
Article

Researching Creations: Applying Arts-Based Research to Bedouin Women's Drawings **Ephrat Huss and Julie Cwikel**

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Abstract

In this article, the author examines the combination of arts-based research and art therapy within Bedouin women's empowerment groups. The art fulfills a double role within the group of both helping to illuminate the women's self-defined concerns and goals, and simultaneously enriching and moving these goals forward. This creates a research tool that adheres to the feminist principles of finding new ways to learn from lower income women from a different culture, together with creating a research context that is of direct potential benefit and enrichment for the women. The author, through examples of the use of art within lower income Bedouin women's groups, examines the theoretical connection between arts-based research and art therapy, two areas that often overlap but whose connection has not been addressed theoretically.

Keywords: art-based research, art therapy, researching women from a nondominant culture

All problem solving has to cope with an overcoming of the fossilized shape . . . the discovery that squares are only one kind of shape among infinitely many.—Rudolf Arnheim, 1996, p. 35

Introduction: Why use the arts in research

While I am talking with Bedouin women about their drawings, the tin hut in the desert that is the community center in which we work sometimes reverberates with lively stories and emotional closeness, and sometimes I, as a Jewish Israeli art therapist and researcher, and they, as a Bedouin Israeli women's empowerment group, are lost to each other: When I suggest that we summarize the meaning of the art therapy sessions for the women, they nod their heads politely and thank me, and ignore my questions.

My aim in this article is to see how art-based research literature and art therapy literature can jointly contribute to both working with and understanding women from a different culture.

Art as communication (rather than as therapy) can be defined as the association between words, behavior, and drawing created in a group setting. McNiff (1995), a prominent art therapist and one of the pioneers of art-based research, suggested that art therapy research should move from justification (of art therapy) to creative inquiry into the roles of the art itself.

I will first review arts-based research in an effort to understand the use of art as research. I will then survey art therapy's practice-based knowledge concerning working with art with women from a different culture, and third, I will apply both of these knowledge bases to Bedouin women's drawings and words from within my case study.

Art as a form of inquiry

The aim in arts-based research is to use the arts as a method, a form of analysis, a subject, or all of the above, within qualitative research; as such, it falls under the heading of alternative forms of research gathering. It is used in education, social science, the humanities, and art therapy research. Within the qualitative literature, there is an "explosion" in arts-based forms of research (Mullen, 2003).

How does arts-based research help us to understand women from a different culture? It seems that classic verbal methods of interviewing or questionnaire answering are not effective forms of inquiry with these women. Bowler (1997) described the difficulties she found in using questionnaires and interviewing, both of which stress Western-style verbal articulation, as research methods with lower income Asian women. She found that the women try to give the "right" answer or to be polite. In-depth interviewing was also conceived of as a strange and foreign way of constructing and exploring the world for these women (Bowler, 1997; Lawler, 2002; Ried, 1993). The women are often mistakenly conceived of as "mute" because they do not verbalize information along Western lines of inquiry (Goldberger & Veroff, 1995).

The search for a method that "gives voice" to silenced women is a central concern for feminist methodologies. De-Vault (1999) analyzed Western discourse as constructed along male content areas and suggested that we "need to interview in ways that allow the exploration of un-articulated aspects of women's experiences . . . and explore new methodologies" (p. 65). Using art as a way of initiating self-expression can be seen as such a methodological innovation.

The arts-based paradigm states that by handing over creativity (the contents of the research) and its interpretation (an explanation of the contents) to the research participant, the participant is empowered, the relationship between researcher and research participant is intensified and made more equal, and the contents are more culturally exact and explicit, using emotional as well as cognitive ways of knowing. Mason (2002) and Sclater (2003) have suggested that drawing or storytelling, or the use of vignettes or pictures as a trigger within an interview, already common in work with children, could also help adults connect ideological abstractions to specific situations, using both personal and collective elements of cultural experience.

Thus, culture and gender unite in making Western research methods insufficient for understanding women from a different culture. Using visual data-gathering methods, then, can be seen as a movement against the dominance of (Western-style) words and talk in research imaginations, perhaps offering alternate avenues of self-expression for women from traditional cultures.

The arts are considered “soft,” female ways of knowing; they tend to be used as a counterpoint to the seriousness of words (Mason, 2002). Alternatively (and mistakenly), as in photography, arts are considered a depiction of absolute reality (Pink, 2001).

Silverman (2000) argued that research must access what people do, and not only what people say. Art brings “doing” into the research situation. However, the inclusion of arts in research poses many methodological difficulties, described by Eisner (1997) in the title of his article as “The Promises and Perils of Alternative Research Gathering methods.” Denzin and Lincoln (1998) described personal experience methods as going “inwards and outwards, backwards and forwards” (p. 152). The art product by definition creates more “gaps” and entrances than closed statements or conclusions (this is what enables so many different people to connect to one picture!). The art process also includes moves between silences, times of doing, listening, talking, watching, thinking, and different gaps and connections between the above. For example, Mason (2002), a qualitative researcher, described how research participants agonize about where to put whom when drawing a genogram or family diagram. She claimed that this process of “agonizing,” or creating the genogram, is an important component of the finished genogram and should not be left out.

