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The Effect of Personal Portrait Photographs on Cultural Attitude among Jewish and Arabic Expressive/Art Therapists in Israel

A DISSERTATION
Submitted by

Varda Serok - Jeppa

In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

LESLEY UNIVERSITY
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Lesley University
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Ph.D. in Expressive Therapies Program

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I hereby certify that I have read this dissertation prepared under my direction and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement.

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ABSTRACT
The purpose of this research was to offer young expressive therapists in Israel, a country with a complex cultural narrative, a tool that might enhance ethno-cultural empathy competencies. The research question was: What is the effect of Personal Portrait Photographs on cultural attitude among Jewish and Arabic expressive/art therapists in Israel? A qualitative arts based study based in constructivist empirical phenomenology was executed collecting data via photo elicitation, through use of portrait photographs of faces of women wearing three religious head dresses: Jewish, Muslim and Christian. The photographs were revised to portray participants’ faces in the portrait photo. Participants were 9 women expressive therapists of 3 religions; 2 religious and 1 secular of each religion. Facilitators were two women expressive therapists, Jewish and Christian Arab. Data was analyzed using inductive thematic analysis by researcher and facilitators, compared, coded and observed for prominent themes and sub-themes. Themes were viewed by a Gestalt therapy approach and concepts. Themes found were: 1. Pattern, and sub-themes were projection, women, personal identity and religion 2. Breaking patterns with sub themes of women (new), self-awareness. 3. Integration of parts, and sub-theme of new self-awareness. 4. Between cultures and sub-themes of affiliation group, fear of the ‘other’ and caution. 5. Professional identity.

Findings show that the research tool offered participants an insightful and meaningful experience and extended their ethno-cultural empathy competencies. Furthermore, the study presents a unique Gestalt approach observation on the multicultural learning process participants experienced. The research tool can have significant future use in training expressive therapists, especially within the intricate cultural setting of Israel, to enhance ethno-cultural empathy and competencies.
CHAPTER 1

Introduction
This research took place in Israel, a culturally complex and intricate place where population is composed of multiple religions and cultures (Bystrov & Soffer, 2012). Of the population 76% are Jewish, divided into religious denominations and ethnic groups and 24% are ethnically Arab divided into various religions (Bystrov & Soffer, 2012; Zamir, 2012). The densely populated Israel is multi-culturally divided over religions, ethnicity, nationality and social breaches where people rarely tend to socially mix (Einstein, 2012; MIzrachi & Herzog, 2012; Rebhun & Malach, 2009; Sharabi, 2014).

Being raised in a religious Jewish family, the researcher found herself socializing outside of her religion and ethnicity only when she was 15 years old, for the first time, when her father acquired his Phd in the USA and the family accompanied him for a 3 year stay. Socializing was surprisingly easier with religious people regardless of their religion than with people of the same religion who were secular. New wonderments and realizations awoke in the teenaged mind about human similarities and differences. Does religious based education create similar behavior patterns within people? What is similar between religions? Would she have been someone else if she would have been born to a different culture and religions? Intuitively she felt that all religions stem from a similar source, that humans belong to one race divided by cultures and religions.

An experience that happened 5 years later when the researcher, then young woman, waited for a bus somewhere outside one of Israel’s multicultural cities accentuated and gave a good picture to her intuitive knowing. As she was sitting on a bench in the bus station, she looked to the right and saw to the side of the busy road, a figure from a distance; a woman dressed in a long black dress with her head covered in black. Behind her followed in line, as not to get hit by the passing cars, four children, arranged by age
and size from big to small, hurrying somewhere. The researcher was captured by the similar dark closings they all wore and the arrangement they were in. She looked to her left, and to her amazement there was another, almost similar feminine figure walking on the road side towards her, dressed in a black dress with her head covered and behind her followed 4 children arranged by size as well. As both women approached, the researcher realized one was a religious Muslim Arab lady, and the other was a religious Jewish lady, followed by their children. The researcher thought they will crash into each other, but they just passed right in front of her, crossing each other’s path and continuing on their way, not even a glance, not looking at each other for a second. Two mirror images, similar almost identical women did not acknowledge each other’s existence, not even for a second. This felt like a human theater show produced especially for the researcher, it left her bewildered sad and thoughtful concerning similarities and differences and unto this day, 35 years later, accompanies her as a compass on her search for human commonalities and human empathy.

During the years, while training higher education expressive therapy and Gestalt to young students in the multicultural Israel, the researcher saw a continuous need for finding a way to teach and expand multicultural competencies. While human commonalities are apparent, culture defines uniqueness and cultural identity by a process of enculturation where parts of cultural rules acquired are conscious, like language yet some parts are mostly unconscious (Dunham, Baron & Banaji, 2006; Gorman, Fiestas, Pena & Clark, 2011; Jack, Caldara & Schyns, 2012; Usborne & DeLaSablonniere, 2014; Kiyokawa et. al, 2012). Cultural belonging is fundamental to humans (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Gere & MacKonald, 2010) where affiliation with ‘my group’ as opposed to ‘otherness’/’outer
group’ develops early in life (Binder, 2006; Eicher, 2010; Keith, 2012). While this might help survival and set boundaries it could develop into stereotyping, prejudice discrimination and bias (Cuddy et al., 2009; Bizumic, 2014; Eicher, 2010; Keith, 2012). Early life multicultural educational exposure might help developing social flexibility (Cuddy et al., 2009).

During the researcher’s first year PhD studies in the apprenticeship class led by Dr. Kussak she created an expressive embodiment of her deepest interest and professional passion. Out of this work emerged a three portrait photograph of her face. The portraits of her face were taken while she wore a religious head dress made of two white and black shawls, wrapping her head with the same shawls in a different manner for each religion – Jewish, Christian and Muslim. The questions accompanying the photos had to do with competencies a therapist should develop to be able to do therapy in varied cultural settings. Out of the need as a trainer in higher expressive therapy education to offer students of expressive therapies an experience of cultural empathy, a sense of identifying with a culture different to their own without losing their identity and perhaps learning ethno-cultural empathy, this research experience had emerged.

The researcher’s personal portrait photos were revised using Photoshop computer tool. The actual face was cut out and left room to ‘plant’ the participant’s face, thereby forming the ‘templates’. A role play and semi-structured interview (Creswell, 2007) was composed to offer an unusual experience of ‘becoming’ someone else for a short time.

The research idea was to check:

The Effect of Personal Portrait Photographs on Cultural Attitude among Jewish and Arabic Expressive/Art Therapists in Israel
The qualitative arts based study data was collected via interviews and founded on constructivist empirical phenomenology using photo elicitation (Betts, 2003; Corbett & Fryrear, 1992; Weiser, 1993; Forinash & Grocke, 2005). Portrait photographs of the participants were ‘planted’ into the ‘templates’ and presented one by one to the participant in the individual interview, followed by a role play, and artistic expression. Following individual interviews was a group meeting where all participants met, when they all filled an individual questionnaire, expressed artistically and had a group discussion. By the end of group meeting facilitators and researcher had a concluding meeting and artistic expression. All meetings were videotaped, transcribed and translated from Hebrew/Arabic to English.

The facilitators were two women experienced expressive therapists; a Jewish Hebrew speaking therapist and a Christian Arab therapist who speaks both Hebrew and Arabic. As preparation for the research work both facilitators underwent the research experience viewing their own portrait photographs dressed in 3 religious head dresses and were interviewed by the researcher. Participants were 9 young expressive therapists, three of each religion: Jewish, Muslim and Christian, where two out of each three were religious and one secular.

Inductive thematic analysis was used to view data which was coded themed and prominent themes were pointed out (Creswel, 2007; Creswell, 2009, Wolcott, 2009). The prominent themes were: pattern, breaking pattern, integration, between cultures and processional identity. Themes were viewed via Gestalt concepts ((Brownell, 2010; Clarckson & Mackewn, 1993; Levi, 2002): relating to: contact, the meeting between a person/a-whole/gestalt to other people or to environment. This is where individual
boundaries are experienced and energy is transferred between the ‘wholes’ (Perls, Hefferline & Goodman, 1973). Assimilation of knowledge leads to learning, growth and change creating new configuration “containing aspect of the old personality and new materials from the environment” (Clarckson & Mackewn, 1993). Inter-cultural issues and professional identity themes were viewed as elaborated in the discussion chapter. The focus of this research was to provide young expressive therapists in Israel, a land of multiple cultural needs and complexities, with a tool that might help them highlight and enhance awareness to personal attitudes of multicultural issues and help exercise and perhaps widen the therapists’ ethno-cultural empathy skills and multicultural competencies. Underlying this is the Gestalt idea of contact-confluence and assimilation-growth: by experiencing another pattern than one’s own, new information can be drawn in and new learning can occur resulting in broadening boundaries. The researcher hoped that the experience of human similarity and cultural difference might allow a growing sense of ethno-cultural empathy and enhance therapeutic multicultural competence in the young therapists.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review
This research stems out of the need to help therapists living in Israel add to the training in multicultural competencies. The research experience was designed for people who are not diagnosed as suffering from any mental illnesses.

**Culture and Cultural Identity**

At the most basic level, humans are physically similar including the biologically innate abilities to think, feel, reproduce, and nurture. However as has been demonstrated through clearly defined research (Chong et al, 2003; Ekman, 1999; Fernald, 1993) culture clearly makes a difference, giving shape to the way those abilities are expressed. While research has observed significant cultural commonalities, belonging to a specific culture defines difference or uniqueness (Kiyokawa et. al, 2012). Cultural identity (Bizumic & Duckitt, 2012; Usborne & DeLaSablonniere, 2014; Kiyokawa et. al, 2012), or enculturation, is a process of socialization into the norms and maintenance of one’s indigenous culture, including its concepts, values and ideas (Kim, Ahn, & Lam, 2009; Keith, 2012; Sharabi, 2014).

Conscious understanding of one’s own culture is a challenge (Yi, 2014; Johnson, 2006). Johnson (2006) states, “Most of what we experience as ’Real’ is a cultural creation. In other words it is made up, even though we do not experience it that way” (p. 17). According to Johnson it is difficult to acquire an objective distance from one’s own culture, yet the cultural influence is deeply engrained in the individual (Bizumic & Duckitt, 2012; Usborne & DeLaSablonniere, 2014; Kiyokawa et. al, 2012).

Culture is defined here as the behaviors, values, and beliefs shared by a group of people (Kiyokawa et. al, 2012; Yi, 2014). People need to live together and form cultures, yet people are born culturally blank and form a cultural identity (Kaynak & Kara, 2013;
Yi, (2014) suggests that along with the conscious cultural identity, there is an unconscious cultural identity that develops as well. People are basically similar in innate abilities yet develop into unique cultures that form conscious differences, in language, religion, symbols and traditions (Gorman, Fiestas, Peña, & Clark, 2011; Jack, Caldara & Schyns, 2012; Kaynak & Kara, 2013).

Enculturation leads to cultural belonging, which is a fundamental human need (Bizumic & Duckitt, 2012; Gere & MacDonald, 2010; Kiyokawa et. al, 2012; Usborne & DeLaSablonniere, 2014). Studies of early development in cultural belonging and identity emphasize the importance of children’s ability to distinguish their caretakers from unfamiliar figures. Bowlby (1982) watched the development of infants and found that between the ages of 7 and 12 months old they expressed fear at unfamiliar faces. Winnicott (Binder, 2006) describes the developmental process of the baby’s recognition of “otherness” as a powerful emotional experience of “destruction of the object” or the sense that there is a self and another (p. 162). The ability to socially distinguish and categorize into relational groups develops at an early age (Eicher, 2010; Usborne and DeLaSablonniere, 2014), resulting in differentiation between “my group” and “not my group” (Sumner, 1906; Bisumic & Duckitt, 2012; Bizumic, 2014). While this helps set cultural boundaries, what is continuously categorized as an ‘outer group’ might develop into stereotypes – as a cognitive reaction, prejudice – as an affective reaction, and discrimination – as a behavioral response (Bisumic & Duckitt, 2012; Bizumic, 2014; Brenick & Killen, 2013), eventually resulting in bias.

Scholars interested in the origins of stereotypes have studied cross-cultural differences and similarities. Cuddy et al. (2009) suggest that it is possible that bias
formation helps create status hierarchy, a necessary evil when people compete for resources in a society. This, in turn, may influence the inevitable formation of stereotypes in social adjustment from early childhood (Brenick & Killen, 2013; Cuddy et al., 2009; Sharabi, 2014). However it is suggested that exposure to multi-social environments in early childhood might help children in early and mid-childhood overcome stereotypes and become more open to social options (Berger, Abu-Raiya and Gelkopf, 2015; Kasl and Yorks, 2016; Taylor et al., 2013).

Cultural stereotypes impose thought patterns, affect cognitive processes and shape ideologies that contribute to the forming of prejudice (Berger, Abu-Raiya & Gelkopf, 2015; Kasl & Yorks, 2016; Litvak & Webman, 2009; Sharabi, 2014).

**Israeli-Palestinian Conflict History**

The history of Israeli-Palestinian conflict is long and controversial (Barzilay-Shechter, 2010; Munayer & Loden, 2013; Sharabi, 2014). In modern times it goes back about a century. Starting around 1880-1914 Jews in Europe and Eastern Europe founded the Zionist movement as a response to persecutions and began immigrating to Palestine that was then under the Ottoman Empire’s regime (Hammond, 2008; Katirai, 2001; Sharabi, 2014). From 1918 the British mandate takes hold and governs over Jews and Arabs residing in the area. The British divided the land into the eastern Jordan River bank to the Hashemite Kingdom, which became the state of Jordan. The British also issued the Balfour Declaration (1917) announcing support for a Jewish homeland in Palestine allowing the settlements of Jewish Zionist immigrants (Katirai, 2001; Munayer & Loden, 2013). The Zionists acquired land and the more they did so the Arab chiefs feared
Jews will take over their land, this eventually led to violence where both sides suffered massacres (Munayer & Loden, 2013).

In 1947 the General Assembly of the United Nations ordered the divide of Palestine into two separate states, for the Arabs and for the Jews; For the Arabs – to be called Palestine and for the Jews – Israel where Jerusalem would be an international area for both Jews, Muslims and Christians (Fisher, 2014). The surrounding Arab states refused the suggestion. At this time more Holocaust survivors Jews from Europe immigrated to Israel. The British army leaves Palestine and in 1948 the Zionist leaders announce the state of Israel and fighting begins with the Arab neighbors (Barzilay-Shechter, 2010; Katirai, 2001). The war ended with Israel’s victory and about 700,000 Palestinian refugees who fled, were expelled or left their homes and were settled in refugee camps in parts of the Arab countries surrounding Israel: Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt, yet some (160,000) Palestinians stayed or came back and became Israeli citizens (Boymel, 2006; Munayer & Loden, 2013). They were called Israeli-Arabs yet suspicion flourished between both Jews and Arabs (Munayer & Loden, 2013). By the end of the 1948 war, Palestinians occupied the West Jordan Bank, ruled by Jordan and the Gaza Strip ruled by Egypt (Fisher, 2014). Winning this first war had become “Yom HaAtzmaout” (Independence Day) for Jewish Israeli people, yet for the Palestinians it had become “the Nakba” (catastrophe) where Palestinians deny recognition of the Israeli Jewish state (Bashir & Goldberg, 2014; Hammond, 2008; Munayer & Loden, 2013; Salim, 2014; Tyler, 2011).

The borders of Israel and Palestine have been under dispute and have been fought over since the first war (Fisher, 2014; Salim, 2014). In 1964 the Palestine Liberation
Organization (PLO) was founded by the Arab League, formed by twenty two Arab countries. Its purpose was to deal with the Palestinian situation (Hammond, 2008; Munayer & Lden, 2013). In 1967 its Egyptian leader changed and the Palestinian Yasser Arafat took his place, stating the organizations’ directives: no recognition or negotiations with Israel and no peace. In 1967 Egypt called for destruction of the state of Israel and with all the Arab countries surrounding Israel, led a war that ended in the occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (as well as the Syrian Golan Heights and Egypt Sinai Peninsula. Israel had since withdrawn 90% of the occupied land (Mor, 2015) by Israeli forces (Fisher, 2014; Munayer and Loden, 2013). Israel stated that due to its original small size the occupied territories provide insurance against Palestinian attacks on its borders (Fisher, 2014). Taking measure in this direction the Israeli government encouraged its citizens to settle in the West Bank as a buffer against invasions. This had created a situation where there are two groups of ‘settlers’: secular Jews that wanted low cost higher quality housing, and religious zealous Jews who believe in the united land of Israel as it had been in the Bible days, as a rightful Jewish privilege (these settlers are sometimes evicted by the Israeli officials) (Fisher, 2014; Hammond, 2008). This situation constrained Palestinians in living areas, mobility and economy resulting in anger, frustration and a fertile ground for guerilla groups to prosper where for Israel these are considered terrorist attacks, whilst for the Palestinians these are Liberation attempts mainly by the Fatah resistance (Fisher, 2014; Hammond, 2008).

UN resolution 242 followed the 1967 war and suggested the Arab states acknowledge the state of Israel and for Israel to withdraw from the taken territories, and as a possible solution to the refugee problem. Munayer and Loden (2013) state that
though this resolution was ignored by both Arab states and Israel, it still today could be a possible base for negotiations.

During the 1972 Olympics in Munich, Palestinians killed 11 Israeli athletes. In October 1973, on Yom-Kippur, holiest day to the Jews, Egypt and Syria arrange a surprise attack on unprepared Israeli forces (Katirai, 2001). Munayer and Loden (2013) explain that the Arab relative temporary fighting gain restored the Arab pride and allowed for the beginning of peace negotiations with Egypt. In 1979 a peace treaty was signed between Israel and Egypt with the assistance of the US president Carter at Camp David. As a consequence Egypt was expelled from the Arab League and in 1981 president Sadat responsible for the peace treaty with Israel was assassinated (Katirai, 2001).

Katirai (2001) explains that with a southern border with Egypt secured and settled in a peace treaty, Israel proceeded to defend the northern border from PLO attacks from Lebanon. From 1982 – 1985, Israel allied with the south Lebanon Christian forces establishing a security strip, though later the allied force killed 2,000 unarmed Palestinians in Sabra and Shatila fighting the PLO. In 1987 a Palestinian uprising (Intifada) began in Gaza and the West bank against Israeli occupation, which after Israel’s attempt to suppress it, changed public opinion to further peace negotiations with Palestinians (Katirai, 2001; Munayer and Loden, 2013).

In 1993 negotiations that took place in Oslo Norway, ended with an agreement to exchange land for peace, where both parties recognize the right of the other to exist. In 1994 Jordan and Israel agreed to a peace treaty. In November 1995, the Israeli Minister Rabin was assassinated by an opposing Jew (Munayer and Loden, 2013). Suicide
bombing attacks had begun in 1996 by *Hamas* (zeal) group (Islamic Resistance Movement) that rejected the Oslo agreements. Munayer and Loden (2013) explain that during the 1990’s both sides did not keep the agreement and provoking acts were executed by extremists on both parties.

In 2000 re-attempted peace talks in Camp David with the US president Clinton failed. Israel offered 95% of the occupied territories whilst the Palestinians would not comprise for less than 100% (Katirai, 2001). A second Intifada was triggered, this time Israeli-Palestinians joined the protest in solidarity with the Palestinians of the occupied territories rioting within the borders of the Israeli state, not only in the occupied territories. Munayer and Loden (2013) explain that the coming years led to immense violence, killing people on both sides and distancing the peace making attempts.

Israel proceeded building a controversial protective wall separating the West Bank, in the East of Israel, whilst in 2005 Israel withdrew unconditionally from the Gaza strip, in the South of Israel. The Gaza disengagement was immediately followed by the Hamas rise of power in Gaza and as a result the Southern part of Israel comprising of cities and Kibbutzim, became subjected to years of regular Missiles attacks on the civilian population (Munayer and Loden, 2013). In 2006 in the northern Israel-Lebanon border, Hezbollah (“Party of God”) Islamist militants constantly bombard Israel with rockets. When this escalates as a group of Hezbollah militants attacks an Israeli patrol killing two and kidnapping three soldiers the Lebanon War begins lasting a month, ending with more pain and resentment within Israel and between the countries (Wales, 2015).
The situation consequently culminated in the Gaza strip on July 2014 when hundreds of missiles were launched by Gaza militant groups into Israel. The rockets reached a new extended range, bombing Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv whilst Israel’s Iron Dome system intercepted most missiles. In retaliation Israel launched an aerial and ground offensive on Gaza. This last war ended claiming a heavy toll on both sides leaving the situation yet still unresolved (Wales, 2015).

Both Israeli Jews and Palestinians carry their own narrative justifying their cause, whilst the ending of the conflict does not seem near and would necessarily comprise of mutual recognition and tolerance (Falk, 2005; Fisher, 2014; Salim, 2014).

**Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and Society**

Currently the ethno-political conflict between the Israeli Jews, Israeli Palestinians and Palestinians is strongly active and includes mutual prejudice, dehumanization and de-legitimization on both sides (Bar-On, 2008; Gesser-Edelsburg, 2013; Maoz, 2011; Mizrachi & Herzog, 2012). With it Israel had developed economically, academically and technologically.

The grid of Israeli society is intricate and complex. It is made of multiple cultures and multiple religions. According to a demographic survey from 2012 (Bystrov & Soffer, 2012), 76% of the Israeli population is Jewish, divided into the following religious denominations: religious, Haredi (ultra-orthodox), traditional, and secular. Within these groups, there are ethnic groups of Jews who have immigrated over the years, mainly since Israel’s declaration of independence in 1948, from Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, North Africa, Arab nations, India, Ethiopia, and more (Bystrov & Soffer, 2012). These ethnic groups share a religion, yet the indigenous traditions preserve
ethnicity of origin; differences dilute with time yet still clearly exist (Mizrachi & Herzog, 2012; Zamir, 2012). The rest of the population is ethnically Arab, including Muslim, Christian, and Druze. There are also minorities such as the Bedouin, Samaritan, Baha’i and Armenians living in Israel. These groups keep culturally separate and observe respected boundaries of conduct (Bystrov & Soffer, 2012; Rebhun & Malach, 2009). Israel is considered one of the most densely populated countries in the West (Rebhun & Malach, 2009; Mizrachi & Herzog, 2012). Most of the Jewish population resides around the large metropolitan areas in the center of the country while much of the Arab population resides in the periphery.

Israel is a multicultural, deeply divided society (Mizrachi & Herzog, 2012; Sharabi, 2014). It is divided over religious, ethnic, political and other social gaps, where national conflict is the most salient (Mizrachi & Herzog, 2012; Sharabi, 2014). Jewish and Arab populations are educated in separate institutions and rarely mix. The same holds in the case of different religious denominations within a given religion. It does, however, happen that people of different religious or ethnic background meet in higher education programs. In specific geographical areas in Israel, where the population is mixed, people of diverse ethnicities meet in everyday life situations but, for the most part, do not tend to mix socially (Einstein, 2012; Gesser-Edelsburg, 2013; Sharabi, 2014).

**Three Groups Discussed in this Study**

This research deals with three demographic groups and head-dresses that identify the women that belong to them: Jewish religious national camp (“settlers”), Religious Muslim Arabs, Christian Arabs. The head dresses styles were chosen as representations out of many creative possibilities women use in all three religions.
**Jewish (J)** – This research relates to religious (not ultra-religious) Jews who tend to oppose the possibility of two independent nations and believe in the biblical right of the Jews for the ‘promised land’ (Hammond, 2008) some of whom are ‘Settlers’. The term “Settlers” in Israel means Jewish Israeli people (religious or secular) who created settlements in the conquered areas of Palestine, by encouragement of the Israeli government (Hammond, 2008).

