

Title: Connecting Identities through Drawing: Relationships between Identities in Images Drawn by Immigrant Students

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Abstract

Immigration is extremely stressful and has an impact on children's identity construction. When immigrating, children must make sense of the changes they experience in order to develop a flexible and plural identity. Schools can foster this meaning-making process by promoting the creation of bridges between home and school social markers. These bridges allow movement between different aspects of students' identity and account for multiple identity configurations. One way to promote connections between identities is to offer creative expression activities within classrooms. When drawing, children project their inner feelings onto images through symbols and identify to elements of their drawings, which contribute to their identity construction. In this paper, the authors rely on data obtained from immigrant children's drawings and interviews to present three identity expression strategies put in place in their drawings: protective withdrawal on the identity of origin to allow movement between identities, mastery of globalized youth cultural identity and neutralization of identities. These strategies reveal the relationship between identities, particularly between the cultural identity of origin and that of the host culture. One strategy, the protective withdrawal on the identity of origin to allow movement between identities will be illustrated by the case of a young Chinese boy.

Keywords: identity, drawing, immigrant children, case study.

Introduction

Globalisation, combined with the rapid growth of information technologies, has changed tremendously the impact immigration has on identity construction. On one hand, the increasing number of immigrants, usually associated with the phenomenon of globalisation, exposes people to new ways of thinking and of doing things that disturb and transform sociocultural markers called upon for identity construction (Vinsonneau, 2012). On the other hand, the infrastructure offered by social media also facilitates the preservation of immigrants' cultural traditions and practices from their country of origin while bringing people from host society in contact with these through newspapers or TV programs representing a variety of languages and cultures (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). This context of shifting identity representations has become a fertile ground for the development of plural identities, but also of identity-based tensions stemming from mistrust engendered by the War on Terror, for instance.

The global social context also has reverberations in Canadian schools receiving an increasing number of immigrant children every year (Sévigny, 2016). In this context, teachers need to be attuned to how children express their identity at school in order to foster good relationships among students and to prevent conflicts. They should particularly pay attention to immigrant children's identity expression as these children might be more subject to discrimination based on their different place of origin, for instance. As identity tensions may be a sensitive topic to address directly, the use of drawing could be a less threatening way for teachers to get to know better their students and foster a positive social climate in their class.

In this paper, the authors explore how immigrant students in Quebec (Canada) expressed their identity through drawing in the context of classroom-based creative expression activities. The case study of a 9 year-old Chinese boy will be presented in order to illustrate how he dealt with the connection of his different identities by relying on his cultural identity of origin.

Immigration, Identity, and Psychosocial and School Adjustment

Immigration is an extremely stressful process that has an important psychological impact on children, especially on their identity construction. When migrating, children need to adjust to their new society by making sense of the changes they experience (Suárez-Orozco, 2000). Yet, meaning-making is not always easy. Immigrant children might experience a sense of discontinuity between their culture of origin and host society culture that influences how they construct and express their identity (Frie, 2011). Arriving in a new country, migrant children join integration classes which usually are multiethnic in their composition. This presupposes that immigrant students must navigate within and between heterogeneous sociocultural contexts, thus incorporating new elements that transform their identity and give meaning to their experience (Flum & Kaplan, 2012). In a school setting, this implies the necessity to be concerned about how children construct their identity in a way that it is congruent with both home and school worlds, as what occurs in one context influences the identity children want to express in another context (Sökefeld, 1999). This consideration is especially important since the construction of a coherent and meaningful identity is a source of strength and resilience that is beneficial to foster immigrant children's adjustment and well-being (Phinney & Ong, 2007).

Through integration classes, schools in Quebec (Canada) are responsible for ensuring that immigrant students become familiar with their new society (Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport du Québec, 2014). This responsibility also implies that schools must promote children's psychosocial and school adjustment as well as the creation of junction points between immigrant children's home and school sociocultural markers. However, facilitating these connections can represent a challenge for schools. It appears that many immigrant children deplore a persistent gap between family values and expectations and those of school (Hyman et al., 2000). These adverse conditions may interfere with migrant students' school adjustment and academic success. From another point of view, research has shown that when educational activities presented to students build bridges between their social, cultural and cognitive references and those of the host society, draw on their strength and allow them to showcase their identity, students are more

likely to be motivated to learn and to participate actively in their learning (Armand et al., 2013; Bradley & McKelvey, 2007; Faircloth, 2012; Flum & Kaplan, 2012; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Szalacha et al., 2005). These bridges also contribute to a meaningful identity construction.

