Cultural Humility in Art Therapy:
An Heuristic Arts-based Inquiry

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Abstract

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The changing demographics of Canadian society make cultural awareness and sensitivity a practical and ethical necessity for all mental health workers. Over the last two decades, there has been a proliferation of research on cross-cultural counseling practices. Despite this growing knowledge base, the problem facing researchers and clinicians now is how to apply the philosophical understanding of cultural competence to practice (Sue, 2006). However, the dominant model of cultural competence has been criticized for suggesting that culture is something that can be mastered through knowledge and the acquisition of specific skills. Instead, a notion of "cultural humility" is put forth, which views self-examination as a lifelong venture (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998). Current art therapy literature tends to focus on interventions with specific cultural groups, without addressing how a therapist should account for his/her own cultural assumptions and biases in the therapeutic encounter. This research, using an arts-based heuristic approach, suggests one way in which art therapists can harness their creativity and intuition to develop cultural humility.

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In a process that began with a weekend course in cross-cultural issues in counseling, I have been drawn to exploring how my culture, values, and biases affect my interactions with clients. This course, though brief and isolated from the core art therapy curriculum, convinced me of the importance of cultural sensitivity in every client contact. With the increasing pluralism of Canadian society, clinicians are faced with the practical reality and challenges of working with greater numbers of culturally different clients (Calisch, 2003). Most cross-cultural counseling theorists cite the first step towards being able to work effectively with clients from different cultural backgrounds as gaining awareness of one's values and biases (Sue, 2006). By structuring my journey towards cultural self-awareness as research, I am striving towards an exploration that is systematic and thorough.

However, "intercultural learning is never linear or orderly. It is a process that occurs in complex ways with increasing levels of cultural self-knowledge as an integral part of understanding how responses to culturally different persons are manifested" (Nakanishi & Rittner, 1992, p. 29). Therefore, while it is important to begin with an exploration of one's biases and cultural assumptions, this knowledge must be coupled with lived learning experiences. Throughout this research project, I oscillated between reading about cultural sensitivity, applying the theory to my interactions with clients, and reflecting on my experience through writing and art making.

Implied in the quote above is the notion that there is no final state of cultural awareness. As culture is dynamic and contextual, it is insufficient to examine one's

presently held values and assume that this awareness will continue to inform all future encounters. Therefore, this research proposes a method of ongoing self-evaluation that can be incorporated into clinical practice as part of a lifelong commitment to ethical cross-cultural counseling. The methods that I utilize may be smoothly integrated into clinical practice as they draw upon art therapists' unique strengths (Bloomgarden & Netzer, 1998). The heuristic process employs intuition and tacit knowledge as pathways to understanding. The arts-based research component allows the art therapist to continually engage in his/her own creative process and derive meaning from it. When combined, this approach results in a highly embodied form of knowledge, internalized through direct experience and intimately linked with the clinical context in which it emerged.

In heuristic research, the question chosen for study represents "a passionate concern that calls out to the researcher, one that holds important social meanings and personal, compelling implications" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 27). The social implications of my study involve making therapy accessible to a greater percentage of the population by properly training clinicians to offer culturally relevant treatment. By having a clear understanding of one's own belief system, including stereotypes and prejudices, therapists can monitor the ways in which those beliefs may enter into treatment. In so doing, they can actively avoid imposing their beliefs on their clients and negatively impacting treatment (Coseo, 1997).

There are unique implications for the field of art therapy as well. Many art therapists hold the assumption that art is a language that can transcend borders. While art, music, movement, and play can permit communication without language, these modalities are

not culturally neutral (Malchiodi, 2008). The circumstances that determine who makes art, when and where it is permissible to create, for what reasons, as well as the preferred modality and the symbols that are employed vary from culture to culture. Art therapists must be cognizant of these variables, in addition to the wider body of cultural knowledge, in order to avoid inadvertently alienating their clients rather than being agents of change.

The difficulty with conducting a self-directed inquiry into one's own cultural biases is that culture is like the water in which we swim; most of us are unaware of the values, mores, and messages that we absorb from our culture. However, as art therapists are well aware, art has the unique ability to "wrench us away from ourselves" (Highwater, 1994, p.13). Art therapy is rooted in the belief that art can reveal unconscious biases and provide a less threatening pathway for assimilating this information into one's conscious mind. Sometimes our art expressions can be unexpected, uncomfortable, or even disturbing. These expressions can disrupt our long-held biases and demand action and change (McNiff, 2009; Sullivan, 2005). I have selected art making as the methodology for my heuristic inquiry for precisely these reasons.

Rationale for Present Study

Art therapists working in Canada, especially in such diverse cities as Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver, must critically evaluate their capabilities in working with a variety of cultural groups. According to the 2006 census, the immigrant population currently accounts for 19.8% of the Canadian population. It is estimated that by 2017, in Toronto and Vancouver, half of the people surveyed will belong to a visible minority group. As these statistics only include permanent residents, the numbers are likely to be

significantly higher than estimated (Statistics Canada, 2008). Given these facts, cultural humility should be considered an integral part of art therapy clinical practice. The current state of multicultural art therapy training reveals deficits: there is a lack of standards and content, a lack of research, a lack of training for educators, and a lack of diversity in the field (Calish, 2003). This study is one step towards furthering that agenda for me and hopefully prompting other art therapy students and practitioners to do further research into this timely and important subject.

The aim of this research is to further the inquiry of cultural humility in art therapy. By undertaking a rigorous process of self-examination, along with direct experience working with individuals and families from cultures different than my own, I intend to explore and critically examine my journey towards cultural humility. My experience facilitating art therapy sessions draws upon an eight-month internship as part of a youth mental health team at a community social services centre. As this centre is located in a multicultural urban centre, I had the opportunity to work with clients from a variety of cultural backgrounds.

Research Questions

Primary Research Question:

How can a heuristic self-inquiry facilitate the development of cultural humility in an art therapy intern?

Subsidiary Research Question:

What role does art making play in this heuristic self-inquiry?

I would like to note that these questions were formulated at the beginning of my research process, when I had only a vague understanding of what form my inquiry would take. As the heuristic process is inherently emergent, I did not want to presume that art would play a dominant role in my journey. By leaving my questions open ended, I allowed for the possibility that other processes, such as writing or discussions with colleagues, would be the primary vehicles for learning. The ways in which this inquiry unfolded are discussed at length in the Research Process section of this document.

Operational Definitions

Culture. For the purposes of this research project, I will accept the definition of culture as:

> A series of habits shared by members of a group living in a geographic area, learned but biologically conditioned, such as the means of communication (language being the basis of them all), social relations at different levels, the various activities of daily life, the products of that group and how they are utilized, the peculiar manifestations of both individual and national personalities (in their cultural context, its patterns and prohibitions), and their ideas concerning their own existence and their fellow people. (Poyatos, 2002, p. 2)

Additionally, culture is more than a package that we acquire from our community as infants. Culture is dynamic and subject to modification by each subsequent generation. Finally, rather than being a random collection of traits, culture is "patterned, organized, and integrated" (Calish, 2003, p. 12).

Due to the scope of this study, I have chosen to focus on those aspects of culture that relate to one's national origin, language, religion, and ethnicity. I would like to acknowledge that culture also includes one's age, gender, acquired and developmental disabilities, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation (Hays, 2008). While these aspects of my own culture certainly influence my beliefs, values, and biases, I have chosen to focus on ethnicity and religion because these are the aspects of my identity with which I struggle the most, and hence, are likely to enter my therapeutic relationships in unexpected ways. However, it is impossible to isolate one area from another and I accept this as a necessary limitation of my study.

Cultural humility. Cultural humility "incorporates a lifelong commitment to self-evaluation and self-critique, to redressing the power imbalances in the [client-helper] dynamic, and to developing mutually beneficial and nonpaternalistic clinical and advocacy partnerships with communities on behalf of individuals and defined populations" (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998, p. 117).

Autoethnographic Narrative

Autoethnography is a method that emerges from critical research perspectives, such as feminism and postmodernism, and challenges the assumptions of traditional social science research (Leavy, 2009). These assumptions include the dichotomies between subject and object, rational and emotional, and private and public. The goal is to reveal the role of the researcher in the process, as more than an objective observer and reporter. In the following narrative, I will present autobiographical information in order to provide

the reader with a context for the study. Whenever possible, I will situate my personal experience within a larger cultural context.

I was born in Israel to Jewish parents. My mother is a Sephardic Jew (loosely defined as a Jew of North African or Spanish descent), who was born in Morocco and immigrated to Israel as a result of the widespread anti-Semitism in Morocco. My father was born in Jerusalem to an Ashkenazi family (Eastern European descent) with roots in the country for three generations. The reaction to their engagement from both families was ambivalent; even in the 1980s, the taboo of mixed marriages between Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews was still strong. The cultures were extremely different and had adopted customs and attitudes similar to the wider culture in which they were immersed; North African and Arab culture influenced the Sephardic Jews, while Ashkenazi Jews were well integrated in Eastern European culture.

This clash of cultures continued to unfold on a smaller scale within my family unit and influenced my sense of cultural identity in many ways. It was expressed through deliberations about which customs we should adopt, such as which synagogue we would attend and what melody we would use to sing the prayers on *Shabbat* (the Jewish Sabbath). Though my parents had grown up with different traditions for these, and other, religious and cultural practices, at home my mother's customs prevailed. This is partially because we lived near my mother's family, who were large and dominant. Growing up around my mother's family, I never felt a strong identification with them. I viewed my aunts and cousins as loud, impatient, and bossy. My introverted personality was pegged as "too Ashkenazi" by my aunts and cousins and I never quite fit in with them. I felt

more connected with the Ashkenazi side of my family – my father's sister and parents – and came to devalue the Moroccan elements of my upbringing.

Another milestone in my cultural upbringing was my adjustment to life in Canada, having been raised in Israel and Europe as a child (my family lived in Turkey and Denmark for 2 years). When I was 6 years old, my parents decided to move to Toronto for the economic opportunities and safety that the country offered. My siblings and I were enrolled in a private, religious Sephardic school. The advantage of attending a Jewish school was that all of my teachers and some of my fellow students spoke Hebrew, easing the transition to Canada. My parents believed that it was important to maintain a connection to Judaism and Israel even though we lived abroad. However, there was a discrepancy between the level of religious observance of other children at the school, who were from much more observant families, and my home life. I felt belittled by my classmates for my lower level of religious observance and tried to hide the fact that at home, I wore pants, listened to music on *Shabbat,* and did not eat strictly *Kosher* food (food prepared according to Jewish dietary laws).

In grade 6, I switched to a less observant school with mostly Ashkenazi Canadian-born peers. I was always aware that I was different from them, with my ethnic sounding name, Israeli parents, and upbringing abroad. However, a visit to Israel in grade 7 reminded me that I was not quite Israeli either. After living in Canada for several years, the loud, impatient, outgoing Israeli attitude seemed very far removed from who I was. I suddenly felt very Canadian.

I remained in the private Jewish school system until the end of high school. Despite living in a culturally diverse city, I rarely had the opportunity to interact with someone who was not Jewish. What strikes me now is how I never even thought this was unusual. My first exposure to Canada's multicultural society was at the age of eighteen, when I began attending a local university and took a part-time job in customer service in a diverse neighbourhood. Though I lived in Canada for most of my life, this was truly an experience of culture shock. In my five years working there, I grew increasingly comfortable and appreciative of the diversity around me. For the first time in my life, I started to feel a bit claustrophobic in my very tight-knit, Jewish community.

Perhaps fittingly, it was a one-year exchange program in Jerusalem during the third year of my undergraduate degree that deepened my awareness of my own culture. Living in Jerusalem, a very pluralistic city, challenged me to reconsider my views on what Judaism and Israel meant to me. In Jewish school and at home, Israel was glorified as "the Holy land", constantly threatened by the Arab countries that surrounded it. The Israeli government and army were given full support to do anything necessary to defend Israel's borders. Likewise, the Jewish people were depicted as heroes, persecuted throughout history and always surviving and thriving. As I studied the history of the region, its archaeology, politics, art and culture, the monolithic myth that I had been brought up to believe about Israel began to crack. I learned about the Palestinian population who was displaced when the State of Israel was established. I was disturbed by their stories of loss and suffering. This expanded understanding enriched me, yet simultaneously I felt the burden of knowledge, the complexity and messiness it created for my sense of identity as an Israeli.

My experiences in Jerusalem were the beginning of my journey towards cultural self-awareness. I continued negotiating what it meant to be white, female, Jewish, Israeli and Canadian in the years that followed. When I decided to pursue my Master's degree in art therapy, I moved from Toronto to Montreal. This transition to a new city, with its unique culture, provided the backdrop for my current exploration. As an intern in a French-speaking institution, I felt my 'otherness'. I learned basic French, but only understood a fraction of what was discussed in team meetings or written in the client's files. Perhaps this sense of exclusion helped me understand, if only slightly, the experience of the clients at my placement site, many of who came to Montreal as immigrants or refugees.

I will conclude my autoethnography with a statement of my biases, which are based on my experiences and may affect my interactions with clients consciously or unconsciously. Firstly, I recognize that I have come to value the cultural values associated with Ashkenazi Jewish culture more highly than Sephardic culture. Though I do not prescribe to these values in their entirety, they are more within my comfort zone. As a disclaimer, I should say that my understanding of Ashkenazi and Sephardic culture is based on my family and the communities with which I have interacted and is not generalizeable to all Ashkenazi or Sephardic Jews and the many manifestations of Jewish culture that exist.