The origin of head cover in Judaism goes as far as Mishnah times about 200AC. It is written in *Mishna, Ketubot 7:6* that a woman should not go out with uncovered hair, and *Talmud Bavly, Berachot 24a* states that women’s hair is ‘ervah’ (sexual) (Weiss, 2009). The head-dress that is typically identified with married women for reasons of modesty (Zalzberg and Almog, 2010) who belong to the discussed group of Jewish denomination is called ‘Tichel’ – usually made of a long shawl, wrapped around the head hiding the woman’s hair.

**Muslim (M)** – This research relates to the religious group of Muslims; in Israel usually affiliated with the Palestinians where some live in the borders of Israel and are Israeli citizens and some in the Palestinian borders. As was mentioned before their stance against the Israeli government and people is controversial (Hammond, 2008; Salim and Munayer, 2014) where they tend to affiliate with views that deny the right of Israel to exist (Fisher, 2014; Salim, 2014).

Head covering in Islam originated in the 6th century and is based on Quran writings: *Surah An-Nur (24:30-31)* and *Surah Al-Ahzab (33:59)* where women are advised to cover for modesty (Ali, 2005; Jackson and Monk-Turner, 2015). The head-dress that is typically identified with religious Muslim women for restriction of physical
exposure of specific body parts in the purpose of modesty is called ‘Hijab’ (Bar Or and Almog, 2014). It is made of a long shawl, surrounding the head hiding hair, forehead and women’s chest.

Christian (C) – There is a community of Christians in Israel where the state classifies them as Arabs. They speak Arabic yet belong to various forms of Christianity: Catholic, Orthodox (Greek, Russian, Armenian, Coptic, and Syrian) and Protestants that all claim to stem from the original Christians who followed Christ in the Holy Land (Kedar, 2014; Salim and Munayer, 2014). The term ‘Christians’ is used in Israel to describe all followers of Christ, as opposed to the USA where there is some differentiation between Catholics and Christians (Arnold, 2015; Geisler and MacKenzie, 1995; Shea, 2004). Their relation and affiliation to the Israeli government and people is controversial. Some identify as Israeli citizens and even serve in the IDF and some identify with the Palestinians. Christians were lately recognized in Israel as members of the ancient Aramean nation setting them apart from the Arab Muslim population (Kedar, 2014; Lis, 2014).

Christian women’s attire in Israel is western and is not specifically identified (Bar Or and Almog, 2010). Yet Nuns do were special cloths accentuating modesty. The head-dress that was chosen out of numerous options, to represent the Christian religions in this research is that of a Catholic nun. It was chosen for artistic alliteration and visual similarity to the other two head-dresses. The head-dress covers the hair, forehead, chin and chest.

All three specific headdresses - were chosen out of many creative possibilities, as symbolic representation of religious uniqueness and political affiliation they tend to
stand for and the fact that they all serve as identifying attire for religious women. The three head-dresses are made of similar materials, same colors (to emphasize similarity): black and white and are wrapped in a similar fashion to hide different areas of the women’s head and face.

Over the years, extreme religious Jewish and Muslim groups have become even more extreme in their attitudes toward the state, economics, education, social integration and each other, widening the cultural gap (Rebhun & Malach, 2009). Sagy, Ayalon, and Diab (2011) explain that the Israeli-Arab dispute elicits a need to form self and national identity in both groups, where there is a collective identity development of both groups and where “the negation of the ‘other’ plays a special role” (p.192). The authors claim that both groups’ socio-cultural narratives weaken “the very right of the ‘other’ to the land” (p.192). Currently there is escalation on left/right parties on both sides of the conflict calling for either war or peace, where the war over land slowly accelerates into religious war.

Uhlmann et al.’s (2010) in their literature review show that stereotyping others is often motivated by both perceived threats to one’s self-esteem and by a desire to rationalize inequality. Stereotyping also possibly arises because of the need to see one’s racial group in a positive light by lowering the status of the other group. Yet studies have shown that stereotyping measurably declines when people felt that they needed to produce accurate judgments. Uhlmann et al. (2010) conclude their review with the acknowledgment of the important contribution of ongoing psychological research to illuminate irrational motives that may underlie cultural-social stereotypes.
Considerable effort is being put into studying intercultural differences and commonalities, towards cultivating intercultural competencies for the purpose of building better co-existence in the multicultural state of Israel. It is proposed in this research that initiatives to enable cross-communication are crucial, especially for therapists, who practice empathy and can communicate with people on a more intimate level.

**Empathy and Ethno-cultural empathy**

“Empatheia” is the original Greek work for empathy (Eklund, 2011). Empathy is defined as the ability to feel the other person in oneself (Hammond, 2015; Siu & Shek, 2005; Reid et al., 2013). Nilsson (2016) explain that empathy is the basics for human relationships and crucial in counseling therapy work. The lack of empathy has been linked to aggression between groups of difference (Berger, Abu-Raiya & Gelkopf, 2015). Empathy can be a counter-act to hostile perspective and could revise and improve relations among groups of ethnic differences (Litvak & Webman, 2009; Rasoal, Eklund & Hansen, 2011; Wang et al., 2003). Ridley and Lingle (1996) explain that empathy to diverse cultural groups can be learnt. They have developed a model of cultural empathy of three processes: affective – the process of experiencing the other culture, cognitive – awareness and learning the cultural difference and communicative – ability to explain the other culture. The ability to be empathetic to a different cultural group than one’s own is called cultural competence, trans-cultural empathy and culture empathy (Green, 1998; Lawrence et al., 2001; Wang et al., 2003). Wang et al. (2003) invented the term: ‘ethno cultural empathy’ and suggest that it is linked to diversity and multicultural awareness in counseling and therapy. They claim that these abilities can be measured and have developed an assessment tool for ethno-cultural empathy: Scale of Ethno-cultural
Empathy. Wang et al. (2003) point to the difference between regular empathy and ethnocultural empathy. Being ethnoculturally empathetic is composed of a few aspects: awareness to the other’s culture and cultural context, awareness to one’s own subjective cultural attitude and the experience of the other culture (Rasoal, Eklund & Hansen, 2011). Experiencing intergroup contact aids in the development of ethnocultural empathy (Berger, Abu-Raiya & Gelkopf, 2015; Kasl & Yorks, 2016).

This study offers an experience that might be used as an enhancer for the development of ethnocultural empathy within the expressive therapist community in Israel.

**Culture and Gestalt Therapy**

Based on the idea so far mentioned, that cultural identity is a possibly learnt acquired pattern, a research study is suggested here that stems from Gestalt concepts (Clarkson and Mackewn, 1993; Perls, Hefferline and Goodman, 1973). Gestalt is a German word meaning form, shape or mold. Gestalt therapy incorporates existentialism, psychodynamic theory and Gestalt psychology. Gestalt therapy originated from Gestalt psychology, where perception principals were transformed into Gestalt therapy and were observed in all levels of human behavior and named as gestalt principles (Clarkson and Mackewn, 1993; Serok, 2000). The gestalt principles that are relevant here are: 1.Gestalt and boundary, 2. Similarity, 3. Tendency for closure, 4.Contact and confluence, 5. Assimilation and growth. An explanation of the principles and their cultural relevance follows:

1. Gestalt and Boundary:
Gestalt - “A gestalt is an organized combination of elements into a meaningful whole” (Serok, 2000, p.5). It comes from the German word for pattern/form/mold/figure. A gestalt is a set of elements that organize by a specific code, logical relatedness or rule. A gestalt could be a person, a work of art, a group of people, an idea or situation etc (Clarckson and Mackewn, 1993; Brownell, 2010).

Boundary – a gestalt is a whole. A whole has inner laws and boundaries; this happens in anything that is a gestalt or form, in drawing as well as in a group of people. The edge of the shape/whole forms the border by which contact or engagement with other gestalts can happen; in humans this includes the five senses as well (Brownell, 2010; Levi, 2002).

Gestalt and Boundary related culturally – the cultural group one affiliates with becomes a defined whole, therefore a gestalt. This gestalt/whole has inner laws and meaning and has an edge or border to it that defines it, forming what or who belongs to the specific cultural group and who does not (Constantinou& Harvey, 1983; Levi, 2002). A different cultural group would be considered as a separate gestalt or whole. According to Levi (2002), defining affinity allows belonging, and offers group protection from the “others.”

2. Similarity:

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Human perception tends to group together similar elements into wholes and patterns. Similar elements tend to be perceived as belonging together and grouped into an object or concept (Rock and Palmer, 1990; Clarckson and Mackewn, 1993).
Similarity related culturally - People tend to unify the people that are similar to them into groups (age, sex, color, religion). Affinity allows belonging, belonging defines those that are similar to me and are perceived as one with me. Those who are like me belong to the gestalt I call mine, my culture (Levi, 2002).

3. Tendency for closure (Zeigarnik, 1927; Ovsiankina, 1928):

Human perception tends to remember interrupted or unfinished tasks and is inclined to finish, fill-in or close an unfinished gestalt/image to the most comfortable learnt option. For example: a round shape that suggests a circle, and is not complete, will be usually perceived as a full circle. The human perception fills out the missing pieces by what is previously known, learnt or what is most relevant. The shape is completed by the imagination, yet completion is conditioned by previous experience. The tendency would usually be to finish the gestalt by what we already know (Schiffman and Greist-Bouz watts, 1992). Creativity exercises deal with this phenomenon trying to allow freedom of imagination and flexibility by exercises like continuing the drawing of the unfinished circle and giving it a meaning other than expected, not necessarily a circle. Winnicott’s Squiggle exercise (Steinhardt, 2006) works on the same principle of continuing the doodle into a meaningful idea (though for therapy purposes it continues into projection which is not directly relevant here).

Tendency for closure related culturally – because of the tendency for closure there is a chance that cultural judgment would be inaccurate concerning groups that are not “my own.” People tend to generalize when they meet a person that is of another culture or does not fit the “my group” criteria. People tend to perceive a few cultural hints or
signs and close the pattern by classifying it or generalizing quickly by their previous experience. This is an admirable brain ability that helps survival: identifying who is friend or foe, yet it could bring to premature judgment in cases where there is a cultural difference but no harm intended, resulting in the creation of stereotypes or biases (Levi, 2002). We imagine a situation; we do not really know the facts. The way to allow these generalizations to be more socially accurate is to expand experience by learning.

4. Contact and confluence:

Contact is the meeting of two gestalts at their boundaries: between two shapes or people as explained by Clarckson and Mackewen (1993) “the meeting between one person to another or between a person and its environment. It is the point where I experience ‘me’ in relation to whatever is not ‘me’, when I experience ‘me’ as distinct from ‘you’” (p. 55). Contact can happen in endless ways as long as the boundaries of both gestalts involved are kept.

Confluence “occurs when two people or two parts of the field flow together without a sense of differentiation” (Clarckson and Mackewen, 1993, p.75). Confluence happens when there is a merging of parts or wholes of the gestalts. Perls, Hefferline and Goodman (1973) explain that every useful contact involves some sort of natural confluence. If contact is allowed to be experienced to the fullest, then energy is exchanged. Gestalts meet, influence each other and separate (Polster and Polster, 1973; Clarckson and Mackewen, 1993). According to Clarckson and Mackewen (1993) contact can be interrupted by confluence, when confluence is used to prevent contact by merging of the gestalts and not allowing recognition of boundaries. When the boundary of a
person or any gestalt is not defined and aware, it lacks the ability to connect/merge and come back to itself. (Clarckson and Mackewn, 1993; Levi, 2012; Polster and Polster, 1973). Clarckson and Mackewn (1993) define a healthy contact as the ability of a gestalt to preserve its boundaries yet be flexible enough and become confluent in interacting with another gestalt and later be able to come back to its own borders after the merging.

Contact and confluence related culturally – in order for people or cultures to make real contact, their identity needs to be clearly defined, so that when they meet they can enjoy the interaction or confluence yet not loose themselves in the process. Furthermore, the interaction should not be interrupted and come to its natural ending, so that both entities can return enriched to their own fields (Clarckson and Mackewn, 1993).

According to Clarckson and Mackewn (1993), if the identity or borders of the cultural entities involved in the interaction are not defined well enough the interaction might result in difficulty to connect for fear of being consumed by the other, where in the need for natural self preservation of personal identity the two entities become suspicious and/or hostile.

5. Assimilation change and growth:

Contact and confluence allow interaction and the absorption of new elements between entities/gestalts involved. Absorption allows gathering of new information or experience and the assimilation of it creates a new configuration of self made of old and new elements and results in expansion of the boundaries, learning and growth (Brownell, 2010; Clarckson and Mackewn, 1993; Levi, 2002). This is reminiscent of the natural law
of osmosis (Odom, 1995) (where elements that possess water yet under different pressure in each, exchange water through a membrane until equilibrium is established).

Assimilation and growth related culturally – when a person of one culture engages in contact with information or person of another culture, confluence can occur that will lead to gaining more experience and resulting in learning about the other (Levi, 2002). Meeting another culture in an empathetic way yet retaining one’s identity, allows widening the boundaries by experience. In this research it is proposed that empathy and experience of the “other” has potential to modify the gestalt (in this case the idea that “my culture” is the only one possible) and allow the reconstructing of a new form, or at least allow the widening of personal boundaries to include not only “my culture” but expand the vision, acceptance and understanding of other cultures, especially in the training of therapists.

Table 1
Gestalt principles and their cultural implications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gestalt Principle</th>
<th>Gestalt (perception based)</th>
<th>Cultural Implication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Gestalt and Boundary</td>
<td>Elements grouped into a meaningful whole.</td>
<td>The cultural learnt/educated concept of “what is my culture” “the group that I belong to”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The whole has inner laws and outer form and edge or border.</td>
<td>The boundaries and borders that define what is in and out of the whole.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Similarity/distance</td>
<td>Similar objects tend to be “those who are like me,”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Tendency for Closure</td>
<td>Tendency for closure (Zigernik, 1927) – where there is an open Gestalt, the human brain completes the Gestalt with known/pre-learnt/pre-educated information that the brain has access to.</td>
<td>Where the information about a cultural group that is “not my own” is not sufficient or not accurate enough, the brain will naturally complete the Gestalt with imagined information.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Contact and confluence</td>
<td>Contact - The meeting between two gestalts at their boundary. Between one person and another, and between one person and their environment. Confluence – the merging of two gestalts in a learning experience. A problem could arise when the boundaries of the Gestalt are not clear, therefore will merge into another Gestalt with no</td>
<td>Contact between two people who know who they are, and can enjoy the interaction yet keep their identity. Confluence – interaction that allows merging and flow of energy between the participants. Yet when identity is not defined well enough and the interaction could lead to symbiosis and loss of self, therefore resulting in possible stress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assimilation and growth/learning</td>
<td>When boundaries are defined and contact is safely made, that is – returning from confluence, there can be a learning process. The energy exchanged in confluence stage brings new information to each of the gestalts involved; this allows assimilation of new elements into a new configuration and therefore widening of the boundaries and growth of both Gestalts.</td>
<td>Meeting another culture in an empathetic way yet retaining one’s identity, allows the learning and absorbing of new information about the other, connecting by way of similarity (osmosis) and resulting in the widening of boundaries by experience. Broadening the options of understanding and experiencing the “other”, the gestalt of “my culture” grows and might include what was considered foreign. In this respect, becoming my “enemy” helps me see them as part of me, therefore part of what I</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
In addition to the Gestalt principles, there are techniques that are unique to Gestalt therapy. The relevant technique to this research proposal is Role playing, or the Empty chair technique. This technique was adopted by Perls from Moreno’s psychodrama technique. The modification is in that all parts of the client’s drama story are played by the client alone, as opposed to the multiple players in psychodrama. In Gestalt, the person’s parts/inner voices were perceived as parts of the self (Polster and Polster, 1973; Clarkson and Mackewn, 1993). ‘The empty chair’ refers to the way a person actually talks to the different parts of self, imagining them on an empty chair. This technique allows the clients the experience and possible results of heightened awareness to multiple parts of themselves.

**Phototherapy and Photo-elicitation**

This research proposal involves the use of Phototherapy, Photoshop as a tool and Photo-elicitation technique. Phototherapy which is an interrelated field with/in art therapy (Corbett and Fryrear, 1992; Krauss, 1983; Weiser, 1993) uses the modern tool of photography and involves the use of photographed images that were collected, or taken by therapist, or client. Weiser (1993) claims that in phototherapy the images are taken from the outside world into the persons’ inner world to be expressed in the artistic media of photography as opposed to art therapy where images are usually evoked from within and are expressed outwardly by artistic media. This media allows the use of innovative tools like the Photoshop editing program, invented by Thomas Knoll and released in 1990 (Schewe, 2000). This program allows the manipulation of image, and is relevant to this
research proposal as it was used to create one of the research tools. The five basic techniques of phototherapy as stated by Weiser (1993) are photos taken of client, by client, of and by client, biographical photos and the one that exists in all and is on its own as well – the projective one. The projective technique in phototherapy as well as in art therapy (Betts, 2003) is the means by which the client can relate to an image and “bypass conscious verbal controls and monitors, as well as allow their unconscious metaphoric and symbolic languages to emerge” (Weiser, 1993, p.13). This technique elicits emotional responses to visual stimuli according to client’s subjective references and meaning making. A photograph seems realistic and people tend to assume that others would see the same “reality” in it. The photograph allows the clients the opportunity to view themselves in special ways and angels that are not possible without the camera tool.

One of the projection technique’s tools is self portrait, which represents the person’s perception of themselves. This technique allows endless possibilities of therapeutic work concerning internal and external appearance and its’ meaning, the way the client is viewed by others and/or by self (Weiser, 1993). Corbett and Fryrear (1992) write about phototherapy’s special way to work on the ‘Persona’ – the Jungian term for interrelations between the individual and the society that influenced their development resulting in a kind of veil or mask that suits cultural demands yet defends the individual by concealing some true culturally less accepted personal features. Work with self portrait also allows the work on the ‘Shadow’ – the Jungian term for the hidden aspects of oneself, the denied or unwanted, yet sometimes these aspects might surprise with their unexpected hidden qualities and are referred to as ‘positive shadow’ (Corbett and Fryrear, 1992). Knowing these aspects of oneself allows the growth of awareness which is
important in personal development, and is especially important in the case of young expressive therapists’ professional development.

In this research the self portrait is used as means for photo-elicitation. Photo-elicitation is a method of using images, photos, paintings or even videos in the research interviews where the interviewee is asked to discuss the images and respond to them (Bignante, 2010). Harper (2002) even goes as far as claiming that the human brain part that responds to symbolic visual representations is evolutionarily more ancient than the verbal part and therefore image evokes deeper content of consciousness than do words.

Analysis in this kind of research method focuses on the meaning the interviewees attribute to the images (Ruby, 1995). Bignante (2010) explains that interpretations of images have many possible meanings as uniquely deciphered by the interviewed participant. “The activity of observation is in fact, inextricably linked to our way of thinking, imagination, memory of past experiences and our ability to combine these elements” (Bignante, 2010, p.3). The use of this technique in research allows the surfacing of subjective perspectives and emotions (Lorenz, 2011). The photographs in this research serve as a stimulus for an interview and role play exploring deeper aspects of the image and its meaning (Hogan, 2012; Newbury, 2005, Prosser, 2006).
CHAPTER 3

Method

The research question and the main format of the dissertation continue the researcher’s quest into understanding human similarities, differences and bias, especially in the multicultural and diverse state of Israel where this study is done, as supported by the literature review. The guiding idea was to check: The Effect of Personal Portrait Photographs on Cultural Attitude among Jewish and Arabic Expressive/Art Therapists in Israel.
This research includes the videotaped process of role plays of female expressive therapist participants. Limitations of gender derive from the realistic and practical reason of the tool being used in this research: role-play of women’s photographs wearing headdresses used by various cultures and religions in Israel. Focus here is on three significant headdresses of the groups that bare most tension in the complicated Israeli social scene - the Jewish religious ‘settler’ group (represented by a traditional Thichl head-dress) and the Arab religious groups that divide into Muslims (represented by the Hijab head-dress) and Christians (represented by the Catholic nun’s head-dress). All head-dresses were made with the same two black and white shawls to intensify and stress the idea that all three head-dresses representing the religion they come from resemble each other in essence and stem from similar sources. Artistic aesthetic alliteration that resulted between the images enhances the point as well.

Research Design

Data Collection
The qualitative inquiry’s data collection was based on empirical phenomenology where “other’s experience” (Forinash and Grocke, 2005, p.323) is gathered through various interview methods. Underlying this idea is the constructivist stance that reality is not absolute but is the outcome of the individual experiencing it (Forinash and Grocke, 2005). Interviews were executed via arts based method: using photo elicitation, a derivative of photo therapy (Betts, 2003; Corbett and Fryrear, 1992; Weiser, 1993) where
the participants were asked to observe their modified portrait photographs taken by the researcher. They were interviewed individually in a semi structured interview (Creswell, 2007) and responded to the process artistically. A group meeting followed two weeks after the individual interviews ended. This meeting was 2 phased divided into an individual part and a group meeting discussion. The specific protocol of the data collection follows later.

**Data Analysis**

All meetings were videotaped to allow verified transcription, transcribed, translated from Hebrew and Arabic into English and checked for themes by researcher and facilitators. Data was viewed using inductive thematic analysis. It was coded and themed by each of the professionals and compared for most prominent themes (Creswell, 2007; Creswell, 2009). Jenkings et al (2008) claim that photo elicitation process allows reflexivity for both interviewer and interviewee during the interview therefore new insight and analysis are created as the meeting progresses; this idea was taken into account when reading the transcribed material.

The researcher and facilitators examined the interview and role-playing transcripts for recurring patterns and themes and were attentive to reflexivity issues in the attempt to answer the research question. In the process there were some sub questions asked: What was the experience for each of the role plays? What or how did the role-play affect the participants’ view or cultural bias? Were there any similarities/differences according to cultural background? There was flexibility for any new information or questions that arose from the data. The group meeting was examined in the same fashion. The
researcher and facilitators examined the artistic expressions of participants and as well as the researcher’s and facilitators own art reflections to find further meaning to the data.

Facilitators

The facilitators are two women art therapists, in their late 30’s with 8+ years of therapy experience. One is Jewish (FJ), Hebrew speaking and the other is Christian Arab (FC) who speaks Hebrew and Arabic. They are acquainted with the researcher as her former students and supervisees, but met each other for the first time in the research. They facilitated the individual interviews so that the Jewish participants could feel at ease with a Jewish Hebrew speaking interviewer and the Arab participants could feel more at ease with an Arabic speaking interviewer.

Before the actual research began and as an introduction to the research experience, each of the facilitators went through the individual interview experience with the researcher as the interviewer: they had their photos of 3 characters made and went through the individual interview process with the researcher. The facilitators conducted the individual interviews, participated in the group meeting and formed an observing team with the researcher after the group meeting. The facilitators later went over the transcribed meetings in the privacy of their homes and pointed out apparent themes that were later embedded with the researcher’s themes for stronger observation.

Participants

There were 9 participants in the research experience. Three of each of the large religions in Israel: Jewish, Muslim and Christian. The participants were women between the ages of 25-35 years old and expressive therapists who work in the community in Israel. All have 2-4 years of experience in the field. The women come from various
cultural religious backgrounds. Each religious group consisted of one secular participant and two religious-observant: 3 Jewish women, 3 Muslim women and 3 Christian women. Limitations in sex, age, and profession were used to form a semi-homogenous group for means of balance and comparison.

Participants were introduced to the research through the informed consent process (see appendix E, F). The participants were chosen from a list of volunteers that have graduated from a confirmed expressive therapy graduate school in the last two to four years, and got the offer to participate in the research via email. Each participant met the facilitator twice, individually the first time and in a group form the second time. In the individual meetings the Jewish art therapists participants met with a Jewish facilitator and the Arab art therapists participants met with an Arab facilitator to try and allow a safe comfortable setting. All participants and facilitators plus the researcher met in the follow-up group meeting two weeks after the individual interviews finished.