Drawing and Psychosocial and School Adjustment

Despite adverse circumstances which can potentially encourage the development of adjustment problems, immigrant families make very little use of mental health resources and services provided by the government. For immigrant families who might feel socially excluded due to experiences of discrimination, or for whom access to mental health services is financially or geographically difficult, schools could be considered more accessible and as a less stigmatizing space for intervention (Pumariega et al., 2005; Rousseau, Hassan, Moreau, & Thombs, 2011). Integrating psychosocial interventions within regular school activities, as is the case with the Art & Storytelling program described later, represents an avenue allowing to respond to the specific psychosocial needs of immigrant students while promoting their identity expression. Moreover, the fact that this program is centered on art responds to the necessity to intervene in a less threatening way, since art interventions can be perceived as fun and relaxing activities (Collie et al., 2006; Malchiodi, 2008; Rubin, 2005).

Besides enabling schools to be better equipped in supporting immigrant students in their adjustment process, exploring immigrant students' identity expression through artistic creation also allows researchers to approach the question from a different point of view. Indeed, identity construction is most often studied through questionnaires and/or interviews which carry the risk of orienting students' response and of providing a non-representative picture of their experience (Marc, 2005). Furthermore, more structured instruments usually require oral and/or language skills, which raises questions about the validity of responses given by newly arrived children who do not master host society language yet. In that sense, the use of a tool based on nonverbal expression, such as drawing, would be more appropriate for young immigrant students, especially since it is also a form of expression particularly favoured by children between 6 and 10 years old (Anzieu et al., 2012). In addition, the use of symbols in drawings supports the expression

of life experience while creating a distance to it as well as it promotes thinking and disclosure in a non-threatening way, processes that foster a meaningful transformation of identity (Ahn & Filipenko, 2007; Avrahami, 2005; Obeyesekere, 1990).

Theoretical Framework

Identity construction in school settings

Put very simply, identity is what makes people similar to themselves while being different from others (Tap, 1988). When taking a closer look, identity is also a concept that fuses children's life experiences on both temporal and spatial dimensions:

Developmentally, identity is an integrative concept. It may capture the objective and subjective; it commonly connects between the self and aspects of the world-out-there; it synthesizes past, present and future experiences. The process of identity formation is also anchored in a sense of 'being part of'—a web of relationships, group solidarity, and communal culture. (Flum & Kaplan, 2012, p. 240)

Identity is a product of the interactions and contexts in which children evolve and is thus in perpetual change (Frie, 2011). For migrant children, this presupposes that immigration plays a pivotal role in how they construct and express their identity. Indeed, immigration generates contact between people from different sociocultural backgrounds. According to Barth (1995), intercultural contact engenders a distinct awareness of difference and new ways to deal with it, resulting in a transformation of identities. Contact with difference leads children to react and to situate themselves within a sociocultural space. Children can do so by choosing to highlight certain aspects of their identity and/or to conceal others, thus demonstrating a certain power and control over their identity expression (Hand, 2006; Song, 2003).

For migrant children, the development of a flexible and comfortable identity is related to the acculturative process and to the stress that can ensue. Migration engenders a rupture on many levels, including cultural values, social norms or lifestyle, and children need to restore a certain balance by readjusting to the changes, a phenomenon identified as

acculturation (Kanouté, 2002). When children succeed in reconciling the attitudes and behaviors expected from mainstream society with those of their culture of origin, their identity is more likely to adjust to different situations and identity conflicts less likely to occur (Ward et al., 2011). However, identity construction depends on potentially diverging contexts (e.g. home and school) and children may sometimes experience discontinuity, a situation that can be problematic for identity construction, because of inherent identity conflicts (Baumeister et al., 1985; Britto, 2008; Frie, 2011; Ward et al., 2011). According to Ward (2013), a way people may try to resolve these identity conflicts and restore balance is by either alternating between their different identities or by blending them.

For immigrant children, how they will succeed in attaining balance can depend on the behaviors and attitudes of significant adults around them. Identity is significantly influenced by family who socializes children to the norms and values of their own group of belonging (Britto, 2008; Phinney & Ong, 2007). When young children get to school, they get in touch with and are influenced by people from sociocultural backgrounds different from their own. Due to school staff status of authority and to schools being perceived as representatives of mainstream culture, the school environment can substantially orient how immigrant children weave into the social fabric of their new society (Vinsonneau, 2012). In this respect, social mirroring corresponds to how immigrant children construct their identity in accordance with how mainstream culture perceives and receives them (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Images conveyed about them or their groups of belonging interact with attitudes and behaviors immigrant students choose to adopt, thus influencing identity construction and expression. When images are negative or non-representative, it can “inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, [that imprisons] someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being” (C. Taylor, 1994, p. 25). Children can internalize a negative self-image despite efforts put by parents to reflect a positive image (Suárez-Orozco, 2000). In this sense, negative social mirroring can lead to detrimental effects on children who are dependent on positive mirroring for developing a flexible identity that can adjust to different situations. As a major reflecting agent, school thus has great potential for immigrant students’ identity transformation (Flum & Kaplan, 2012).