To me, some values that are emphasized by Ashkenazi culture are individualism, linear thinking, pursuing higher education, achieving material success, supporting 'high art' (classical music, fine art and literature), and establishing insular communities and separate institutions for Jews. Sephardic culture places more emphasis on larger families, strong community networks, and interdependence (collectivist rather than individualist),

maintaining traditional gender roles, a belief in superstitions (such as the "evil eye"), being street savvy over formally educated, and participating in making music and dancing regularly (more rhythmic, spontaneous and body-centered). Very broadly, I would classify these two streams as collectivist and individualist cultures. Of course, these are gross generalizations. However, my assumption is that this bias is likely to interfere more in my treatment relationships with individuals from collectivist cultures, which I feel less connected to and somewhat alienated from in my own background.

My second area of bias lies with my personal belief in secularism and atheism, rather than organized religion and spiritualism. Despite my religious education until high school, I have since espoused a much more skeptical attitude towards religion. My negative experiences at an Orthodox Sephardic school have left me with some hostility towards Orthodox institutions. As before, I believe that this bias may interfere with my objectivity when working with individuals who espouse any strong religious beliefs, not just Judaism.

The final area of bias that I would like to address relates to visible minorities. While I do not consciously hold negative attitudes towards visible minorities, given my extremely sheltered background, I may still hold an "us and them" mentality. I have consciously rejected the idea that Jews are special and other individuals are "gentiles". Nonetheless, residues of this idea may linger in my subconscious mind and may become more noticeable when working with non-Jewish and non-White individuals. For the purposes of this paper, I will define White as an individual who has light skin pigmentation and may self-identify as Caucasian. I recognize that this term is both ambiguous and

contentious and will strive to provide as much specificity as possible when I describe my clients' ethnic background, without resorting to such broad labels.

In the remainder of this document, I will describe my journey of striving for an increased awareness of how my personal and cultural background interacts with those of my clients. I will return to the biases outlined above in my analysis to consider whether they affected my interactions as I had expected or not, and if so, how this was manifested.

Literature Review

Multicultural Counseling

Over the last few decades, there has been a proliferation of research on issues relevant to multicultural counseling practices. Recognizing the inherently culture-bound nature of all psychological theories and techniques, multicultural counseling theory (MCT) proposes that individuals exist in a cultural context (Ivey, 1995). While this seems self-evident, the basic assumption of Western psychological models is that problems lie within an individual. This assumption serves to perpetuate the status quo, as individuals are expected to change in order to survive in a society that may be discriminatory. Rather than doing unto the client, MCT employs inter-subjectivity: a collaborative process where client and therapist work together to examine their relationship and their social context (Ivey). The goal of MCT is critical consciousness, whereby clients come to understand their difficulties in context and can therefore take action (Ivey). Both the therapist's and client's cultural identity will influence the way s/he defines problems; hence both are relevant in a culture-centered approach (Diamond, 2009).

Just as individuals are culture-bound, so too is the process of therapy (Lewis, 1997; Sue & Sue, 1990). The Western European and North American origins of psychotherapy have endowed the field with a worldview that is based on the values and assumptions of these cultures (Lewis, 1997). Western psychology assumes a universal approach to culture, which means that all humans are essentially the same (Carter & Quereshi, 1995). In psychoanalaysis, for example, each individual has an id, ego, and superego, which function and malfunction in the same way in all people. Core assumptions are that most problems are a result of intra-psychic forces, such that individual therapy may successfully resolve one's problems (Sue & Sue, 1990); that there is a standard of normal behaviour, from which any deviation may be labeled abnormal (Burr & Butt, 2000; Lewis, 1997); and that most dysfunction can be explained by cause and effect reasoning (Lewis, 1997), to name just a few. Cross-cultural research has shown that social and psychological constructs from Western cultures may not be generalized to other cultures (Hocoy, 2002; Sue, Arredondo & McDavis, 1992). This challenges mental health providers to expand their theoretical understandings in order to avoid pathologizing legitimate cultural expressions (Hocoy, 2002).

Cultural Competence

Competence in multicultural practice is comprised of three general areas: cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, and cultural skills (Sue, 2006). Awareness refers to the therapist's "sensitivity to her or his personal values and biases and how these may influence perceptions of the client, client's problem, and the counseling relationship" (Sue, p. 238). According to Pedersen (2002), multicultural awareness can be assessed on the basis of specific competencies: the ability to recognize cultural and linguistic

differences, interest in cultures other than one's own, sensitivity to the myths and stereotypes of other cultures, concern for the welfare of persons from other cultures, the ability to articulate elements of the individual's own culture, among others.

Cultural knowledge is the therapist's understanding of the client's culture, worldview and expectations for the counseling relationship. This can include knowledge about the history of cultures other than one's own, an understanding of the roles of education, money, values, attitudes and behaviours in other cultures, knowledge of the language and slang of other cultures, knowledge about the resources available for teaching and learning in other cultures, and possession of information that persons in other cultures will perceive as useful (Pedersen, 2002).

Finally, skill is the therapist's "ability to intervene in a manner that is culturally sensitive and relevant" (Sue, 2006, p. 238). This can be observed through one's ability to use the teaching and learning techniques of other cultures, establish empathic rapport with persons from other cultures, analyze feedback accurately within the context of other cultures, and develop new ideas in the contexts of other cultures (Pedersen, 2002).

A Critique of Competence: Towards Cultural Humility

Though cultural competence is the dominant construct in the psychological literature, it has been criticized for misunderstanding culture and suggesting that one can be competent in the life experiences of another human being. Some of the critiques of competence models, stemming from anthropology, are that they:

> Frequently present culture as static; treat culture as a variable; conflate culture with race and ethnicity; do not acknowledge diversity within groups; may

> inadvertently place blame of a patient's culture; often emphasize cultural differences, thereby obscuring structural power imbalances; and finally, fail to recognize biomedicine as a cultural system itself. (Carpenter-Song, Schwallie & Longhofer, 2007, pp. 1363)

The proponents of cultural humility suggest that, rather than competence, humility is a more appropriate goal in cross-cultural interventions (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998). This involves a lifelong commitment to self-evaluation, which also challenges therapists to serve as allies to the clients they assist by working actively to remove barriers that hinder societal progress (Ayvazian, 2001; Diamond, 2009; Ivey, 1995).

Cultural Competence in Art Therapy

In the last 15 years, art therapy has responded to the demand for cross-cultural interventions. The bulk of the research is qualitative, with numerous articles written on specific interventions with individuals or groups of a particular cultural background. Victor (2007), in her dissertation on the Lost Boys of Sudan, provides a comprehensive survey of cross-cultural interventions in art therapy. A recurring theme in the literature is the responsibility we have as art therapists to understand our own values and biases when working with culturally different clients (Calish, 2003; Coseo, 1997; Hocoy, 2002). Despite this recognition, few guidelines exist to assist art therapists in undertaking this process.

The American Art Therapy Association (AATA) includes a section on cultural awareness in its Code of Ethics (2003). The points covered in this section address awareness, knowledge and skills, the elements of competence discussed by Sue (2006).

The AATA devotes five clauses to this topic, including: sensitivity to differences in beliefs and treatment (6.1), self-awareness (6.2), continuing diversity education (6.3), knowledge about specific cultural groups with which one works (6.4), and obtaining culturally sensitive supervision (6.5). While there is no recipe for cultural competence, art therapists are grappling with how to put these principles into practice. Most models identify the first step towards becoming culturally sensitive as an examination of one's own cultural values and how those values may influence clients. Several examples in the literature exist of art therapists who undertook this self-examination as part of their research process (Brigatti, 2006; Coseo, 1997; Goldman, 1994; Mathews, 1998). Despite its suitability for this purpose, the heuristic approach was only used in one of these studies (Brigatti).

While many art therapists are recognizing themselves as culture-bound and are striving to increase their ability to work effectively with members of other cultures, many are still 'culture blind' (Acton, 2001; Gerity, 2000; Hocoy, 2002). Hocoy defines this as "one who treats all clients equally without consideration for cultural origin" (p. 141). Also called cultural encapsulation, this way of treating clients may ultimately result in unintentional bias or cultural malpractice (Acton, 2001; Diamond, 2009; Gerity, 2000). For example, the role of art in a particular culture will greatly influence how a client responds, or not, to art therapy interventions. Being unaware of cultural specificities may result in incorrect assessment and treatment. Several authors have implicated art therapy training programs in this problematic situation.

Multicultural Training in Art Therapy

While training programs have added courses on multicultural awareness to their curriculum, Calish (2003) asserts that this is not sufficient. In a comprehensive examination of the current state of multicultural education in art therapy, she identified six issues that hinder progress in this area: a lack of standards for multicultural education and competence, a failure to encourage students to contextualize persons in their cultural setting, a failure to apply research information that is relevant to multicultural practice, a separation between research and practice, a lack of continuing multicultural training for educators, and the lack of diversity in gender and culture within the profession.

As art therapy training programs are just beginning to integrate multicultural issues into their core curriculum, the onus is on the individual student or therapist to prioritize cultural humility in his/her own learning. The literature on cultural competence and cultural humility provides a framework from which to begin, with some examples in the art therapy literature of innovative approaches to self-awareness and education. By taking an active stance against imposing culture-bound assumptions on our clients, art therapists will ensure that the field remains viable in our multicultural society.

Methodology

This research journey was not a clear, linear path to learning. Selecting a heuristic and arts-based approach deviated from my preferred way of working. Engaging in a creative process is not the same as writing a theoretical paper; the process cannot be directed or predicted in the same way. Even as I proposed my project, I had trepidations that I could undertake an authentic creative journey while under time constraints. I worried that I

would not have any insights worth mentioning, that my journey would be superficial or incomplete. Looking back, I can see that my own judgments and doubts were the greatest obstacle to the creative process.

Given the inherently personal nature of my research question, the heuristic approach is the most appropriate. The foundational question in a heuristic inquiry is: "what is my experience of this phenomenon?" (Patton, 2002, p. 107). Rather than focusing outward, on the client, his/her artwork or the therapeutic alliance, in order to study the development of cultural humility in my role as an art therapy intern, I must focus inward. By attending to my experience closely, through journaling, art making, self-dialogue and dialogue with others, I will attempt to discover the essential meaning of this phenomenon (Moustakas, 1990). Implied in my research question is the assumption that the heuristic process will affect my development as an art therapist. As self-understanding and self-growth are interrelated, my research will be more than an intellectual exercise (Moustakas). In the internal search for knowledge, the heuristic process relies on tacit knowing, an important part of the art therapist's repertoire. Therefore, in conducting my research, I will also be strengthening my ability to follow intuition and tacit knowledge in working with clients (Bloomgarden & Netzer, 1998).

The Heuristic Research Method

Heuristic research is a form of qualitative inquiry that emphasizes the personal experience and insights of the researcher (Patton, 2002). It is a "passionate and discerning personal involvement in problem solving, an effort to know the essence of some aspect of life through the internal pathways of the self" (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 39). Heuristic research does not dictate a particular methodology; a researcher

may draw from numerous sources of data, including journal entries, poems, artwork, dream analyses, personal documents, transcripts of dialogue with oneself and others, and audio/video recordings of conversations (Moustakas, 1990). Given the highly personal self-examination that must take place when exploring one's cultural values and biases, heuristic research seems well suited.

Moustakas' model of heuristic research. The following is a brief overview of the steps involved in Moustakas' heuristic approach. A more detailed elaboration of these steps is included in the *Heuristic Journey* section of this document. Beginning with initial engagement, the researcher discovers the question that he/she will passionately pursue in his/her research and begins to define and clarify its terms. A period of immersion follows, where the researcher lives with the question and seeks any opportunity to understand it and ascribe meaning to it. In the incubation phase, the focus lessens in intensity, allowing the researcher's tacit knowledge to grow from beyond one's conscious awareness. The next phase, illumination, occurs naturally when qualities of the phenomenon break through into conscious awareness. During the explication phase, the researcher fully examines the qualities and themes that arose in the previous phase. Through focusing, indwelling, self-searching and self-disclosure, the researcher seeks to gain a meaningful understanding of the phenomenon. Finally, the researcher must integrate the elements of the heuristic journey in a creative synthesis, which can be a narrative description, a poem, a story, or an artwork.

Sela-Smith's critique of Moustakas' method. The critique that Sela-Smith (2002) directs towards Moustakas does not challenge the approach that he suggests, rather his application of it. While Moustakas describes a surrender to one's subjective experience,

his own investigation of loneliness (1961) focuses on the objective, observed experience of the phenomenon. Sela-Smith attributes this external shift to an unacknowledged resistance to the overwhelming feelings that accompany the experience of loneliness. In a meta-analysis of 28 heuristic research studies, Sela-Smith found that only 3 successfully completed the method. That is, only 3 researchers reported a subjective, open-ended inquiry that draws on tacit knowledge and results in transformation. She attributes this to Moustakas' ambivalence, wherein he presents one method and undertakes another.

To reconcile this inherent discrepancy in the method, Sela-Smith proposes a variation of it which she terms "heuristic self-search inquiry" (2002, p. 83). This method retains the six phases as outlined by Moustakas but emphasizes the "I-who-feels", or interior, subjective experience. The core component of this method is self-transformation, which will occur when one surrenders to the inquiry and all the feelings, no matter how painful, that come along with it. While Moustakas encourages researchers to utilize co-participants as part of the investigation, Sela-Smith states, "there can only be one subject for self-study and that is 'I'" (p. 78). She does suggest that co-participants can be valuable if they are used to reflect possible areas of resistance and the focus remains on the researcher. Recognizing Sela-Smith's critique as valid, I will integrate her approach into my methodology.