Issues in arts-based research

Sclater (2003) explored the above-described complications of defining the “contours” of art-based research, as difficulties in defining issues related to the quality of art, to the relationship with the research participant, and to the relationship between art and words in arts based research.

Defining issues related to the quality of art

Mullen (2003) concluded that art-based research is focused on process as expressing the context of lived situations rather than the final products disconnected from the context of its creation. Mahon (2000) argued, through the concept of embedded aesthetics, that the aesthetic product is not inherent from within but is always part of broader social contexts, which both transform and are transformed by the art product and around which there is always a power struggle over different cultural meanings (see also Barone, 2003). At the same time, Mahon claimed that art includes elements and aesthetic languages that are specific to itself and that cannot be translated into action research or communication, or understood as direct translations of social interactions. The boundaries of quality are seen as marginalizing whoever does not conform to them, as in folk, vernacular, and outsider forms of art. In art-based research, elitism is replaced by art as communication, whereby reactions to the art work are more important than the quality of the art in terms of external aesthetic criteria. Within this paradigm, the criteria of communication and social responsibility predominate over craftsmanship (Finley, 2003; Mullen, 2003; Sclater, 2003).

Defining issue related to the relationship with the research participant

Another consideration for arts-based research is the setting of standards or limits around the roles of artist, researcher, and facilitator of creative activities. Mullen (2003) suggested, We need to find ways not just to represent others creatively, but to enable them to represent themselves. The challenge is to go beyond insightful texts, to move ourselves and others into action, with the effect of improving lives. (p. 117)

Therefore, multiple or blurred roles are advantageous, as they reflect the complexity of reality within any research situation. By handing over creativity and its interpretation to the research participant, and including these elements within the research, the relationship between researcher and research participant is intensified, eliciting emotion and facilitating transformation. Thus, the blurring of the contours or roles of the researcher and research participant is seen as advantageous.

For example, cameras were given to lower income rural Chinese women, who, through photography, were able to communicate their concerns to policy makers with whom they would not engage in a direct verbal confrontation (Wang & Burris, 1994).

Defining issues related to the relationship between art and words in arts-based research

Art-based research literature addresses the problematic issue of how to work with the relationship between the verbal and nonverbal elements of the data, the art form, and its interpretation within a research context. Within research, the theoretical framework of understanding a work of art is harnessed to the reason art was used within the research puzzle (Mason, 2002). The use of verbal and nonverbal elements can be seen as a triangulation of data. It is important to understand why we are including art and to think about how the use of visual contents will help solve the “puzzle” of the research (Davis & Srinivasan, 1994; Finley, 2003; Mason, 2002). Save and Nuutinen (2003) defined the relationship between drawing and words (after researching a dialogue between the alternate use of pictures and words) as “creating a field of many understandings, creating a ‘third thing’ that is sensory, multi-interpretive, intuitive, and ever-changing, avoiding the final seal of truth” (p. 532).

Connections between art therapy and arts-based research

Art therapy, or any therapy, aims to connect, integrate, and transform experience and behavior. Art-based research also aims to transform, in that it can “use the imagination not only to examine how things are, but also how they could be” (Mullen, 2003, p. 117). It aims to connect and empower by creating something together with the research participants rather than the classic research orientation that takes information away from them (Finley, 2003; Sclater, 2003).

Sarasema (2003), a qualitative researcher, discussed the therapeutic advantages of storytelling for widowed research participants, claiming that art-based research is a way of creating knowledge that “connects head to heart” (p. 603).

Both art therapy and arts-based research involve the use of dialogue, observation, participant observation, and heuristic, hermeneutic, phenomenological, and grounded techniques of interpretation. Both relate to the ethical issues of art and interpretation ownership and a relational definition of art, including the skills of working simultaneously with both visual and verbal components (Burt, 1996; Mason, 2000; B. Moon, 2000; H. Moon, 2002; Talbot Green, 1989).

The difference between the two fields could be defined as art therapy implementing a theoretical psychological metaframework that organizes the therapeutic relationship while using the inherent qualities of different art materials and processes (Kramer, 1997). However, within art therapy, there are researchers who wish to discard these psychological metaframeworks and to focus more on “art-based” art therapy. For instance, in feminist, and studio or community art therapy, art is used both as an expression and a critique of society (Allen, 1995; B. Moon, 2000). Savneet (2000) claimed that art with women from the Developing World, such as the Bedouin women, can serve as a decolonizing tool by giving voice to women holding a polytheistic view of the world, as long as the interpreters of the art are the women and not an external interpreter. The nonverbal image should speak for itself, reducing the possibility of the artist-client’s being spoken over (Hogan, 1997). In addition, the image can be subversive, creating a narrative or counternarrative additional to the dominant one of words. The distancing or intermediating element of art can be helpful in interactions of inequality or of conflict (Dokter, 1998; Liebmann, 1996).