The individual interviews took place in the researcher’s art therapy studio and the group meeting took place in a larger spaced room nearby in the same building, for privacy and convenience of all.

**Data collection procedure protocol**

As preparation for the interviews the researcher made portrait photographs for the participants wearing religious head dresses of the three religions. The specific details and technology follows later in this section, as stage 1 of the process.

Two research meetings with participants took place. In the first individual interview meeting, the participants responded to photographs of themselves wearing three religious head-dresses (Appendix A), through artistic reflective expression of the process
and an in-depth interview (Appendix B, C). A second meeting consisting of all the participants took place two weeks after all interviews were finished. The second meeting had two parts. The first part of the meeting began by assessing the impact of the first meeting interview experience through filling out a questionnaire (Appendix D) with questions that are comparable to Appendix B, C, questions that relate to participants’ views and emotions. In addition, participants were asked to express in art their current sense of the interview experience. The second part, a group discussion took place focused on the individual experience. After the research terminated, the researcher and facilitators met to discuss the two processes and responded reflexively with visual art materials. The videotapes of the interviews and group meeting were transcribed and translated. The researcher and both facilitators viewed transcripts of the data from the videotapes for themes in the privacy of their own homes. Later themes found by the researcher and facilitators were compared and compiled into the most prominent themes.

Below is a breakdown of each stage of the research.

**Stage 1:**

**Preparing portrait photographs**

After participants agreed to participate in the research and were guaranteed by the researcher via email for confidentiality, they sent a portrait photograph of their face to the researcher via cell phone or email.

The researcher prepared three portrait pictures for the interview meeting between the facilitator and participants: the photographed portrait of the participant was planted or placed using the software program Photoshop into each of three ‘preplanned template images’ that were previously designed (Appendix A). The ‘pre-planned template images’
were faceless images of women in headdresses from the major cultural constituencies in Israel; Jewish, Muslim, and Christian. The researcher ‘placed’ the portrait photograph of the participant into each of the pre-planned headdress template images and printed out an A4 picture for each (Appendix A).

**The pre-planned template images (Appendix A):**

The images were based on 3 photographs that were originally taken of the researcher’s portrait wearing religious headdresses: Jewish, Muslim and Christian. All headdresses were prepared by wearing the same two black and white shawls. The idea to implant individual’s portraits into a pre-designed image using the three headdresses was to present the idea of inner/outer appearance as affecting the viewer, where the outside garment changes yet the person inside stays the same. The researcher wanted to convey in image, the situation where people sanctify and segregate themselves into religious groups, as had happened many times in history and as is happening in Israel today.

The idea for the photographs came as an end result of the first year’s expressive therapies doctoral studies assignment in the course: GEXTP 8004 Arts Apprenticeship in the Expressive Therapies at Lesley University, led by Dr. M. Kossak. The idea for the photographs came from the researcher’s belief that all religions stem from a similar source and that being born into a specific religion is a privilege and maybe a chance that could easily have been a different one in the case of being born to a different setting.

Photograph 1 – the ‘templates’
The three head dresses were chosen for their symbolic representation of specific parts of the population in Israel. The Jewish headdress is usually worn by religious women after they get married as a modest attire to hide the feminine part of the hair (Zalzberg and Almog, 2010). This group tends to belong to the right political wing, some belong to the ‘settlers’ group that usually do not support the idea of two nations, Jewish and Arab living together and some of them tend to show very publicly their attitude concerning the matter (Hammond, 2008).

The Muslim headdress – is worn by women beginning at a very early age when they first show signs of femininity. The headdress covers the chin and forehead (Bar Or and Almog, 2014). The women who wear this headdress belong to religious groups that sometimes identify themselves as Palestinians even though they might have been Israeli citizens since the establishment of the state. Some of them do not see a life for the two nations together in the same land and they too tend to show their attitude publicly. Both groups tend to show their attitude publicly, loudly and sometimes violently (Fisher, 2014; Hammond, 2008; Salim and Munayer, 2014).
The Christian Catholic Nun headdress – covers all feminine identifiable body parts, the chin, forehead and neck. Nuns in Israel do not belong to any political party and are only involved in social and religious matters. This headdress was chosen as a symbol of Christianity and it fits well with the color of the shawls used and idea of the research. The headdresses were made of the same black and white shawls, to represent the polarities of color and ideas they stand for representing extreme opposing groups. The use of the same shawls was meant to accentuate the fact that only the outer physical appearance changes.

The three photographs of the researcher’s portraits wearing the religious head-dresses were manipulated and edited via Photoshop computer software. The original face of the researcher was “cut” out and an empty transparent space was left instead, allowing the photograph to serve as a “mold/template” for other faces to be “fit” into it. With PowerPoint software it was easily possible to “plant” any face into the new empty mold/template.

The participant’s portrait was placed into the mold/template of the three religiously dressed empty faces, and then was printed life size separately on an A4 white paper; producing three self portraits of each participant dressed in the three religions head dresses.

The facilitators received an envelope containing all research documents (informed consent, consent to use art work, demographic information and interview questions) including the three photoshopped portrait photographs of the specific interviewee. The facilitator hung up the first of the three portrait photographs on the wall in front of the participant as if the participant was looking into a mirror. Then the facilitator proceeded
to ask the participant questions according to the interview prepared (Appendix B, C).

This was continued in the same manner with the other two photographs.

**Stage 2:**

**Individual interview**

The first individual interview meeting between the facilitators and each participant took place in the researcher’s art therapy studio. The participant filled out Informed consent; Consent to use artwork, and a demographic questionnaire (Appendix E, F and G). Each participant was shown 3 pictures one at a time, of their own face dressed in a religious headdress (Appendix A) and was interviewed by a semi structured interview (Appendix B, C). The whole process was videotaped, transcribed and translated from Hebrew to English after the meeting was completed.

**Role-play (Appendix B):**

The participants observed each portrait one at a time as it stood in front of her like a mirror and was interviewed by the facilitator as the character it represented, using the technique of role play, as explained earlier in the Gestalt part of the literature review, expressing her experience in first tense. The facilitator conducted this interview through a pre-planned semi structured interview questionnaire (see Appendix B). After being interviewed as all three characters, the participant viewed all three images in front of her and was interviewed in a semi-structured format.

**Artistic expression 1 (Appendix C):**

After being interviewed as all three ‘characters’ and viewing the three together the participant expressed her experience process with art materials, and discussed the
experience with the facilitator. In addition to established questions, facilitators used further probing questions as needed (see Appendix C).

**Stage 3:**

**Group meeting**

Two weeks after the individual personal interviews ended, all participants met for a group meeting, discussion and artistic expression. This meeting was conducted in two phases. In the first part an individual questionnaire was filled out checking for the influence of the prior process of interviews and role-play during the time that had passed between the first interview and the group meeting (Appendix D). The participants were asked to create a second expression of their experience in visual art form – Artistic expression 2.

The second part was an open semi-structured group discussion of the process. The artwork from the first meeting and the second meeting was viewed, compared and discussed. The group meeting was videotaped and later transcribed and translated (Hebrew to English).

**Stage 4:**

**Researcher and facilitators’ meeting**

The facilitators and the researcher met to observe the videotapes, artistic images, discuss and reflect on the experience and express their reflections through visual art. This meeting was videotaped and transcribed and translated as well.

**Stage 5:**

**Analysis**
The researcher and facilitators each individually read and re-read the transcribed material searching for themes and later compared notes and consolidated the most prominent themes, as was described at the beginning of this chapter.

In the next chapter a detailed description of the results will be presented where the thematic analysis and its descriptions are represented in a narrative and table format (Creswell, 2007; Creswell, 2009; Wolcott, 2009).

CHAPTER 4

Results

The results section contains a vast amount of information. This is the outcome of personal interviews, a personal questionnaire filled out at the second meeting, a group meeting, the facilitators’ meeting and the facilitator’s reactions and artistic expression in
response to the entire experience. The meetings were videotaped, transcribed, translated (from Hebrew and from Arabic) and themes were extracted. The researcher and the facilitators noted recurrent themes, which the researcher then consolidated into the most apparent and grouped them by subject.

Subjects were defined based on Gestalt principles as applied to perception and cultural implications (elaborated in Lit. Rev. chapter, and in the Discussion chapter). Themes were grouped under: Pattern (Gestalt), Breaking pattern (contact and confluence, experience), integration of parts (Assimilation change and growth) and between cultures (law of similarity and tendency for closure). The last theme referred to and Professional identity.

Themes

Gestalt is the basic concept a person has of an object or idea. It is the organized outcome of elements that make a meaningful whole (Serok, 2000). In this context the Gestalt was considered as the original pattern of thought (before experiencing the research process) as was expressed in a participant’s comments and was called ‘Pattern’. It is the first theme and its sub-themes (ST) are: Projection, Women, Personal identity and My religion.

The second theme is “Breaking pattern” and refers to the process of Gestalt principles that is named ‘Contact and confluence’. The meeting of two Gestalts or concepts at their boundaries is much like two shapes meeting or people experiencing one another or their surroundings (Clarckson and Mackewn, 1993). In this context, it is the experience offered by the research. The sub-themes (ST) are: Women and Self awareness..
The third theme is ‘Integration of parts’. It relates to the Gestalt principle that explains assimilation and growth where interaction allows the intake of new learning or patterns and results in the expansion of boundaries and creation of a new configuration (Brownell, 2010; Clarckson and Mackewn, 1993; Levi, 2002). The sub-theme (ST) of this part is: new self awareness.

The fourth theme is ‘Between cultures’. It relates to the Gestalt principles of: law of similarity (Clarckson & Mackewn, 1993; Rock & Palmer, 1990) and the tendency for closure (Zeigarnik, 1927; Schiffman & Greist-Bouzuet, 1992). Sub-themes (ST) are: Affiliation group, Fear of the ‘other’ and Caution.

The fifth theme relates to Professional identity as this research was meant to observe the effect of the experience on expressive therapists. As the original inquiry followed: The Effect of Personal Portrait Photographs on Cultural Attitude among Jewish and Arabic Expressive/Art Therapists in Israel

The sixth theme is a conclusion of the effect of the research process as participants experienced it.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
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<th>Sub-themes (ST)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Gestalt Based Pattern</td>
<td>Projection Women Personal identity</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My religion</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Breaking pattern</td>
<td>Women - new</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Self awareness</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Integration of parts</td>
<td>New self awareness</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Between cultures</td>
<td>Affiliation group</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fear of the “other”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Caution</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Professional competence 5 Professional competence

With the desire of staying true to the original material collected, though vast in scope, the researcher decided to present the information as is: the story line of the first individual interview of each of the participants, the second meeting personal questionnaire and the group meeting discussion, followed by the facilitators’ meeting and later the facilitators’ artistic expressions, and ending with the participants’ voluntary sharing after the research was complete. The extracted specific themes will be mentioned
after the written comments in the story line (marked in parentheses in red ink) and will indicate the theme and the sub-theme.

**Story Line**

**The first personal interview meetings – (Appendices B and C) – 3 images**

After the nine participants role-played observing their personal portraits as Muslim, Jewish and Christian, they observed all three images together and were asked about their experience assessments and feelings, after which they expressed this artistically. Each participant met with a facilitator on a personal basis in the art therapy room for this meeting. What follows are examples of the participants’ responses and a concise description of the conversation. In parenthesis after each summary there is a concept or theme that emerges, which was determined in a discussion involving the two facilitators and the researcher. These themes will be explained holistically and in more detail below.

1. **M1** – Drama therapist, 35-year-old Muslim religious woman, married with three children, living in a traditional Arab village.

   “Observing all three of them takes me to an unpleasant place. They give me an uncomfortable sense. I do not know why” *(pattern, breaking pattern).*

   When asked what was similar/different between the images she answered:

   “They all wear religious clothing, there is similarity, but each has a different expression. The nun is sad, the Muslim is comfortable and the Jew is cunning and ironic” *(Pattern (ST): Projection).*

   When asked what the images tell her, she explains:

   “Each of the images tells me something: the nun says we do not choose what we want yet we learn to be happy and content. The Jew wants to be my friend and to learn from each
other, please give me the chance to get to know you, she says. The Muslim tells me that a quiet life is a distant goal to achieve. We have to learn to survive in the present” (Pattern, breaking pattern).

Photograph 2, Artistic expression 1, M1:

Drawing 1: “I usually draw a flower in the center of the page. But here I felt as there are multiple stages and parts, difficult to explain, there are several parts, similar yet different. Tension went into the long element; I am in the upper element, on the bottom a still closed part. On the right I drew the flow that has just begun, a source of energy and this triangle that is lacking integration between all parts yet it is a bridging element; this allowed energy of communication between the parts; it might be you (the facilitator)”.

(Breaking pattern (ST): self awareness, integration of parts).

Summary of experience – “First of all I am a woman who lives continuously in multiple characters and duties, like all women: mother, teacher, wife, social person… but it is most uncomfortable to have my inner selves contradict. I am whole in myself. Yet in this experience I felt contradiction between the three characters; it created uneasiness. Still, there is a place of truth in each of the characters; they are all parts of me. This was a new experience for me.” (Pattern (ST): Women, Pattern (ST): inner characters, breaking pattern).
“I learnt a lot from this experience. It brought me to inner inquiry and a realization that these are all parts of me.” (Breaking pattern (ST): self awareness, Pattern (ST): personal identity).

“As a therapist I realize that clients bring their own inner characters to therapy yet these are all parts of the same person. I learnt that I should be more flexible” (Professional identity).


When asked about the sense she gets when looking at all three images she said:

“They all have the same name, mine, they are all covered with darkness, dark cloth; it closes on them” (difficulty in breaking pattern).

“I sense their inner freedom in the smile and eyes despite their dark covers” (Pattern (ST): projection).

Photograph 2, Artistic expression 1, M2:

![Drawing 1](image)

Drawing 1: “I started with the middle blue circle to show my emotion and connection to the first image. It is possible to live together despite darkness, tradition and closed minds, which make it difficult. The black expresses the closed mind and despite it there is a
smile within. We can live together. We each have a heart and the sun shines on everyone” (Breaking pattern (ST): self awareness).

“All images are held by the same base, a limit. Accept reality, black exists; live with it” (Breaking pattern (ST): self awareness, integration of parts).

She explained what she had learnt from this experience:

“This experience made me focus on my inner life and question how the various parts can live together” (Breaking pattern (ST): self awareness).

“Despite my inner darker more traditional parts there is a possibility to integrate the new modern stuff and live together” (Breaking pattern (ST): self awareness, integration of parts).

“This is the first time I have experienced something like this. It allowed me to feel Jewish, Christian and Muslim. It is possible to live together in spirit, in peace with a smile. Despite the dark parts there is a joint point in the middle… and from there to continue” (Breaking pattern (ST): self awareness, integration of parts).


Her first reaction to seeing all three images was:

“It is a bit scary observing all three images. They are all Muslim in various aspects” (Pattern (ST): my religion).

“I comprehend the differences, yet all three have a backbone – strength – and it makes me happy because usually women with headdresses are perceived as weak” (Breaking pattern (ST): women, pattern).
“I am happy I found strength in each of them for I would not want to see them weak. Headdresses and religious choices do not mean… it is all social and environmental limitations. Still I meet strong women that wear a Hijab” (Pattern (ST): women).

“I see that religious women are not exactly like they are perceived in society. There are strong, intelligent, capable women in Islam, which is the religion closest to me. It is beyond clothes; it is the ability to do and accomplish. I am certain not everyone sees this my way. I wonder what religious women would say because I am not religious” (Pattern (ST): women).

“My stomach is turning… I am secular yet I see strength in the headdress. To my dismay it is not perceived this way culturally. They in culture will probably say that a religious woman, Muslim or Jewish, will not study, will have lots of children stay home; but it is not necessarily so” (Pattern (ST): women).

“I connect mostly with the Muslim, yet despite my anger there is something in the Jewish woman I connect with. This is strange. I feel as if each of the characters is a separate being even though they are all me” (Pattern (ST): projection, Breaking pattern, Pattern (ST): personal identity).

When asked what she would tell these characters, she answered:

“I tell them all to meet. It should be interesting and they will be exposed to new things” (integration of parts).

“You always benefit from encountering differences” (Breaking pattern (ST): self awareness, integration of parts).

Photograph 4, Artistic expression 1, M3:
This is what she explained about the art and the experience:

“Women and femininity is what I felt most doing the artistic expression. I forgot all about the strength, inner power and the headdresses… Interesting. I wanted to show light and the three colors of each of the characters, with renewal, nurturing, nature and femininity, passion and anger, this energy that does a thousand things… maybe sensuality or sex” (Pattern (ST): women).

“What is a woman under the headdress? All these women with their hardships, yet they keep trying… with the headdress and family, husband, and barriers they still try to integrate life in movement and breathing (pointing at the blue circle). All characters are here, and I am too” (Pattern (ST): women, integration of parts).

When asked what she had learnt from the experience:

“The experience allowed me new angles of perception. It was shocking in the beginning to see myself with these headdresses. When I got into it, I actually felt each of the characters in my body” (Breaking pattern (ST): self awareness).

She continued to explain what she had learnt from this as a therapist:

“Religious and cultural differences are an uneasy issue for a therapist, especially when I try to contain the client. At university I wondered to what extent the therapist should
allow the clients’ violent aggressive content to be brought in, especially when this was directed at me, as the therapist, and could hurt me. I am still learning this. I am learning to balance and be who I am with my own identity, whilst letting the clients be themselves, with much respect, so they can also learn this from me” (professional identity).

The conversation carried her to her experience in the last war:

“I work with children, especially during war time I worry… and I dread what children on both sides see and learn…what will happen in ten years time…?” (Professional identity).

She summarizes the process:

“We are all human. I say this as someone who has spent much time in hospitals for various reasons; we all have the same apparatus…” (Breaking pattern (ST): self awareness, Pattern (ST): personal identity).

“I belong to the Arab minority and it is not an easy place to be in. Yet on the one hand I maintain my identity and on the other I still try to blend in because if I do not, I will stay in my own bubble which is not for me” (Pattern (ST): personal identity).

After telling stories of people she had encounters with she concluded:

“We each have our own pain. It is time that people accept each others’ pain so we can sit and talk. I do not reject people even though I might not agree with them” (Breaking pattern (ST): Self awareness).

She was surprised at the stories that emerged from the role-play and explained similarities and differences between the characters:

“All three are religious, all wear headdresses which places them in the same category, yet inside lives something totally different. I experience this as a mask, covering the life inside, which is so different from what they show on the outside” (Breaking pattern (ST): headdress as limitation, pattern).

“All three women live in a closed, limiting situation where each one behaves differently. Despite the place they are in, there is something greater within each of them. All three want to break out to a bigger place” (Breaking pattern (ST): women).

When asked what the characters tell her she answered:

“This feels like a women’s triangle that offers me presents. I feel I get something unique from each one. From the Christian nun I take spirituality. From the Jewish woman I take her trust in her ability to grow and develop and from the Muslim woman I take strength, her rebelliousness, her will to change. How can I connect all three, to become a rebellious woman who develops and still leaves room for her spirituality… this is a lethal combination that could help me continue. Each aspect is helpful and it is important for me to integrate them all. (Integration of parts (ST): new self awareness).

Photograph 5, Artistic expression 1, C4:
She explained the artistic process:

“I felt the rainbow in a way in the process. It started from something unknown (the dark parts of the rainbow) and some inner power came out of the Christian character. It connected to things I have been going through lately. The sense developed and became more focused, difficult to explain, the feeling changed. The Muslim woman brought me hope, which I felt in the end; it is in the yellow part. I felt I had to do something under the rainbow. This pink circle appears often in my art. I wanted it to be a triangle but it turned out as my usual pink circle.

This circle takes me back to a pink circle I drew in my first school year of art therapy – an emotional dictionary – and this circle represented then the sense of security and confidence. It takes me back there every time I draw the circle” (Breaking pattern (ST): self awareness).

In conclusion of the experience she said:

“It was a very strong, powerful and interesting experience. It brought up in me this triangle we talked about before, as if the various characters that live in me showed themselves: rebelliousness, trust, spirituality and the passion to grow and develop. I do have all of these in me” (Breaking pattern (ST): women, (ST): self awareness).
“These forces do not always work together… they raise inner conflict. Today they came out straight up to my face and told me things about religion and accepting differences, yet I think about these differences inside of me and wonder how to integrate it all and allow a respectful relationship. I do hope to make inner peace between all these characters” (integration of parts (ST): new self awareness).

She explained about what she had learnt as a therapist from the experience:

“Everyone has many inner characters that sometimes struggle to live together. We behave differently everywhere. It is as if a different character comes out of me, various roles to play: work, home or at my mother-in-law’s. I wish I could make peace with all these inner characters and learn to accept and respect them. Being aware of this process is the beginning of developing as a person and as a therapist” (Integration of parts (ST): new self awareness, professional identity).


When she first observed all three photographs she said: “I do not want to be any one of these characters (laughing)” (Breaking pattern (ST): self awareness, Pattern (ST): projection).

About similarities and differences:

“All three are racist; their view of life is similar, very much alike, racists. They have difficult life stories and they are not content” (Pattern).

“I would tell them all to take charge of their lives, to be strong with no regrets, and not wait for others to be strong for you” (Pattern (ST): Projection).
About the art: “I felt that each character that came up had its own difficulty. Each circle is a character. One character carries all her family’s responsibility, the other is afraid of her husband’s death and one that is stuck in her life. All three transfer energy, a bomb that explodes. In the end they find themselves facing a similar problem. The black circle is me, coming out of the ground, as it was difficult for me to do the role-play in the beginning and later it flowed” (Pattern (ST): Projection, (ST): women).

About the whole experience:

“At the beginning of the experience I felt myself being racist… I remembered bad people I know… then I remembered others, my friends who are not like that… I forgot it is not the real me and only a role-play… the second character was easier to play” (Pattern (ST): projection, breaking pattern (ST): self awareness).

“The whole experience was amazing for me. In the beginning of the role-play I meant to stay neutral, but acquaintances entered my mind and I fell into what I knew before…” (Pattern).

She shared what she had learnt from the experience:
“Not to judge by outer appearance. I have known this before; still I am human and I admit that I do tend to judge. I became more aware of it, and I do want to reduce my tendency to judge” (Breaking Pattern (ST): self awareness).

“I started the role-play just having fun, and got into it. I realized that these characters were having a difficult time. When comparing them to my real life I could appreciate where I really am at. I feel complete and at peace with myself “ (Integration of parts (ST): new self awareness).

What she had learnt as a therapist:

“I am the only Arab therapist in a Jewish kibbutz school. You cannot get more Jewish than that…. I had my doubts when I joined the staff. From the beginning I introduced myself, as I am, to everyone. Peacefully, I asked what it did to them, how it made them feel and we discussed it… clients and colleagues and parents… I am in a good place within myself now. What saddens me is the situation of the Arab schools in Israel. They are very conservative in all aspects. My husband and I want our children to be able to enroll in a Jewish school… (Integration of parts (ST): new personal identity, professional identity).


After the role-play, she observed all three photographs and responded: “I never imagined myself with a headdress… it is a bit difficult to see my face out of my usual context. It suffocates me like handcuffs… they are all very different from me” (breaking pattern). Crst6 was painfully honest in her responses. When she role-played what the characters might say to her she said: “the Jewish woman says to me: this land is not for you. The
Muslim woman says: continue being as you are. The nun says: give to others as much as you can” (pattern).