Heuristic Research in Art Therapy

The heuristic approach aligns well with art therapists' strengths, given the emphasis on intuition, tacit knowledge, and learning through creative experiencing (Bloomgarden

& Netzer, 1998). As many art therapists are hesitant to engage in quantitative research, heuristics enables the researcher to conduct research while simultaneously offering an opportunity to develop both personally and professionally (Netzer, 2009). Junge and Linesch (1993) identify several elements of qualitative research, such as heuristics, that makes it well suited for the field of art therapy. These include: intentionality (a concern with the emotional and cognitive meanings behind overt behaviour), engagement (a desire to be actively involved with the subject of one's research rather than remain detached), understanding (seeking the unique features of a phenomenon), and a critique of ideology (uncovering individual and social assumptions that reinforce oppression), among others.

Studies utilizing the heuristic approach have been used to investigate intimate and otherwise difficult to research subjects, such as: negotiating the conflicting roles of artist and therapist in becoming an art therapist (Rigg, 2004), the experience of female mental health clinicians coping with work related stress in treating traumatized children (Pegel, 2003), and the experience of conducting home-based art therapy with seriously ill children (Derouaux, 2007). While remaining deeply personal, these studies also relate to the experiences of other art therapists and thus contribute to the body of knowledge.

Using art to facilitate heuristic research. As the heuristic process does not dictate a specific methodology, the criteria for selecting a method should be its ability to access internal experience, encourage open-ended exploration of the research question, and facilitate understanding. The creative process is extremely well suited as a means to achieve these aims. Gordon (1975) describes the four stages of the creative process as preparation, incubation, illumination and verification. Her definitions of these stages

correspond closely to the stages of the heuristic process outlined by Moustakas. The creative process, like the heuristic inquiry, requires that one approach it with a sense of not knowing and a willingness to tolerate the doubt and anxiety that may arise as a result. Langer (1989) believes that this not knowing, which she calls creative uncertainty, allows new information to emerge into consciousness. When one is able to focus on the process, rather than the outcome, and play with multiple perspectives and contexts, transformation is possible.

Recognizing this potential, several art therapists have harnessed the creative process to execute their heuristic journeys. Morin (2008) evaluated the shifts in her personal mythology, as reflected through her art making, throughout the course of her Master's degree in art therapy. Similarly, Arsenault (2009) analyzed her spontaneous art making over the course of her Master's studies in order to understand how her art making facilitated her development as an art therapist. Mosher (2007) used art making as the primary means of exploring the experience of parental illness. Finally, Brigatti (2006) documented her journey towards cultural self-awareness through art making. The authors, while researching different questions, all report that the creative process facilitated increased reflection, heightened awareness, and resulted in personal transformation.

Art-based research. The abovementioned studies incorporate art making quite seamlessly into the heuristic research process. Though the object of the studies is the researcher, art is used as a means to elucidate inner experience. Finley and Knowles (1995) propose the notion of the researcher as artist/artist as researcher, which I believe is especially suitable for art therapists. They suggest that artist and researcher are two

aspects of the self, rather than distinct entities. Just as an artist may make a sculpture one day and a painting the next, the process of research can also be viewed as an artful endeavour. Knowles says, "I am looking at the landscape on the wall behind us. The cast of yellows, the sunlight- there are pyramid shapes and sand dunes. Realism blends with interpretation, and I also see that combination in your research. You are drawing conclusions, you are writing a story, you are analyzing, but at the same time the realist 'telling' is highly interpretive" (p. 135).

McNiff (1998), recognizing the value of heuristic investigations, suggests an alternative role for art in this process. He speaks of the interplay between researcher and art object as a more dynamic interaction. Whereas the traditional perspective of heuristic research is that of the researcher, if the researcher can enter into a partnership with the art object, he/she is able to expand the perspective of the research. Having a dialogue with the art object and investigating the object as a separate entity from the researcher can accomplish this task. McNiff's position, while deviating slightly from the heuristic method established by Moustakas and Sela-Smith, places greater importance on the art process and product(s). This shift results in a study that is both introspective and empirical, as the creative products serve as empirical data to be systematically reviewed.

Research Process

Heuristic Journey

While I was drawn to the heuristic approach for the self-search and the self-disclosure it facilitated, I did not find that my process neatly fit into the six stages outlined by Moustakas and Sela-Smith. In the following section, I classify my process according to

the six stage model, but call attention to any areas where the two did not coincide. As McNiff (1998) states, "the creative researcher avoids stock theories and rigid methods of inquiry and prefers insights emerging from sustained reflections on phenomena" (p. 47). While the heuristic process is far from rigid, the insistence by its proponents on adhering to the six stages does seem antithetical to the chaotic, messy nature of any creative process.

Initial engagement. While my formal research journey would not begin until years later, my initial questioning of what defined my cultural identity began during my exchange program in Jerusalem in 2005. Displacement from my insular community in the suburbs of Toronto and immersion in a different place inspired me to clarify who I was, in relation to others from similar and different cultural backgrounds.

My question began to crystallize following a cross-cultural counseling course in the second semester of my Master's degree. I was asked to write about how my cultural values, beliefs and biases affect my interactions with staff and clients at my placement site. I expected to have a difficult time completing the assignment in great depth. As my placement was at a long-term care facility with Jewish elders, I assumed that my values would closely mirror theirs. Through that reflective exercise, I realized that while we shared some values, the linguistic, regional and generational differences were significant. This led me to wonder: if my values can differ so greatly from clients with the same religion and similar cultural backgrounds, how would they influence my interactions with clients from totally different cultures? I felt compelled to explore this further and believed that this questioning could be personally meaningful and professionally relevant.

Immersion. During the immersion phase, the researcher "lives the question in waking, sleeping, and even dream states. Everything in his or her life becomes crystallized around the question" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 28). Immersion is an active phase of research, where the investigator seizes every opportunity to engage with the question. Sela-Smith (2002) emphasizes that immersion is not only about increasing knowledge, in a planned and controlled way, but also about surrendering to one's "felt experience" (p.66).

I began by immersing myself in information. I enrolled in a summer course in Cultural Psychiatry, where I studied with students and professionals from all over the world. The cross-cultural perspective on mental health, illness and healing traditions fascinated me. Informal dialogue with fellow students and extremely knowledgeable instructors enriched my understanding. I secured a practicum placement through one of the instructors, working as part of a youth mental health team with a focus on cultural psychiatry. Later that summer, I enrolled in a French language intensive course to prepare myself for the bilingual environment at the site. These opportunities were carefully planned with the intention of growing my knowledge base and seeking meaning. However, as Sela-Smith asserts, this alone does not constitute full immersion.

The period that I label "immersion" began with my therapeutic encounters with clients. As the heart of my question was how my culture would affect my interactions with clients, I considered each session an opportunity to be mindful of this question. However, as the focus of therapy was not directly related to the client's culture in most cases, I greeted the question at the beginning of each session and allowed it to fade into the background for the duration. As I wrote my process notes at the end of each session,

I included observations of how my culture may have interacted with the clients' during that hour. Due to the cultural focus of the clinical team that I worked with, issues of culture were often discussed at meetings, research presentations, and during my supervision. My immersion period lasted for eight months.

Incubation. Despite the focus and prolonged engagement of my immersion period, there were times when my attention was less directed at my question. Academic and personal responsibilities demanded my time and energy, such that my immersion phase alternated with periods of incubation. Moustakas describes incubation as a retreat from the intense focus on the question (1990). Once removed from conscious awareness, the tacit dimension of the mind continues to process the question and expand one's knowledge. Like a seed that has been planted, the question "undergoes silent nourishment, support, and care that produces a creative awareness" (p. 29). After some time, a moment of illumination brings new understanding to the researcher.

In addition to the alternating cycles of immersion and incubation throughout the year, there was a period of incubation following the end of my clinical placement. Having completed my clinical and academic work, I felt saturated and needed a period of rest before I could begin my creative process.

Illumination. This next stage occurs naturally when the researcher is attuned to his/her intuition and in a "receptive state of mind" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 29). Illumination involves the breakthrough of themes, meanings, and essences into conscious awareness. New aspects of one's question may be revealed or distorted understandings corrected. I experienced several moments of illumination, all resulting from engagement in the

creative process. The first major illumination occurred during the Creative Process in Clinical Practice course where I created two masks to represent a character from a story I had chosen, The Ugly Duckling. While I discuss this in greater detail in the *Data Collection* section, briefly, I realized that these masks represented more than a fictional character – they represented two distinct and polarized aspects of my cultural identity. Other moments of illumination took place during the creative process that I undertook after completing my clinical placement and are discussed later in this manuscript.

Explication. During the explication stage, the researcher seeks to understand and explain what was discovered during the previous phases of the inquiry. This involves fully examining the data and distilling the core themes of the phenomenon. As with all findings in a heuristic study, the meanings are unique to the researcher and the particular experience under study. My explication began during the data analysis phase of my process, which is described in detail at a later section.

Creative Synthesis. This final stage of the heuristic process is the creative synthesis, in which the researcher consolidates the knowledge he/she has gained thus far. In order to achieve a synthesis, the researcher must be totally familiar with the data, the themes, and the meanings of the experience. After being immersed in it for a significant period of time, the researcher must move beyond the data and creatively express the essence of the experience. This can take the form of a narrative, a poem, a drawing, or any other creative form. In many ways, the writing of this document has been a creative synthesis. As well, I must admit that I do not feel that I have understood every potential meaning contained in this creative process. While I have expounded upon many of these, I remain

humble and accept that there are other meanings that I have yet to discover. Perhaps with some time and distance, a creative synthesis in an artful form may emerge.

Data Collection

The data in heuristic research lies within the researcher (Moustakas, 1990). It is the challenge of the researcher to discover it through "self-search, self-dialogue, and self-discovery" (Moustakas, p. 11). Some potential sources of data are journal entries, poems, artwork, dream analyses, personal documents, transcripts of dialogue with oneself and others, and audio/video recordings of conversations (Moustakas). In this research project, I only collected data from my own process. However, some heuristic research involves co-researchers, from whom data, in any of the forms mentioned above, is also collected.

In research projects where co-researchers are not involved, dialogue with others is a valuable tool to increase validity. Research supervisors, experts, or others who have experienced the phenomenon can reflect possible areas of resistance, of which the researcher is not aware (Sela-Smith, 2002). As my question deals with cultural awareness, an area where bias is often unconscious, sharing my process with others and receiving their feedback suggested new avenues for exploration. While I did not involve co-researchers, one phase of my analysis included dialoguing, through art and words, with two "respondents". I will expand on this part of the process later in this section.

For my research, I collected several sources of data. Over the course of my eight-month internship, I composed process notes following every art therapy session. In these notes, I included a section of observations, thoughts or questions about aspects of the

client's culture that emerged in that session. I reflected on how the client's worldview, behaviour, mannerisms, and responses might be culturally related. I also noted how my own culture might be influencing our interactions or the course of therapy, such as treatment planning and hypotheses regarding what has caused or maintained the problem for which the client was referred. Any discussions in my clinical supervision or during team meetings at the placement site that related to cultural themes were also included in my data.

Given the scope of this research project, I decided to only include my notes from five clients. These were five clients with whom I had a prolonged engagement, ranging from four to seven months. There were several clients who had been referred for art therapy and with whom I met at least once for a consultation, yet they did not proceed with treatment. It is possible that their decision not to pursue art therapy treatment was related to their cultural beliefs, such as what constitutes appropriate treatment, or a poor compatibility between us. However, I did not include them in this study under the assumption that any information that arose in one meeting would not likely be sufficient for the in-depth analysis that I applied to each client. Nonetheless, it is important to note that the five clients who are included in this research were comfortable enough with me, the idea of receiving treatment, and art therapy to pursue therapy from beginning to termination.

The next stages of my data collection took place several weeks after the end of my practicum placement. I knew that I wanted to make a creative response for each client, but was unsure of how to make the transition from words to art. It felt daunting to create one image to represent months of therapeutic work. Following the suggestion of my

research advisor, Professor Yehudit Silverman, I revisited my notes for each of the five clients and created a list of words, one for each client, which stood out as essential. Professor Silverman proposed that these "transitional words" might provide a point of entry into the creative exploration (personal communication, April 22, 2010). Leavy (2009) addresses this translation process from words to images and vice versa. The dialogue that is created between verbal or written language on one hand and visual language on the other creates a "third space", rich with potential meanings (p. 232).

At this point, I was not selecting words that specifically related to culture, rather whatever words stood out as significant. I made this decision in order to avoid limiting my exploration to the most obvious manifestations of culture; those aspects that I had already consciously identified as culturally influenced. I trusted that in the process of distilling essential words, creating images, and later, analysis, the key cultural components of my therapeutic relationships would surface.

I devoted one or two days per client to complete the initial block of responses from process notes to transitional words to creative response. For each client, I created a list of transitional words from the process notes. I felt compelled to read the words aloud after writing them down and to animate some words with a hand gesture or movement. This small step, though unexpected, brought the words to life and revealed their affective quality. Next, I spent as much time as was necessary to respond creatively to the words. This often took the form of a painting, drawing or sculpture, although I incorporated some movement as well.