Art-based research, art therapy, and culture

Arts-based research literature focuses on art as a way to connect different people and to express different cultures, giving voice to nondominant narratives.

The culture of the viewer of the art will influence or interact with how the art is understood (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Another possibility is to accept that art does not define cultures from the outside but enables multiple and complex views of that culture (Eisner, 1997; Pink, 2001).

Art therapy literature also stresses the ability of art to help make cultural issues manifest within pictures by the fact that each picture shows differing understandings and conceptions of the content drawn, rendering new perspectives (Gerity, 2000). Quiet people can create “loud” art work. Art connects to individual-subjective rather than generalized and stereotyped levels of experience. Thus, we see that factors inherent in the art language help integrate the individual with the culture (Campanelli, 1991; Campbell, 1999; Hiscox & Calisch, 1998).

Art therapy literature also addresses the complexity of art as a culturally embedded vessel in itself. Hocoy (2002) has argued that art as self-expression is a deeply Western construct, not necessarily suited to people from different cultures. Acton (2001) warned against being a “color blind” art therapist, ignoring the cultural differences and approaches to healing of different people and their manifestations within art. Hogan (2003) stressed that art therapists can claim to be culturally sensitive but actually dominate the participants by offering an art process or interpretation that is alien and strange to them (Acton, 2001). Conversely, Hocoy (2002) pointed out that assuming that everything is a cultural difference can also create misunderstandings of pictures. Cultural possibilities for misunderstanding are, on the one hand, bridged by the third object—the artwork—but, on the other, intensified by it. Thus, art is not a “magic” way of overcoming cultural differences but has the potential to enable the multifaceted nature of different cultural identities. The analyses of the art, and the relationship, are harnessed to the therapeutic aims, taking culture into account. In general, art therapy literature supplies much practice-based knowledge of how to take culture into account while focusing on harnessing the artwork and relationship to the therapeutic goals of the interaction.

Having briefly summarized and created a connection between the central issues within arts-based research, and within art therapy with a different culture, I will now apply them to some drawings by the Bedouin women from my research, as a set of relevant data on which to continue examining the above concepts.

The context of the Bedouin women

My aim is to outline briefly the levels of change and stress that some women in this culture are currently experiencing.

Meir (1997) has suggested that under the influence of the dominant Israeli culture (and despite ongoing political friction between the Israeli government and the Bedouins’ claim to the right to continue a traditional nomadic lifestyle), Bedouin society is undergoing change from a collective to an individualistic culture, and from a nomadic lifestyle to fixed settlements. This has resulted in the devaluation of women and children, who no longer work in the fields and tend animals as part of the economic support system, as well as changes in the traditional role of elders. In addition, the loss of the traditional Bedouin tribal supportive roles with an externalization of these responsibilities to state authorities, who invest limited resources and cultural relevance, has resulted in the decline of collective family support and funds. These changes are creating high levels of stress (Abu-Rabia-Abu-Kuider, 1994; Meir, 1997).

The status of Arab women in Israel can thus be defined as doubly oppressed, both by their patriarchal society and by the Israeli political regime. Paradoxically, Bedouin women’s dependence on the males in their family has sometimes increased due to perceptions of women’s exposure to work, education, and individualism as a threat to tradition. Indeed, Bedouin women in the Negev were found to be intensely

affected by poverty and the interconnected social and health problems that this entails (Cwikel, 2002; Cwikel, Wiesel, & Al-Krenawi, 2003).

Conversely, Arab feminists Hijab (1988) and Sabbagh (1997) have differentiated between issues of concern for Western women in Western society and those for Arab women. In the West, concerns focus on issues such as reproductive rights, legal equity, expression of self through work and art, and sexual freedom; for Arab women, concerns center on education, health, and employment opportunities as well as legal reform and political participation. Power is measured in relation to other women and not in relation to men (Hijab, 1988; Sabbagh, 1997).

We have found that there are many difficulties for Western female researchers who are not from within the Bedouin communities to understand the diverse concerns of Bedouin women. Bedouin middle-class women will also be from a different “culture” from that of Bedouin working-class women. We see that there is a paramount need to find alternative research methods that can enable outsiders to “hear” the concerns of the Bedouin women and that can enable the Bedouin women to communicate those concerns first to themselves and then to the dominant culture.

Using art as a research method: The Bedouin women’s drawings

The following examples of drawings are from three ongoing groups, in which the art activity was introduced for a few sessions, aiming to enrich, reflect on, or enhance the existing self-defined concerns of the group rather than to present an external study objective or research agenda. The three groups were all of poor Bedouin women living in a township in the Negev, including a group of single mothers meeting as a support group, a group of women undergoing vocational training to open early childhood centers within their homes for extra income, and a group of women without writing skills, wishing to learn arts and crafts as enrichment and eventually to make products to sell.