Photograph 7, Artistic expression 1, C6:

“I chose to draw multiple color circular motion; it helped me relax from the tension this experience caused for me” (Breaking pattern (ST): self awareness).

She explained her experience: “It took me into a confusing difficult place within me. I never imagined being different, let alone religiously different. Very confusing” (breaking pattern).

“I became aware of my actual daily perception of others. There are Jewish religious women in my daily surroundings, whom I interact with, but it is different than what I watch on TV, where I view these women very differently, and this view is rooted deep in my perception” (Breaking pattern (ST): self awareness, pattern).

“The thing is that Arab people are socially located in a very bad place in this country; we are not liked. Like my place at the hospital where I work, for example, at the hospital they celebrate the Jewish holidays only and where are we the Muslims and Christians?” (Breaking pattern (ST): self awareness, between cultures).

About the art expression: “I divided the page outside the circle into four white areas, showing the three images and myself in the right upper corner. All people are born
similar into a choice-less place, which is why the base of the paper is black, because the world is black. Every baby is born into a clean white sheet and starts drawing and absorbing its environment. The influence of our parents and all that happens around us slowly makes us enter the general world (points at the circular motion in the drawing), where there is obvious multicultural existence, little acceptance and much hatred. And this is where all the commotion begins” (between cultures, Breaking pattern (ST): self awareness).

“I could see how extreme I was in the role-play with the Muslim and Jewish women. I could accept the nun easily, though there are tough nuns too… yet it was a painful realization seeing that I gave more credit to the nun than to the Muslim or Jewish women” (breaking pattern (ST): self awareness).

She learnt from the experience: “I realized I was less in touch with Jewish religious women and that it is difficult for me to connect with them and that I do not know much about them. The only information I have about Jewish religious women is from TV” (Breaking pattern (ST): self awareness).

New professional perceptions: “as an Arab therapist I realize how difficult it is to treat clients with cultural differences. There are multiple views and values within the same culture and religion” (Professional identity).

“In the artistic expression I was stuck in this emotional whirlpool… this sensation accompanies me at work, and in this experience, it is difficult to cope with” (professional identity).

“Confusing situation this multicultural thing… for example we are in a time before Easter and Passover. We, at the hospital, will have a party and holiday festive meal for all the
patients. But if you think about it deeper, I ask my Jewish patients to remember Easter, where for me as a Christian is the holiday when the Jews crucified Jesus… hello… what complexity!” (Between cultures, professional identity).

She concludes: “You need to respond to all things out of love, without diving too deep into religious issues, each person to their own religion, better to stay with what is common between people and keep being happy. That is that” (integration of parts (ST): new self awareness).

“This process enlightened the experiences I have been dealing with in my daily life lately” (Integration of parts (ST): new self awareness.)


When observing the three photographs she responded:

“I identify with the Muslim woman. It probably has to do with my Yemenite ancestry, my grandmothers, my past, people whom I deeply loved that I can see in this figure” (Pattern (ST): projection).

“The Jewish woman’s isolation evokes anger in me” (pattern (ST): projection).

“I have never looked at myself for such a length of time. I feel my patterns and bias. As if this is me and not me at the same time. Each of the costumes changes the facial expression” (pattern (ST): projection).

When asked about similarities and differences between the photographs and characters she explained:

“It is my face in each of them yet a totally different world. As if I am multi-faceted… I try to be more open, less biased. I have experienced a lot in my life and discovered things
are the opposite to what my learnt patterns dictated, very interesting. It feels like a conversation between my inner multiple identities is going on. Still with all awareness to it, bias and judgment is deeply embedded, you can’t run away from it” (breaking pattern (ST): self awareness).

When asked what she could tell all three figures she answered:

“The world is wide, not just the physical planet, but the social world too and it is ok for each person to have her own place, a fact that I accept and appreciate. What I find difficult is seclusion and isolation of groups… it is true that each person is a whole world and it is interesting to explore and discover new worlds different from your own; learning about others does not mean that you give your world up” (integration of parts (ST): NEw self awareness).

Photograph 8, Artistic expression 1, J7:

“Two words came up whilst working – femininity and air. It felt as if part of the feminine aspect was lost in these covers. The basic similar aspect was suffocated inside these wrappings” (Pattern (ST): women, (ST): projection).

“I had to allow room for free universal femininity that was somehow suffocated in there” (Pattern (ST): women).
About the whole experience:

“It took me strongly to my roots… I feel it connected me to identity issues I constantly deal with at home and at work, not just religious aspects” (Pattern (ST): personal identity).

“The question of pre-determined patterns of behavior raises a constant question that takes me to my extremes. Here in the feminine aspect, which is a huge issue for me. This experience highlighted things that are constantly in my awareness, which the experience gave a shaking and sharpening effect to. It raises the question of where the place of the pattern of behavior is, the one that is supposed to organize and protect our psyche, and on the other hand where does the same thing restrict us” (pattern, breaking pattern (ST): self awareness).

“How much chance and opportunity do we really allow for expanding our patterns of behavior? You have to want and aim for it; it does not seem to be a natural thing that comes on its own. You have to initiate change. We are animals of habit” (breaking pattern (ST): self awareness).

“It’s a great dilemma… on one hand you want to hold on to your own culture and not confuse your kids and on the other – with no confusion you stay in the same place and do not grow” (Breaking pattern (ST) self awareness).

Her insight as a therapist:

“I work in a multicultural setting. Arabs, Ethiopians, Russians, Druze, Christians… it makes me constantly ask questions: where am I in my pre-learnt patterns and where I am outside of these patterns. Keeping this question in my awareness helps me stay tuned to the clients’ needs” (pattern, professional identity, between cultures).
8. JS – Art therapist, 32-year-old traditional Jewish woman, married with two children, living on a Kibbutz.

After she had role-played for each of the photographs, she observed all three together and responded: “this is beautiful; it is true what they say that a woman can seduce with her eyes alone… each of the photographs looks unique; this is interesting” (Pattern (ST): women, (ST): projection).

“I am surprised by what came out in the role-play, extreme stereotypes…” (pattern).

“I expected to see difference between the characters, yet all three are conservative and covered” (Pattern (ST): women).

When asked what she would say to these characters she answered:

“To the Muslim woman I say – realize that you are just as important as your husband, do not hide behind your man. To the Jewish woman I say – open your eyes, your village and life cannot be built if you are not empathetic to the Arab village next to you. To the nun I say – allow your will and passion to rise; you are the only one who can change your choice” (Pattern (ST): women).

When the characters “replied” to her, she got very emotional:

“The Muslim woman would say to me what I said to her (Jew8 is crying) she would say to me not to hide behind my husband” (Pattern (ST): projection (ST): women (ST): personal identity, Breaking pattern (ST): awareness).

This brings her many realizations and leads to honest conversation concerning her place in her marriage and realizing her own potential as opposed to just being someone’s wife.

“(crying, breathing) My husband does a lot; he is a social activist. I think I should hide behind my husband less and try to realize myself regardless of him – simply to see that I
have value on my own too” (Pattern (ST): women, Breaking pattern (ST): self awareness).

Photograph 9, Artistic expression 1, J8:

“I spent this last weekend in the desert, very healing experience… and the issue of women came up in me concerning that now… women in general are in need of healing.” (Pattern (ST): women)

“This is a comforting containing place to heal these hurting places in me as a woman, probably in all women living in the world” (Pattern (ST): women).

“Women need time to heal in order to be able to think differently and step into feminine leadership, to dare to be” (Pattern (ST): women).

Concerning the whole experience she explained:

“Each of the characters is a part of myself. What echoes most is conservativeness, and yet there is a side in me that has always rebelled against this…” (Pattern (ST): women, breaking pattern (ST): self awareness).

“I could have easily been any one of these women… the possibility of this hurts… that I could give up so much of myself to be like this… I might not wear a headdress but inside I do… hiding behind a man, not being adventurous, hiding behind values… I call it – display of conservative acts that religious extreme harbors. I need air… oh, thank you so
much for this opportunity” (Breaking Pattern (ST): women, breaking pattern (ST): self awareness).

To conclude she was asked about her therapist view of the experience:

“As a therapist I am convinced that all women need to go through a healing process. There is a cultural wound; I see this place in all women I treat. The same goes for couples’ therapy: there is the need to heal the woman, to empower her so that she realizes that she is allowed to do and to wish things; only then can you start therapy” (Professional identity).

“No matter how modern the woman is, every woman has been infected with this mantle, or Hijab that covers her… and each man, no matter how modern in his views, is bound to play his part in a cultural social role of restrictive warden” (Pattern (ST): women).

“First thing I look at in a therapeutic meeting, even before the cultural aspect, is the gender issue, men and women” (Pattern (ST): women, professional identity).


Observing the three photographs after the role-play she said:

“This is strong. As if I am viewing my own stigma. This pattern of thought that comes out of the role-play, the faces… it talks…” (pattern).

“They look as if the same woman yet not the same woman… even though I know it is the same face, each looks unique…” (Pattern (ST): projection).

“All of the characters seem aloof and distant. When I look closely they are sweet… very confusing… who are these women staring at me… overwhelming… they all want something of me, searching for my eyes…” (Pattern (ST): projection).
“I admit I was surprised, by the technique and to realize how little I know, such ignorance… when it comes to cultural information that is different from my own I just know nothing…” (Breaking pattern (ST): self awareness).

“I am ashamed of my ignorance… I consider myself an open progressive person and still I am locked into generalizations…” (Breaking pattern (ST): self awareness).

“I see that similar things occupy all three of them… they all want fulfillment for their family and themselves. They want to do well in their own eyes and in the eyes of God… they all fear similar things…” (Pattern (ST): projection, integration of parts).

Photograph 10, Artistic expression 1, J9:

“The main experience for me was the surprise at realizing how little I know… I feel it is a meeting of consensus and bias that I create” (breaking pattern (ST): self awareness).

“I find it difficult to look at my own photographs. The first instant I looked at the photo I did not see me… it was a meaningful instant… to see me without seeing me… very strong experience… no self criticism. The instant I recognized myself it became difficult…” (Breaking pattern).

About the whole experience she explained:

“The drawing is patterned, arranged neatly and comes out of the borders a bit. I can see how my generalizations are pre-learned patterns of thought. One-on-one we discover uniqueness… yet there is still something in generalizations… it’s a constant dialogue, the
private person with thoughts, emotions, and fears and on the other side, generalizations probably resulting of the affiliation group that affects the individual” (breaking pattern (ST): self awareness).

When asked how this experience had affected her professionally she explained:
“What confuses me most is when my clients resemble me. I see someone who could be my friend and she comes to therapy with her husband… and I find that I become personally involved. When someone very different from me comes to therapy, I stay open and observant… I get confused with pre-conditioned patterns…” (Pattern, breaking pattern (ST): self awareness, professional identity).

“When I work with a population that is very different from me, I am in constant inner war as not to be judgmental and accept the other. I find it very difficult not to criticize” (Breaking Pattern (ST): self awareness, professional identity).

“What I am actually talking about is accepting differences – accepting myself and the other person” (breaking pattern (ST) self awareness, professional identity).

Second meeting – first part – personal questionnaire (Appendix D)

The second meeting took place two weeks after the individual meetings began.

Each participant had a package of documents waiting for her, which included her photographs, artistic expression and a questionnaire (Appendix D). The meeting started with filling out an individual questionnaire to assess what they had experienced in the time passed since the individual interview and how this affected their perspective. After translating and transcribing the material, themes were extracted. Themes are written at the end of a comment in parentheses in red ink and will be dealt with later. Here are the participants’ responses to the questionnaire.
1. **M1** – When she was asked to observe all three photos again and describe her thoughts and feelings, she wrote: “I feel comfortable, I accept all three equally” (integration of parts). When asked what she would say to each of the characters today she said:

“To the Muslim – I am proud of you; continue with your goals. To the Christian – I respect your views and stances. To the Jew – It is the time to look inward and decide on the way to continue your life”. The characters “answered” her: “the Muslim would say: It is good that we are friends; the Christian would say: you learn from me. The Jew would say – I am glad to learn from you.”

To summarize the experience she explained: “as a therapist, I know each of the characters are part of me, so I treated them with care because I understand from where within myself they appear’’ (integration of parts, professional identity). “It reinforced my stance towards my clients to remember that each person is a whole world unto herself” (integration of parts, professional identity).

To conclude the experience and its effect on her she wrote: “I had the opportunity to deal with my anger towards the Jewish character by focusing on it; I understand it better now” (breaking pattern (ST): self awareness).

“This experience allowed me to get in touch with parts of myself I was not aware of before” (breaking pattern (ST): awareness, integration of parts).

2. **M2** – When observing all three characters this time she wrote: “I see the common denominator: the smile, the light in their eyes” and she would say to them today: “continue your journey.” They would “answer”: “empower yourself to continue your journey; accept reality to know peace.”
She described the effect of the experience since the personal interview: “as a therapist the research helped me be more open, accepting differences, and to believe the other is really me” (professional identity); “the experience strengthened my sense that we are all human” (integration of parts (ST): multicultural ability).

In conclusion, she wrote about the effect the research had on her: “I thought about the experience the whole week and thought that integration of the characters is possible” (integration of parts).

“I realize the importance of exploring new directions in life and not letting anxiety and indecision control me” (Integration of parts (ST): new self awareness).

“I realized that I can release all the dark stuff within me – there is no need for so much inside… (breaking pattern (ST): new self awareness).

3. **M3** – could not attend because of back pain.

4. **C4** – Observing the three characters she exclaimed: “OMG I never want to be like them… they are pathetic” (Pattern (ST): projection).

She responds to them: “Let yourself free, breathe, realize your inner wishes – those that your attire would not allow out” (pattern (ST): projection), and the characters “respond”: “take my thoughts, my emotions and my courage and do something with them.”

She described the effect of the research as a therapist: “as a therapist the experience allowed me to discover and see that in each of us and in our clients there could be more than one inner character steering our behavior. I see my role as a therapist to help the client discover, connect and get to know these inner characters” (integration of parts (ST): new self awareness, professional identity).
“I thought about women in general and in the religious world. I realized that they are not always there because of choice; still they are humans with feelings and thoughts that are much more than meets the eye” (breaking of pattern (ST): women).

In conclusion she wrote: “It [the research experience] had a great effect. I continued observing my inner characters, what fits and what does not. This experience was an opportunity for some of my inner characters to reveal themselves and explain to me unknown things about myself” (Integration of parts, felt effect).

5. C5 – When observing the three photos again she responded: “if they want to live like this, then it’s their own business, as long as it is done under consent” (pattern (ST): projection).

She said to them: “To the Muslim – be strong and wise. Life is a journey, choose, and don’t let anyone do this for you. To the nun – you chose this way. Let yourself enjoy this place. To the Jew – start the change, be the first one to start this process” (Pattern (ST): projection) and they responded:

“The Muslim: I need your help; I do not have enough on my own. The nun: enjoy as long as you do not wear a mask; I wish I could be more like you. The Jew: this is all talk… I cannot make change on my own; it is impossible” (pattern (ST): projection).

She described the effect of the experience for her over the past two weeks: “I always work from my heart regardless of the clients’ religion. I relate to people as humans and spirits. The experience gave me a lot of positive energy and strengthened me as a therapist” (integration of parts, professional identity, felt effect).

“The experience reinforced the attitude and spirit in which I practice therapy” (professional identity).
She summed up the effect of the process: “The experience influenced my ability to accept others and open my heart. I realize that people are where they are because of their life decisions, which may be difficult ones... Not to judge and be less racist” (Integration of parts: (ST) awareness, felt effect).

“I thought about people who choose to be extremists. Some live well with this decision whilst others might not want to be there and are held against their will. I guess with much struggle even this could be changed” (Integration of parts).

“The experience renewed my energy. Looking at people more openly gave me strength and helped me become less racist” (Integration of parts: (ST) awareness, felt effect).

6. C6 – When she looked at the three photographed characters she wrote: “I do not want to be in their place; I have chosen my life style” (pattern: (ST) projection).

She said to them: “I love them, and relate not to their appearance but to their content. I just ask them to respect me as I respect them” (pattern: (ST) projection), and they “answered”: “The nun: I wish to dedicate more time to God. The Jew: I really do not know… the Muslim: I want to be in your place, to be free” (pattern).

The effect of the process as a therapist: “I am always in an accepting, respecting place for others. The question is: do others accept and respect me as an Arab Christian woman therapist?” (professional identity).

“Despite my acceptance and understanding of others, I realized that there is a part of me that is bias about people. I could see in the research that I related differently to the nun because we were both Christian; I accepted her more…” (Breaking pattern: (ST) self awareness).

In conclusion she wrote:
“I have shared the experience of this amazing research with everyone I met since. The interview showed me that I have the right attitude yet still some things influence my approach to people, just a bit, but honestly, just for a little while” (Integration of parts (ST): new self awareness, felt effect).

“The experience accentuated my attitude.”

“The experience allowed me to view myself as someone very different from me” (Breaking pattern).

7. J7 – Observing the three photos she wrote: “Right now I feel curious, some empathy. I feel a more refined sense of balance than the first time” (integration of parts).

Relating to the images, she wrote what she would say to them today: “Who are you, tell me about you and your world, I want to get to know you, you are familiar to me” (breaking pattern). And about what they might answer she wrote: “I hope they will want to meet me and we will learn more about each other to achieve a dialogue” (integration of parts).

She wrote about the effect of the process on her as a therapist: “the experience has influenced me in all social interactions. I felt how my inner container as a human and a therapist has widened a bit by the experience. New questions are rising in me and some new un-clarities as well” (integration of parts, professional identity, felt effect).

“The experience influenced my awareness to the existence of pre-determined patterns of my perception” (Breaking pattern, pattern).

She concludes: “this research experience accompanies me continuously. I keep asking myself questions about political, national and ethnic seclusion. I ask myself how much
knowledge and information do I have of neighboring cultures and especially their extremities. The experience got me very curious” (integration of parts, felt effect).

“I felt the characters represent cultural extremes – the further the extreme the greater my ignorance and in accordance the size of the pre-determined pattern” (Breaking pattern (ST): self awareness).

“The research gave me an opportunity for a meaningful inner and outer observation” (Integration of parts: (ST) new awareness).

8. J8 – Observing the three images she wrote: “I feel sadness, shame, relief for not being one of them and responsibility for not being one of them” (Pattern: (ST) projection).

“In a way they seem like one character to me now” (integration of parts).

Relating to the images, she might say to them: “come out, stop hiding in your comfort zone and behind what has been decided for you. Come out and be who you are. We are all one; we are all you” (Pattern: (ST) women, integration of parts), and the images’ “reaction”: “They try to convince me to cover up and hide from life’s race and from exposure, fear and responsibility. They offer me a quiet life with no questions where all is known and clear” (pattern (ST): women).

As a therapist she writes about the effect of the process: “My view of the complex meaning of being a woman has expanded. I understand the concept of headdress and its opposite – exposure, in a new way” (Integration of parts: (ST) new awareness).

“This experience helped broaden my horizons concerning the role of women. My understanding keeps expanding” (Integration of parts: (ST) new awareness, Breaking pattern (ST): women).
She concludes: “the experience accompanies me. This was an important, surprising and thought provoking inner observation for me. I do not yet know what the outcome will be, but this is an important stepping stone on my way” (integration of parts, felt effect).

“My learning is mostly personal. I realize that hiding is not necessarily an outcome of physical clothes and covers. I could stay reserved and conservative with modern clothing as well. I have a new desire to interact with women of various cultures and religions” (integration of parts: (ST) new awareness, Breaking pattern (ST): women).

“A new aspect has been added to my view of women. I appreciate the choice of exposure (as opposed to a headdress), and I have a deeper appreciation of the complexity of being a woman. I had very interesting conversations with colleagues on the subject” (Integration of parts, breaking pattern (ST): women).

9. J9 – Observing the three photos again she wrote: “I feel more befriended with them. We are acquainted in a way and my attention is less on the outer appearance and more on the face” (integration of parts).

She responds to the images: “To the Christian I say: You intrigue me the most. To the Muslim I say: We would talk about family and children. With the Jew I would talk about life, preparing for the holiday, family… they were all a pleasure to meet” (pattern). The characters “answer”: “it is fun meeting you, it is pleasant and intriguing” (pattern).

She describes the effect of the process as a therapist: “The experience of the “shedding of the costume/covers” was surprising and meaningful; I do not yet know its effect, but I am sure it gave birth to something new” (breaking pattern).

“The experience left me questioning the way I met the characters within myself. I met an unknown secretive part of me. Getting acquainted with new parts in me is extremely
meaningful in understanding myself and others as a therapist” (breaking pattern: (ST) awareness).

She summarizes the effect of the process: “the experience evoked many inner thoughts, especially regarding the ability to see through the veil and cover of a person. It showed me that I do not know enough about cultural worlds outside of my own. I know that when there is communication, the separating wall falls down, and I am able to see the person in front of me, yet it is surprising how distant I felt from the character in the photo until I recognized something familiar in her face” (Breaking pattern: (ST) awareness).

“My main insight from the experience is that our perceptual pre-determined pattern that supports “putting people into known molds” serves us well at times and at other times is destructive” (Breaking pattern: (ST) awareness, integration of parts).

“The experience allowed me to perceive a new view of myself. A strong feeling arose in me that meeting “the other” is in a way mirroring meeting myself. It is mirroring my own ability to stay open to the “other” within me. It means to know myself from various angles. This has been an extremely deep and fascinating experience” (integration of parts, felt effect).

Second artistic expression

Photograph 11, M1 artistic expression 2:
“This drawing has a combination of figurative symbols in the center” (integration of parts).

Photograph 12, M2 Artistic expression 2:

Mus 2 added a heart shape to the previous artistic expression. “the heart says: the other person is me as well. I combined both expressions because they are one” (integration of parts).

Photograph 13, C4 artistic expression 2:

“I have processed my thoughts and feelings from the individual interview. I now feel more confident and more aware to new things; therefore the shape is a closed and organized one” (integration of parts).

Photograph 14, C5 artistic expression 2:
“The colors are brighter today. I feel more comfortable with the three characters. They each have their difficulty that is marked by the middle circle but I know they can deal with their obstacles and grow” (integration of parts).

Photograph 15, C6 artistic expression 2:

“This expression is similar to the first one, but here colors are merging, boundaries are accentuated and there is more order inside” (integration of parts).

Photograph 16, J7 artistic expression 2:
“This is a more abstract drawing than the first one. This work deals more with a universal feeling. It is more open and spacious regardless of the questions and uncertainty I feel” (Integration of parts).

Photograph 17, J8 artistic expression 2:

“It’s a faceless close up of the female from the first drawing. She says to me: be yourself, your face is not important. Be colorful and alive. So she says to all women” (integration of parts).

Photograph 18, J9 artistic expression 2:

“The art work is taking me inside; softer gentle colors. My insights go deeper” (integration of parts).

Second meeting, second part – group sharing and discussion
After the participants completed the questionnaire and created their artistic expression, we gathered in a circle (participants, facilitators (FJ, FC) and researcher (R)) for a group discussion and sharing. The discussion focused on basic open questions and was open for any direction the conversation might take. The meeting was videotaped and later translated (from Hebrew), transcribed and themes were extracted. What follows is the story line of the meeting. Themes are listed in parentheses in red ink at the end of each response and will be dealt with later on.

The researcher started the meeting by introducing the participants. Most of them did not know each other beforehand. Interestingly, they all chose to sit according to the religious groups, as pointed out by C4 (Between cultures: (ST) affiliation group). The researcher asked everyone to display the same photo: the Muslim character. A circle of photographs formed on the floor in the midst of the seated group; participants laughed. J7 – “I see unity; uniqueness disappears” (Breaking pattern: (ST) headdress as limitation).