The following materials were available for each session: 18" x 24" white watercolor paper, 9" x 12" gray scale paper (a pad with white, black and three gray tints), oil pastels, black, white and earth tone charcoal pastels, a selection of acrylic paints, scraps of fabric and yarn, and white, air drying modeling clay. Based on my intuition, I selected from any of the above materials and created one or more pieces, often leaving the images for several hours and returning to them later. Once the image felt resolved, I stored it out of sight, and cleared the working area for the next session. The images that resulted from these sessions will be discussed in the Data Analysis section of this document.

After repeating this cycle for each client, I set the artwork aside for one week. During the time away from the images, I was busy with other tasks and withdrew my attention from them altogether, allowing the tacit dimensions of the work to unfold. When I returned to the work, I approached the pieces for each client as though I were encountering them for the first time. I approached the object from different angles, felt its surface textures, focused on its lines, colours and contours, and allowed myself to become absorbed by it in timeless immersion. These "encounters" involved absorption, a heightened sense of consciousness, and increased physiological arousal (May, 1975). Rather than attempting to understand the object, I allowed it to simply exist and encouraged myself to be with it.

During some of these sessions, I spoke aloud into a tape recorder in order to capture my thoughts during this time of "formlessness" and chaos (Levine, 2009). If I felt compelled to do so, as I was in two cases, I created another creative response to the initial object. When this response felt resolved, I put the image away, if one had been created. Thus, I concluded my second block of responding to the images creatively. Though I had

not planned to include this step in my process, I found it necessary in some of the cases and followed my intuition.

The next step of my data collection also emerged organically. As I was revisiting the art pieces that I had created for each client, it struck me that I had not created art to represent my own culture. This suddenly felt like a conspicuous absence. To begin, I created a list of transitional words, which I distilled from my autoethnographic narrative. Similar to my process with the clients' lists of words, I said these words aloud and animated them with small gestures. These small gestures turned into larger movements and eventually to a sequence of movements. Though I had not anticipated the form my response would take, given my artistic preferences, I was surprised that I had chosen this medium.

In addition to the movements, I am including two masks that I had previously created as part of my cultural response. The masks were created during a course I took in my final semester, Creative Process in Clinical Practice. As I was in the immersion phase of my heuristic journey, it was nearly impossible for my question not to enter this parallel creative process that I was engaged in. While I was exploring the story of the Ugly Duckling through various expressive modalities, two distinct "ducklings" emerged – a vulnerable, avoidant, grey and yellow duckling (Figure 1) and an angry, fiercely protective brown and black duckling (Figure 2). During a moment of illumination, I realized that both ducklings represented aspects of my cultural identity. I had primarily identified with the grey duckling, my Ashkenazi side, and rejected the brown duckling (or Moroccan/Sephardic side) as part of myself. It was at the end of my creative process in this course that I came to own both parts of my cultural self.

Figure 1. The Ugly Duckling. Mask representing Ashkenazi side of my cultural identity.

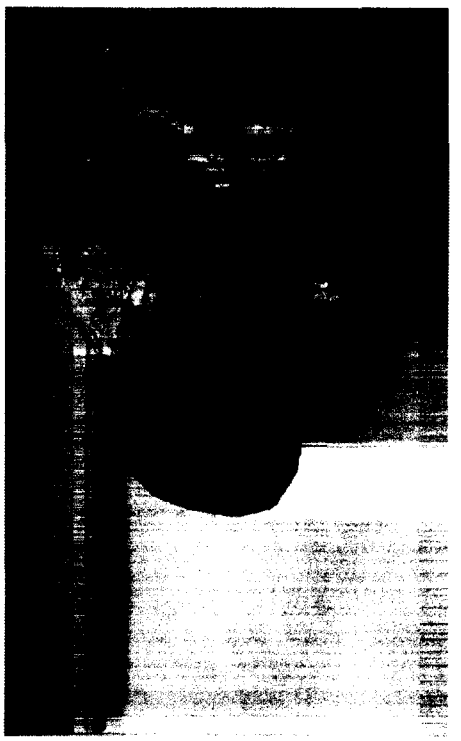

Figure 2. Aggressor/protector. Mask representing Sephardic side of my cultural identity.

The final phase of data collection came from meetings that I held with two respondents. The distinction between "participants" and "respondents" is that participants in a heuristic research project would be undergoing their own parallel process (in this case, exploring their responses to clients from different cultural backgrounds), and the principal researcher would be responsible for synthesizing all of the data in a summarizing paper and creative synthesis (Moustakas, 1990). In contrast, the respondents in this study were not involved with the research in any way except for this component.

Each respondent was asked to participate in one meeting, of 60 to 90 minutes, where I showed her my artwork for each client and asked her to create her own artwork in response. The meetings were held individually, two weeks apart. Each respondent was asked to "encounter" the artwork, one client-set at a time, and to respond creatively using any of the materials that I had available during my own art making sessions. Once she completed her response, I asked her to write down a list of words that related to my images or her own response to them. Before moving to the next client, I asked if she had anything questions or comments about the process thus far. The respondents were allotted 10 minutes per client-set, with a brief break in between, to encourage a spontaneous response.

In order to maintain the anonymity of my respondents, the artwork and words that they created will not be included in this paper, nor will the content of our discussions. Staying true to the heuristic process, the focus will remain on the researcher (Sela-Smith, 2002). Therefore, the information that arose during these meetings will be included in

the context of how it informed my exploration, including any areas of resistance that emerged.

Although it is important to establish a structure for heuristic investigations to unfold, the nature of the inquiry allows for a change of methods or procedures at any point, in order to remain responsive to the question under investigation (Douglas & Moustakas, 1985). Indeed, this process of data collection varied considerably from my proposed research plan. I had initially planned to create a quick drawing following each client session. This would have been responsive to weekly fluctuations in my interactions with each client. While I still consider this to be an ideal way to proceed with this sort of investigation, the practical reality of taking additional time after each session (in addition to cleaning up, writing process notes, documenting the session in the client's charts, and inputting the session in the institution's statistical program) made this small step feel overwhelming.

While my applied method was not sensitive to weekly fluctuations, it allowed me to invest more time and energy into the process. Having completed my coursework and practicum placement, I devoted two months to the creative process, with periods of immersion and incubation. I was able to delve into my inner experience and follow the creative process more intuitively than would have been possible during the hectic months that preceded it. Additionally, the time between termination with each client and the beginning of the creative process enabled me to expand my focal lens from very close to more distanced. As such, I was able to view my interactions with each client in a broader way and notice connections between clients more clearly.

Data Analysis

To summarize, the data that I collected includes: (1) process notes written after each session for each client, (2) a list of transitional words for each client, (3) an initial creative response for each client, (4) a second creative response, if applicable, (5) my personal creative response to my autoethnography, which is a series of movements and two masks, and (6) artwork, lists of words, and dialogue with two respondents.

I approached the analysis of this data in several steps, always remaining attuned to the images themselves and the process through which they were created. I began by clustering all of the images and words that were created for each client, including the respondents' art. I left the images visible for one week before beginning my analysis, giving myself an opportunity to live with them. Schaverien (1987) describes the different levels of knowing that occur through making art and, later, regarding the object. When we see the image, we know it; when we live with it, we know it better and begin to understand it conceptually; when we talk about it, we negotiate and fix meaning to it. Therefore, before talking or writing about it, I wanted to simply live with it and allow its multiple potential meanings to emerge.

When I returned to the images, I regarded them in relation to each other, and attempted to discover "nuances, textures, and constituents of the phenomenon" which I may not have noticed (Moustakas, 1990, p. 31). I looked for any cultural elements or symbols in the images. The observations and insights that emerged through this process are described in the following section, divided by client. I will begin by disclosing the cultural background of each of the five clients who are included in this research. While

each case is rich and multifaceted, given my research question and the scope of this document, I will only present the clients' cultural backgrounds and exclude other case material. I will use pseudonyms to refer to each client to maintain his/her anonymity. As I mentioned, I will not include any of the images created by the two respondents, nor our conversations.

Client 1: Joshua. Joshua is a *Hasidic* Jew (a branch of Orthodox Judaism), born and raised in Montreal. Issues of culture came up frequently in our sessions and there were many times when my values differed from his. Because of my early education in an Orthodox Jewish school, I was familiar with some of his community's norms, beliefs, and values. However, I was initially uncomfortable working with Joshua. I carried a lot of cultural baggage into this relationship, including previous negative experiences, assumptions, and fears. I assumed that he and his family would be uncomfortable working with a secular Jew, would judge me negatively for not wearing clothing that covers my neck, elbows and knees. I was careful to avoid revealing my own religious or cultural practices, perhaps more so than with other clients. I brought conflicts that arose as a result of our differing beliefs to supervision and struggled with maintaining an objective stance in our sessions. While our sessions were challenging, I grew fond of Joshua and enjoyed discovering his uniqueness expressed in his actions and art.

After re-reading my process notes, I created a list of transitional words to describe my experience with him. The words are: *heavy, constraining, magic, chaos, power, anger, burden, compliance, frustrated, king, space, special*, and *boundary*. Initially, I created two pieces in response to these words and another two during the second round of responding. The first piece (Figure 3, Figure 4) is a small clay sculpture, smooth on one

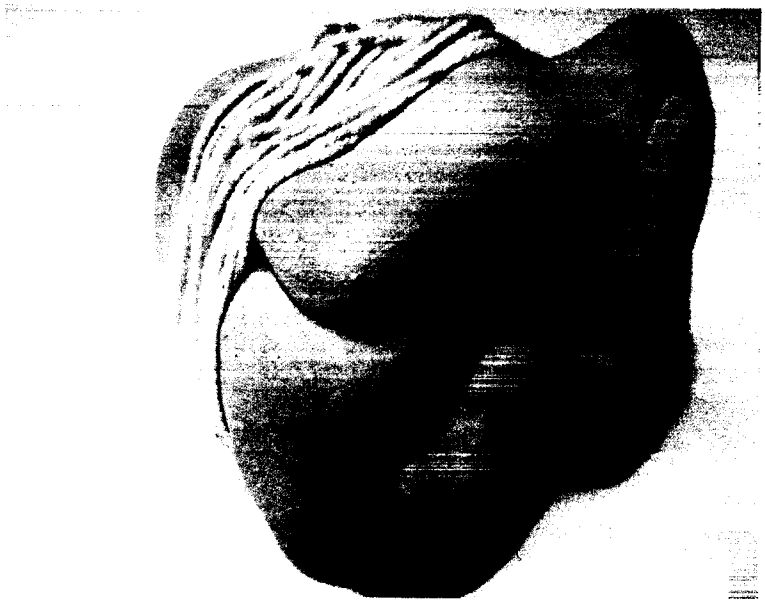

Figure 3. Tender Binding (front view). Creative response to Joshua.

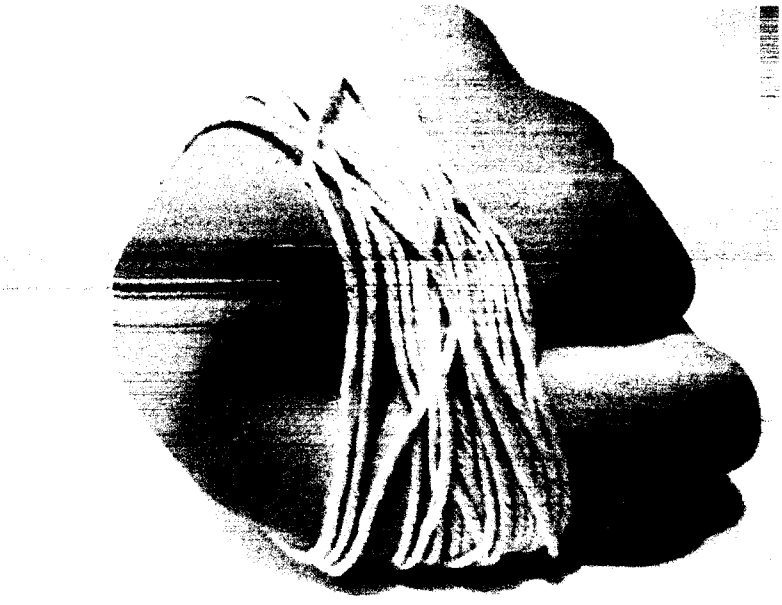

Figure 4. Tender Binding (side view). Creative response to Joshua.

side, with many folded creases on the other. The middle of the sculpture is wrapped in white thread. In creating this piece, I began by feeling the clay in my hands, noticing the flesh-like qualities of it, and adding water to make it messier. I felt a release of tension come from beating the clay into a flat surface. I folded it over and in upon itself. After walking away from it for nearly an hour, I began binding it with the thread, wrapping it around and around before deciding the piece was finished.

The act of creating this piece revealed a great deal of information. My manner of handling the clay and the feelings that arose throughout suggest my strong emotional engagement with this client. At times, our sessions felt chaotic and messy, like the clay. Attempts to create order were not always successful, leading me to feel frustrated, as I had while making this piece. Wrapping the thread around the piece felt like bandaging a wound. I wondered if this act of binding represented my desire to impose order on chaos, or perhaps to bandage my own strong feelings that were evoked during our sessions, memories of feeling out of place and hiding my true self at the Orthodox school that I attended for many years.

However, the thread also appears to be constraining the object. The act of wrapping reminds me of the Jewish custom of wrapping phylacteries (*tefillin*), black leather cubes that contain biblical passages, which are wrapped with straps on the arm and head of adult men during prayers (Bowker, 1997). The white thread also resembles *tsitsit*, the fringes of a prayer shawl, often left hanging out underneath a man's shirt to remain visible. Most strongly, this piece represents my belief that religion is constraining, that believers are bound by custom. This belief conflicts with my client's and his family's views, which could silently sabotage treatment if left unacknowledged.