The art activity in all the groups and meetings divided into set stages, although the contents were in accordance to the group’s wishes. The meetings were undertaken by means of a Bedouin social worker learning art therapy, so as to enhance cultural suitability and to enable the women to talk in Arabic.

As stated, the aim of the art was two pronged.

The first direction is art as empowerment, enrichment, or self-expression. This is in accordance with feminist research that aims to be of direct benefit to the participants (especially as the aims of the group and the contents were defined by them).

The second direction is art as a research method, or a way to understand the concerns of the women (which is a preliminary step to any type of empowering or enriching intervention).

Following is a detailed explanation of the art stages and examples of each of the stages from the different case studies. The intent is not to present a full case study but to examine the interaction between arts-based research and art as empowerment, and lower income Bedouin women.

From a bird’s eye overview, the method of using art described within this article undergoes the following stages, which can be repeated, refining, redefining, deepening, or enriching the contents through doing, observing, and talking.

1. Participant interacts with art making (within the context of the group leader and group).
2. Participant interacts with art and group and group leader simultaneously.
3. Participant observes the pictures as a group exhibition.

4. Participant re-interacts with the above stages of art making, discussing, and observing, over an issue that arose in the former “wave.”

Step 1: The art-making stage

Each participant draws a picture in oil pastels, or makes a clay statue of a subject agreed on in the initial discussion and connected to the overall aim of the group:

- Oil pastels with different sizes of paper, and clay are offered. Oil pastels enable both lines and areas to be created quickly with minimal mess. Clay might be a more familiar medium for Bedouin women.
- Drawing can be used in a combination of directive and nondirective forms, similar to different levels of structuring an interview.
- The type of art making is process rather than product oriented, termed diagrammatic art within art therapy (Liebmann, 1996), which helps access and raise an issue rather than working on a product that exists independent of the creator, as in an art class. This means not that the art does not “lead” the artist but that the products are relational, used to communicate rather than to display talent (Hogan, 2003).

In the sketch shown in Figure 1, the black circle (left) symbolizes the drawer, the red (vertical) oblong, her picture, and the arrows, the mutual influence of her on the picture and the picture, on her. The brown circle (right) is the context within which this reflective activity takes place, created by and observed by the group leader or researcher, symbolizing the dominant culture.

The question of whether to suggest a topic to draw can be seen as analogous to decisions concerning the level of structure of an interview. I chose to suggest a few topics, so as to make the drawing less threatening for people not used to drawing. Oil pastels include the elements of color and line, encouraging a “story” to be told. On the other hand, clay might be a more familiar medium for some women, and three-dimensionality evokes different types of storytelling. Time is then given to work individually or in pairs (according to what is preferred by the women) on the subject.

The assumption is that the engagement in the art process creates a novel interaction with the subject matter, showing differing perspectives and enhancing a connection between the emotive and the cognitive which in turn promotes a process of reflection and prioritizing elements to be included in the art. This creates a silent prestage of creative organization of personal data from inside onto the empty page, before or together with translating it to the group and to the researcher-observer.

Each type of art assignment embodies a different “culture” within the room in terms of collectivist or individualist interactions. Dosamantes-Beaudry (1999) showed how cultural self-construal is depicted by working individually or in pairs in dance therapy. The use of time, space, materials, and so on are all expressions of power and will influence the type of discussion that emerges, enacted both physically and symbolically within the organization of the arts behavior.

An additional question arises if the group leader or researcher, beyond becoming an observer and student of the participant’s pictures, also draws so as to make transparent and clarify her position. According to arts-based research, the aim is to “blur the boundaries” of the (unequal) relationship between researcher and research participant. According to art therapy, this point is much disputed, with some advocating the above and others considering the danger of taking the client-drawer’s space, or intimidating or influencing the client.

All of these considerations become the research context. They need to be examined reflexively as they express the researcher’s cultural bias.

For example, I was certain that oil pastels were the most flexible medium, perhaps being the closest to a writing tool, which is the dominant medium within my culture, but the older Bedouin women responded immediately to clay. One single mother, an abandoned first wife and an older Bedouin woman did not draw but, when I included clay, immediately made a clay ashtray before bursting into tears. She explained that the ashtray was like an older woman, an empty and discarded container. A mundane clay ashtray thus becomes an object of intense meaning and communication illustrating the communicative rather than aesthetic quality of art. As Finley (2003) stated, within this paradigm, the reactions to the poem are more important than the poem itself. (The above example also illustrates how the visual stimuli initiated associations that were not decided on in advance, and that were influenced by the material and by the context of the group.