Drawing and identity expression

If teachers and school professionals want to support immigrant students in constructing a flexible identity and participate to their social and school adjustment, they must pay attention to its expression at school. Since identity construction is hardly tangible, one way to get a concrete access to it is through drawing. According to Winnicott (1975b/2012), when children draw, they transform their identity through the processes of projection and identification. By projecting their internal world on the image, students reveal important information about themselves of which they are not necessarily conscious or of which they do not have sufficient language skills to share orally (Anzieu et al., 2012; Rubin, 2005). When creating images and reacting to them, students project their internal world on the artworks that capture their psychic and emotional experience (Anzieu et al., 2012; Vick, 2003). The image is thus very informative for teachers to understand students' internal dynamic, which is essential for providing appropriate support (Rubin, 2005).

Images also provide important information on identifications experienced by students, which in turn give indications about how they construct their identity. Identification is a mechanism which results in a change in the individual who assimilates some characteristics of other individuals (Abraham, 1992). By successively absorbing and integrating different people's attributes within their identity, students develop and transform their identity (Pontalis & Laplanche, 2004). The creation of an image allows students to explore different identifications to people surrounding them. Indeed, "drawings [...] can be considered as acts of identification through drawing. [Drawings are] in this sense a location for complex interactions in relation to family and social ritual and convention" (Hawkins, 2002, p. 214). Human figures drawn by children illustrate the identification process, as do the animals, plants and other graphical elements, while students' reactions to these elements also give some indications of their identifications (Greig, 2001).

Students' identifications are rarely represented in a straightforward manner in their drawings, as interpretation of images involves decoding of symbols. By definition, the symbol is a mental representation of a thing or of a reality that is absent and connects the concrete with students' thoughts (Wilson, 2001). Symbolization is thus a process allowing one to share his or her internal world and to be recognized by others (Obeyesekere, 1990;

Winnicott, 1975b). Children, who might be initially unaware of their identifications and of their reactions to them, may find some traces in the symbols they use, since they originate from the identification process (Greig, 2001). Taking a closer look at symbols created by students will guide teachers in recognizing students' identification process and the associated emotions.

By allowing projection, identification and symbolization, drawing helps students to make sense of the world (Hall, 2010). Through art creation, immigrant students can bridge different realities, given that art allows the expression of ambivalence and change as well as the meaningful integration of conflicting aspects of identity (Ferrara, 2004; Huss, 2009). In this paper, immigrant students' identity expression and development of a plural identity through the relationship between students' different identities will be explored in the context of a classroom-based creative expression program using drawing, *Art and Storytelling*. The authors will do so through the analysis of visual symbols and metaphors used by students in their drawings and the stories related to the images.

Methods

Art and Storytelling Program

Art and Storytelling is a classroom-based, arts-based program aiming at preventing exacerbation of emotional and behavioral difficulties stemming from migration. The program was elaborated by the Transcultural Research and Intervention Team (Erit) in collaboration with schools and community organizations. It is based on the notion that opening free creative and supportive spaces in the classroom allows children to find healing resources within themselves and to create meaning from their experience. Non-performance and respect of everyone's rhythm are at the heart of the process and in order to do so, facilitators take on a listening, non-judgmental stance.

The program is comprised of a series of 12 weekly workshops of a duration of an hour. For the purpose of creating a safe and ritualized framework, the workshops adopt an open but structuring approach: (1) an opening ritual helps children to make contact with the here and now and delimits the workshop period. (2) Children are then invited to take part in a game, such as tag or musical chairs, to activate a playful energy and to get in touch

with others while having fun. (3) Follows a storytelling period to stimulate children's imagination. Stories are either told by facilitators, imagined by children during a guided imagery exercise or told by children to the group. (4) Children are then encouraged to create an individual drawing on the topic of their choice. (5) The workshop ends with a closing ritual, to ease the transition back to the educational space.

Through the years, the program has been evaluated both quantitatively and qualitatively and positive results were found in terms of a reduction of symptoms related to fears, anxiety and depressive mood (Rousseau, Drapeau, et al., 2005). The authors also suggest that these positive results may be due to the fact that through art, children were able to build bridges between different realities, which contributed in turn to the reduction of distress associated with inconsistencies between their worlds (e.g. home vs. school).

Participants

The study took place in a multiethnic elementary school where more than 90% of students are either born in another country or born from at least one immigrant parent (Sévigny, 2016). The *Art and Storytelling* program was offered to two integration classes (different age groups), where newcomers learn host society language, while getting acquainted with its culture. The two classroom teachers were experienced and specialized to work with this population. One group of children (n = 17) were aged between 8 and 10 and came from 12 different countries while students in the other group (n = 14) were aged from 10 to 12 and were also born in 12 different countries. When combined, a total of 29 children accepted to participate in the study.