The object itself is a closed shape, with a hint of opening at the sides and front. To me, it seems like something that was once open, which has been folded and bound by an outside force. While I focused on the closed aspect, one of my respondents suggested that it could also be bursting open, breaking the thread. I wondered if this reflected a secret wish that Joshua would break away from his ultra-Orthodox community and find freedom. Moreover, as I have been questioning my own sense of belonging to Judaism in recent years, this symbol may illustrate my feelings of breaking away from my family's customs and my years of Jewish education. This questioning has not been easy and is often accompanied by feelings of guilt.

Another respondent focused on the "specialness" of this object; how it seemed precious somehow, mysterious. This relates to my transitional words of "magic", "king", and "special." Despite my disdain, did I also cling to my childhood teachings that Jewish people were "chosen" and therefore special? This idea supports the bias I had described in my statement of bias earlier in this document. It led me to wonder if the opposite could also be true. Did I feel somehow superior in relation to my non-Jewish clients?

The second piece (Figure 5) is simply the transitional words written out in large letters, with lines drawing connections between associated words. Splotches of colour surround words or are near them, representing emotions that I felt towards those words. As Joshua was the first client in my creative responding process, I was unsure of what form the transitional words would take. My instinct in this case was to make them large and animated. After reading the list of words aloud, I noticed that many of the words had a negative resonance. I wanted to see how mapping them out in a large, visual format might help me understand why I had chosen them. Notably, for the remainder of the

clients I chose to write the words with black pen on smaller sheets of paper in a less expressive manner. This signaled to me that something about these words, my relationship with this client, or my countertransference resonated with me more strongly than with my other clients.

After the words were written out, I placed Figure 3 in the centre of the paper, surrounded by the words and colours. The transitional words, animated in this way, confronted me with my highly negative view towards religion. Placing Figure 3, an object that I saw as fragile and hurting amongst these big, bold words felt dangerous. I wanted to protect it, not confront it with these words. Nonetheless, leaving it there and observing my reactions challenged me to consider that it was myself who I was protecting from this confrontation. I did not want to admit that there was such a strong disconnect between my current ideas towards religion and my upbringing and education, because it evoked strong feelings of shame and guilt. I also had to admit that I felt anger towards the whole system that perpetuates organized religion, from the rabbis at my synagogue to my former teachers, who only told me a narrow version of the truth.

When I revisited these initial pieces after nearly 3 weeks, I felt compelled to respond to them creatively. I created a chalk pastel drawing (Figure 6) of the sculpture from one angle, noticing the highlights and shadows and how the thread hung from its sides. The image had a strongly feminine quality and I decided to write a narrative from the point of view of this woman. She described feeling both restricted and protected by the thread that binds her, but knowing that even if it was removed, she would forever feel it on her skin. She described herself as a passive observer, immobile, fragile, her head bowed. Turning the sculpture to the folded side, I wrote a narrative from this point of view as

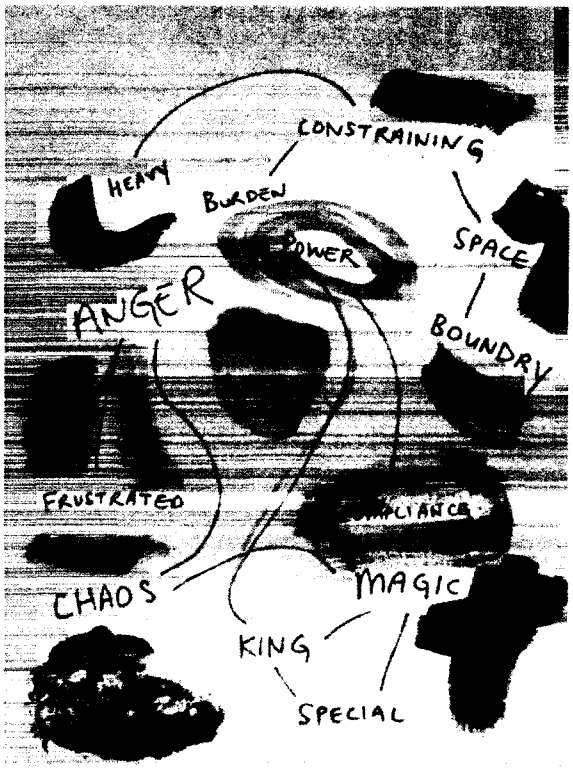

Figure 5. Ordered Chaos. Transitional words for Joshua.

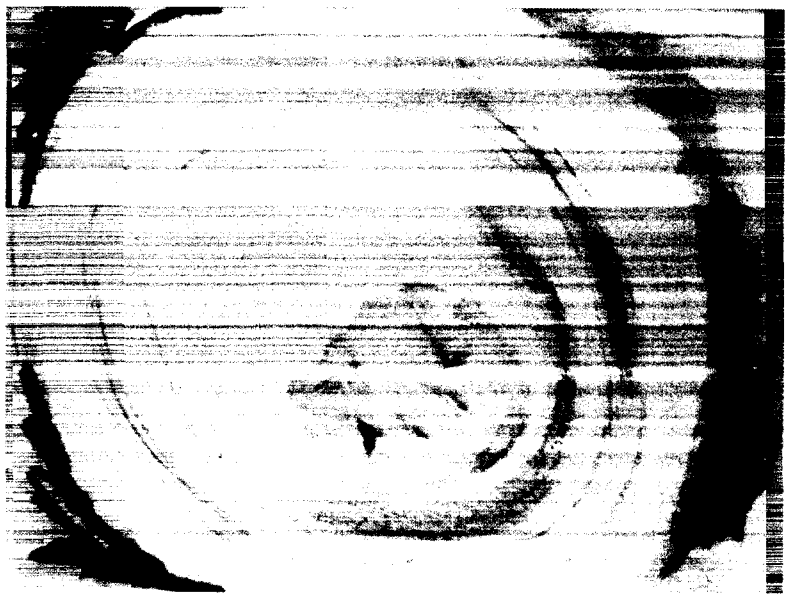

Figure 6. She Speaks. Response to *Tender Binding*.

well. This side was masculine, less restricted by the thread. This man was greedy, hungry, selfish and fat. I felt belittled by him, disgusted and envious. By listening to the object speak, I had discovered this theme that related to my view on Judaism and organized religion: the subjugation of women.

Discovering this theme led me to question how my belief about the power imbalance between men and women in Judaism affected my role as a woman therapist to Joshua. I believe this manifested primarily in my challenge with setting firm limits during our sessions. Joshua often took control during sessions, recruiting my help as an assistant when he needed it and asking (at times, demanding) for materials. I knew that his behaviour was at the core of his difficulties at school and home and therefore, the focus of our treatment. However, at times, I had difficulty with his dominant role in our interactions and it is possible that my interventions at times were guided by my negative reaction to being controlled rather than being fully conscious and based on our treatment plan.

Client 2: Katie. Katie is a secular Jew from Montreal. Like mine, her family maintains some Jewish customs and is connected with the local Jewish community. Because of our perceived similarities, culture was an invisible aspect of our work together. As neither of us was entirely aware of the other's beliefs and values, this comfort was based primarily on our appearance as Ashkenazi Jews. However, as I described earlier, the diversity within this group is vast and any assumption of a shared worldview is erroneous. Nonetheless, issues of culture did not come up in treatment and our known similarities created a sense of connection. During treatment, I experienced strong counter-transference with Katie, finding myself overly identifying with her. I

reflected often, alone and in supervision, on what aspects of my reactions were my own projections and what were realistic responses to her behaviour. I believe that this counter-transference was fostered by our cultural similarities.

My list of transitional words for Katie is: *anxiety, pressure, success, façade, silence, mother, resistance, identity, playful, laughter, spontaneous.* I created two images in response to these words. These images began as a playful experimentation with the materials. As I was working on Figure 7 several days prior, I used aluminum foil as a palette on which to mix my acrylic paints. When I had finished most of the paint, I pressed the foil onto the paper to create a print (bottom left, Figure 7). The texture of the foil created a beautiful pattern, and I applied it to two sheets of blank white paper that I had lining my table to keep it clean. As I returned the next day to work on my response to Katie, the unintentional beauty of the purple and pink stained papers compelled me to use them as a starting point for my response.

The residue of clay from the day before had stained the paper and I began by smearing wet clay in ribbons around the coloured splotches. I worked across two pages (Figure 7, Figure 8), working with my fingers and intuitively covering the surface with clay and chalk pastels. Intuitively, I began tearing a hole in the centre of Figure 7. This hole is ragged and reveals the fibers of the paper, calling attention to the surface of the image. It stands in contrast with the soft colours and organic composition of the piece. Figure 8 has a yellow form in the centre, which seems to begin in the horizon and opens like a tunnel at one end. This image has a slit on the right side, which is more intentional and clean than the hole in Figure 7.

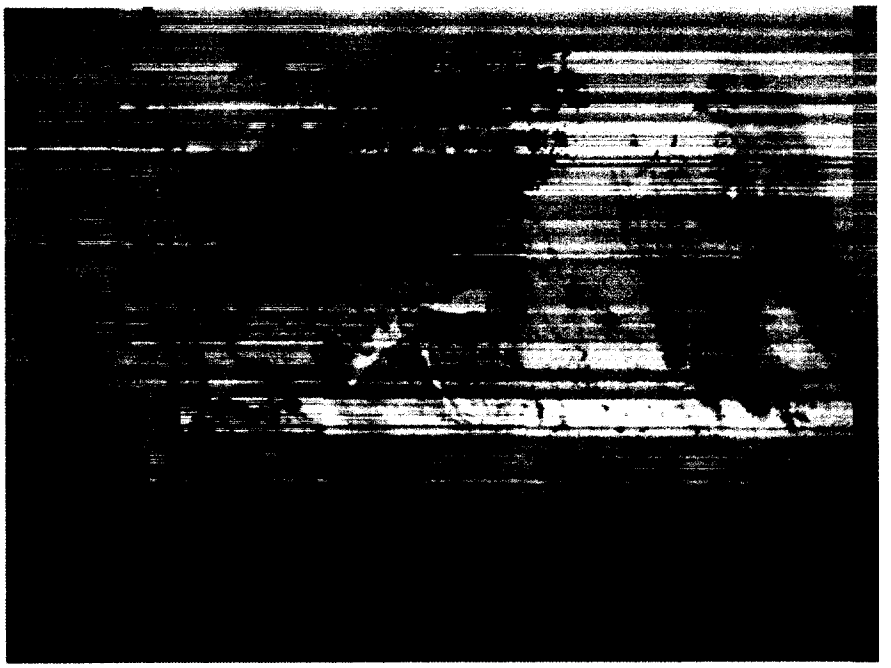

Figure 7. I See Through. Creative response to Katie.

Figure 8. Liminality. Creative response to Katie.

The main themes that emerged from these images are female corporeality and the tension between surface and depth. The earthy, pink colours and holes/tearing seem strongly feminine. Scrawled green lines are barely visible, coming through from the back of the paper. They allude to a rawness, anger, or anxiety behind the surface, a surface that is beautiful, but cracking. Unlike Figure 6, this version of womanhood is open, not closed, exposed and raw, not passive and hiding. As a symbol, the hole represents fertility and opening and departure (Herder Dictionary of Symbols, 1993). My primary association with the tunnel is a transition, a passage from one place to another, perhaps alluding to birth or the rite of passage of puberty. In Judaism, a *bat mitzvah* (rite of passage celebration at age 12) marks a girl's entrance into womanhood. This time is often filled with the chaos of change – physical, hormonal, emotional – and the acceptance of a set of norms, of what it means to be a woman in our society. However, behind the surface, one's own doubts, questions, and flaws are kept hidden.

As with Joshua, Katie's story touched on a sensitive area in my own life. In this case, working with Katie evoked my experience of transitioning to a new school in grade 7 and the subsequent challenges to my identity as I was exposed to a new peer group, who had a different cultural upbringing. To return to my statement of bias, Katie was Ashkenazi, from a similarly insular Jewish community, and not strongly religious. Based on my assumptions, there should have been no major obstacles to forming an effective therapeutic alliance with Katie. However, in reality, our similarities may have caused me to make assumptions about her cultural identity, to overly identify with her, and therefore, to allow my countertransference to interfere with our treatment alliance.

Client 3: Maria. Maria was born in Mexico to a Catholic family. She arrived in Montreal with her family seeking refugee status. She speaks Spanish and is learning French. As my French is limited and I do not speak Spanish, I worked with a co-therapist who spoke English, French and Spanish. Culture came up frequently in sessions due to Maria's recent migration and process of adjusting to life in Montreal. Building a treatment alliance with Maria was more straightforward than I had assumed given our linguistic and cultural differences. My fumbling with French may have helped build our connection, as we both struggled to express ourselves and often used art to communicate.

My list of words for Maria is: *ambivalent, crisis, connection, village, isolation, gifts, affectionate, aggressive, relationship, clinging, superficial, loss, trauma.* I created three images in response, all during the first art making cycle. Figure 9 was created first, an acrylic painting with three distinct forms. The central form has a red centre that unfurls and connects to a brown form on the top right of the page. A smaller green and white oval floats in space, not connected to the others. A soft brown wash with visible brush strokes creates layers around the composition. The three forms seem to be at different stages of development, suspended in a warm, fluid environment. I did not feel that this image strongly represented this client or my experience of working with her, so I put it aside and created two additional pieces.