C4 – “The headdress closes in on you, stifles expression – isolating, committing and closing… a prisoner of attire” (Breaking pattern: (ST) headdress as limitation).

J7 – “is she a prisoner of attire or a prisoner of her own pre-determined patterns?” (Pattern).

J8 – “I feel that the headdress allows a sense of ease. When the laws are clear it allows peace” (Breaking pattern: (ST) Headdress as limitation).

J7 – “There is a purpose to wearing the specific attire… I hope my pre-determined pattern is wide enough, but when things get extreme I find my pattern shrinking… is the
character closed and suffocating or is it my own perception that is stifled…” (Breaking pattern).

J9 – “The group wears the same clothes and it makes me look for the individual face” (pattern).

M1 – “I see multiple facial expressions under the headdresses. I am used to wearing a Hijab” (pattern).

C4 – “We that do not wear a headdress focused on the attire, and Mus1 who is covered with the Hijab focused on the face… interesting” (pattern).

They proceeded sharing what they felt when they first viewed the personal character photos in the individual interview. They were talking about choice.

C6 – “I never imagined myself in such clothes… the nun does not belong to the group because she chose her way. In Christianity there are no specific clothes and no one can tell if I am religious based on my clothes” (Breaking pattern (ST): choice, my religion)

C4 – “I was disturbed by the nun too. She made the choice out of her own free will to enter a closed place; the other two were born into it” (Pattern: (ST) my religion, choice).

J9 – asks for more information about nuns. Christian facilitator gives relevant information about the various kinds of nuns.

J8 – “I see the Jewish character as a more extreme one, and this is a choice she has made. Her clothes might be the symptom of restraint yet her behavior is her strength and armor… I know the type… I know she is extreme and she chose to be… the Christian chose too… the Muslim might have been born into it, yet she might be a free spirit inside…” (Breaking pattern: (ST) choice).
C5 – “I loved the role-play, feeling like each of the characters. My characters are not whole within themselves and want to be somewhere else but have no choice. In my real life, I have struggled to become whole and am settled with who I am today” (Breaking pattern: (ST) choice, Pattern: (ST) projection, Breaking pattern: (ST) awareness).

C4 – “The characters are my own projections; they are part of my inner life. The photos helped me focus and view those secret images hidden inside and become more aware of them” (Breaking pattern: (ST) awareness).

C4 – “Various characters are hidden within me; I adapt my behavior to situations. I find it of utmost importance to notice and be aware of my inner life; this way I learn who “I” am”… (Breaking pattern (ST): awareness, Pattern: (ST) inner characters).

J7 – “Observing all of us wearing the same headdress raises questions of identity. When there is unison of clothes I look at the face, the identity” (Breaking pattern). “I felt antagonism towards the Jewish character, maybe because she belongs to my religion yet is so different and far from me that I find it difficult to identify with her” (Pattern: (ST) my religion, Breaking pattern: (ST) awareness).

They talk about various dresses of nuns and their origin. The Christian women differ in their attitude towards nuns. (Pattern: (ST) my religion).

C4 – “I connected to the life the character chose, not to her headdress” (Breaking pattern: (ST) choice).

C6 – “My parents had difficult experiences with strict nuns, but I could talk with nuns about almost anything” (Pattern: (ST) my religion).

C4 – “I too met very strict nuns” (Pattern: (ST) my religion).
C5 – “My aunt is a nun. I found it difficult to separate in the role-play from the characters I know in life… it was the same with the Jewish one” (pattern).

J7 – “I know religious Jews and Muslims. I never met a nun, this is far from me” (pattern).

M1 – “I have met nuns only in movies… I respect the place they chose to be in because I am religious too, but I did not connect to this character. It felt easiest with the Muslim character. I do not have Jewish religious acquaintances. I did not connect to the Jewish character, maybe because I am angry with her” (pattern (ST): my religion).

The researcher asked:

**Could you provide therapy to the character you least connected to?**

J8 – “I work with Jewish extremists. I do not judge them. There might be something in the therapist’s role that requires a distant observation of every culture, like a phenomenon, like the stance of an anthropologist” (Integration of parts (ST): multicultural ability, professional identity).

J7 – “As a therapist, my attitude is a broad one that includes everyone. When you really get to know a client you realize the wealth and scope of their lives” (professional identity).

C6 – “I wanted to share something concerning acceptance. I work at a hospital. At times I sit with someone who killed his wife or his father… at that moment I do not think that I am with a murderer but I am totally with that person. I relate to the person as someone who went through something awful and is now ill. I am actually in a very dangerous situation, but I forget about myself… no words really to explain this feeling” (professional identity).
C5 – “I was very candid in the research personal interview. I work with Jews, Muslims and Christians. I walk in there as a human, from heart to heart. And yet it is interesting that in the interview the characters emerged as such extremists. As a therapist I am different… it has been already mentioned here… there are many inner characters…” (Professional identity, between cultures).

J9 – “I work with Haredi Jews. They keep asking me why I am not dressed like them; they criticize me. It is hard for me when the children’s parents come for consolation and the father does not look me in the eye. It is easier for me to observe and accept them but it is difficult when they criticize me” (between cultures, professional identity).

J8 – “I feel like a doctor… and then the Haredi Jews I work with do not look at my appearance… but when they relate to people in therapy they criticize. They find it easier to accept me than someone who might be more religious that might be of an opposing group [there are many Haredi groups and some dislike others]” (between cultures (ST): caution, professional identity).

C6 – “I came out of the personal interview with an uneasy feeling that I do not really know the Jewish woman even though some of my colleagues at work are religious Jewish women. So actually I know them only from TV… and they do not like me… this is what I see on TV” (breaking pattern: (ST) awareness, between cultures (ST): fear of the other).

J9 – “I too do not know any nuns… only from The Sound of Music…” (Pattern).

J8 – “I felt ignorant that I know so little about Arabs” (breaking pattern: (ST) awareness).

C5 – “I also felt that I do not know Jewish religious women. I know people, but not closely” (breaking pattern (ST): self awareness).
J7 – “Each group is so within itself… such frustration! It is so clear that meeting opportunities change it all! Everything can look different” (integration of parts: (ST) new self awareness).

J9 – “I was eager to come to this meeting. I wanted to meet at last and hear and learn from the multicultural group” (integration of parts).

The conversation took a turn to affiliation groups:

C6 – “The way we chose to sit in the circle is amazing [by religion], spontaneous yet it means something” (between cultures: (ST) caution).

J7 – “My family lived in Silicon Valley; there were no Americans… even in the playground everyone divided into ethnic groups… we here are no different… (between cultures).

J8 – “As open as I am, there is fear of groups that are not like mine” (Between cultures: (ST) fear of the “other”).

M1 – “I belong to an Arab-Jewish women group that has existed for years. With them I do not have these barriers; on the contrary, I feel closeness” (between cultures).

C4 – “What were the relationships at the beginning?”

M1 – “Of course time breaks this ice… and then when you allow the other entry into yourself, all mental barriers disappear. We are all human, and this is how it should be for all next generations and forever!” (Between cultures, integration of parts).

Conversation turns to the instinctual fear of the other:

J8 – “The media constantly drive us to instinctively fear the other” (between cultures (ST): fear of the other).
Jewish facilitator – “we do not even have the language… I am extremely frustrated with not knowing Arabic.”

C4 – “I was in an art group of five Arab women and one Jewish woman; the director was Jewish as well; we spoke Arabic… and the Jewish woman felt like a minority…language. When I need to write professional reports, I find myself writing in Hebrew to an Arab institution. Hebrew is the professional language we use. I do not have “professional” Arabic” (between cultures).

M1 – “It is easier to communicate professionally in the language we studied the profession in at school” (between cultures).

C4 – “I find myself between languages, neither in Hebrew nor in Arabic. When I want to talk “professional” I speak Hebrew and if I want to talk to someone I speak in Arabic” (between cultures).

J9 – “every culture has… I work in a Haredi Jewish place and in a Jewish secular place. I constantly ask myself where I feel more comfortable… In the secular place I feel more at ease this might be because I identify more with the openness” (between cultures).

C5 – “I find myself “between” and find it easier with the secular people” (between cultures (ST): affiliation group).

M1 – “You might say that Jews and Arabs are in similar places these days, but they do not let themselves view it this way. The Holocaust and the Nakba are similar things. We have experienced similar things. We have to allow ourselves to realize that we have been through identical experiences; we have and we still are… not just to close your eyes to the other’s suffering and think that you alone are the victim here. We are similar victims. Everyone suffers. This is my view today” (between cultures, integration of parts).
M2 – “I moved into a Jewish city a short while ago. People in my village keep asking me how this is going. I say that all is well: Jewish people are nice, they say hello on the street they greet me good morning in the street and at work. There are people of all religions in my neighborhood; I feel a shared existence” (between cultures, integration of parts).

J8 – “When there is an opportunity to meet, everything becomes simple. I work in a multi-cultural setting and all is well” (between cultures, integration of parts).

Researcher points to the art expressions created in the individual meeting and the second meeting before the group meeting and asks for similarities and differences.

J7 – “I felt physically shaken up after the individual interview (breaking pattern). I needed air. The drawing was concrete. Now in the second drawing, it is abstract, there are more questions, no real knowing, it all has expanded…” (Breaking pattern).

C4 – “same movement and color in both drawings”

J7 – “similarity in shapes – I felt something in the femininity aspect was lost in the second drawing” (Breaking pattern: (ST) women).

J8 – “In my interview a rush of anger towards men rose up in me. I felt somewhat like a victim in this covered up situation of the headdress” (Breaking pattern: (ST) women).

C4 – “Men are the same in all cultures and religions…” (Pattern, Between cultures: (ST) affiliation group).

J8 – “we can talk about how things should be and love each other in this room, yet out there is a whole culture that puts us “in our place.” They have decided that femininity should be hidden and forbidden” (Breaking pattern: (ST) women, between cultures (ST): affiliation group).

Researcher asks Jew8 to relate to her two drawings.
J8 – “They are both of feminine figures – the first from the back, and today frontal and closer up. They both reveal themselves and are vulnerable” (*Breaking pattern: (ST) women*).

J9 – “In the first one, the mountains are a bit like the men you were talking about, threatening her. In the second one there are no mountains; she is herself and stronger” (*breaking pattern (ST): women*).

Researcher asks for concluding remarks:

C4 – “I relate to my clients as people, and as people I love them. Those I have a problem with I bring to supervision… I thank them for the issues that come up because of what I feel for them…” (*professional identity*).

J7 – “Me and my colleagues sometimes call ourselves “whores of love…” We love all our clients…” (everyone laughs) “…come to the therapy room to get some love…” (*professional identity*).

C4 – “When I practice therapy I disconnect from my own needs and adapt to the client’s needs” (*professional identity*).

J7 – (with humor) “Yes…some people do meditation to disconnect from reality… and there are those that become therapists…” (*professional identity*).

C6 – “I want to thank you for allowing this opportunity, to meet ourselves in the three images/characters and the opportunity to meet this whole group. Since the first interview I have shared this experience with everyone I have met” (*integration of parts: (ST) awareness*).

J9 – “I think this research idea is ingenious. Your idea is ingenious; I am constantly thinking about the personal interview” (*integration of parts: (ST) new self awareness*)
C4 – “Many things came up. We could really use many workshops like this. We could go on and on and not stop…” (integration of parts).

**Researcher and facilitators’ meeting after the group meeting**

(FJ - Jewish facilitator, FC - Christian Arab facilitator)

FJ - “when everyone displayed their similar picture it was strong; it immediately took away all personal differences” (multicultural ability?).

We talk about the special Easter cookies one of the Christian women brought for us. The cultural aspect concerning this, the skill it involves and the social aspect of its making.

FC – explains: “making the cookies requires special skill. All women in the extended family assemble before the holiday to make the dough and the cookies, and they judge each other’s skills… this is a complicated dynamic…” (between cultures).

FJ – “I felt the process began nicely, no hard content… I was attentive to the pleasant atmosphere… which contradicted the feeling I had when I came out of my own personal individual interview. My feelings then were uneasy” (Between cultures: (ST) cautious).

“Issues rose slowly… I was glad for this, for if it would not have happened it would not have been real… the participants began sharing what they feel in real life, how it was in school… I noticed that even I upon entering the room counted how many Jews were there compared to Arabs… and I noticed that Jews were in minority…” (Between cultures: (ST) affiliation group).

We talk about specific women and the concept of affiliation groups.

FJ – “I drove today through Sahnin (Arab city nearby), and I admit that I felt unsafe… my ignorance…” [it is important to note that when these things are actually being written, six months after the meeting, driving through Sahnin is dangerous for Jews. Even though
commerce is abundant during peaceful days, these are very stressed times and there are security warnings for Jews against driving through the Arab cities and villages. This happens every time there is political tension (Between cultures: (ST) fear of the other).

FC – “We are afraid of unknown things” (Between cultures: (ST) fear of the other).

FJ – “It makes me fear in the face of the unknown. I feel very comfortable with you FC, but with M1 I found it very difficult. I felt it became important for me to know who was Muslim and who was Christian” (Between cultures: (ST) affiliation group).

We talk about what the identifying markers of each of the cultures are.

FC – “We distinguish by last name or clothing.”

FJ – “Would you recognize a secular Muslim or Christian?”

FC – “Yes.”

FJ – “Does it matter to you what they are?”

FC – “No. There are not many differences between secular people. But nowadays people have become more religious… it’s a trend… most of the women I work with wear a Hijab. It is a wave. It had changed during the years I have been there. They cover their head for religious and social reasons. There are thirty teachers, of which seven do not wear a Hijab. They constantly ask me “when are you going to wear a Hijab (even though they know I am Christian…) maybe next Ramadan””

FJ – “similarly to asking: when are you going to get married…”

FC – “I am the only Christian there and they constantly say to me: “well, Yaalla, when are you going to convert to Islam”?…” (between cultures).

From here conversation concerns religious radicalization:
FC - You know, the Arab movies used to show people in modern clothing until about twenty years ago; nowadays it has become so conservative… as if the years proceeded and the clothing went backwards… this is no “Arab Spring”… there is radicalization… you can feel it… in Nazateth and Sheffaram [Arab cities].

FJ – “This could correlate the Teshuva process in Judaism, where people become more religious.”

FC – “It used to be that in Nazareth you could not distinguish who is who. The majority was Christian. Today the majority is Muslim. There is a difference in the number of children per family, two-three children in a Christian home, compared to religious Muslims or Jews, where the more the merrier…”

FJ – “Following this research, I decided to take my children to a church in an Arab village near us. We have never seen a church. We made an appointment with the minister and we met with him for an hour and a half. It was very interesting” (integration of parts)

The discussion continued concerning Israeli citizens abroad… and if Jews and Arabs are treated the same. FC could not understand why FJ was afraid to go to Jordan whilst FC goes there with her family on holidays. [FC speaks Arabic, and FJ was afraid to be seen as a Jew and immediately as the enemy.]

All facilitators wonder about the affect of one’s own known religion:

FJ – “Concerning the group meeting, it was interesting to see that the three Jewish women did not connect to their religious Jewish characters in the photos. They said that of the three characters they found the Haredi Jew the most difficult to identify with” (between cultures, pattern (ST): my religion).
FC – “C4, who is Christian, found it difficult to identify with the nun” (Pattern (ST): my religion).

FJ – “I wonder if this means that if the religion is closer to you, and you know the nuances, it might be more difficult to identify with… (pattern (ST): my religion).

R – “It might be that when you know nuances of your own religion you might have some inner discussion and judge it more quickly… whilst other unknown religions are perceived as some pre-determined pattern, a stereotype of some sort” (pattern (ST): my religion).

We talk about the way people are raised religiously and about prayer.

FJ – “When we sat with the minister in the church he explained that they read Psalms every week… I was shocked! To my surprise he said – what would we do without Psalms and the Bible… it was amazing. But when he invited my 12-year-old daughter to church service I got cold feet…” (Between cultures: (ST) affiliation group).

FC – “It’s education. I also freak out when they ask me why I do not wear a Hijab or tell me to convert to Islam… I am totally secular… still it aggravates me” (between cultures: (ST) affiliation group).

We asked each other about belief in God and intermarriage… the three of us do not much care if our kids marry outside of the religion. We do care that our kids would marry good people… this continued into a conversation about gender.

We agree that there are cultural differences between religions. We talked about differences within the same religion and about marriage within the same religion that still is a marriage between two strangers of different family cultures.
FJ – “It was interesting to see that the three Jewish women had similarities within their art work. The Christian women had many circles in the drawings” (Pattern)

“It was a strong experience. When they displayed the same religious photo on the floor and we all observed it, they could see similarity and loss of personality… then they observed the faces and could detect individuality” (Breaking pattern. Integration of parts, conclusion).

**Researcher’s and facilitators’ reaction to process after two weeks:**

Sadly, by the time we all planned to meet, the Christian Arab facilitator was diagnosed with a medical condition that disabled her from continuing the research process. What follows is the researcher’s and the Jewish facilitator’s reactions.

Photograph 19: Researcher’s artistic response and conclusion of the experience:

![Rainbow painting]

We are all part of a whole separated by culture and religion, not realizing we stem from the same source.

Divine energy comes down to humans, like a ray of sun, all white, and then because humans cannot perceive the fullness of this energy, separates into the prism/rainbow colors. The rainbow colors are separate, yet are next to each other, touching, defined, named as Judaism, Islam, Christianity and more… each in its own
border yet together, each having their own respected place, as siblings to the same parent. But the further away from the source the rainbow colors reach, they separate and each defines itself as the only one existing on a black background. They become secluded and defensive, rejecting anything that does not fit their own color. The further down the line color recedes, the darker it gets, until it gets lost in darkness.

There is the possibility to climb back up from darkness.

During the research I felt I was fighting to allow the unison of the parts even for just a brief second, minute, hour…

To try and allow others to surf above separation and the seclusion that each religion dictates, into where all parts become parts of the same thing, a bigger whole – unique yet integral.

Photograph 20: JF’s artistic response and reaction to experience:

“When I think about the research and the part of facing the photo images (when I went through the experience myself), I actually faced images that shook me up, and it was not easy. I faced my own cultural ignorance. I could see my transference and projection onto the images. This is what I expressed in the two balls – red and orange” (breaking pattern).
“The circle of balls refers to the group meeting. This was a real opportunity to meet, not a distant projection of a photograph… I found myself counting who was there and was alarmed that the Jewish women were in minority… I surprised myself… I thought I was more open… being in the minority probably got me stressed on a subconscious level…” (between cultures (ST): fear of the ‘other’)

“The feeling in the meeting was pleasant but much was not yet said… still it was a beginning, meeting face to face” (between cultures (ST): caution).

“The third part where the plasticine is smeared and a bit dirty – I thought about the meeting between all of us, each one a bit “dirty,” a bit touching the other, and I thought about closeness from a new angle” (integration of parts).

“Another topic I was busy with was in/out [touches the orange half empty ball[… how I look on the outside opposed to what really happens inside. [She points at an inner tricolored ball inside]. This got me thinking that eventually we are all made of the same stuff… we all have the same desires, maybe not similar ones but we all have desires, we are all humans with desires, with loves with disappointments, and that stuff. We are all the same, even our religion is very much alike, yet we hang on to definitions and forms and patterns… and moreover… to my deep sorrow… we are enemies… all the same yet in disguise…” (integration of parts).

“Actually everything on the inside is similar in humans… our organs look similar… we all feel and emote… no special editions on the model…. we are all creatures… Godly created… I think this is the term… but each one grew up wherever with their definitions and patterns, and we hold on to them. It is comfortable and safe; it is familiar. I cannot imagine myself marrying a Muslim man. I will be excommunicated
by my family… as sad as this is… yet again, we are made of the same materials, and there is the angle we touch, closeness, and still there is a great big void between us. This is my summary” (integration of parts).

FJ shared her experience of reviewing the transcribed interviews searching for themes: “It was amazing to see the women that were really open. I sometimes envied them in their openness. It was interesting to see how everyone lacked information about the others. It was interesting to see how everyone really wishes for similar things. I think the participants slowly understood that in the group meeting. That all is so similar yet on the other hand we hold on to our definitions and things just seem different but are actually the same. This is such an important matter It is important to talk about this and show it so people become aware of this. This is extremely important. For me personally the research was extremely meaningful” (integration of parts).

“Reading it again and again and watching how the themes pop out… and maybe compassion for our human limitations too… really… some kind of compassion, because I know that I am captive to the same exact concept and with it am trying to see similarity between people… and we are all captives of this… if somehow we could take the veil off our eyes then we could all suddenly see… this is tricky, really tricky… even stupid and childish behavior…” (integration of parts).

Participants’ voluntary reaction after the group meeting:

Researcher, facilitators and participants shared a closed social texting group (using the WhatsApp cell phone application) mainly for technical purposes, like to schedule meeting times.
Participants did not have to react following the group meeting, but they were moved to and did so texting through WhatsApp, where the whole group received the messages:

J8 – “Thank you for an enchanting and educational meeting. We would love to have some more…” (integration of parts, conclusion).

C4 – “Good morning, despite my tiredness yesterday, I enjoyed our meeting tremendously. I was happy to meet you all dear colleagues… and would love to have more meetings like this one…” (integration of parts, conclusion).

C5 – “It was an enchanting, interesting and educational meeting. I returned home with a lot of positive energy many feelings and emotions… it was so wonderful to meet each one of you… this was a great group” (integration of parts, conclusion).

M2 – “Good morning, it was a rich meeting. I want more and more….I feel this empowered me personally” (integration of parts, conclusion).

C6 – “I went and introduced myself to the religious Jewish woman that works with me whom I never talked to… she is a lovely woman… I told her about our meeting… we were both very moved” [there was a photo attached of the two women hugging…] (integration of parts, conclusion (stretching boundaries)).

R – “This is really moving.”

FC – “See…the research experience is already taking effect…” (conclusion).

This chapter introduced raw information collected in the research process. The need for maintaining its integrity resulted in a massive body of information. The ideas underlying the mapping of the process according to themes were introduced as well as the themes
accompanying the comments. The next chapter will discuss the themes, examples and their meaning.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

Introduction

This qualitative phenomenological inquiry was conducted using diverse interview approaches where the basic idea was a constructivist stance suggesting that reality is an individual experience outcome and is not absolute (Forinash and Grocke, 2005). The research inquiry observed: The Effect of Personal Portrait Photographs on Cultural Attitude among Jewish and Arabic Expressive/Art Therapists in Israel.

Interviews were carried out via arts based method using photo elicitation, a subsection of phototherapy (Betts, 2003; Corbett and Fryrear, 1992; Weiser, 1993). The expressive therapists participants, 9 women, 3 of each religion: Jewish, Muslim and Christian, Israeli Jews and Arabs, were asked to observe their portrait photographs that were revised by the researcher and were individually interviewed by an expressive therapist facilitator in a semi structured interview (Creswell, 2007). The participants observed their revised 3 portrait photographs, dressed in a Jewish, Muslim and Christian head dress and were asked to role-play and respond artistically to the process. A group meeting followed two weeks after the personal interview that was 2 phased: an individual questionnaire and a group discussion. Data gathered from the personal interview include 3 role plays for each of the portrait photographs in a semi structured fashion, participants’
reaction to observing all 3 images, artistic response and its explanation. Data gathered from the group meeting include a personal questionnaire relating to the time passed between the first and second meeting, second artistic expression the group meeting discussion, and after-research messages sent voluntarily via mail by participants. As well, there was a facilitators’ meeting that followed the group meeting, discussion and artistic expression.