Data Collection and Analysis

Three principal sources of data were used: drawings, interviews and field notes. A total of 478 commented free drawings were collected as part of the *Art and Storytelling* program, in which children were invited to create drawings on the topic of their choice on a 12 in. x 18 in. sheet of paper and to briefly talk about them to the researcher. Four students were then selected on the basis of their capacity for expression, elaboration and symbolization to participate with one or both parents to a semi-structured interview. With parents, the interview addressed the family story, as well as themes related to language,

religious beliefs and changes they noticed in their child since arrival in Canada. The interview with children was used to collect more information on the stories associated to the drawings and on their school, friend and family life.

Throughout the program, the researcher took notes related to the images drawn by every child and the comments made about them. She also took brief notes about social interactions she observed in the classroom. These notes were used to complete the information obtained during interviews in order to gain a more complete picture of the object under study.

In the context of this study, a global analysis of the entire data set has been completed in order to highlight the main emerging themes in terms of identity expression strategies used by children. These themes were then put in relation with the processes of projection, identification and symbolization. Four in-depth case studies were also achieved and allowed a better understanding of what was common to most participants and what was different. In the following section, results from the overall data set will first be introduced before presenting a case drawn from the four in-depth case studies, Tao, a 9 year-old Chinese boy who recently immigrated to Canada.

Results

In their drawings, immigrant children expressed their identity in different ways potentially reflecting internal identity conflicts. The different ways in which children resolved these conflicts could be represented by the metaphor of combat. In some instances, the fight was apparent, with real or fictitious characters adopting good and evil roles in the combat. In other instances, the fight was rather implied when children used symbols evoking protection, like the fortified castle, or when they neutralized differences between opposing identities. The confrontational encounter between children's cultural identities can thus be presented under three identity strategies: a protective withdrawal on the identity of origin to allow movement between identities, a mastery of globalized youth cultural identity and a neutralization of identities.

A protective withdrawal on the identity of origin to allow movement between identities

Fights can be exhausting and there are moments when combatants need to retreat from the enemy in order to protect themselves and restore their strengths. In other words, there were moments in this study when immigrant children needed to rely on their cultural identity of origin in order to protect themselves from the threatening invasion of host society culture caused by the intercultural contact. Children expressed this identity strategy and projected this need for protection in their drawings mainly through two symbols related to buildings: the fortified castle and the house. During the program, almost every child drew at least one image containing a house or a castle. Drawn stereotypically (triangle over a square for a house and a serrated palisade with towers for a castle), castles and houses were not meant to be exact replicas of reality but rather to symbolize the idea of protection. As buildings, castles and houses have walls and roof delimiting their space. These limits allow one to get in or out or could prevent one from getting in or out. In this sense, when exhibiting the cultural identity of origin could be dangerous, children could have chosen to retreat within fortified castles. Typically, fortified castles are strongly built as a way to prevent strangers or non-members from entering into forbidden territory. Instead of waving a white flag as an act of surrender to the enemy, children chose to withdraw in their cultural identity of origin as a way to protect themselves and gain strength in order to face the confrontational encounter between their different identities. This strategy was mainly used within the younger group of children.

Compared to fortified castles, houses are less difficult to get in. Friends but also strangers may be invited in by the occupants, but they could also be kept out if doors are closed and if there is no invitation. Houses are the domain of family, where members can go to rest, gather strength and return to their roots, while being preserved from external elements. Houses also allow the passage of members out of the building, when the world outside is sufficiently safe to get in contact with. In other words, as buildings, both houses and fortified castles allow back and forth movement between the cultural identity of origin and the other identities out there, that is to say youth globalised culture and host society culture in this study.

Besides the notion of passage, visibility and invisibility of identities underlie the theme of protection. Children made use of other symbols to achieve this. When sufficiently protected by their cultural identity of origin, children were in a position in which they were able to express elements of their identity of origin, as a way to push back the enemy. In their drawings, they did so by drawing flags on the entire surface of the paper or by including them on castles, houses and boats, as a way to warn others of their identity. At other times, protection also took the form of withdrawal, with children camouflaging their identity behind a very busy background when drawing their name in a stylized manner on the entire surface of paper. Participants were also able to create links between the visible and invisible worlds, between their internal and external worlds using the symbol of the tree. With their trunk growing and their appearance changing according to the cycle of seasons, trees bring growth and development to mind (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1997). Their hidden roots rather evoke the country of origin and the family, who are the basis of identity development, especially for young children (Phinney & Ong, 2007). With regards to foliage, children either chose to represent the leaves in a generic manner, placing the tree in a non-specific place, or to detail the leaves to represent a particular species (e.g. palm trees) situating the tree in a particular place, usually their country of origin. By representing children's choice to hide or make visible some elements of their identities, trees could thus be linked with identity development and transformation. Trees could also represent the passage between children's identities, by linking the roots of traditions to the leaves representing the host country.