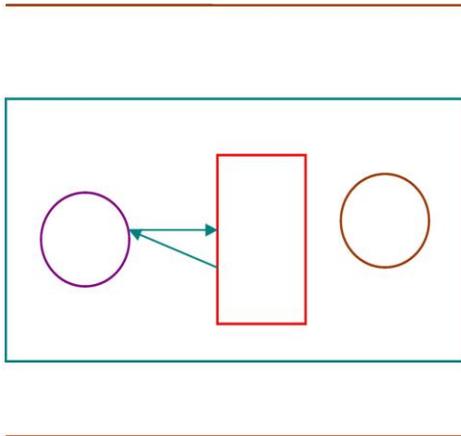


Figure 1 An example of a woman's interaction with her art was an older woman from the single mothers' group, who did not speak at all at the beginning but repeated a schema of squares within each meeting. In one meeting, she stated that it was a house. It is not clear if the squares were an illustration of the house the idea of a house emerged from the graphic shape of the squares, or the idea of a house emerged from within the context of the things other women said, or all of the different elements combined together. Arnheim (1996) stressed the inherent dynamics of an art gestalt that influences the observer (rather than just being a neutral vessel for projection) (Figure 2).

The example in Figure 3 illustrates how the dialogue between art and the individual can be transforming in itself. One young third wife, whose husband is in jail for violence, said of her picture of a house with flowers, that her father did not allow her to plant flowers by the house and did not allow her to play with other children, and he chose her husband for her. About the picture, she said, "I want a house; I want to build a house of my own. Most important, I want to plant a garden by the house." The picture contained past and future in a causal narrative, based on a specific instant that gained symbolic meaning. The narrative is poetically organized, with three elements from the past and three from the future, corresponding to the three pictures. The dialogue was transformative, in that it allowed the drawer "to use imagination to examine how things are, but also how they could be otherwise" (Finley, 2003, p. 292). This exemplifies the arts-based paradigm that has as an aim to "go beyond insightful texts, to move ourselves and others into action, with the effect of improving lives" (Mullen, 2003. p. 117).

Another example was when an older woman, who was silent in all the meetings, made a cow, saying that a woman is like a cow: When she has no milk left, she is discarded. A younger woman made a horse, saying that a woman is like a horse, strong and able to carry many burdens. Here, the art "answered" the art.

Another woman made an ashtray, and while describing how tired she was of managing as a single mother with no money, she broke the ashtray into many tiny bits in nervous movements, creating a physical embodiment of her emotional state. When the women talked to her and suggested solutions, she started sticking all the pieces together again. She looked at her hands and laughed, noticing this.

One woman ignored the two directives and decided to draw, first in pencil and then in paint, a stylized sunset picture she had once seen in a magazine. She worked quickly and carefully, begging for a few

more minutes at the end. I framed the picture for her. She stated that she wanted to execute a picture like that to decorate her house, as she could not afford to buy one. She had worked hard and was proud of the result (Figure 4).



Figures 2a, 2b, and 2c



Figures 3a and 3b

Although for me, as a Western-oriented art therapist, the discussion or individualized creativity of the product is most important (rather than copying a preexisting picture), for this woman, activating the will power and concentration to execute or copy a picture that she could not afford to buy, so as to have the product, was an empowering experience that connected her intensely to the art experience. It seems that the autonomy and intimacy inherent in the exclusive interaction between the drawer and her drawing enabled the woman to pursue her aims rather than to comply with our directives (Hogan, 1997). The woman's self-directedness is a good example of a negotiation of power as against the dominant culture represented by our suggestions.

Another example of the complex interplay of power between the researcher and women follows. For example, although each of the women in the early childhood training group had 5 to 10 children and were very knowledgeable about early childhood, when I asked them what they would like to focus on in the drawings, they answered with questions conveying helplessness, such as what should be done with a crying child, what games to play, how to connect to the children, and what to feed them. Conversely, they were very clear and confident about the contents of their drawings in relation to early childhood. The art seemed to be express power and knowledge, whereas their words expressed helplessness. Perhaps the drawing enabled a simultaneous double transference: Words were used to express helplessness toward representatives of the dominant culture, but confidence and knowledge were expressed through their drawings. The multifaceted component of the drawing and then talking about it, simultaneously expressed and overcame the disempowerment of learning within the context of the dominant culture.

The discussion stage

After completing the artwork, we laid them out in a circle on the floor at the drawers' feet, facing toward the group, both clearly connected to their creator, and also creating a group exhibition. The participants ask one another questions about their art work, and the women explain or connect to other's art work in a free discussion.

The following sketch illustrates the complexity and multiple interactions that occur simultaneously in this situation.

Thus, the art work, group interaction, and so on cannot be analyzed separately, out of context with the other elements.

For example, one young woman was too shy to talk about her drawing of a black circle (Figure 5). Her friend sitting next to her said that she thought the girl was sad there were so many people in her small house that is like a closed circle that one cannot get out of. The woman nodded in agreement.