The inductive qualitative data analysis, taken by the researcher and both facilitators, each on their own and later compared for themes between all 3 observants, revealed 5 main themes. The first four themes relate to Gestalt principles (Clarkson and Mackewen, 1993; Perls, Hefferline and Goodman, 1973) as were elaborated in the literature review and explained again below, and are named for this study: Pattern, Breaking pattern, Integration of parts and between cultures. Each of the Gestalt principles themes divides into sub-themes. Sub-themes of pattern are: projection, women, personal identity, and my religion. Sub-themes of breaking pattern are: women – new and self awareness. Sub-theme of integration of parts is: new self awareness. Sub-themes of between cultures are: affiliation group, fear of the ‘other’ and caution. The next theme is: professional competence. There is a conclusion part that sums up participants’ experience and summary of results. The intention of this research was to observe the effect of personal portrait photographs on cultural attitude among Jewish and Arabic expressive/art therapists in Israel. The study is based on the idea that humans are basically similar yet cultures, by their makeup, form difference (Chong et al, 2003; Ekman, 1999; Fernald, 1993; Weinberg, 2012) and therefore uniqueness or separation (Kiyokawa et. al, 2012; Usborne & DeLaSabloneire, 2014; Weinberg, 2012). Separation is at its height of
expression in the country of Israel (Barzilay-Shechter, 2010; Mizrachi & Herzog, 2012; Munayer and Loden, 2013) a multicultural country, bearing a long disputed history of Israeli Palestinian conflict, divided by stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination bias and war (Bizumic & Duckitt, 2012; Caddy et al., 2009; Kiyokawa et al., 2012; Uhlmann et al., 2010). Participants in this study were expressive therapists of 3 religions in Israel: Jewish, Muslim and Christian.

Results of the study show that despite the natural enculturation processes people go through, where they are deeply ingrained with their cultural influence, learn to socialize and hold their cultures’ values (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Gere & MacDonald, 2010; Johnson, 2006; Kim, Ahn, & Lam, 2009; Usborne & DeLaSablouinie, 2014; Weinberg, 2012), the study’s process allowed participants to experience ethno-cultural empathy (Green, 1998; Lawrence et al., 2001; Wang et al., 2003) and widen their scope of cultural imprints (Clarkson and Mackewn, 1993; Perls, Hefferline and Goodman, 1973) by breaking automatic engraved patterns (Brownell, 2010; Levi, 2002). The study had an effect on cultural, personal and professional attitudes for all participants, as the discussion follows.

Note: due to the massive body of results data, the discussion will introduce a significant sampler of participants’ reactions. The full data can be observed in the Result section of this study. The discussion will follow by the themes and sub-themes found in the research.

**Observation of Gestalt based themes:**

Gestalt (pattern) is the basic organization of elements into a defined whole, that could be an individual person, an idea, a situation, a group of people or behavior pattern
In this context, enculturation fills a natural need to belong and leads to a conditioning into cultural/social pattern of behavior (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Gere & MacDonald, 2010), which creates a Gestalt, mold, and pattern by which the cultural affinity is defined. In this research experience the pre-determined learnt cultural gestalt concerning cultural affiliation and perception of the “other” can be seen in various situations and reactions as the following findings show.

**Pattern**

After observing their revised portrait photographs participants realize the strength of pre-determined pattern and respond:

Crst5 - “The whole experience was amazing for me. In the beginning of the role-play I meant to stay neutral, but acquaintances entered my mind and I fell into what I knew before...”

Social gestalt/pattern concerning the Arab-Israeli situation is touched upon honestly by a Christian Arab participant, with the pain of cultural separation:

C6 - “the Jewish woman says to me: this land is not for you. The Muslim woman says: continue being as you are. The nun says: give to others as much as you can”.

Observing all three revised portrait photos, a Jewish participant realizes how conditioned she is to her gestalts:

J7 - “I have never looked at myself for such a length of time. I feel my patterns and bias. As if this is me and not me at the same time. Each of the costumes changes the facial expression”.”
Viewing the individual process, two more remarks of participants acknowledging their bias:

J8 - “I am surprised by what came out in the role-play, extreme stereotypes...”.

J9 - “This is strong. As if I am viewing my own stigma. This pattern of thought that comes out of the role-play, the faces... it speaks...”. 

In the questionnaire the participants were asked to fill out in the second meeting, participants notice their pre-conditioned bias:

C5 – “My aunt is a nun. I found it difficult to separate in the role-play from the characters I know in life... it was the same with the Jewish one”. 

And dare to talk about this in the group meeting:

J7 – “I know religious Jews and Muslims. I never met a nun, this is far from me”. 

J9 – “I too do not know any nuns... only from The Sound of Music...”. 

A pattern that some participants agreed with in the group meeting belonged to gender issues. In a way, they agreed on it simultaneously:

C4 – “Men are the same in all cultures and religions...”. 

**Projection** - Sub-theme (ST)

Observing the 3 photos of her face wearing head dresses, this participant sees various expressions on the faces of her own portrait, even though she knows they are all made of the same exact portrait replica:

M1-“They all wear religious clothing, there is similarity, but each has a different expression. The nun is sad, the Muslim is comfortable and the Jew is cunning and ironic”. 

The participant grants the photos emotions and state of mind that appear to be her own:

M2 - “I sense their inner freedom in the smile and eyes despite their dark covers”. 

A Muslim Arab participant attributes characteristics and emotions to the faces though she knows they are all reflections of her own face:

*M3 - “I connect mostly with the Muslim, yet despite my anger there is something in the Jewish woman I connect with. This is strange. I feel as if each of the characters is a separate being even though they are all me”.*

This participant is aware to her bias and projections and yet this is the learnt known pattern that is in play when she is in the experience:

*C5 - “At the beginning of the experience I felt myself being racist... I remembered bad people I know... then I remembered others, my friends who are not like that... I forgot it is not the real me and only a role-play... the second character was easier to play”.*

A Jewish participant identifies with the Muslim attire out of pre-conditioned cultural family ties she later realizes were affecting her:

*J7 - “I identify with the Muslim woman. It probably has to do with my Yemenite ancestry, my grandmothers, my past, people whom I deeply loved that I can see in this figure”.*

The power of gestalt/pre-determined learning appears to result in projection and is expressed by this participant who describes her effort to separate what she knows from what she feels:

*J9 - “They look as if the same woman yet not the same woman... even though I know it is the same face, each looks unique...”*

The same participant continues observing the photos she knows are her own face dressed in various attire yet she attributes emotions to the characters and puzzles over their identity:
J9 - “All of the characters seem aloof and distant. When I look closely they are sweet... very confusing... who are these women staring at me... overwhelming... they all want something of me, searching for my eyes...”.

This participant wrote a sincere statement distancing the characters and relating to them as people different to her:

C4 - “OMG I never want to be like them... they are pathetic”.

The participant recognizes her patterns yet she cannot help but project:

M3 - “I connect mostly with the Muslim, yet despite my anger there is something in the Jewish woman I connect with. This is strange. I feel as if each of the characters is a separate being even though they are all me”.

**Women** - Sub-theme (ST)

The photos evoked universal feminine themes of women’s status in any society. This Muslim participant connects empathetically to women’s multiple tasks in society:

M3 - “What is a woman under the headdress? All these women with their hardships, yet they keep trying... with the headdress and family, husband, and barriers they still try to integrate life in movement and breathing (pointing at the blue circle n her drawing). All characters are here, and I am too”.

A Jewish participant connected to the feminine aspect in herself and its meaning for her. She is especially annoyed by the Jewish character in the photos:

J7 - “The Jewish woman’s isolation evokes anger in me”.

The head dress evoked anger and pain of women’s need to hide their strength:
J7 - “Two words came up whilst working – femininity and air. It felt as if part of the feminine aspect was lost in these covers. The basic similar aspect was suffocated inside these wrappings”.

J7 - “I had to allow room for free universal femininity that was somehow suffocated in there”.

This religious Jewish participant sees similarity in all 3 characters of the women despite their religious difference:

J8 - “I expected to see difference between the characters, yet all three are conservative and covered”.

The participant continues trying to help the women characters cope:

J8 - “To the Muslim woman I say – realize that you are just as important as your husband, do not hide behind your man. To the Jewish woman I say – open your eyes, your village and life cannot be built if you are not empathetic to the Arab village next to you. To the nun I say – allow your will and passion to rise; you are the only one who can change your choice”.

She is looking for healing the feminine aspect, in herself, in the world:

J8 - “This is a comforting containing place to heal these hurting places in me as a woman, probably in all women living in the world”.

She continues with a realization, or lament concerning the world gender issue:

J8 - “No matter how modern the woman is, every woman has been infected with this mantle, or Hijab that covers her... and each man, no matter how modern in his views, is bound to play his part in a cultural social role of restrictive warden”.

**Personal identity** - Sub-theme (ST)
Watching her 3 photos brings up identity aspects in this participant. She sees the common human denominator:

M3 - “We are all human. I say this as someone who has spent much time in hospitals for various reasons; we all have the same apparatus...”.

This Muslim participant candidly shares her difficult position in the Israeli society. Her struggle to belong yet maintain her Muslim Arab identity:

M3 - “I belong to the Arab minority and it is not an easy place to be in. Yet on the one hand I maintain my identity and on the other I still try to blend in because if I do not, I will stay in my own bubble which is not for me”.

This Jewish participant reflects on her inner identity concerns:

J7 - “It took me strongly to my roots... I feel it connected me to identity issues I constantly deal with at home and at work, not just religious aspects”.

My religion - Sub-theme (ST)

The pre-determined experience of this participant dictates her statement about all characters in the photos belonging to the same religion. Islam is the religion she knows best and attributes its nature and sense to all characters:

M3 - “It is a bit scary observing all three images. They are all Muslim in various aspects”.

This religious Christian participant finds it difficult to connect the Nun character to the other characters in the photos because of her pre-learnt knowledge and experience. She finds fine details within the known gestalt or character of the Nun:
C6 – “I never imagined myself in such clothes... the nun does not belong to the group because she chose her way. In Christianity there are no specific clothes and no one can tell if I am religious based on my clothes”.

A Jewish participant knows her own religion better and can be particular into nuances concerning specific Jewish streams. Her previous knowledge, her gestalt of the matter, leaves her with antagonism towards the character of her own religion:

J7 - “I felt antagonism towards the Jewish character, maybe because she belongs to my religion yet is so different and far from me that I find it difficult to identify with her”.

This Muslim participant admits to her previously learnt knowledge as the one that dictates her preferences in feeling more comfortable role playing the Muslim character:

M1 – “I have met nuns only in movies... I respect the place they chose to be in because I am religious too, but I did not connect to this character. It felt easiest with the Muslim character. I do not have Jewish religious acquaintances. I did not connect to the Jewish character, maybe because I am angry with her”.

In the facilitators’ discussion the religion aspect was discussed as well. FJ noticed that the Jewish participants found particular issues in their own religion probably due to previous knowledge or learnt point of view:

FJ – “Concerning the group meeting, it was interesting to see that the three Jewish women did not connect to their religious Jewish characters in the photos. They said that of the three characters they found the Haredi Jew the most difficult to identify with”.

FC sees the same pattern with the Christian participant:

FC – “C4, who is Christian, found it difficult to identify with the nun”.

FJ poses a question:
"I wonder if this means that if the religion is closer to you, and you know the nuances, it might be more difficult to identify with...”.

The researcher assumes (out of her own pattern….):

R – “It might be that when you know nuances of your own religion you might have some inner discussion and judge it more quickly... whilst other unknown religions are perceived as some pre-determined pattern, a stereotype of some sort”.

The examples brought so far show the existence of cultural gestalts and patterns of behavior and thought in the participants concerning their perception about culture, women, inner lives and their religion.

**Breaking pattern**

The form, or gestalt is a whole that has boundaries, as explained in the literature review, and referred culturally, is where interaction with other forms/cultures happen (Brownell, 2010; Levi, 2002). The human tendency to group similar elements into one gestalt/concept referred to as ‘similarity’ in the literature part (Rock and Palmer, 1990; Clarckson and Mackewn, 1993) actualizes culturally when people tend to unify into groups by similarity (Levi, 2002). Because of another tendency – the tendency for closure (Zeigarnik, 1927; Ovsiankina, 1928), as explained in the literature part, where human perception tends to fill in an unfinished image into the easiest learnt option, culturally, there is a chance that inaccurate generalized quick judgment would appear relating who belongs to “my group” or not, leading to bias (Levi, 2002).

Contact and confluence is the gestalt principle explaining the interaction of two gestalts/forms, as explained in the literature review. Contact happens when the defined form’s boundary edge meets another form and the boundaries are kept (Clarckson &
Mackewn, 1993). Confluence occurs when the two forms flow and merge in the meeting experience exchanging energy and separate back to their own boundaries after influencing each other (Clarckson and Mackewn, 1993; Levi, 2012; Polster and Polster, 1973). Culturally, two defined cultures interact, exchange information/energy, separate and become enriched (Clarckson & Mackewn, 1993).

In this research experience the portrait photographs allowed participants the experience of sensing a different culture than their own. By watching the photo-shopped portrait photos of their own face in new religious options with their usual perception/gestalt and participating in the role play and artistic expression, the participants’ original structure/gestalt had an opportunity for contact and a meeting of gestalts occurred. Role playing and identifying allowed confluence and the exchange of energy between the pre-learnt identity gestalt and the new playful possibility. Exchanging energy and receiving new possible identity/cultural options resulted in enriching, breaking, shaking or widening the old pattern/gestalt options. This could lead into unknown territory and could sometimes even result in an uncomfortable feeling or sensation. The experience of the widening or breaking of the original pre-determined cultural pattern was observed in the research by participants’ responses in the examples that follow.

When observing all three images of her photos this Muslim participant experienced the uneasiness of the stretching of the old gestalt when things become unfamiliar and still not yet coherent:

\textit{Mus1} - “Observing all three of them takes me to an unpleasant place. They give me an uncomfortable sense. I do not know why”.
Observing the three portrait photos of her face dressed in the various head dresses this participant experiences a physical sensation as well as difficulty. She realizes the cause for this is the shaking of her original gestalt:

_Crst6_ - “I never imagined myself with a headdress... it is a bit difficult to see my face out of my usual context. It suffocates me like handcuffs... they are all very different from me”.

She describes her disorientation, the meeting of gestalts and the breakage of the old pattern as an uneasy sensation:

_Crst6_ - “It took me into a confusing difficult place within me. I never imagined being different, let alone religiously different. Very confusing”.

This participant relates to the gestalt-confusion she experienced when observing her own portrait presented to her in an unfamiliar manner. In this occasion the experience resulted in a sense of no self judgment that turned into something else the instant the old gestalt/recognition took over:

_J9_ - “I find it difficult to look at my own photographs. The first instant I looked at the photo I did not see me... it was a meaningful instant... to see me without seeing me... very strong experience... no self criticism. The instant I recognized myself it became difficult...”.

The participant explains in the written questionnaire how the process offered a meeting of her old configuration/gestalt with new options:

_C6_ - “The experience allowed me to view myself as someone very different from me”.

Writing about her experience this participant could observe her own experience and note her own original structure as pre-conditioned:
**J7** - “The experience influenced my awareness to the existence of pre-determined patterns of my perception”.

Summarizing the experience this participant relates to the shaking of her original structure as ‘unmasking’ a part of her perception. She knows it is meaningful still it had not yet set into its new form:

**J9** - “The experience of the “shedding of the costume/covers” was surprising and meaningful; I do not yet know its effect, but I am sure it gave birth to something new”.

In the group meeting, this participant shared her experience openly with the group using her two art expressions to describe the breaking of the gestalt. She senses that she is still in the process of birth to a new option in her perception:

**J7** – “I felt physically shaken up after the individual interview. I needed air. The drawing was concrete. Now in the second drawing, it is abstract, there are more questions, no real knowing, it all has expanded...”.

As part of the facilitators’ preparation for their interview work in the research, they personally went through the portrait photos experience. **JF** reflects on the experience when she felt her gestalt disturbed to the point of being shaken up:

**JF** - “When I think about the research and the part of facing the photo images (when I went through the experience myself), I actually faced images that shook me up, and it was not easy. I faced my own cultural ignorance. I could see my transference and projection onto the images”.

**Women (new)** - Sub-theme (ST)

Participants related to the ‘breaking pattern’ aspect in the feminine aspect as well. This participant related to it in summarizing her experience. She admitted to her multiple inner
female characters that live harmoniously within her yet this experience brought some
shaking into the consensus:

**M1 - Summary of experience** – “First of all I am a woman who lives continuously in
multiple characters and duties, like all women: mother, teacher, wife, social person... but
it is most uncomfortable to have my inner selves contradict. I am whole in myself. Yet in
this experience I felt contradiction between the three characters; it created uneasiness.
Still, there is a place of truth in each of the characters; they are all parts of me. This was
a new experience for me”.

An empathetic reaction emerged within this participant. She could identify with all
possibilities of women or options. Her known gestalt was shaken into new possibilities.
This confused her to the point of aching when she eventually burst out in tears:

**J8** - “I could have easily been any one of these women... the possibility of this hurts...
that I could give up so much of myself to be like this... I might not wear a headdress but
inside I do... hiding behind a man, not being adventurous, hiding behind values... I call it
– display of conservative acts that religious extreme harbors. I need air... oh, thank you
so much for this opportunity”.

Strong emotion struck this participant as she was in the process. She was shaken into new
understandings as she later described:

**J8** – “In my interview a rush of anger towards men rose up in me. I felt somewhat like a
victim in this covered up situation of the headdress”.

A strong realization overtook the participant as she considered the new options/gestalts:
J8 – “We can talk about how things should be and love each other in this room, yet out there is a whole culture that puts us “in our place.” They have decided that femininity should be hidden and forbidden”.

**Self awareness** - Sub-theme (ST)

During and after the experience participants described a heightened sense of awareness that manifested in various ways. The impact of the experience brought this participant to new perception and an actual felt bodily sensation as she described:

*M3* - “The experience allowed me new angles of perception. It was shocking in the beginning to see myself with these headdresses. When I got into it, I actually felt each of the characters in my body”.

Heightened awareness to multiple inner characters was recognized in some of the participants, of which here is one example:

*C4* – “Various characters are hidden within me; I adapt my behavior to situations. I find it of utmost importance to notice and be aware of my inner life; this way I learn who “I” am”.

Reflecting on the experience the participant reported on the various aspects/options/ways of behavior of her inner world where multiple inner characters woke up to her awareness:

*C4* - “It was a very strong, powerful and interesting experience. It brought up in me this triangle we talked about before, as if the various characters that live in me showed themselves: rebelliousness, trust, spirituality and the passion to grow and develop. I do have all of these in me”.

Succeeding the process this participant burst out laughing to her new knowing:

*Crs5* - “I do not want to be any one of these characters (laughing)”.
New awareness and admission to perhaps less wanted inner gestalt qualities:

*C5 - “Not to judge by outer appearance. I have known this before; still I am human and I admit that I do tend to judge. I became more aware of it, and I do want to reduce my tendency to judge”.

The conscious artistic expression allowed an outlet for the somewhat arduous process that shook up some known patterns:

*Crst6 - “I chose to draw multiple color circular motion; it helped me relax from the tension this experience caused for me”.

This Christian Arab participant frankly shared her new awareness concerning her view about Jewish women at her work place:

*C6 - “I became aware of my actual daily perception of others. There are Jewish religious women in my daily surroundings, whom I interact with, but it is different than what I watch on TV, where I view these women very differently, and this view is rooted deep in my perception”.

The same participant continued expressing her awareness to her cultural bias and somewhat lamented her own shortcomings:

*C6 - “I could see how extreme I was in the role-play with the Muslim and Jewish women. I could accept the nun easily, though there are tough nuns too… yet it was a painful realization seeing that I gave more credit to the nun than to the Muslim or Jewish women”.

An acute awareness to inner perplexity is well described by this participant:

*J7 - “It is my face in each of them yet a totally different world. As if I am multi-faceted...

I try to be more open, less biased. I have experienced a lot in my life and discovered
things are the opposite of what my learnt patterns dictated, very interesting. It feels like a conversation between my inner multiple identities is going on. Still with all awareness to it, bias and judgment is deeply embedded, you can’t run away from it”.

Awareness to the pattern in process of change was expressed by the participant:

J7 – “There is a purpose to wearing the specific attire... I hope my pre-determined pattern is wide enough, but when things get extreme I find my pattern shrinking... is the character closed and suffocating or is it my own perception that is stifled…”

The process brought awareness to habit, pattern and the need for flexibility to perhaps be built in as a purpose:

J7 - “How much chance and opportunity do we really allow for expanding our patterns of behavior? You have to want and aim for it; it does not seem to be a natural thing that comes on its own. You have to initiate change. We are animals of habit”.

Confusion was expressed when awareness to old patterns was discovered:

J7 - “It’s a great dilemma... on one hand you want to hold on to your own culture and not confuse your kids and on the other – with no confusion you stay in the same place and do not grow”.

The research experience brought acute awareness and a deeply honest painful reaction from this participant when she realized her limiting patterns/gestalts:

J8 - “(crying, breathing) My husband does a lot; he is a social activist. I think I should hide behind my husband less and try to realize myself regardless of him – simply to see that I have value on my own too”.

Observing the three revised portrait photos of her face this participant could admit to her inner contradiction:
J8 - “Each of the characters is a part of myself. What echoes most is conservativeness, and yet there is a side in me that has always rebelled against this...”.

Awareness to her gestalt’s limits and confusion is expressed by this participant:

J9 - “I admit I was surprised, by the technique and to realize how little I know, such ignorance... when it comes to cultural information that is different from my own I just know nothing...... I feel it is a meeting of consensus and bias that I create... I am ashamed of my ignorance... I consider myself an open progressive person and still I am locked into generalizations...”.

A Muslim participant allowed her anger to rise up concerning her original gestalt:

M1 - “I had the opportunity to deal with my anger towards the Jewish character by focusing on it; I understand it better now”.

Awareness to her bias was sincerely expressed by this participant:

C6 - “Despite my acceptance and understanding of others, I realized that there is a part of me that is bias about people. I could see in the research that I related differently to the nun because we were both Christian; I accepted her more...”.

This participant became aware of her cultural ignorance and her pre-conditioned learning:

J7 - “I felt the characters represent cultural extremes – the further the extreme the greater my ignorance and in accordance the size of the pre-determined pattern”.

A keen awareness to projection and inner world was observed by this participant:

C4 – “The characters are my own projections; they are part of my inner life. The photos helped me focus and view those secret images hidden inside and become more aware of them”.

The participant shared an honest observation of an insufficient ability:
J8 – “I felt ignorant that I know so little about Arabs”.

The data brought here offered an example of the outcome of the semi-shock like experience the participants went through observing their faces in the revised portrait photos and role play in the purpose of ‘rattling’ their original gestalts concerning cultural issues. Gestalts were ‘shuffled’ a bit; new contacts between patterns were experienced. As was discussed above, contact and confluence allow new energy consumption (Clarckson and Mackewn, 1993; Levi, 2012; Polster and Polster, 1973). The next theme describes what happened with the new information and energy exchanged in the research experience.

Integration of parts

Contact and confluence result in exchange of energy, experience and information. It allows the intake of new elements into the original form/gestalt that in turn result in a new composition, a bigger one, thus expanding boundaries, as well as growth and learning (Brownell, 2010; Clarckson and Mackewn, 1993; Levi, 2002). In cultural context, the meeting of a person from a specific culture with a person or information of another culture allows learning and expansion of cultural understanding (Levi, 2002). This study proposed that the research experience could modify the gestalt of the participants concerning cultural attitude by allowing empathy and the experience of ‘the other’. Integration of the new learnt information could result in new awareness, growth, personal growth, professional growth and new ethno-cultural empathy, possibly leading to multicultural competencies, as the discussion follows.