Figure 10 began with a sketch of two faceless figures sitting back to back, enveloped by a light blue bubble. The bubble is surrounded by sharp red and blue strokes, created with a palette knife. This image suggests the themes of connection vs. isolation and vulnerability vs. protection. The two figures are close, yet facing away from one another. They are protected in the small blue bubble, yet seem to be exposed to the danger around

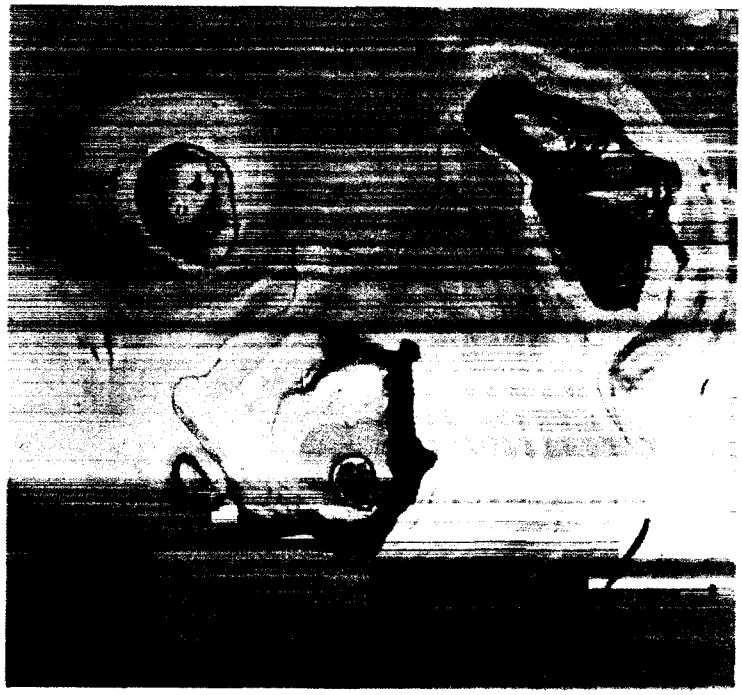

Figure 9. Primordial Soup. Creative response to Maria.

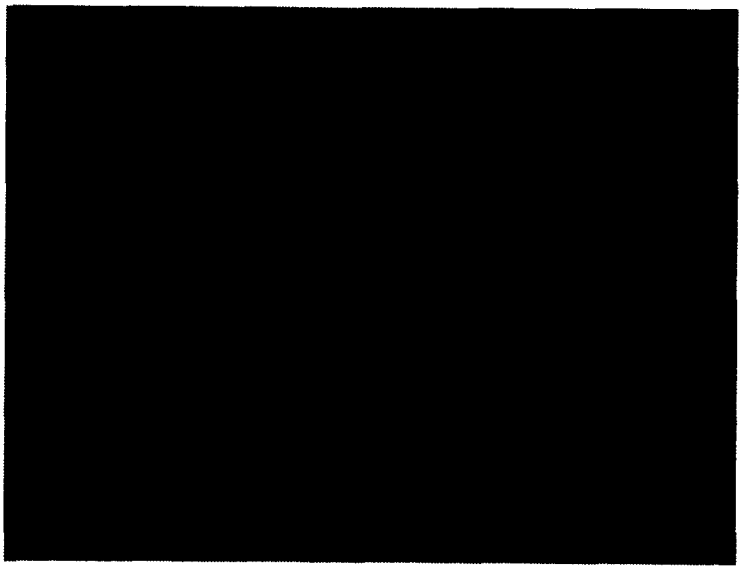

Figure 10. Protective Barrier. Creative response to Maria.

them. This image speaks to this client's story of pre-migration trauma, which is unfortunately common in the histories of Mexican refugee claimants in Canada. It also evokes my experience of seeking connection with others after immigrating to Toronto and not always finding a supportive environment. It is possible that my personal experience, while not traumatic, increased my ability to sympathize with Maria and respond compassionately.

Lastly, I created two small clay sculptures (Figure 11, Figure 12) based on the image in Figure 10. The figures are smooth and hunched over. A protruding spine on each is the only distinguishing feature, although one cannot be certain whether they are human or animal. The figures are not connected, but can be placed with their backs to each other or facing one another. Each fits nicely into the palm of my hand. Looking at the entire set of images, they appear to be a sequence of development from conception to birth (albeit abstractly rendered). The clay sculptures, if human, appear not to be fully formed. This seems to reflect my concern for my client's development, given her traumatic past.

One cultural idea that emerges is the closeness between the figures, perhaps family members, to the point of being nearly fused. Mexican culture reminds me of Sephardic culture, with the emphasis on interconnectedness and a strong maternal presence. In this case, my bias towards Ashkenazi culture did not seem to interfere with my ability to relate to Maria. Her close relationship with her family and her parents' attempts to connect to me by offering me food and hugging me after sessions felt warm and familiar, rather than uncomfortable. Despite our differences, I found aspects of Maria's experience that resonated with me and we were able to form a strong working alliance.

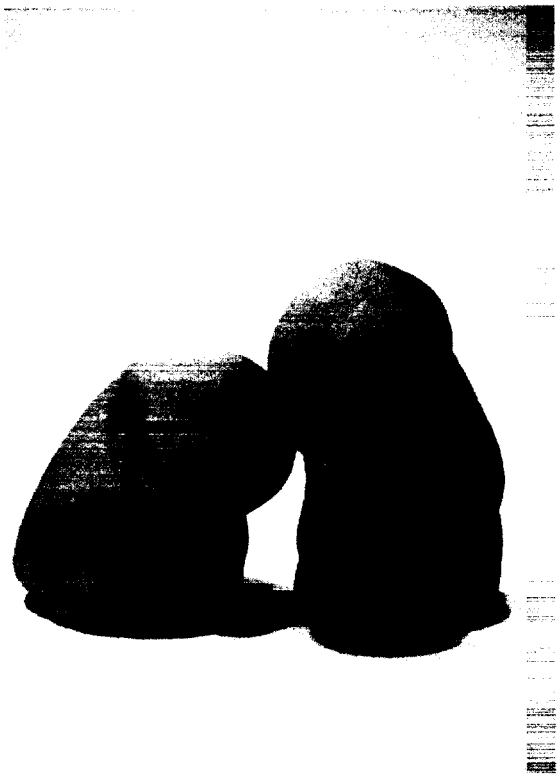

Figure 11. The Space Between (front view). Creative response to Maria.

Figure 12. The Space Between (back view). Creative response to Maria.

Client 4: Adam. Adam has lived in Montreal for most of his life. He speaks English and is from a non-practicing Christian family. Culture was rarely discussed in our sessions, except when he would occasionally ask if any of my other clients were from different cultural backgrounds. While I had a clear sense of our differences, I believe that Adam was mostly unaware of them (except for my unusual name). I noticed the cultural differences most with regards to family dynamics and parenting style, which may relate more to his socioeconomic status and unique circumstances.

The list of words for Adam is: *attachment, hungry, attention, instability, protect,* and *chaos*. During the initial art making stage, I made a small brown scribble and filled in areas with light blue, dark blue, and beige chalk pastels (Figure 13). The perimeter of the drawing was smudged outwards, creating subtle radiating lines. The image that emerged from the scribble reminds me of a Madonna and Child composition from Christian iconography. This idealized depiction of a mother and child contrasted starkly with my client's relationship with his mother. I wondered if I had been silently judging her for her child-rearing abilities, while holding her up to an impossible standard.

In the second art making stage, I created a nest from many long and narrow pieces of clay (Figure 14). The pieces were woven together to create a nest and then four small sculptures were placed inside: a larger figure with a small, closed 'beak'; two smaller figures, who are less identifiable but appear to consist of only a mouth or a neck and a mouth with no body; and, a small egg. The large bird is facing away from the others, who appear to be demanding its attention with open mouths. This sculpture picks up on the theme of attachment vs. rejection from Figure 13. In art therapy, the nest is often viewed as a symbol of attachment, protection, and safety. I have created a nest of worms,

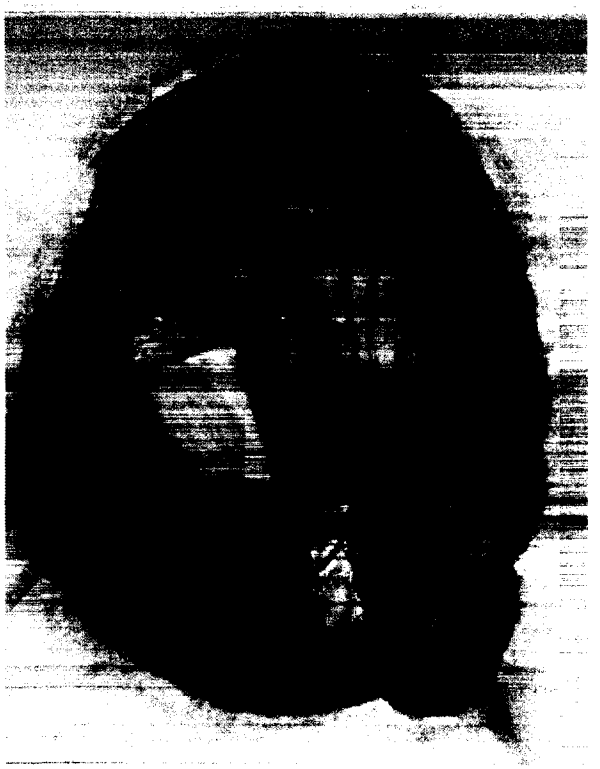

Figure 13. Madonna and Child. Creative response to Adam.

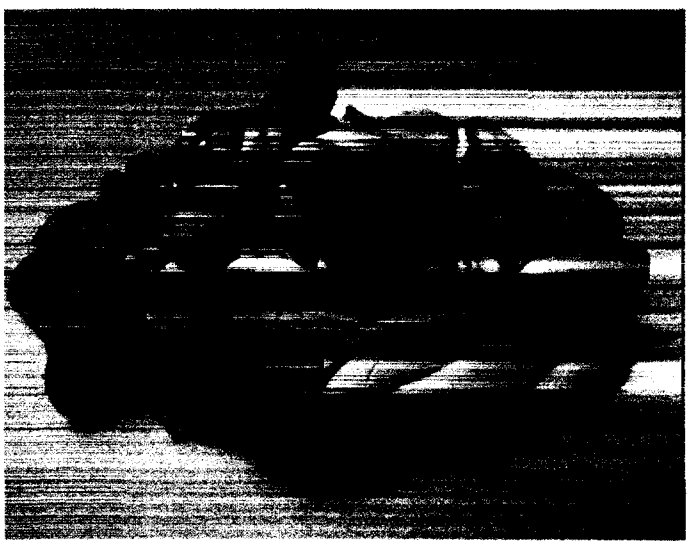

Figure 14. Gaze Beyond. Creative response to Adam.

perhaps trying to compensate for what I felt Adam lacked from his mother. However, the worms may also be seen as snakes, a disguised threat to this familial home.

Both images are underpinned by my belief that Adam's mother did not provide sufficient care for him. While this is partly true, it is also based on my idealized view of what a mother ought to be. My idealized view is based on the stereotype of the Jewish mother: highly involved in her child's life, always supportive and nurturing, to be point of being overly so. This is confounded with the North American standard for the ideal woman and mother, who is able to balance work and family responsibilities, while looking good and maintaining a positive attitude. Adam's mother had limited resources, financial, social, and personal, and was struggling with her responsibilities as a mother.

While as a therapist, I understood her challenges within her socio-cultural context, on a less conscious level, I did not believe that she was providing good enough mothering to Adam. This belief, based on my upbringing, may have affected my ability to form a connection with Adam's mother, which compromises my treatment relationship with him. Additionally, I may have tried to compensate for this perceived lack of mothering by being overly nurturing, which could have create a dependence on me as a therapist. Alternatively, Adam may have come to view me as a threat to his mother and tried to undermine treatment as an act of solidarity with her. In any of these cases, my ideas about the ideal mother could have harmed my treatment alliance with Adam and his mother.

Client 5: Paul. Paul was born in Montreal to parents who had emigrated from the Philippines several years before his birth. He spoke both French and English and our

sessions were conducted in English. His voice had a slight Tagalog cadence, though he did not speak his parent's first language. Discussions of culture took place occasionally, and I related to his experience of belonging to two cultures and negotiating his identity. Perhaps because his cultural upbringing was so different than my own, I approaching our sessions with a greater sense of "not knowing" than with my Jewish clients, not assuming that I knew anything about his values or beliefs.

The list of words for Paul is: *freeze, rain, invisible, expectations, teeth, scary, missing, crocodile, transition, envy, anger,* and *inferior.* Figure 15 was created first and with simply a free association to the words with pen on paper. Several weeks later, during the second response period, I began by molding two small sculptures out of clay. One is circular and has a spiral shape carved out of the top, and the second is a long piece of clay wrapped around itself like a snake. Soon after creating the sculptures, I was compelled to paint the paper on which they rested. I circled the first sculpture with purple oil pastel and the snake form with yellow chalk pastel. I connected them with soft yellow lines and spirals, adding a light blue wash around them. Hints of orange appear throughout the composition, with a bright orange splotch in the top right (Figure 16).