The interaction between the two friends is similar to Shvadren's (1992) analogy of observing an art work as two people, (the creator and the observer) gazing into a lighted window and both seeing new things within the room. Within feminist theory, this emphatic understanding of another person has been termed a relational form of interaction that focuses on empathy and is characteristic of female interactions (Goldberger & Veroff, 1995). Feminist theory suggests that words, as power structures that define reality, are created by men and thus do not describe women's experiences within this male-dominated world. For example, De-Vault (1999), a feminist theorist, claimed that we "need to interview in ways that allow the exploration of unarticulated aspects of woman's experiences" (p. 65). The black circle described above and its ensuing dialogue might be such an "interview." In terms of the art product, we see a simple black circle that is not rich in terms of crafts or in terms of Western art but is an art form used in art therapy, focusing on receptive or connective elements that emphasize thoughts, emotions, and relationships.

Figure 4 An intercultural term for this emotional understanding is Steinberg and Bar-On's (2002) concept



of a dialogic moment. Observing Arab-Jewish conflict resolution groups, they noted that these moments of empathy and understanding between Jewish and Arab students occur when a specific story or personal detail is expressed rather than when generalized ideologies are expressed. Drawing seems to encourage the description of a specific or personal instant and a specific way of “telling” or interpreting that instant, creating, in Abu-Lughod’s (1991) terms, “ethnographies of the particular . . . [that] capture the cultural and social

‘forces’ that are only embodied in the actions of individuals in time and space” (p. 156).

The visual stimuli themselves can also encourage engagement beyond the areas of conflict. For example, the Bedouin social worker who facilitated art with the group of single mothers stated in her summary of the experience that for the first time (with many years experience working with the women), she felt flooded and disturbed by their suffering. This might be what Finley (2003) defined as the purpose of arts-based inquiry, to contribute to deeper relationships between researcher and research participant.

Within the context of the group discussion, the picture creates a concrete anchor (to use yet another metaphor!) that can be related to on many different levels of language, with everyone seeing or reacting to the same trigger (the picture being discussed). It becomes a transitional space that is a useful mediator for people from different cultures, who formulate their stories along different types of narrative. The meanings of the picture can be negotiated and clarified through both people’s observing the same object. Drawing, and then discussing the drawings, serves as a form of self-interpretation, or validation, of the subject drawn, that is important with intercultural communication. In terms of art therapy, it is congruent with the feminist and phenomenological stands that stress the artist’s understandings of the art work.

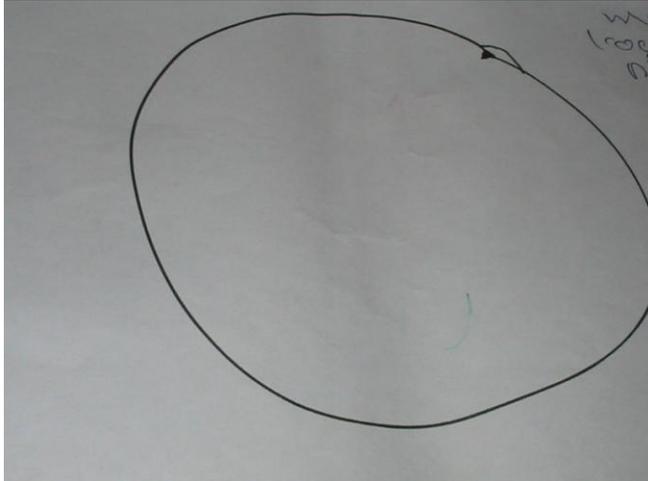
For example, one woman drew a cupful of flowers (a traditional subject in Islamic art), then said that her life is empty and boring, not like the flowers, expressing an opposite relationship to the picture.

Alternatively, another woman drew a fish in a stormy sea (Figure 6) to express her loneliness, far from her maternal family, using a metaphor from the natural world—expressing silence, loneliness, and the turbulence of her circumstances. Another woman used a metaphor of a black cloud, stating that that was the feeling of being a Bedouin woman without a husband.

One woman took this feeling as a confrontation, asking “Why did God give us [women] hands, if he does not allow us to use them?” She then drew a picture of the modern and the traditional women holding hands and making a connection, stating that the modern women is pulling the traditional women in her direction, as can be seen in her picture (Figure 7). Another woman drew a television and said that all day she sits crying in front of the TV, bored and lonely, thus creating a metonym (Figure 8).

One woman, whose shack is going to be pulled down because she does not have a building permit, drew a steep slope, with a house at the end. She said that she feels the energy needed to keep her house is too steep a slope for her to climb, juxtaposing a concrete situation and a metaphor.

Figure 5



The above words describe different personal and cultural “entrances” to the pictures. Discussing the contents of the pictures thus helps clarify the participant’s stand toward her picture.