A mastery of globalized youth cultural identity

During fights, there are also moments when combatants disguise themselves in order to confound opponents. In this study, when children assumed a different identity, they chose to express and identify with a common youth culture, which allowed them to be like the others. In their drawings, children would do so by mastering the shared codes related to superheroes, videos games, manga and youth culture vocabulary (e.g. XD, LOL). While superheroes and video games were usually drawn in conjunction with combat scenes by children in the younger group, manga and globalized youth culture were more common in the images made by children in the older group, thus reflecting possible age difference

in the wish to be like the others. Moreover, superheroes and video games evoke the possession of magical powers, the transformation in an all-powerful identity. By drawing these fictitious characters to whom they may have identified with, immigrant children could have projected their wish to be invested with special qualities. These special powers could allow them to gain power over the enemy or hide certain aspects of their identity they disliked. Either way, the result seems to be a certain identification to a common youth cultural identity.

For older children in this study, manga and the use of a globalized youth culture vocabulary were frequent. As mentioned elsewhere (Beauregard, soumis), being able to accurately reproduce manga involves the mastery of specific competencies that allow immigrant children to go from a feeling of alienation to a sense of competency. Similar to the protection given by the cultural identity of origin that allowed immigrant children to express their identities in a threatening world, the mastery of these shared codes allowed children a transformative power, to be like the others, if they wished to.

A neutralization of identities

At other times, it is best for combatants to go unnoticed in the battle field if they want to survive. The children that would choose to go unseen in their drawings would do so by wiping out the physical characteristics of characters that would otherwise allow identification. In this case, participants drew characters in a stereotypical way (e.g. stick figure) that go beyond cultural specificities and is in this sense a/cultural. A good example of the expression of neutralization of identities is the use of black oil pastels in the drawing of characters. Very few children used specific skin color to fill the facial space. They would rather use black to trace features and the outline of the face, as if to say that people may see a color on the outside, but that on the inside, immigrant children are like anybody else from majority culture. From another perspective, black is also a neutral color by definition. Neutralization involves the attenuation of the strength of someone or something. In this sense, participants in this study may have projected their wish to get rid of any differences, especially the physical features, that would set them apart from the others. This implies an identity expression that transcends cultural origins.

In opposition to the neutralization of physical features, facial characteristics (e.g. eyes) are blown up in manga drawn by older children. While there is a specific way of drawing the eyes that is related to membership to a globalized youth culture, a wish to obliterate any identifying features is also present. Immigrant children drawing manga may thus use different identity expression strategies simultaneously. This phenomenon is similar to what Marc (2005) asserts when he writes that assimilation strategies, in which people strive to be similar to others, can occur at the same time than differentiation strategies in which people highlight their unicity and difference from others. Immigrant children can also oscillate between the three identity expression strategies introduced previously, like in the case of Tao who will be presented next.

Case study: Tao

Tao is a 9 year-old Chinese boy who has been in Quebec with his younger sister and both parents for almost a year at the time of the interview. For the family, the immigration was planned long before coming to Canada, with the father who resigned from his job as an engineer in order to learn French and prepare all the necessary paperwork for migration. While this choice was supported by his spouse, his parents and his friends did not fully comprehend the reasons behind his decision. Indeed, the couple decided to immigrate in order to offer their children a better quality of life, in particular in terms of a cleaner environment, of better access to quality education and health services. For Tao's father, the key to a successful integration is to learn French and to be patient. The family values work and perseverance and during the interview, the father declares that he would like children to work harder at school, even though he acknowledges that his children are happy with school being more relaxed and that he is very pleased with this. Indeed, Tao confirms that what he likes the most about school in Quebec, is that he can be involved in the choice of educational activities and that he has time between the school periods to play and relax (recess). From the interview, it was possible to sense a certain struggle between a Chinese and Canadian perceptions of what work and school should be. This tension between the here and there is also found in Tao's drawings.

Over the course of the 12 workshops, Tao created 16 free commented images. Overall, the boy committed easily to his drawings which were generally colorful and

spontaneous. For the purpose of this paper, six images were chosen to illustrate how through projection, identification and symbolization, the boy made use of one identity expression strategy in particular, the protective withdrawal on the identity of origin to allow movement between identities, in order to resolve his internal identity conflict.

Workshop 2: Ambivalence towards new identity possibilities



Figure 1. Ambivalence toward identity possibilities.

One of the first drawings Tao created during the *Art & Storytelling* program represents animals, namely two ducks swimming in the sea (Figure 3). The first thing he said about this image is that “the sea is both big and small”. He then went on describing the image by saying that “the ducks feel very free and will swim faster. The ducks are a big brother and his sister”. According to his family situation and his school experience, Tao could have projected his newly found feeling of liberty at school onto the ducks, but also his uncertainty given all these possibilities. Indeed, he could have identified with the ducks that are swimming fast towards the left side of the paper as if they wanted to get

back to the certainty of their past in China. Like the protective withdrawal strategy, Tao could have projected his need to rely on his roots in order to be able to go outside the limits of his reassuring cultural identity of origin. However, the strategy is not represented by the presence of boundaries like most of his peers, but by the absence of it as represented by the open sea. Nonetheless, the idea of passage is still at the heart of this drawing, as symbolized by the movement of water and the act of swimming. Representing a limitless space, Tao could have felt, at that time, a certain ambivalence when facing these new identity possibilities and a need to withdraw on his Chinese identity to restore internal balance.