This participant described her artistic expression of the process. She felt her gestalt changing where new parts joined in not yet fully integrated but still in the process:
M1 - “I usually draw a flower in the center of the page. But here I felt as there are multiple stages and parts, difficult to explain, there are several parts, similar yet different. Tension went into the long element; I am in the upper element, on the bottom a still closed part. On the right I drew the flow that has just begun, a source of energy and this triangle that is lacking integration between all parts yet it is a bridging element; this allowed energy of communication between the parts; it might be you (the facilitator)”. New realizations and self-perception came out of the new experience, an elaborated sense of cultural identity:

M2 - “This is the first time I have experienced something like this. It allowed me to feel Jewish, Christian and Muslim. It is possible to live together in spirit, in peace with a smile. Despite the dark parts there is a joint point in the middle... and from there to continue”.

The participant described a sense of hope in integration of a new form:

M2 - “Despite my inner darker more traditional parts there is a possibility to integrate the new modern stuff and live together”.

Awareness to a new perception concerning the feminine on general and personal levels rose in this participant:

J8 - “This experience helped broaden my horizons concerning the role of women. My understanding keeps expanding”.

This participant shared her new learning and personal understanding that resulted in new energy to reach out multi-culturally:
J8 - “My learning is mostly personal. I realize that hiding is not necessarily an outcome of physical clothes and covers. I could stay reserved and conservative with modern clothing as well. I have a new desire to interact with women of various cultures and religions”.

Reflecting on the process she shared her new expanded gestalt of the feminine:

J8 - “A new aspect has been added to my view of women. I appreciate the choice of exposure (as opposed to a headdress), and I have a deeper appreciation of the complexity of being a woman. I had very interesting conversations with colleagues on the subject”.

New understanding of acceptance rose out of the process for this participant:

J9 - “What I am actually talking about is accepting differences – accepting myself and the other person”.

She could further integrate her new knowledge into a wider gestalt than she had experienced prior to the process:

J9 - “My main insight from the experience is that our perceptual pre-determined pattern that supports “putting people into known molds” serves us well at times and at other times is destructive”.

After this participant expressed anger towards one of the characters she met in the portrait photos she could embrace the new findings and integrate them into a new whole:

M1 - “This experience allowed me to get in touch with parts of myself I was not aware of before...”

A week later she reflected in her questionnaire: “I feel comfortable, I accept all three equally”.

This participant lingered with the experience which needed time to integrate:
M2 - “I thought about the experience the whole week and thought that integration of the characters is possible”.

Participant’s self view was influenced and enriched by the experience:

C4 - “It [the research experience] had a great effect. I continued observing my inner characters, what fits and what does not. This experience was an opportunity for some of my inner characters to reveal themselves and explain to me unknown things about myself”.

A process of continuous integration is expressed with this participant who seemed to widen her multi-cultural competency:

J7 - “this research experience accompanies me continuously. I keep asking myself questions about political, national and ethnic seclusion. I ask myself how much knowledge and information do I have of neighboring cultures and especially their extremities. The experience got me very curious”.

The participant described sensing herself changing. She was aware to the time needed for the full integration to actualize:

J8 - “the experience accompanies me. This was an important, surprising and thought provoking inner observation for me. I do not yet know what the outcome will be, but this is an important stepping stone on my way”.

Reflecting on the whole process a new profound realization of self was expressed by this participant:

J9 - “The experience allowed me to perceive a new view of myself. A strong feeling arose in me that meeting “the other” is in a way mirroring meeting myself. It is mirroring my
own ability to stay open to the “other” within me. It means to know myself from various angles. This has been an extremely deep and fascinating experience”.

After encountering her own cultural shortcomings in the interview meeting, this participant could integrate what she had revealed about herself and found a new place within to accept herself and be open to the ‘other’ and waited eagerly to meet the multicultural group:

*J9 – “I was eager to come to this meeting. I wanted to meet at last and hear and learn from the multicultural group”.*

At the group meeting’s conclusions this participant shared with the group. After she had learnt and integrated new options she wanted more:

*C4 – “Many things came up. We could really use many workshops like this. We could go on and on and not stop...”.*

The Jewish facilitator shared in the facilitators’ meeting the following story. She took her children to a church in an Arab village. This was unusual behavior for her, as she confided she comes from a religious Jewish upbringing, yet the research experience affected her into integrating differences in a new way and action:

*FJ – “Following this research, I decided to take my children to a church in an Arab village near us. We have never seen a church. We made an appointment with the priest and we met with him for an hour and a half. It was very interesting”.*

**New self awareness** - Sub-theme (ST)

Integration for this participant seemed to happen by connecting qualities of all three characters into a new inner awareness to help her be more open in her life:
C4 - “This feels like a women’s triangle that offers me presents. I feel I get something unique from each one. From the Christian nun I take spirituality. From the Jewish woman I take her trust in her ability to grow and develop and from the Muslim woman I take strength, her rebelliousness, her will to change. How can I connect all three, to become a rebellious woman who develops and still leaves room for her spirituality... this is a lethal combination that could help me continue. Each aspect is helpful and it is important for me to integrate them all”.

She described with clarity her keen awareness of her restricting gestalts and hopes to be able to integrate the new one she had began to develop:

C4 - “These forces do not always work together... they raise inner conflict. Today they came out straight up to my face and told me things about religion and accepting differences, yet I think about these differences inside of me and wonder how to integrate it all and allow a respectful relationship. I do hope to make inner peace between all these characters”.

A conclusion of new awareness is expressed by this participant preferring commonalities over differences:

C6 - : “You need to respond to all things out of love, without diving too deep into religious issues, each person to their own religion, better to stay with what is common between people and keep being happy. That is that”.

The expansion of boundaries was described in this statement, where learning from people different to her no longer threatens the participant, having her own boundaries reassured:

J7 - “The world is wide, not just the physical planet, but the social world too, and it is ok for each person to have her own place, a fact that I accept and appreciate. What I find
difficult is seclusion and isolation of groups... it is true that each person is a whole world and it is interesting to explore and discover new worlds different from your own; learning about others does not mean that you give your world up”.

This participant concluded her new integrated awareness concerning her anxiety:

*M2 - “I realize the importance of exploring new directions in life and not letting anxiety and indecision control me”.*

**Artistic expression comparisons** of drawings from first and second meetings show the apparent integration process:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artistic expression 1</th>
<th>Artistic expression 2</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>M1</strong></td>
<td><strong>M2</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

“I usually draw a flower in the center of the page. But here I felt as there are multiple stages and parts, difficult to explain, there are several parts, similar yet different. Tension went into the long element; I am in the upper element, on the bottom a still closed part. On the right I drew the flow that has just begun a source of energy and this triangle that is lacking integration between all parts yet it is a bridging element; this allowed energy of communication between the parts; it might be you (the facilitator)”.

“This drawing has a combination of figurative symbols in the center”.
Both expressions are abstract, made of pieces combining/conglomerating into the center. The first work is all abstract on black background, while the second has figurative elements as if the beginning creation of a facial figure on white. In the first artistic expression Mus1 was aware of her multiple inner parts and it confused her. She sensed the lack of integration and wished the parts could communicate. She attributed the combining energy to the facilitator. In the second artistic expression Mus1 created figurative facial symbols that begin the creation of a face, a new ‘whole’, showing the process of integration she was going through.

M2

“It is possible to live together despite darkness, tradition and closed minds, which make it difficult. The black expresses the closed mind and despite it there is a smile within. We can live together. We each have a heart and the sun shines on everyone”

Mus 2 added a heart shape to the previous artistic expression. “The heart says: the other person is me as well. I combined both expressions because they are one”

In the first expression Mus2 drew 3 circles representing women connected to the ground. She identified with the middle one. She found the black covering head dresses suffocating yet she said it was possible to live together despite difference. The second expression was added to the first. She explained: “The first expression said – it is possible to live together and the second one says – ‘the other’ is me”. Her statement shows the integration she went through and expresses ethno-cultural empathy.
**M3**

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<th>![Image]</th>
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“Women and femininity is what I felt most doing the artistic expression. I forgot all about the strength, inner power and the headdresses… Interesting. I wanted to show light and the three colors of each of the characters, with renewal, nurturing, nature and femininity, passion and anger, this energy that does a thousand things… maybe sensuality or sex”

Mus3 could not participate in the second meeting. The research experience connected her to femininity, that is, to similarity rather than difference.

**C4**

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“I felt the rainbow in a way in the process. It started from something dark and unknown… difficult to explain… I felt I had to do something under the rainbow. This pink circle appears often in my art. I wanted it to be a triangle but it turned out as my usual pink circle… for it is confidence”

“I have processed my thoughts and feelings from the individual interview. I now feel more confident and more aware to new things; therefore the shape is a closed and organized one”
In the first artistic expression Crst4 felt confused and maybe a bit intimidated after the individual interview process. She drew the dark rainbow threatening underneath which she felt almost compelled to put her soothing pink circle, by this she described her pattern being shaken. She explained her difficulty in processing her feelings in the first meeting and she showed this by not putting boundaries to the image. In the second drawing she felt more integrated, aware and confident and expressed it in the firm boundaries of the orange square containing the circles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I felt that each character that came up had its own difficulty. Each circle is a character…. All three transfer energy, a bomb that explodes. In the end they find themselves facing a similar problem. The black circle is me, coming out of the ground, as it was difficult for me to do the role-play in the beginning and later it flowed”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The colors are brighter today. I feel more comfortable with the three characters. They each have their difficulty that is marked by the middle circle but I know they can deal with their obstacles and grow”</td>
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</table>

The first drawing expressed Crst5’s breaking pattern. It was her in the black circle observing the ‘bombs’ of the three characters exploding while they were all connected to her. In the second drawing there were 3 black circles with a colorful energy line to each. She explained that in the second meeting she could live in peace with all three characters and see a good future for them. In a way she gave each of the characters her own black
C6

135
circle as a center, as if unconsciously showing her identification with the characters she hated in the first meeting. Crst5 had integrated the new information and experience and expressed her genuine empathy by identifying with the characters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“I chose to draw multiple color circular motion; it helped me relax from the tension this experience caused for me”</th>
<th>“This expression is similar to the first one, but here colors are merging, boundaries are accentuated and there is more order inside”</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>She explained her experience: “It took me into a confusing difficult place within me. I never imagined being different, let alone religiously different. Very confusing”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crst6 was very moved by the research experience. She verbally expressed her confusion and ‘breaking pattern’. She used the drawing to calm herself by the colorful circular motion creating a whirlpool. The second artistic expression showed colorful merging and defined boundaries. The black background was not covered. New forms appeared within the circle, Crst6 defined them as “new order” expressing the new integration she found.</td>
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</table>
“Two words came up whilst working – femininity and air. It felt as if part of the feminine aspect was lost in these covers. The basic similar aspect was suffocated inside these wrappings”

“I had to allow room for free universal femininity that was somehow suffocated in there”

“This is a more abstract drawing than the first one. This work deals more with a universal feeling. It is more open and spacious regardless of the questions and uncertainty I feel”

The research experience connected Jew7 to the feminine aspect within herself. She identified familiar pattern in subject and in the drawing. She explained she tended to draw women with the same colors a bit resembling a tree, mother nature. In the second drawing the same colors appear but the shape is abstract. In a way it is the upside down image of the feminine figure, turning it into a spacious open container. Her previous patterns gave room to new options. Verbally she spoke about new thoughts and insights and unconsciously showed it in the drawing. New possibilities immerged. In gestalt language: integration of parts into stretched boundaries or new pattern.
“I spent this last weekend in the desert, very healing experience… and the issue of women came up in me concerning that now… women in general are in need of healing.”
“Those are comforting containing places to heal these hurting places in me as a woman, probably in all women living in the world”
“Women need time to heal in order to be able to think differently and step into feminine leadership, to dare to be”

| Jew8 connected to the universal feminine that needs healing. She shared the fact that she came back from a desert retreat. Verbally she talked about the pain the masculine world gives her and in the drawing she unconsciously drew a feminine figure seen from a distance. Though naked, this figure faces backwards showing her back to the viewer. Jew8 wanted healing for the figure yet the figure was small and she felt the mountains closing in on her, as if wanting to get away to heal in the desert yet still threatened. The second figure showed the feminine figure facing the viewer; though faceless she is seen from up close and wears colorful head dress, as opposed to the black in the research experience. Jew8 shared this figure encouraged her and all women to be themselves. The ‘breaking of the pattern’ can be well detected in the first drawing whilst the second | “It’s a faceless close up of the female from the first drawing. She says to me: be yourself, your face is not important. Be colorful and alive. So she says to all women” |
drawings shows integration of an image into a new pattern/figure.

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<th>J9</th>
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| ![Image](image1.png) | ![Image](image2.png) |

“The main experience for me was the surprise at realizing how little I know… I feel it is a meeting of consensus and bias that I create”

“The art work is taking me inside; softer gentle colors. My insights go deeper”

In the first drawing Jew9 expressed her surprise as her familiar view/pattern of herself shook up. She tried to show her pre-learnt templates in the defined black borders and the clean cut colors filling them stretching from the center to the borders of the paper. She shared her insights whilst drawing. The second artistic expression is of a more processed experience. Jew9 felt her insights go deeper. She used soft watercolors, merging boundaries. The image showed a soft feminine figure watching her reflection in the water. Jew9 could appreciate her observation going from the outside inward creating new options of reflection and learning possibilities. In Gestalt terms, the original pattern went through change of structure that materialized in a new composition and media used into integrating the new learning.

**Between cultures**

The fourth theme is ‘Between cultures’; the sub-themes (ST) are: Affiliation group, Fear of the ‘other’ and Caution.
Human similarities and differences were at the heart of this research study. As was elaborated in the literature review despite human’s commonalities, enculturation defines cultural identity (Chong et al, 2003; Ekman, 1999; Fernald, 1993; Usborne & DeLaSablonniere, 2014; Weinberg, 2012) and related to this study – defines the cultural conditioning or gestalt. The cultural gestalt is defined by its boundary/customs, beliefs, meanings and inner laws (Constantinou & Harvey, 1983; Levi, 2002) where the law of similarity (Clarckson & Mackewn, 1993; Rock & Palmer, 1990) of grouping similar elements to one gestalt into ‘my group’. Cultural affiliation offers a sense of belonging and protection from the ‘other’ (Bizumic, 2014; Bizumic & Duckitt, 2012; Gere & MacDonald, 2010;), where the ‘other’ in gestalt terms is a different gestalt to what is defined as ‘my group’ (Levi, 2002). Due to human’s tendency for closure (Zeigarnik, 1927; Ovsiankina, 1928) ‘the other’ group’s gestalt is created out of pre-learnt information and at times is completed by imagination (Schiffman & Greist-Bouzwuet, 1992).

This research was executed in Israel. Israeli population is culturally complex and intricate and controversial where at the heart of its controversy lays the historically long Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Barzilay-Shechter, 2010; Hammond, 2008; Munayer and Loden, 2013). Currently the conflict between Israeli Jews, Israeli Palestinians and Palestinians is extremely active. Ending does not seem a near option and ethno cultural relations include dehumanization, prejudice, suspicion and fear on both sides (Falk, 2005; Fisher, 2014; Maoz, 2011; Mizrachi & Herzog, 2012; Salim, 2014). The various cultural groups try to keep respectful boundaries of conduct and hardly interact (Bystrov & Soffer, 2012; Rebhun & Malach, 2009) while at present times there is an escalation
towards religious war (Sagy, Ayalon & Diab, 2011). Great efforts are put into possibly building a better multi-cultural co-existence (Maoz, 2004; Millul, 2003; Svirsky et al., 2007).

Participants in this study were all trained expressive therapists aware of the importance of empathy (Wang et al., 2003). They belong to three different cultural groups and the cultural issues as well as the inter-cultural ones influence them. In this context the meeting between two cultural gestalts was apparent in participants’ statements as the results show.

This Christian participant keenly shares her cultural interaction experience with Jewish women. She admitted to her poor gestalt of the ‘other’:

*C6 - “I realized I was less in touch with Jewish religious women and that it is difficult for me to connect with them and that I do not know much about them. The only information I have about Jewish religious women is from TV”.*

The Jewish facilitator noticed the Jewish participants’ remark in the group meeting about their reluctance relating to the Ultra-religious portrait photo of the Jewish head dress. This might be due to a formation of a ‘my group’ gestalt and ‘the other’ gestalt within the same religion:

*FJ – “Concerning the group meeting, it was interesting to see that the three Jewish women did not connect to their religious Jewish characters in the photos. They said that of the three characters they found the Haredi Jew the most difficult to identify with”.*

The Christian facilitator noticed the Christian participant’s hesitation which could have happened for the same reason as the former reaction mentioned:

*FC – “C4, who is Christian, found it difficult to identify with the nun”.*
In the group meeting Mus1 burst out with an emotional statement. It seemed like she compared gestalts in the hope of showing us similarities, maybe to combine the two or widen her own boundaries to include the ‘other’ gestlat:

\(M1\) – “You might say that Jews and Arabs are in similar places these days, but they do not let themselves view it this way. The Holocaust and the Nakba are similar things. We have experienced similar things. We have to allow ourselves to realize that we have been through identical experiences; we have and we still are... not just to close your eyes to the other’s suffering and think that you alone are the victim here. We are similar victims. Everyone suffers. This is my view today”.

She concluded the process and interaction with a statement paving the way for possibly merging the gestalts by interaction:

\(M1\) – “Of course time breaks this ice... and then when you allow the other entry into yourself, all mental barriers disappear. We are all human, and this is how it should be for all next generations and forever!”.

A move to a Jewish city is described by this Muslim participant. With all her worries she found that Jewish people were quite nice. She described her own gestalt and expectations meeting the ‘other’s gestalt, surprisingly to her, creating confluence and change:

\(M2\) – “I moved into a Jewish city a short while ago. People in my village keep asking me how this is going. I say that all is well: Jewish people are nice, they say hello on the street they greet me good morning in the street and at work. There are people of all religions in my neighborhood; I feel a shared existence”.

The participant is aware to intercultural difficulties yet trusts contact:
J8 – “When there is an opportunity to meet, everything becomes simple. I work in a multi-cultural setting and all is well”.

An emotional remark of a Christian Arab participant concerning her place in the Israeli cultural ‘ladder’ and difficulties of acceptance at work. She described gestalts contradictions:

C6 - “The thing is that Arab people are socially located in a very bad place in this country; we are not liked. Like my place at the hospital where I work, for example, at the hospital they celebrate the Jewish holidays only and where are we the Muslims and Christians?”.

She continued to explain through her art expression how she saw the cultural divide. She illustrated how a cultural gestalt is created and how difference and contradicting gestalts bring hatred:

C6 - About the art expression: “I divided the page outside the circle into four white areas, showing the three images and myself in the right upper corner. All people are born similar into a choice-less place, which is why the base of the paper is black, because the world is black. Every baby is born into a clean white sheet and starts drawing and absorbing its environment. The influence of our parents and all that happens around us slowly makes us enter the general world (points at the circular motion in the drawing), where there is obvious multicultural existence, little acceptance and much hatred. And this is where all the commotion begins”.

She shares her view of the holiday festivities and the absurd situation it creates within the multicultural setting she works in:
C6 - “Confusing situation this multicultural thing... for example we are in a time before Easter and Passover. We, at the hospital, will have a party and holiday festive meal for all the patients. But if you think about it deeper, I ask my Jewish patients to remember Easter, where for me as a Christian is the holiday when the Jews crucified Jesus... hello... what complexity!”.

Working in a multicultural setting requires a certain mindset from this participant, and awareness to her pre-learnt cultural gestalts:

J7 - “I work in a multicultural setting. Arabs, Ethiopians, Russians, Druze, Christians... it makes me constantly ask questions: where am I in my pre-learnt patterns and where I am outside of these patterns. Keeping this question in my awareness helps me stay tuned to the clients’ needs”.

She shared her experience of multicultural contact living in the USA finding it similar to the Israeli situation:

J7 – “My family lived in Silicon Valley; there were no Americans... even in the playground everyone divided into ethnic groups... we here are no different...”.

This Jewish participant found multicultural issues within her own religion. She described the somewhat agitated contact of gestalts within the same religion:

J9 – “every culture has... I work in a Haredi Jewish place and in a Jewish secular place. I constantly ask myself where I feel more comfortable... In the secular place I feel more at ease this might be because I identify more with the openness”.

A solution for the multicultural problem is offered by this participant where she described the confluence of gestalts meeting and merging:
J8 – “When there is an opportunity to meet, everything becomes simple. I work in a multi-cultural setting and all is well”.

**Affiliation group** – sub theme (ST)

The cultural group one belongs to forms the affiliation group that supports and protects (Bizumic, 2014; Levi, 2002; Usborne & DeLaSablonniere, 2014) and forms the ‘my group’ gestalt as opposed to ‘the other’ gestalt (Levi, 2002). Questions of affiliation groups surface where participants check their belonging as did this participant concerning religious groups/gestalt:

*C5 – “I find myself “between” and find it easier with the secular people”.*

This participant related to her feminine group rather than her religious group, by this maybe unintentionally, creating an affiliation with the participants’ all-women group, designing a new gestalt based on gender:

*C4 – “Men are the same in all cultures and religions...”.*

Feminine group issues rose with this participant’s sharing in the group as well. She lamented the poor contact feminine and masculine gestalts have at times:

*J8 – “we can talk about how things should be and love each other in this room, yet out there is a whole culture that puts us “in our place.” They have decided that femininity should be hidden and forbidden”.*

The Jewish facilitator reflected on the group process and the slow contact process made. She honestly shared her own worry about being a minority in the room. She sensed her pre-conditioned Jewish gestalt being a bit intimidated by the contact with a gestalt different to hers:
FJ - “Issues rose slowly... I was glad for this, for if it would not have happened it would not have been real... the participants began sharing what they feel in real life, how it was in school... I noticed that even I upon entering the room counted how many Jews were there compared to Arabs... and I noticed that Jews were in minority...”.

FJ – “It makes me fear in the face of the unknown. I feel very comfortable with you FC, but with Mus1 I found it very difficult. I felt it became important for me to know who was Muslim and who was Christian”.

The Jewish facilitator shared in the facilitators’ meeting how the research had influenced her and her family. She took her Jewish family to visit a Church in a nearby Christian village, an act unlike her habits, having had a religious Jewish upbringing. She dared to initiate the confluence of her religious gestalt with one different to hers:

FJ – “When we sat with the minister in the church he explained that they read Psalms every week... I was shocked! To my surprise he said – what would we do without Psalms and the Bible... it was amazing. But when he invited my 12-year-old daughter to church service I got cold feet...”.

The Christian Arab facilitator shared her experience working at a Muslim Arab facility as an expressive therapist. She described her cultural religious gestalt in an uneasy contact with another cultural religious gestalt:

FC – “It’s education. I also freak out when they ask me why I do not wear a Hijab or tell me to convert to Islam... I am totally secular... still it aggravates me”.

Fear of the other – sub theme (ST)

There is a tendency for closure (Zeigarnik, 1927; Ovsiankina, 1928) where human perception tends to complete an unfinished image into the most convenient pre-learnt
option, interpreted culturally, this might mean a quick generalization that could result in stereotyping or bias, therefore creating an imagined gestalt of ‘the other’. This Christian Arab participant’s somewhat painful explanation concerning Jewish women acquaintances described new awareness to her imagined gestalt of Jewish women:

*C6 – “I came out of the personal interview with an uneasy feeling that I do not really know the Jewish woman (in the photo) even though some of my colleagues at work are religious Jewish women. So actually I know them only from TV... and they do not like me... this is what I see on TV”.*

This participant pointed out her fear openly:

*J8 – “As open as I am, there is fear of groups that are not like mine”.*

One of the reasons she found as the cause for the fear was the media, as a trigger to creating false gestalt of ‘the other’:

*J8 – “The media constantly drive us to instinctively fear the other”.*

Driving through an Arab city posed a threat on the Jewish facilitator as she shared it:

*FJ – “I drove today through Sahnin (Arab city nearby), and I admit that I felt unsafe... my ignorance...”*

[it is important to note that when these notes are actually being written, six months after the meeting, driving through Sahnin is dangerous for Jews. Even though commerce is abundant during peaceful days, these are very stressful times and there are security warnings for Jews against driving through the Arab cities and villages. This happens every time there is political tension].
The Jewish facilitator reflected on her experience of the whole process through art expression she had made. She related to the group meeting where she felt a minority and it bothered her:

FJ – (personal conclusion) “The circle of balls refers to the group meeting. This was a real opportunity to meet, not a distant projection of a photograph... I found myself counting who was there and was alarmed that the Jewish women were in minority... I surprised myself... I thought I was more open... being in the minority probably got me stressed on a subconscious level...”.