The art directive itself can also disclose cultural differences. For example, we asked all the participants to draw a symbol of themselves as an introduction (a common exercise in art therapy). However, they all drew a wish, something that they wanted, or something abstract. At first, it seemed that they had not understood or ignored the request for a symbol of self. However, a wish can also be understood as an abstract symbol of self extended into time and space outside or

beyond the self. This might relate to collective identity, which extends beyond the individual, and to the aesthetics of Islamic art, aiming to cheer and express wishes for a better future. We see that basic concepts, such as symbols, constitute different formulations or “shapes” within different cultures. The concrete element of drawing makes the specific characteristics of concepts such as a symbol, wish, or moment less abstract and thus more overt. The dual activity of both concretely drawing or enacting these concepts, and then explaining them as they appear in the picture helps access these subtle differences that are lost in verbal interaction, where we can mistakenly assume that by using the same concept (such as a symbol) we mean the same thing. Bhaba’s (1994) statement that concepts, such as death, mothering, and aging, cannot be translated, having different values and meaning different things in different cultures. Thus, it is not possible to “translate” one culture into another.

Art can contain different elements simultaneously.

One young woman said about the blue-and-white abstract silkscreen made in the arts and crafts group, that the brooch’s colors reminded her of the sea, with a boy standing in the distance. Everyone laughed and she said that she wanted to get married, although marriage is the end of freedom: You stay at home and do not go to the sea anymore. Thus, the picture enabled a dialogue of ambivalence. When people live in more than one culture and are undergoing acculturation, the ability to integrate different cultural or personal understandings, or even opposing feelings as part of a whole, is considered beneficial to the acculturation process. Talking in a linear sequence seems to invite a more unified dialogue, as each point has to come after the last, rather than being shown simultaneously. The art as a trigger for discussion enabled a complex version of reality that is not reduced to one truth.

Figure 6



Figure 7



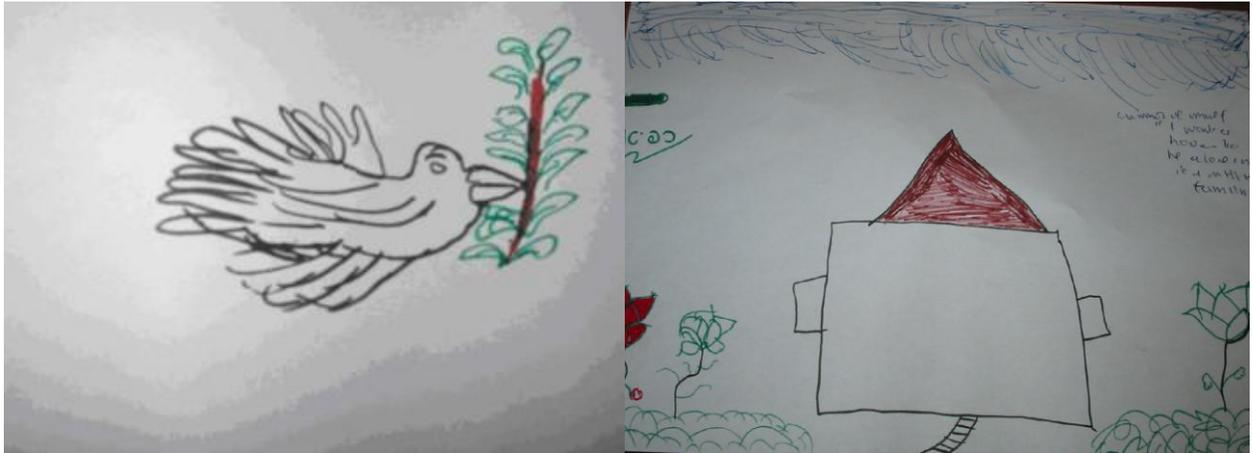
Figure 8



Another example is of a young teenage girl from this group with no head cover wearing jeans and a large Magen David (a Jewish and national symbol that is currently part of the teen fashion in necklaces in Israel), who drew a picture of a Bedouin tent and said that she liked the traditional Bedouin culture best (perhaps also expressing a wish for less complicated times in terms of identity). This is similar to Abu-Lughod's (1991) suggestion that specific, individual examples negate cultural stereotypes. For instance, she describes a woman swearing and citing from the Koran in the same sentence, thus refusing to be reduced to one truth (Abu-Lughod, 1991).

One woman drew a picture of a bus (driving accidents are a major problem within Israel in general and within the Bedouin villages and townships in particular). She described how, after many failures, she had just completed her driving theory test but must now find the money for driving lessons; otherwise, the theory would be out of date. She stated that, like the traffic light, when there is war, one needs to stop. She continued about how important her driving license was for her, as it would enable her to take the children to different places. She said her brothers were helping her to pay for the lessons, because she had left school at the age of 8 to look after them. She had written the words "derech shalom-ve lo lemilhama" above the bus, "a journey of peace and not war." She explained, "I want there to be peace—inside me, between people, and between countries." This is an example of the multiple levels of future and present, particularity and generalness, concreteness and abstractness, that can be contained within one picture, making it especially suitable for people undergoing cultural (and physical) transitions within their lives, incorporating different cultures.