Both images are about internal cycles, of birth, digestion, and life. In Figure 15, a large figure seems to be pregnant with a smaller one, while eating another figure. The imagery is surreal and it is not possible to clearly state what is happening, however, the movement of the composition seems to be from inside the large figure, to outside of her and back inside through her mouth. Similarly, in Figure 16, the spiral encased in purple seems to lead to an outline of a purple spiral to its right, then across the yellow line to the snake, and around to the top right. The symbol of the snake is a powerful one,

Figure 15. Eat the Young. Creative response to Paul.

Figure 16. Ideas of Rotation. Creative response to Paul.

representing transformation and the capacity for renewal (Herder Dictionary of Symbols, 1993). Likewise, the spiral is a symbol of the universe, the cycles of nature, and creation (Ibid). While I do not fully understand the imagery, the dynamic, cyclical nature of both compositions stands out.

Another similarity between Figure 15 and 16 is that they include animals, a crocodile and a snake, respectively. In analyzing what this could mean, I first turned to the symbol dictionaries and noted the more abstract definitions, such as those mentioned above for the snake. Next, I considered my personal understanding of these animals as exotic and fascinating, yet threatening. These meanings forced me to return to my biases: because of our different cultural backgrounds, had I thought about Paul in this way?

To answer this question, I returned to my session notes and to the images I had created. Through re-reading my notes, I admitted to myself that when I began working with Paul, I wondered if our different cultural backgrounds would make it more difficult to build a therapeutic alliance. I believe that the themes of digestion and cycles in the images suggest how my view changed in our months of working together. Though I may have started with a hypothesis about some aspect of Paul's cultural identity, I modified my idea based on what I learned in our sessions, gradually internalizing a new idea. This cyclical process may have resulted in a more complete or more authentic understanding of Paul's identity and our interactions.

Art-to-art Interactions. Having described my creative responses descriptively and analytically, I will now share the final stage of my data analysis. This stage emerged organically. After completing the image analysis based on form and content, I noticed

that I was objectifying the data rather than engaging with it as an "I who feels" (Sela-Smith, 2002). To address this need, I created an "art to art" (McNiff, 1998, p. 68) interaction between the movements and masks that represented my culture and the art that I had created for each client. In doing so, I was looking for any similarities or differences between the art I had created to represent my culture and my clients', as well as my level of emotional engagement with each interaction.

I arranged the set of images for each client on the floor and read each word from my list of transitional words out loud while performing the associated movement. I noted which words/movements felt close to the client art and which felt distanced. As I was enacting these interactions, I found it difficult to stay with the process. Perhaps because I am unfamiliar with the modality of dance/movement, I felt ill equipped to understand and analyze what emerged. I was struck that the movements had a decidedly Moroccan flavour. They reminded me of the aspects of my mother's culture that I love: the music, dancing, and community celebrations. This was something I had nearly forgotten, as I was usually focused on the aspects of Moroccan culture that I felt alienated from.

With this observation in mind, I enacted another series of interactions between my two duckling masks and the data set for each client. Using a step stool and some fabrics, I created an environment for the interactions to unfold. I incorporated the stool to create compositions with more dimensionality, rather than using the floor. It is important to mention that I did not wear the masks. Instead, I treated them as objects, placing them in relation to each client's data set. During the Creative Process course where the masks were created, I alternated between wearing the masks and using them as objects. Hence, while it was not unusual for me to use the masks in this way, I gravitated to this less

embodied approach. Perhaps after the movement-to-client art interactions, I wanted to distance myself by creating visual, rather than kinetic, compositions that are easier for me to understand.

Interaction 1: Joshua. For my interaction with Joshua's art, I decided to only use the sculpture (Figure 3), as it had evoked the strongest responses for me in the analysis. I placed the sculpture on the stool, placing the grey duckling near it. The brown mask sat on the floor, removed from the other objects, yet connected to the sculpture by an orange fabric. There appears to be closeness between the sculpture and the grey mask, while the brown mask is cast away, at a lower elevation. I believe that in attempting to relate to Joshua, I drew from my experience as an Ashkenazi Jew, minimizing my Sephardic connection. As there were so many cultural differences between us already, I may have clung to the one area of similarity. However, the orange fabric connects the brown mask and Joshua's sculpture. As the brown mask represents a part of me that I have rejected or seen as "other", noticing this connection led me to acknowledge that I had viewed Joshua as "other" too. I believe that this represents my struggle to distinguish my pre-conceptions about the Hasidic community from what I noticed about Joshua and his family.

Interaction 2. Katie. I arranged the two images on the floor, placing the grey mask nearby so that it faced the images without touching them. The brown mask is approximately two feet away, propped up on the stool, facing the images and the other mask (Figure 18). As with the first interaction, the grey mask is closer to the data set than the brown mask. I attribute this closeness to my strong sense of identification with Katie, such that the mask I primarily identify with is the one closest to her images.

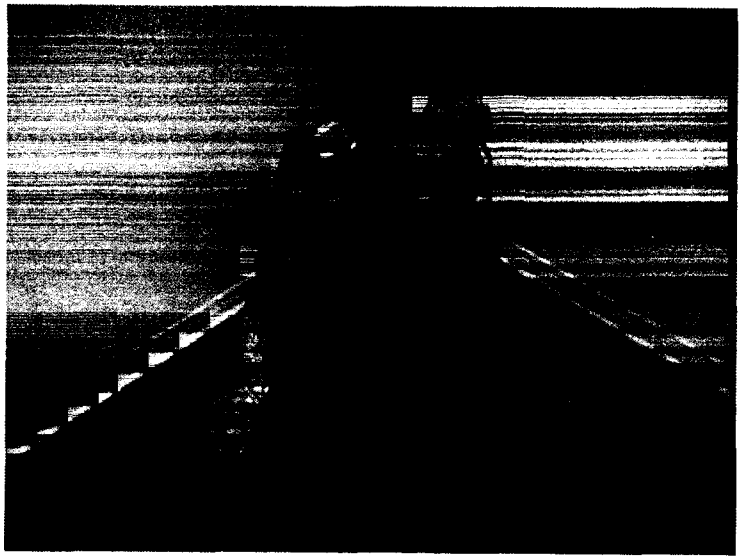

Figure 17. Interaction 1. Interaction between masks representing my cultural identity and *Tender Binding*, representing Joshua's.

Figure 18. Interaction 2. Interaction between masks representing my cultural identity and *I See Through* and *Liminality*, representing Katie's.

Unlike with Joshua's interaction, here, the brown mask is not connected to the composition at all. Given my identification with Katie and our assumed cultural similarities, the mask of "otherness" did not play a strong role in our interactions. However, the brown mask is positioned so that it can observe the interaction, perhaps protecting the more vulnerable grey mask and paintings.

Interaction 3. Maria. With this third interaction, both masks flank the sculptures on top of the stool (Figure 19). The collection of objects seems like a family, with the "parents" facing out to scan for danger and protect their children. The two figures huddle together, near their mother (the grey duck) but still separate from her. The emphasis on close family relationships in the artwork mirrors the cultural values of many Mexican families.

This was the first interaction where both masks are on the same elevation, in close proximity to the client art. Joshua and Katie knew that I was Jewish and, therefore, similar to them in some way. I hypothesize that because Maria's culture was clearly different than my own, I felt comfortable integrating both aspects of my cultural identity, without feeling like I needed to be anything in particular. As well, her experience of migration (while very different than my own) and integration into a new culture may have evoked my memories of immigrating here, bringing with me multiple aspects of my cultural identity and acquiring new ones.

Interaction 4. Adam. For this interaction, I placed the sculpture of the nest on the top of the stool. The grey duckling is near the nest, facing it. The brown duckling stands in front of the nest, looking outward. Similarly to the third interaction, the scene resembles

a family unit. Here, however, each mask plays a different role: the grey duckling plays a more nurturing role and the brown duckling, a more protective role. As there is already a mother bird in the nest, this raises questions about the identity and intentions of the grey and brown ducklings – are they outside "helpers" trying to assist this distressed family of birds? How does the bird family regard these outsiders? Is their presence welcomed, or seen as a threat?

These questions reflect some of my own thoughts as I was working with Adam and his family. As I mentioned earlier, no strong themes emerge regarding Adam's culture. Rather, the focus seems to be on socioeconomic background and the challenges of a family with insufficient means. While it is possible that some client's cultural backgrounds will not evoke as much reaction from the therapist, it is important to consider why this may be. Did questions or conversations about culture not arise in sessions because I had made assumptions, rather than asking for clarification? While I do not have definitive answers to these questions, enacting this creative interaction helped bring them to the forefront. The issues raised about the helper-client relationship are relevant for every client interaction, regardless of culture.

Interaction 5. Paul. This final interaction resulted in the most well integrated composition. I used the two sculptures that had been embedded as part of a painting and placed them both on the stool, with the snake form at a higher elevation (Figure 21). The brown mask was placed at the highest point, near the snake, while the grey mask was placed on the floor, partially obscured by an orange fabric. This is the first composition where the grey mask is placed in a less prominent and less elevated position. It is interesting that the snake, a symbol of strength, transformation and the evil side of nature

(Herder Dictionary of Symbols, 1994), is placed near the brown mask, which to me represents "otherness", protection, and fear. In this context, I associate the mask with Paul's mother, who like mine, is strong and dominant in the family. As the snake also represents masculinity (Ibid), the small, curled up snake that I created as a representation of my client seems dwarfed by the looming brown mask.

Placed diagonally from the snake and brown mask are the grey duckling and spiral form. The grey mask, eyes partially concealed by the orange fabric, seems withdrawn and hidden. The spiral, likewise, closes in upon itself and seems introverted and self-contained. This composition, seemingly marked by the polarization of opposites, is more illusive to me. There is a tension between the poles, a dynamic flow of energy from one point to another. Perhaps this speaks to the struggle within myself to grasp my cultural identity, to try and reconcile these two seemingly opposite cultures; perhaps this mirrors my client's similar struggle, feeling a sense of belonging with Canadian culture, yet also identifying with his Filipino background.

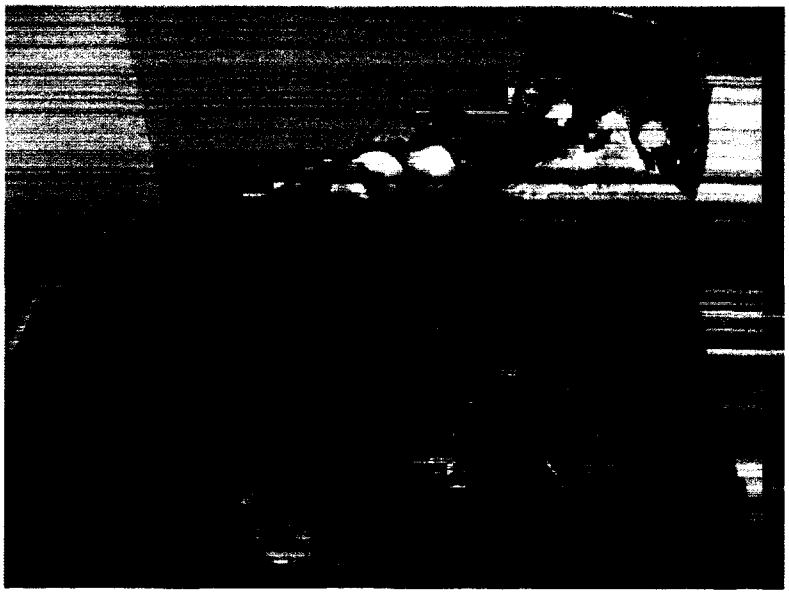

Figure 19. Interaction 3. Interaction between masks representing my cultural identity and *The Space Between*, representing Maria's.

Figure 20. Interaction 4. Interaction between masks representing my cultural identity and *Eat the Young*, representing Adam's.

Figure 21. Interaction 5. Interaction between masks representing my cultural identity and *Ideas of Rotation*, representing Paul's.

Findings

The heuristic process, if undertaken in a rigorous, authentic manner, brings to consciousness the nature or essence of the phenomenon under investigation. The results of such an inquiry are "heightened awareness, the creation of meaning, and personal growth" for the researcher (Frick, 1990, p. 68). Based on the analysis I conducted, I will summarize some of the meanings that emerged for me through this heuristic arts-based process. Though I have focused on my specific reactions to individual clients thus far, I will now describe the themes and patterns that emerged across clients. Of course, as each client's culture is unique, fluid, and being negotiated on an ongoing basis, my findings apply to this set of clients and their cultures at a specific moment in time. Rather than attempting to find a formula of working with a certain clientele, my findings reflect my insights about the process of seeking to understand my reactions to culture through a creative process. Therefore, if I find that through this process, I have increased my awareness and experienced personal growth in this area, I will adopt it in future intercultural interactions.

My first reflection comes from my work with Joshua and Katie, who were both Jewish. Over the course of treatment and through the creative process, I experienced the strongest reactions to these clients. I approached both cases with more assumptions about who the client was and how they expressed their culture. This attitude discouraged me from asking as many questions about cultural values in treatment. With Katie, our perceived cultural similarity fostered a sense that culture was non-existent, which served to build an initial comfort level but may have limited her opportunities to explore and

express her cultural identity. Joshua's ultra-Orthodox background elicited a strong reaction from me, based on my unresolved feelings towards my own religion.

These reflections are significant, as some institutions may seek to match clients to counselors of a similar culture, believing that this will result in more culturally responsive therapy (Sue, 1988). However, as I have realized through my own process, this is not necessarily so. Goldman (1994), while working with mainly Jewish clients at a long-term care facility, undertook a self-examination of her racial/cultural development. She found that as she increased her knowledge of her own Jewish culture, she felt more competent working with members of her own, and other, cultures. Similarly, I was surprised to learn how my unacknowledged rejection of aspects of my religion and culture influenced my ability to work objectively with my Jewish clients.