Caution – sub theme (ST)

Human ability to detect quickly who is friend/’my group’ or foe/’the other’ is a most needed survival commodity (Levi, 2002). When two distinct gestalts meet contact occurs and caution is exercised in the process of relating to the elements that form the gestalt (Clarckson & Mackewn, 1993).

Working with a cultural group different to her own made this religious Jewish participant feel uneasy and cautious:

J9 – “I work with Haredi Jews. They keep asking me why I am not dressed like them; they criticize me. It is hard for me when the children’s parents come for consultation and the father does not look me in the eye. It is easier for me to observe and accept them but it is difficult when they criticize me”.

A religious Jewish participant shared her solution for her cultural difference or in gestalt terms: the clash created by contact of two gestalts, by adopting a somewhat distancing doctor like stance:
J8 – “I feel like a doctor... and then the Haredi Jews I work with do not look at my appearance... but when they relate to people they know during therapy they criticize. They find it easier to accept me than someone who might be more religious that might be of an opposing group [there are many Haredi groups and some dislike others].”

During the group meeting a Christian Arab participant pointed out the sitting choices the participants made, coming into the room and not knowing anyone of the people present. Participants probably perceived similarity and closed the gestalt into a familiar (pre-learnt ‘my group’) and a non-familiar (pre-learnt ‘the other’) one when looking for friends in the new group:

C6 – “The way we chose to sit in the circle is amazing [by religion], spontaneous yet it means something”.

The Jewish facilitator reflected on the group meeting. She noticed the caution and speed people were interacting in:

FJ – “I felt the process began nicely, no hard content... I was attentive to the pleasant atmosphere... but much was not yet said... still it was a beginning, meeting face to face”.

**Professional competence** and identity

The fifth theme relates to the influence of the experience on professional identity and competence, as this research was meant to observe the effect of the experience on expressive therapists, where the original research inquiry checked for: The Effect of Personal Portrait Photographs on Cultural Attitude among Jewish and Arabic Expressive/Art Therapists in Israel.

In gestalt terms: professional identity is a meaningful whole/gestalt onto itself. Here is a sample of the responses:
This participant described how her professional awareness helped her relate to the portrait photos as inner characters with gentleness and respect:

*M1 - “As a therapist, I know each of the characters are part of me, so I treated them with care because I understand from where within myself they appear”*. 

She shared how the research experience supported her attitude to recognize the client as an individual unique creation:

*M1 - “It reinforced my stance towards my clients to remember that each person is a whole world unto herself”*. 

She translated her own inner understanding of having multiple inner-characters into her therapy understanding realizing she needed to be more pliable:

*M1 - “As a therapist I realize that clients bring their own inner characters to therapy yet these are all parts of the same person. I learnt that I should be more flexible”*. 

This participant concluded her process experience describing her expansion of professional awareness in openness, acceptance and ethno cultural empathy:

*M2 - “as a therapist the research helped me be more open, accepting differences, and to believe the other is really me”*. 

The research experience encouraged the participant to share her awareness and difficulty trying to contain cultural aggression aimed at her in therapy. She realized she is in a continuous process of self and professional identity development:

*M3 - “Religious and cultural differences are an uneasy issue for a therapist, especially when I try to contain the client. At university I wondered to what extent the therapist should allow the clients’ violent aggressive content to be brought in, especially when this was directed at me, as the therapist, and could hurt me. I am still learning this. I am
learning to balance and be who I am with my own identity, whilst letting the clients be themselves, with much respect, so they can also learn this from me”.

This participant described her heightened awareness to her various, sometimes contradicting inner roles. She shared her understanding of the importance of this awareness in her personal and professional development:

*C4 - “Everyone has many inner characters that sometimes struggle to live together. We behave differently everywhere. It is as if a different character comes out of me, various roles to play: work, home or at my mother-in-law’s. I wish I could make peace with all these inner characters and learn to accept and respect them. Being aware of this process is the beginning of developing as a person and as a therapist”.*

She shared how her own awareness to her inner characters allowed her a wider scope of professional understanding and new sense of direction in her role as a therapist with her clients:

*C4 - “as a therapist the experience allowed me to discover and see that in each of us and in our clients there could be more than one inner character steering our behavior. I see my role as a therapist to help the client discover, connect and get to know these inner characters”.*

Language is part of the cultural divide in Israel as described by this Christian Arab participant. She explained her professional identity as a gestalt in the process of being created out of two cultural gestalts, yet not fully integrated:

*C4 – “I was in an art group of five Arab women and one Jewish woman; the director was Jewish as well; we spoke Arabic… and the Jewish woman felt like a minority…language. When I need to write professional reports, I find myself writing in Hebrew to an Arab
institution. Hebrew is the professional language we use. I do not have “professional” Arabic”.

This Muslim Arab participant agreed with the language issue and brought the angle of integrating it professionally into her therapist’s identity:

M1 – “It is easier to communicate professionally in the language we studied the profession in at school”.

Professional language was a topic of confusion for this participant as well. She described how she dealt with parts of the whole when contradiction between gestalts occured:

C4 – “I find myself between languages, neither in Hebrew nor in Arabic. When I want to talk “professional” I speak Hebrew and if I want to talk to someone I speak in Arabic”.

This participant described how the research process strengthened her direction as a therapist and enhanced her acceptance of all humans, stretching her professional identity gestalt’s boundaries:

C5 – “The experience charged me with positive energy and strengthened me as a therapist. I realized that when I am in therapy I am not affected by the client’s culture or religion. The process accentuated the therapeutic spirit I work by and gave me strength to perceive people more openly and be less biased towards all humans”.

This Christian Arab participant shared her heightened sense to multiculturalism in therapy where she was aware to the multiple aspects of people’s gestals:

Crist6 - “as an Arab therapist I realize how difficult it is to treat clients with cultural differences. There are multiple views and values within the same culture and religion”.

She continued to share her pain concerning her own questionable acceptance by culture, colleagues and clients:
C6 - “I am always in an accepting, respecting place for others. The question is: do others accept and respect me as an Arab Christian woman therapist?”.  

She honestly admitted to her own shortcomings:  

C6 - “I have shared the experience of this amazing research with everyone I met since. The interview showed me that I have the right attitude yet still some things influence my approach to people, just a bit, but honestly, just for a little while”.  

This participant described her widened ethno-cultural sense. She shared how as she continued in her life and in her professional life, new inquiries continuously rise concerning the subject as her professional identity gestalt continues to grow:  

J7 - “the experience has influenced me in all social interactions. I felt how my inner container as a human and a therapist has widened a bit by the experience. New questions are rising in me and some new un-clarities as well”.  

She shared some of the questions that help her stay unbiased and attentive to her clients:  

J7 - “I work in a multicultural setting, Arabs, Ethiopians, Russians, Druze, Christians... it makes me constantly ask questions: where am I in my pre-learnt patterns and where I am outside of these patterns. Keeping this question in my awareness helps me stay tuned to the clients’ needs”.  

This participant connected to the feminine aspect in the experience, it brought a need for healing in her to those parts in all women.  

J8 - “As a therapist I am convinced that all women need to go through a healing process. There is a cultural wound; I see this place in all women I treat. The same goes for couples’ therapy: there is the need to heal the woman, to empower her so that she realizes that she is allowed to do and to wish things; only then can you start therapy”.
She accentuated her point:

“This affected my professional observation of the intricate issue of women in therapy. I had very interesting talks with colleagues about the subject”.

This participant shared her ongoing awareness and difficulty staying unbiased:

\textit{J9 - “When I work with a population that is very different from me, I am in constant inner war as not to be judgmental and accept the other. I find it very difficult not to criticize”}.

She summed up her new understanding from the research experience seeing the importance of inner integration in her and in her clients:

\textit{J9 - “The experience left me questioning the way I met the characters within myself. I met an unknown secretive part of me. Getting acquainted with new parts in me is extremely meaningful in understanding myself and others as a therapist”}.

\textbf{Conclusion}

Participants were deeply moved by their experience. This participant described the great effect the experience had on her:

\textit{C4 - “It [the research experience] had a great effect. I continued observing my inner characters, what fits and what does not. This experience was an opportunity for some of my inner characters to reveal themselves and explain to me unknown things about myself”}.

This participant expressed her widening sense of acceptance:

\textit{C6 - “The experience influenced my ability to accept others and open my heart. I realize that people are where they are because of their life decisions, which may be difficult ones... Not to judge and be less racist”}.

She was thankful for the opportunity of participating in this research:

\textit{C6 – “I am so proud to be a part of this humane study”}. 
This participant expressed her extended continuum of the experience:

J7 - “this research experience accompanies me continuously. I keep asking myself questions about political, national and ethnic seclusion. I ask myself how much knowledge and information do I have of neighboring cultures and especially their extremities. The experience got me very curious”.

This participant as well expressed a sense of continuous integration:

J8 - “the experience accompanies me. This was an important, surprising and thought provoking inner observation for me. I do not yet know what the outcome will be, but this is an important stepping stone on my way”.

This participant shared her new awareness:

J9 - “The experience allowed me a new perception of myself. A strong feeling arose in me that meeting “the other” is in a way mirroring meeting myself. It is mirroring my own ability to stay open to the “other” within me. It means to know myself from various angles. This has been an extremely deep and fascinating experience”.

The group meeting allowed some more honest sharing and realizations:

C6 – “I want to thank you for allowing this opportunity, to meet ourselves in the three images/characters and the opportunity to meet this whole group. Since the first interview I have shared this experience with everyone I have met”.

J9 – “I think this research idea is ingenious. Your idea is ingenious; I am constantly thinking about the personal interview”.

C4 – “Many things came up. We could really use many workshops like this. We could go on and on and not stop...”.
The Jewish facilitator shared her experience of reviewing the transcribed interviews searching for themes. She was overtaken by the participants’ honesty and deep issues that surfaced both for her and the participants:

_FJ - “It was amazing to see the women that were really open. I sometimes envied them in their openness. It was interesting to see how everyone lacked information about the others. It was interesting to see how everyone really wishes for similar things. I think the participants slowly understood that in the group meeting. That all is so similar yet on the other hand we hold on to our definitions and things just seem different but are actually the same. This is such an important matter It is important to talk about this and show it so people become aware of this. This is extremely important. For me personally the research was extremely meaningful”._

_FJ - “Reading it again and again and watching how the themes pop out... and maybe compassion for our human limitations too... really... some kind of compassion, because I know that I am captive to the same exact concept and with it am trying to see similarity between people... and we are all captives of this... if somehow we could take the veil off our eyes then we could all suddenly see... this is tricky, really tricky... even stupid and childish behavior...”._

After-research responses were sent via WhatsApp, a smart phone application we used to communicate concerning times and details, where the entire group received the same sent messages these are some of the responses:

_J8 – “Thank you for an enchanting and educational meeting. We would love to have some more...”._
C4 – “Good morning, despite my tiredness yesterday, I enjoyed our meeting tremendously. I was happy to meet you all dear colleagues... and would love to have more meetings like this one...”.

C5 – “It was an enchanting, interesting and educational meeting. I returned home with a lot of positive energy many feelings and emotions... it was so wonderful to meet each one of you... this was a great group”.

M2 – “Good morning, it was a rich meeting. I want more and more....I feel this empowered me personally”.

C6 – “I went and introduced myself to the religious Jewish woman that works with me whom I never talked to... she is a lovely woman... I told her about our meeting... we were both very moved” [there was a photo attached of the two women hugging...].

Researcher – “This is really moving.”

FC – “See...the research experience is already taking effect...”.

Summary of results

The purpose of this research was to observe the effect of personal portrait photographs on cultural attitude among Jewish and Arabic expressive/art therapists in Israel. Observation of the content’s themes revealed multiple subjects. Participants reported a heightened sense of self awareness to personal and professional aspects of bias, acceptance of cultural difference, cultural versatility, enlarging of multicultural competencies and the escalating sense of ethno-cultural empathy. In ‘Gestalt language’ the results show a possible ‘shuffle’ of the original gestalt that is the pre-learnt cultural pattern (Clarckson & Mackewn, 1993’ Brownell, 2010). The ‘shuffle’ seemed to be caused by the research experience where participants faced their own portrait photos
portrayed as religiously different people causing contact and confluence between gestalts (Clarckson & Mackewn, 1993; Pers, Hefferline & Goodman, 1973; Polster & Polster, 1973), that is, merging former and latter understandings or experiences, in a way ‘rattling’ the basic format/gestalt as was demonstrated in the ‘breaking of the pattern’ in the results’ theme. This in turn allowed the possibility of assimilation and new arrangement of the structure, resulting in an expansion of the original gestalt’s boundaries, that is: development and growth (Brownell, 2010; Clarckson & Mackewn, 1993; Levi, 2002).

It is proposed here by the results observed, that the heightened awareness to cultural issues and the ethno-cultural empathy experienced by participants allowed the possible expansion of affiliation group by experiencing the option of ‘being the other person’, that is, exercising empathy (Elkund, 2011; Hammond, 2015; Siu & Shek, 2005). The observation of one’s portrait photograph portrayed as belonging to a different and perhaps an opponent culture and religion, especially in the conflict stricken area of Israel (Barzilay-Shechter, 2010; Hammond, 2008; Munayer & Loden, 2013), allowed the expansion of the former definition of ‘my group’ (Eicher, 2010; Keith, 2012), in gestalt terms this means: the gestalt, that had been a result of pre-learnt enculturation (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Gere & MacDonald, 2010), by exercising empathy, in gestalt terms: contact and confluence. The expansion allowed the inclusion of what had previously been categorized as “outer group” into “my group” (Bisumic & Duckitt, 2012; Bizumic, 2014) resulting in widening of diverse cultural options of acceptance, in gestalt terms: assimilation and growth.
Limitations of this study could be detected in the questionnaire phase. The questions should have been carefully thought about and put into two similar questionnaires given to participants in each of the meetings, in a manner allowing comparison between first and second meeting. The questions would have benefited from being rated from 1-5 in a Likert scale manner (Boone & Boone, 2012), which would have allowed for some statistical data to take place. Statistical data could help detect and quantify more significance of present research effect and point at possible directions for continuous future study. A question regarding the difference in observing the portrait photos individually as opposed to watching the photo of the same portrait religious photo of all members in the group, where all look similar, could have issued some more important information.

Further limitations refer to the Nun’s head dress as representation of the Christian head dress. This choice stemmed both of the need to add a relevant head dress and aesthetic considerations that meant to stress similarity between all head dresses. This head dress is not as commonly seen in Israel as the other two Jewish and Muslim head dresses. This decision might have biased the results.

Some of the research participants were drama therapists; by their training they might have had some tools accessible to them in communicating the issue that the art therapists might have had less of.

The themes chosen to be discussed were related to from a Gestalt point of view. Other parameters that were seen in themes like inner characters, choice, head dress as limitation, new personal identity, multicultural ability and more could be discussed in further study.
Further study could be suggested exploring the effect of a similar technique in various population groups, perhaps children, teenagers, soldiers, mothers etc. as opposed to therapists’ groups. This could be done in the aim of education as well. A likert scale questionnaire could be ensued to participants some months after the experience to check the influence of the process. The research technique could also be adopted to deal with various identity issues.

The focus of this research was to provide expressive therapists in Israel, a land of multiple cultural needs and complexities, with a tool that might help them highlight and enhance awareness to personal attitudes of multicultural issues and help exercise the therapists’ ethno-cultural empathy skills and multicultural competencies. Underlying this is the Gestalt idea of contact-confluence and assimilation-growth. The researcher hoped that the experience of human similarity and cultural difference might allow a growing sense of human empathy and somewhat enhance therapeutic multicultural competence in the young therapists.

The researcher can only hope that perhaps widening the option/gestalt of ‘my group’ into including all humans could possibly enhance better peaceful worldwide possibilities.
Appendix A
Appendix B

Role play (Interviewing the image):

1. Please tell me about yourself. Who are you? Name, age, place of residence, family, original family, education…
2. Goals – what are your goals in life?
3. Values - what is most important to you in your life?
4. What saddens you most in your life?
5. What makes you most happy in your life?
6. What makes you most angry in your life?
7. What frightens you most in your life?
8. Should the entire world practice one religion?
9. Could you socialize with someone of a different religion than yours?
10. Would you allow your children to connect with someone of a different religion than yours?
11. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Hang all three images next to each other on the wall, in front of participant:

1. Observing all of the photographs, what is the sense you get, what is it like? (comparable)
2. What is most similar/different feature you find between the characters? (is there more difference or similarity?)
3. Which one would you prefer to be?
4. What would you say to the one you chose to be? What would you say to the one you loath? (comparable)
5. What do the characters tell you? (comparable)
Appendix C

Artistic expression: (and short conversation)

1. Could you please express artistically the process you went through?

2. How was this process for you? What came up in you? Associations, how was it for you to see yourself as each of the characters?

3. Did you learn anything new from the experience? Are there any thoughts in you as a result of the process? (comparable)

4. Have you learnt anything from the process as a therapist? (Comparable)
Appendix D

Questionnaire second meeting – before group discussion

The photographs:

- Observe all three photos. Relate to similarity and difference.
- Describe your thoughts and feelings when observing the three characters now.
  (comparable)
- What would you say to each of them today? (comparable)
- What would the characters say to you today? (comparable)

Summarizing the experience:

- Describe if/how had the research experience affect you these past two weeks.
- Describe if/how had the research experience affect you as a therapist these past two weeks.
- Did you share your experience?
- Have you thought about the content that came up during the experience?
- Did the experience have an effect on you as a therapist? (comparable)
- Have you had new insight concerning the experience during the last two weeks?
- How did the experience influence you, what did the experience give you?
  (comparable)

Artistic expression:

- You are invited to express your process and experience two weeks after.
- After completing art expression:
  Observe your two art expressions: what is similar/different in structure, color, and shapes content. Is there a difference? What is its meaning for you?
Appendix E – informed consent

29 Everett St., Cambridge, MA 02138

Doctoral Research Informed Consent Form:

You are invited to participate in the research project titled: Do Personal Cultural Portrait Photographs’ have an effect on cultural attitude among Jewish and Arabic expressive/art therapists in Israel? This study will examine the effect of cultural portrait photographs on cultural attitudes among Jewish and Arabic expressive therapists in Israel. The purpose of the study is to examine cultural attitudes and the possible effect of cultural portrait photographs on multicultural competencies among expressive/art therapists in Israel.

The session will take place in an art therapy studio where you will be individually interviewed by an expressive therapist. You will be asked to fill a demographic form. You will be asked to have your portrait picture taken on a digital camera and then participate in role play and answer questions about your experience as well as respond artistically. The session will be an hour and a half to two hours in length and be videotaped. The artistic expression will be photographed as well.

Self-Disclosure: there will be opportunities in this research to talk about yourself and share personal thoughts, feelings, opinions, ideas and experiences. The Art-making will also present an opportunity for self-disclosure, and has the potential to elicit a range of thoughts and feelings that might not be anticipated. You are in charge of monitoring your own level of comfort in self-disclosure. You will not be expected to disclose more about yourself than you choose to share. Although this experience and study may be therapeutic, it is not intended to serve the purpose of therapy. If any of the study topics trigger past trauma or present distress for you, please reach out to an appropriate counselor or helping professional for support. I will be happy to give you a referral as needed. Confidentiality will be protected.

In addition:

- You are free to choose not to participate in the research and to discontinue your participation in the research at any time.
- Identifying details will be kept confidential by the researcher. Data collected will be reviewed with a pseudonym, the participant’s identity will never be revealed by the researcher.
- Any and all of your questions will be answered at any time and you are free to consult with anyone (i.e., friend, family) about your decision to participate in the research and/or to discontinue your participation.
Participation in this research poses minimal risk to the participants. The probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are no greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

If any problem in connection to the research arises, you can contact the researcher Varda Serok-Jeppa by phone: 972-4-6619219 and by email at vserokje@lesley.edu, or Lesley University sponsoring faculty and Doctoral advisor Dr. Kossak at phone: 972-617-349-8167, email: mkossak@lesley.edu.

The researcher may present the outcomes of this study for academic purposes (i.e., articles, teaching, conference presentations, supervision etc.)

My agreement to participate has been given of my own free will and that I understand all of the stated above. In addition, I will receive a copy of this consent form.

__________________________________________  ______________________  _________________  
Participant’s signature             Date                  Researcher’s signature             Date
Appendix F – consent to use art work

Consent to Use and/or Display Art

CONSENT BETWEEN: Varda Serok-Jeppa and _______________________

Expressive Arts Therapy Doctoral Student         Participants’ Name

I, __________________________ agree to allow Varda Serok-Jeppa to use and/or display and/or photograph my artwork, for the following purpose(s):

YES / NO Reproduction and/or inclusion within the research currently being completed by the expressive arts therapy doctoral student.

YES/ NO Reproduction and/or presentation at a professional conference.

YES/ NO Reproduction, presentation, and/or inclusion within academic assignments including but not limited to a doctoral work, currently being completed by the expressive arts therapy doctoral student.

YES/ NO I would like the original art returned to me at the completion of the research.

It is my understanding that neither my name, nor any identifying information will be revealed in any presentation or display of my artwork, unless waived below.

☐ I DO ☐ I DO NOT wish to remain anonymous.

This consent to use or display my artwork may be revoked by me at any time. I also understand I’ll receive a copy of this consent form for my personal records.
I, ___Varda Serok-Jeppa____, agree to the following conditions in connection with the use of artwork:

**Expressive Arts Therapy Doctoral Student**

I agree to keep your artwork safe, whether an original or reproduction, to the best of my ability and to notify you immediately of any loss or damage while your art is in my possession. I agree to return your artwork immediately if you decide to withdraw your consent at any time. I agree to safeguard your confidentiality.

Signed ____Varda Serok-Jeppa_____________ Date ___________________

Expressive Arts Therapy Doctoral Student

Contact info:
Varda Serok-Jeppa
Email: vserokje@lesley.edu
Address: Zvia, 20129, Israel
Phone number: 972-4-6619219
Appendix G

Anonymous demographic details’ form

Sex______________________________
Age______________________________
Religion________________________ secular ( ), religious ( ), conservative ( ).
Education_______________________________________________________________
Profession_______________________________________________________________
Status: Married ( ), divorced ( ), widowed ( ), single ( ).
No. of children: 0 ( ), 1 ( ), 2 ( ), 3 ( ), 4 ( ), other ( ).
Place of residence: village ( ), city ( ), Kibbutz ( ).
Family of origin:
Mother’s profession_________________father’s profession_________________
NO. of children in family________ your place in between siblings_____________
Was your original family: religious ( )? Conservative ( )? Secular ( )?
Mark the words describing the atmosphere in your original family:
Strictness, flexibility, openness, acceptance, criticism, judgment, containment, warmth,
closeness, isolation, segregation, patronizing, love, intimacy, friendship, equality,
dictatorship, social status.
References


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