Figures 9 and 10



To summarize, the reflective dialogue between drawer and drawing, and the interactive elements of the group dynamics combine to create a triangular situation with many different types of interactions, for instance between a drawer and her own drawing, between a drawer and other people's drawings, and between a drawer and other people. In the following section, I illustrate the complexity and multiple interactions of this situation, showing the different types of interactions between the words and the art, and explaining the art creates a multifaceted level of content that refuses to be reduced to a simple entity.

Group stage, the whole picture

The third stage can be observing the art works as a unified exhibition or group statement. Recurring themes become overt both to the group itself and to an outsider, such as the researcher (Campbell, 1999; Hiscox & Calisch, 1998). Cultural stands or beliefs are often so embedded that we are usually not aware of them ourselves. Observing the meanings within the drawings of other people from the same culture strengthens and defines these messages, creating a type of critical pedagogy.

For example, when observing all the pictures of "what a child needs," we noticed that the children always played outside and were depicted in rich color. The caretakers inside were depicted without color and in minimal pencil lines. Thus, outside was defined as the focus for exploration—having implications for creating a culturally sensitive early childhood curriculum for Bedouin children (Dosman-tes-Beaudry, 1999).

This is also congruent with feminist group therapy, which defines problems as outside the individual, related to context, and experienced by anyone within that context (rather than defined as a personal pathology). In terms of art therapy, art work can become "embodied" with meanings that hold symbolic meaning for the whole group.

For example, houses were a strong theme with the single mothers, and we devoted a session to drawing more houses so as to understand their implications. This led to the following, last stage of this method.

Validating or deepening understandings through additional words or drawings

The fourth stage of the drawing process entails re-viewing pictures and re-drawing issues that it is felt need more clarification.

In terms of arts-based research, this serves as a type of validating mechanism, in that the group exhibition gives a chance for themes to be discussed and verified on the spot through the multiple voices or comments of the group. One of the advantages of drawings is that they are constant and permanent fixtures that can be re-viewed and additional meanings gained with each viewing. At the same time, the meanings can constantly shift, enabling different words or associations at different viewings (just as we enjoy observing a work of art again and again, giving it additional or different meanings).

Within art therapy, the observation of former pictures is used as a way to enhance self-reflection and emotive involvement with (or projection onto) the picture. Schaverien (1992) has discussed how a picture can become temporarily infused with much emotional meaning for the viewer, whereas at a later stage, the picture as a talisman is relinquished.

Summary

In this article, I attempted to combine the theories of art therapy and of art-based research concerned with working with a different culture. Canclini (1996) stated that we are used to the fusion of different cultural elements, such as modern art books sitting together with crafts books on our coffee tables, to multimedia reproductions of “high” culture, to foods that combine different cultural traditions, but that we mistakenly shy away from creating “hybrid” mixes of academics and of clinical practice.

This article can be seen as a double meeting between art as therapy or empowerment, and art as research, and between Bedouin women and Jewish Western art therapy. This combination was used to create an art activity that, I hope, is both informative as research and empowering as self-expression and enrichment.

It seems that art as research can enhance understanding between the Bedouin women and the dominant Israeli culture by offering a complex, multifaceted expression of the Bedouin women’s concerns, together with their understanding of these concerns. Feminist researchers have stated, “to hear women’s perspectives accurately, we have to learn to listen in stereo, receiving both the dominant and the muted channels clearly, and understand the relationship between them” (Anderson & Jack, 1991, p. 11).

Similarly, art as therapy or empowerment can offer the transformative, enriching, and empowering elements of creating art, making it a worthwhile endeavor for the women. Both uses do not exclude the need for constant reflexivity in understanding the cultural meanings implied by different art interventions. Thus, the research context becomes of direct potential benefit to the women, uniting research and therapy aims—observation and self-observation, action and reaction.

Spivak addresses the difficulty in “admitting non-Western cultural production into the Western academy without side-stepping its challenges to metropolitan canons and thus perpetuating the ‘subalterization’ of third world culture” (p. 254). This difficulty in accepting different forms of art—both Bedouin women’s art, such as crafts, and art within psychology, such as in art therapy (rather than art as diagnostics) and art within research (rather than words only)—challenges Western classic conceptions of art and its roles (and, thus, of Bedouin women, of psychology, and of research). The limitation of this article is that I did not fully explore the meanings of the art experience for the women. Another limitation is the paradox built into the method, and mentioned above, of trying to access non-Western experience, through Western methods.

When working with art materials, the narrative is developed through the interaction of doing and reflecting on one’s actions, in a constantly modifying activity. For example, wet paint makes the paper too wet, and so pencil can be tried, but then the shapes are too defined and have lost their essence and vitality. Oil pastels can be used as a compromise, although this might result in the loss of some of the essence of both vitality and definition, and so on, until a “good enough” solution is created. This constant

negotiation and renegotiation of actions and their meanings seems an inherent part of any intercultural communication made concrete and visible through using art

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