While it was less pronounced, I also noticed that with Adam, who was Caucasian, I paid less attention to cultural elements in treatment. This raised an ethical concern for me: had I neglected one part of my client's identity by not acknowledging that his culture was unique and different than my own? Conversely, would I overemphasize the cultural elements in treatment with clients who were of a noticeably different ethnicity than me? By bringing this issue to my conscious awareness, I can now work on remaining open and curious with every client I work with, therefore reducing the likelihood of cultural encapsulation. Cultural encapsulation refers to the belief that all individuals are the same, which ultimately reduces the individual's life experience and results in unintentional bias (Diamond, 2009).

Interestingly, in my work with Maria and Paul, who were the most different from me in terms of ethnicity, I approached treatment with fewer assumptions and remained alert to cultural similarities and differences. I was able to focus on the challenges of the present case rather than working with the presumed characteristics of my clients' cultural groups. According to Green (1995), these qualities of openness, alertness, and flexibility in relation to others, along with the learner's inner state, attitudes and values comprise cultural awareness.

The final theme that carried through every creative response was womanhood. Images of fertility, motherhood and femininity came through in the art and the analysis. As I mentioned at the beginning of this document, gender is one aspect of culture, however, not one that I was focusing on here. Nonetheless, this aspect of my culture came through strongly in my reactions to my clients. My perceptions of what it means to be a woman in my own and other cultures influenced my relationships with my clients and their parents. For example, in Joshua's case, I felt some resentment towards the treatment of women in ultra-Orthodox communities. This was a surprising emergence in my counter transference, as it is an aspect of my own identity that I had not fully contemplated.

Given the force with which the theme of womanhood emerged in my art making and analysis, I was challenged to explore this as a "cultural blind spot". I returned to my personal narrative, attempting to identify how my experiences have shaped my perception of what it means to be a woman. One major realization that emerged was the dominance of women in my family, particularly in their role as cultural agents. As I mentioned in my autoethnographic narrative, though my parents were from different Jewish traditions, ultimately, we adopted my mother's Sephardic customs as a family. My mother was the

one who insisted that I attend a Jewish school, despite the sacrifices that sending me to private school entailed. She educated me about Jewish rituals and customs, such as lighting candles on *Shabbat*. My grandmother, aunts and female cousins were also central in my cultural education, teaching me about Moroccan food, music, and dance. The men in my family were involved in these cultural rituals, but were not the primary agents in performing them.

Because I grew up in this female-dominated environment, it comprises a part of my cultural seeing. However, because this is my status quo, I was not cautious enough in declaring it as a bias and accounting for it in my interactions with clients. As every culture has its own gender norms and assigns different roles to men and women, my bias towards strong women may influence my ability to work with individuals from other cultures in a sensitive manner. For example, in working with Katie, my ideas of womanhood may have subtly directed her to a particular way of being as a woman. With Joshua, feelings of anger towards a perceived subjugation of women in his community may have been misdirected as anger towards him, as a man. Whatever the culture of the client, my assumptions about womanhood (and by omission, masculinity) are liable to shape my reactions to the client on a conscious or unconscious level, potentially affecting my ability to function as an objective helper.

I raise this observation to respect that while I narrowed my focus for this research project, in reality, every aspect that makes up one's own and one's clients' cultures must be considered in terms of how it affects treatment.

Validation of Heuristic Arts-based Research

Reliability and validity in qualitative research are evaluated in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Because heuristic self-search inquiry differs from most qualitative research, as the researcher is the sole participant, some of these criteria are not relevant. Ultimately, validity is determined by whether or not the depiction of this experience is "derived from rigorous, exhaustive self-searching" that presents "comprehensively, vividly, and accurately the meanings and essences of the experience" (Moustakas, 1990, p.32). Similarly, in arts-based research, the 'success' of a project depends on how well the methodology has addressed the research question and goals (Knowles & Cole, 2008; Leavy, 2009). I will briefly define each criterion of qualitative reliability and validity and describe how it does or does not relate to this inquiry, along with what measures were taken to execute a valid, meaningful study.

Credibility refers to the results being convincing given the data, or the 'truth' of the findings. Some strategies that I employ to enhance credibility are prolonged engagement, triangulation, along with peer and expert debriefing. From discovering my question to completing my analysis, my journey has spanned 18 months. In this prolonged period of time, I have had periods of immersion and withdrawal, or incubation, allowing me to explore my experience deeply. In so doing, I employed triangulation by collecting data through several methods: writing process notes, creating transitional words, making artwork, and sharing that artwork with creative respondents. Finally, throughout the process I have used peer and expert debriefing by dialoguing with my supervisors, colleagues at the placement, and creative respondents. They have helped me examine

features of my thinking and artwork that I overlooked, due to my biases, perspective, and assumptions.

The next criterion is transferability, which involves showing that my findings have applicability in other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A technique for establishing transferability is providing 'thick description', or a detailed account of my methods and process. While in any heuristic inquiry, the findings are not applicable to other times, settings, situations, and people, I have attempted to describe my experience in 'thick' detail.

The third criterion, dependability, calls upon a researcher to show that the findings are consistent and could be repeated. As with transferability, this criterion is less relevant because any other researcher cannot repeat my findings. However, someone interested in undertaking a heuristic arts-based process can apply similar methodology to his/her own question.

Finally, confirmability refers to the degree to which the findings are determined by the conditions of the inquiry and not the bias of the researcher. To address this point, I have been honest in revealing my biases throughout this process and have shared my data with others to ensure transparency and enable alternate ideas to arise (Lincoln & Guba; Morin, 2008).

Discussion

To begin my discussion, I would like to return to my research questions. My primary question asked: How can a heuristic self-inquiry facilitate the development of cultural humility in an art therapy intern? My secondary question was: What role does art making

play in this heuristic self-inquiry? After completing my research journey, I believe that these two questions are actually one. My heuristic self-inquiry was primarily facilitated through the creative process; without it, my process would have lacked depth and likely proceeded in a much more linear, predictable fashion. Rather than being one of several methods of collecting data, creative exploration was at the heart of my study.

Creating art to represent my intercultural interactions deepened my understanding of what was happening in treatment. As I did not begin my creative process until I completed my clinical internship, I had the opportunity to compare my conscious thoughts about therapeutic dynamics as treatment was happening versus what arose in the artwork after the fact. While I was aware of my counter transference during treatment and often sought supervision to address issues of culture, there were certainly surprises that surfaced through the creative process. As I mentioned in the *Findings* section, I had not been aware of the discrepancy in my levels of openness and curiosity when working with culturally similar clients and culturally different clients. Had I engaged in the creative process during treatment, as part of a regular self-reflection process, I may have been able to apply my insights to treatment with these clients.

In speculating as to why the creative process would be able to reveal insights that my conscious mind had bypassed, I return to the very basis of art therapy as a treatment modality. Art therapists, building on psychoanalytic theory, have long held that art has the capacity to uncover unconscious conflicts and bring them into vivid awareness (Rubin, 2001). Visual images "provide a way to connect with, represent, and give meaning to inner experiences" (Jongeward, 2009, p. 241). In addition to the final

product, the process of creation is often challenging and demands the ability to tolerate pain and doubt as one risks uncovering something new and unknown (Gordon, 1975).

One previously unacknowledged aspect of my culture emerged through creative mask work. Though I had always felt different from my mother's family, I had not consciously acknowledged my anger at feeling like an outsider. In creating my brown mask, a tangible entity outside of myself, I was able to regard it more objectively, allowing for unanticipated connections to be made. In this case, I realized that my feeling of rejection from the Sephardic side of my culture had transformed with time into a rejection of Sephardic customs and values. The distance made it easier to identity and label complicated feelings and hidden aspects of myself. The process of "taking back from the work on a conscious level what has been projected onto it on an unconscious level is perhaps the most fruitful and painful result of creativity" (Ehrenzweig, 1967, p. 57). By staying with the process, I began to integrate these different aspects of my cultural identity, recognizing that they are both part of my story.

Like the creative process, "intercultural learning is never linear or orderly. It is a process that occurs in complex ways with increasing levels of cultural self-knowledge as an integral part of understanding how responses to culturally different persons are manifested" (Nakanishi & Rittner, 1992, p. 29). Learning how to work effectively with clients from a variety of cultural backgrounds demands that we be critical and reflective of our responses to others (Green, 1995). From my experience, exploring those responses creatively can be a powerful and illuminating way of doing this. However, because of the unpredictable nature of both intercultural learning and artistic inquiry, the

researcher/clinician must be able to trust that "within the chaos of the unconscious lies a potential for hidden order" (Freud, in Levine, 2009, p. 133).

As an art therapist, having personal experience with the creative process as a tool for self-discovery is essential (Dalley, 1987). From a personal standpoint, making time to engage in artwork can generate a sense of renewal and be a form of self-care. Sweig (in Moon, 2002) says: "taking time in to feed my introverted and expressive needs puts me in contact with the deepest aspects of myself that ultimately are what I have to offer my patients as a fellow traveler on their personal journeys" (p. 225).

When this self-discovery relates to one's clinical work, it can serve several professional functions. Practitioner research can increase one's attentiveness in sessions, one's appreciation for clinical work, and ground knowledge in experience (McNiff, 1998). This type of research sets a precedent for life long creative experimentation and a personal understanding of the challenges and healing properties of art therapy. It also reasserts the artist aspect of our identity as art therapists, which Bruce Moon describes as "a matter of professional authenticity" (2002, xvii).

By researching the processes and methods that are at the core of our profession, the artist/clinician/researcher "enlarges practice and stimulates innovation" (McNiff, 1998, p. 45). This notion is a critical shift from the current movement in art therapy research where art therapists are encouraged to conduct research to justify our work to other professions. While both forms of research are necessary, in my experience, research through the arts has been devalued in our training. Art therapy students are at a critical juncture in their learning and development of a professional identity; I believe that it is

important to begin to heal the split between artist/researcher and form a better integrated professional identity.

Conclusion

In any heuristic process, any conclusions that are drawn are highly personal and cannot be generalized. As with all qualitative research, no cause and effect conclusions can be drawn. Despite these limitations, the final conclusions that are accepted by the researcher represent his/her truth (Polanyi, 1969). It is my hope that in coming to understand and accept my truth – the wholeness of my cultural identity – my capacity to facilitate this process for my clients will grow. Though developing as an art therapist is a life long journey, this research project was an opportunity to focus on one area of my development in a conscious and focused manner.

Certainly, the process took longer than I expected. There were times when I wished I had chosen a research methodology that I could control. However, I truly believe that this was a journey that I needed to take. Somewhere along the route of applying to the Master's program in art therapy, beginning an intense course of study and clinical training, I became disconnected from my artistic self. This creative process has rejuvenated my sense of artistic identity and deepened my appreciation of the kind of deep learning that can happen through making art.

Moreover, by being honest, critical, and reflective of my responses to clients, I have increased my awareness of my own culture and how it interacts with clients from a variety of backgrounds. Remaining with the notion of cultural humility, my experience has reinforced that I can never be "culturally competent". I do not believe that I will ever

be able to claim that I am certifiably competent with another's life experience, particularly when their experience is so different from my own. However, I am now more aware of my limitations, my values and my biases. I believe that with experience, coupled with on going reflection and supervision, I can become more comfortable with understanding how my responses to culturally different persons are manifested.

Recommendations for Future Research

Given the scope of this project, there were many aspects of my journey that I could not explore fully. One of the most rewarding parts of this process was working with the respondents. As the heuristic journey can be a lonely one, having the opportunity to share my artwork with others and receive their creative response was invaluable. This process can be fruitfully expanded in future studies, whether heuristic or arts-based. The process of asking others to respond to art with art and then create a list of words, essentially reversing my process of moving from transitional words to art, can be explored further; how does this process of translation from art to words affect the essence of what is being explored?

Another suggestion for future research lies with the creative process of responding to clients with art. In post-session or counter transference art making, which materials and mediums does the art therapist use when thinking of certain clients and why? Does comfort or discomfort with a medium relate to the particular client relationship?

In art therapy training programs, students can be asked to keep a visual journal of their countertransference responses to clients. This journal can be integrated into peer or individual supervision to provide students with another perspective into their developing

client relationships. As I noticed in my research, the insights that emerged through art making often reflected a more unconscious layer of knowledge, which was not readily accessible through verbal dialogue. This visual journal can be particularly useful as students are beginning their training, at a time when they are processing a great deal of information and may not be as conscious of their cultural interactions with clients. By being able to dialogue with peers and experienced clinicians about how one's biases and assumptions may enter treatment in a candid way, students will feel more comfortable addressing issues of culture in therapy and supervision.

An interesting process to explore may be how responding to clients' art with art, either in sessions or post-sessions (to be shared with clients selectively), may help facilitate a therapeutic relationship with a less pronounced power differential. In the process of creating art about my clients and our relationship, which took place after the termination of treatment, I wondered how they might have responded to seeing the images that they inspired. While some images should remain personal, and are useful for the therapist to process and untangle her feelings about the course of treatment, others may provide the client with valuable feedback. Even if the images are not shared, this process may enrich the therapeutic relationship by creating an ongoing dialogue between therapist and clients. This diminished power differential is part of the ethos of cultural humility, which at its core acknowledges both client and therapist as lifelong learners and teachers.

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