the war, which has become a primary public mental health issue in Colombia (Semana, 2017). Fortunately, community and social perspectives exist in art therapy, and seem to be a much more suitable response to the country's reality.

Art Therapy and its Public Practice.

Public Practice Art Therapy is an example of the theories that come from a critical cultural social perspective on the art therapy literature; this interdisciplinary approach is based in liberation psychologies, attachment theory and movement theory and is a new way

of working in art therapy that has been recently developing in Canada (Timm-Bottos, 2016, 2017). Public practice art therapy, was developed as a response to the necessity of addressing the current collective cultural and environmental symptoms that go beyond individual pathologies (Timm-Bottos, 2017). In this stream, art therapists are generating public and safe third spaces, commonly known as Art Hives (Timm-Bottos & Reilly, 2014, 2015), where people from different cultural, educational, social, and political backgrounds come together to create, connect with others and mobilize collective actions generating new experiences and knowledge, in between their differences (Timm-Bottos, 2017). Although this particular way of intervening has limitations, because it doesn't intend to deepen in the particularities of individual struggles, its strength is it works with what is already working and tries to help strengthen that. The model has had ripple effects on a wider level of the wellbeing of communities based on relationships built over time, which is what seems to fit for the needs of Colombia. This example provides a good reason to promote conversations between countries in order to grow the intrinsic knowledges and encourage the local interventions for the wellbeing of our communities.

Ethical considerations.

Finally, it is important to consider ways to guarantee the necessary care by professionals intervening in communities other than their own, in order to do no harm. Although in all of the cases, the strategies of the present study were very successful and apparently, they did not involve any adverse reactions, it is a reality that there are risks associated with intervening with human participants, which can be prevented if certain guidelines are established.

In general, professionals in human sciences, such as psychologists, social workers, and certainly art therapists, have ethical codes that govern their profession and actions when intervening with individuals. But, risks can be presented in cases where a power relationship is established for intervening in a population without guidelines and a training on how to ensure the well-being of participants. Even if done with good intentions, sometimes interventions are iatrogenic, causing more harm than well-being.

As Rubiano (2015a) reports, there are cases of some artists, particularly professional plastic artists, who freely establish instrumental relationships with victims in order to produce a successful and altruistic work, which sometimes ends up having a negative effect on communities. Although unfortunately these cases were not recorded in the registered literature, it would be interesting to conduct an exploratory study to develop or adapt a series of guidelines for working through the arts with vulnerable Colombian populations.

According to the literature reviewed, there are certain factors that must be considered in this regard: 1. That the interventions are participatory (Rojas & Borda, 2018; Rubiano, 2015a, Watkins & Shulman, 2008); 2. That the interventions are long term as long as needed. (Rojas & Borda, 2018; Rubiano, 2015a); 3. That accountability exists through the stories of the participants, a promotion of their sense of agency and freedom in their decisions in fundamental issues such as anonymity and information management (Rojas & Borda, 2018; Rubiano, 2015a); 4. Consideration of the unintended benefits to the community in the processes developed and not relying only in the “therapeutic value” of what is being offered. By thinking about the sustainability of the project, the long term benefits to the community could be realized. For example, through investing a percentage of the economic benefits the artist-researcher will obtain, to ensure that the projects developed have some kind of continuity over time (Rubiano, 2015a). 5. Work towards preventing revictimization, that is, avoiding the generation of feelings of incapacity and insecurity, and on the contrary, empowering the communities as people with the possibility to act and create their own stories.

Watkins and Shulman (2008) propose characteristics of liberation arts that can also serve as a guideline for this purpose, by checking if the interventions are: participatory, unpredictable, proactive, sheltered, egalitarian, creative, rupturing, dialogical, transformative, consciousness-raising, de-centering, performative, communicative and evaluative. Better improvements can come from having broader and real conversations between disciplines and countries, because art has been known for evading ethical discourses but when one is intervening with people, it intersects with other disciplines, and practitioners then tend to tread more carefully.

Conclusion

It is possible to conclude that the knowledge that has been generated in Colombia, about the properties and curative use of art is vast and powerful, and has the potential to be strengthened through methodological approaches such as community-based evidence and through dialogues with the public practices of art therapy. As proposed by Salom (2017), the synergy between established professions and knowledge generated intuitively by communities and artists, can produce important results for the development of better intervention strategies in collective trauma present in Colombia. This research allowed to collect from the literature, documentation of successful community interventions in which art was useful as a therapeutic strategy. This can serve as a first step for a systematization and subsequent evaluation of the information collected, in order to prove its effectiveness,

achieve recognition and thus possibly expand its field of action by inserting itself into current therapeutic structures and considering its ethical implications.

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