Workshop 3: A future not quite Chinese

These conflicting feelings between his Chinese and Canadian identities are also found in the drawing he created during the following workshop. In this image, one can see a small ladybug with five dots alongside a big ladybug with seven dots on a tree leaf (Figure 4). Tao said that “it is a father and a baby”. During the interview, the discussion between the father and his son was interesting. When seeing this image, one of the first things the



Figure 2. A future not quite Chinese.

father asked the boy is the reason why the small ladybug only has five dots. To which the boy replied, in a very utilitarian manner, that “he lacked space to draw seven dots to the baby”. Interestingly, the word ladybug in Mandarin Chinese means seven stars. The father ladybug, like Tao’s father, could thus symbolize the pillars of Chinese culture while Tao identified to the baby ladybug that was not completely Chinese. Being protected by the Chinese ladybug, it was possible for the boy to show his own identity, which was not completely Chinese. And as the insects are looking forward, there might not be enough space for both Tao’s Chinese and Canadian identities in the future.

Workshop 4: Canada threatens Chinese past, but it is possible to escape the threat

Figure 5 is a good illustration of this conflict between Tao’s identities. In this image, he drew a three-head monster that he described as being “big and dangerous”. The threat is so important that “people run to their house because they are afraid”. However, he went on saying that “small people can escape by going underneath”. Having the monster looking to the past (left side of the image), it is possible to hypothesize that the monster symbolizes



Figure 3. Canada threatens Chinese past.

the present time in Canada and that at this time, Tao felt as if Canada was threatening his Chinese past. Even though the house is not drawn, there is still the idea of retreating within the limits of a house, of the cultural identity of origin when facing danger. However, as a small child, he could find a way to get around the danger in order to be in a safe position, which suggests that the boy's drawings were already starting to represent the integration process of Tao's different identities.

Workshop 5: Protecting his Chinese identity

In the following workshop, Tao drew two castles, one for his sister and one for himself (Figure 6). After saying that they were alone in the castles and after thinking for a while, he added that his father and his mother were also present in the castles and that the flag drawn on top of one of the fortresses was the Chinese flag. This is a typical illustration of the protective withdrawal strategy symbolized through the drawing of fortified castles. Like many of his peers, the boy made a clear reference to his country of origin (China) and his family was also included in the comments he made about the drawing. Tao developed



Figure 4. Protecting Chinese identity.

quite a story around the castles and a knife that was placed behind a locked door by a man who is now dead. In his story, Tao was the only one who could break through the door, take the knife and kill the monster from figure 5. In other words, the boy was the only one controlling the passage between his different identities. As opposed to the image created during workshop 4, with the symbol of fortified castles owned by China, Tao might have projected his need to protect his Chinese identity against Canadian invaders and even to kill this invader with a weapon coming from Chinese territory. After wanting to put aside his Chinese background, Tao strived to preserve it in this drawing, by finding shelter in his cultural identity of origin.

Workshop 10: An empty Canadian identity which is frightening to fill

After a few weeks, Tao represented a scenery in Canada, namely a camping scene, with an “empty tent having no door” drawn in the middle of the forest. “The tent has no floor” neither, no solid supporting base. “Because the tent has no door, a tiger can get in” (Figure 7). As a portable temporary shelter, the empty tent could symbolize the identity



Figure 5. An empty Canadian identity.

that Tao needed to fill in Canada. The process could have been frightening to the boy who projected his fear onto the drawing. Indeed, the tiger symbolizes both ferocity and beauty in China as well as a protective strength (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1997). Still, Tao seemed to be afraid of the beast, protecting his Chinese identity while possibly being a threat to his Canadian identity. At this point in time, Tao's Chinese and Canadian identities seem to have switched place, with Tao's Canadian cultural identity in a role of protection that it was not able to play properly. Indeed, this identity was not constructed solidly enough yet, as symbolized by the absence of floors and a door, which means that the menacing Chinese tiger could come in. This unshielded state was not comfortable for Tao, as he identified this image as the one he liked the least during the interview.

Workshop 12: Going back to China to feel better in Canada

Compared to the camping scene that he liked the least, Tao declared that the image he made during the last workshop is the one he liked the most. He described this image as “an airplane that flies and goes to China” (Figure 8). Tao and his father are inside the plane.

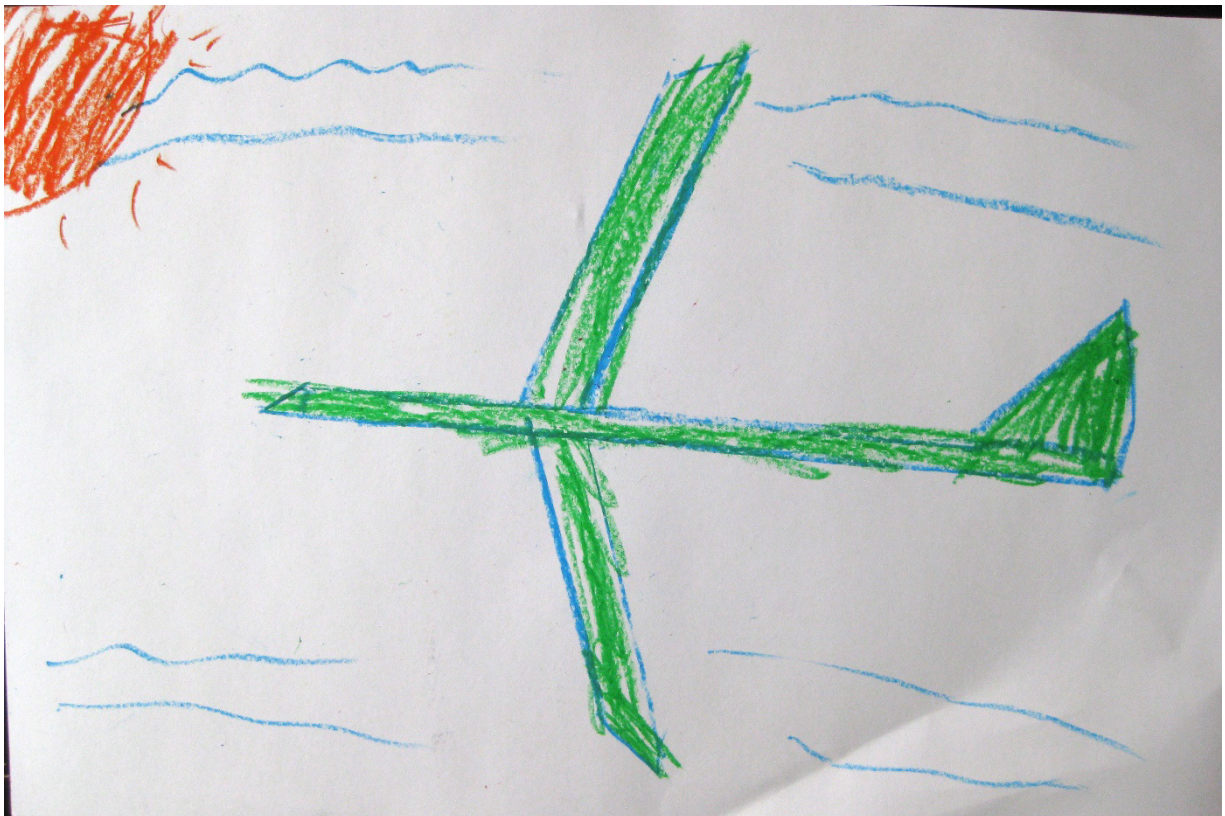


Figure 6. Returning to China to feel better in Canada.

He is going to China to play with his friend. Tao added, at the end, that he would “like his friend to come to Canada so they can ski together”. In this drawing, although he did not draw his family, his friend and himself, the introduction of his relatives was made when he told the story about the image. The symbol of the airplane is a good illustration of the back and forth movement between Tao’s Chinese and Canadian identities. Indeed, as a transportation means, the airplane creates a link between both identities and thus represents the idea of passage between identities as identified in the protective withdrawal strategy. While wanting to go back to China where he might feel more comfortable and secure, Tao also projected his desire to come back to Canada, with a Chinese friend, in order to do an activity emblematic of the Canadian culture, skiing. In a sense, relying on his Chinese identity is necessary in order to integrate both identities into a meaningful whole.

Discussion

The interactions immigrant children experience at school with other peers and with school staff orient substantially the strategies they may use to express their identities. These identity expression strategies are made visible in the drawings of children through the processes of projection, identification and symbolization. According to situations, immigrant children rely on different strategies to arrange their identities in different configurations that support the resolution of internal identity conflicts. For Tao, drawing seems to have allowed him to find a comfortable balance between his identity of origin and that from the host country, thus contributing to the development of a flexible plural identity. For Tao, the development of an adaptable identity was made possible through the protective role played by his cultural identity of origin. These points will be developed in the following sections.

Multiplicity of identity configurations

The evolution of Tao’s identity is a good example of how the identity process is nonlinear and in perpetual change. As an immigrant child who is experiencing an acculturation process, the struggle to maintain a healthy balance between his different identities is ongoing (Ward et al., 2011). Like many of his peers, there was some modulation in the space filled by Tao’s cultural identity of origin and Canadian identity

over time, as interaction with host society influenced his identity expression (Frie, 2011). At certain times, the Canadian identity competed with the Chinese identity to be in the leading role, as exemplified by the monster in figure 5. Furthermore, there was not enough space for the Chinese identity to fully express itself as shown by the example of the baby ladybug with five dots (Figure 4). It is interesting to note that on the day he created this image, Tao spontaneously wrote his name in Mandarin Chinese characters on the back of his sheet, but that the student teacher in his classroom asked him to write it in French, request to which he complied reluctantly. In this situation, Tao could have projected his feeling of not having enough space to freely express his Chinese identity onto the baby ladybug or he could have identified with the small insect. This is a concrete illustration of the role school staff can play, albeit unconsciously, in immigrant students' identity expression (Vinsonneau, 2012), directing children towards the use of certain cultural identity symbols rather than others. This event perhaps led Tao to perceive Canadian identity markers as invasive and dangerous to his Chinese identity, like the monster he drew in the following workshop (Figure 5). It may also have led him to put forward his Chinese identity as is the case in the illustration of the Chinese fortified castle (Figure 6). Although the student teacher's response seems to have influenced Tao's identity expression, this shift in identity organization may also have been a response to contact with difference found in the host society in general and in the multiplicity of students' cultural origins found in Tao's classroom. In this intercultural context, Tao needed to position himself within the sociocultural space of his classroom and of his new society and he chose to do so by contracting the limits around his Chinese identity, as suggested by Barth (1995). At other times, the limits around his identity were rather permeable when he drew the Canadian camping scene in which the tent had no door (Figure 7) to restrict access to foreign identity elements.

The last drawing Tao made during the Art & Storytelling program and his favourite, represents well how the boy succeeded in finding a comfortable balance between his different identities. As Flum and Kaplan point out (2012), identity construction is about combining and fusing present and past experiences into something meaningful. This meaning-making process is also about resolving internal identity conflicts (Ward, 2013). Tao's teacher seemed to possess intercultural competencies that allowed him to provide

space for the sociocultural background and knowledge of immigrant students, which in turn helped them build bridges between host society and their culture of origin (Potvin, 2014). In this sense, positive social mirroring performed by the school milieu, in which school staff recognizes the competencies of immigrant children and return a faithful reflection to students (Flum & Kaplan, 2012; Suárez-Orozco, 2000), does seem to have played a role in how Tao expressed his identities through drawing and made sense of them. For Tao, he could do so by creating a bridge between his Chinese and Canadian identities allowing him to move back and forth between both identities, a connection symbolized by the airplane travelling between China and Canada. This also supports the findings of Rousseau and collaborators (2005) in which art helped in fostering the emotional well-being of immigrant children by reducing the distress associated with living in disconnected sociocultural worlds.

Tao's ability to bring together his Chinese and Canadian identities also suggests that he was experiencing a successful acculturation process. Indeed, the shifts in the way he organized his different identities may be evocative of the readjustment reactions Tao had in response to the disruptions engendered by the differences between Canadian and Chinese values, social norms and lifestyles, which corresponds to the process of acculturation (Kanouté, 2002). By drawing the airplane, Tao showed how he solved the navigation issue between his identities in order to make sense of his migration experience and to "come to terms with the new cultural 'rules of engagement'" (Suárez-Orozco, 2000, p. 197). For the boy, relying on his Chinese identity seems to have played a positive role in his social and school adjustment, as will be shown in the next section.

Cultural identity of origin as a protective factor

Studies about the adaptation strategies adopted by immigrant children have found that presenting an integration profile, in which children move from one culture to another by reconciling sometimes contradictory elements between cultures of origin and host society, was best associated with positive psychological and sociocultural adjustment and lower levels of identity conflicts (Berry et al., 2006; Phinney & Ong, 2007; Ward et al., 2011). This implies that in order to foster immigrant students' social and school adjustment,

children should be encouraged to maintain a close relationship with their culture of origin while creating a sense of belonging to host society.

Based on the interview with Tao's family, it was clear that his family environment provided him with a solid basis for connecting with his Chinese legacy while encouraging him to integrate to Canadian society, which probably contributed in attenuating identity conflicts. For instance, the father was very motivated to learn French (which he already started in China) and to have Canadian friends to help him integrate to the host society. But he also maintained regular contact with his family in China and encouraged his children to keep a close relationship with their Chinese relatives who stayed in their home country. Tao's family environment provided him with the necessary foundation to deal with the unpleasant feeling associated with integrating elements of the host society into his identity. When Tao felt discomfort with the space occupied by his new Canadian identity, he was able to project this discomfort in his drawing and to draw from his culture of origin to protect him. Indeed, the insecurity felt towards Canadian values and sociocultural norms, symbolized by the monster, perhaps engendered a protective reaction from the boy, who drew a Chinese fortress equipped with a weapon that could kill the threat induced by the Canadian identity. Interestingly, castles are a "near-universal symbol of humanity's inner refuge" and "convey the feeling of security" (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1997, p. 161). For Tao, the perspective of integrating Canadian elements in his identity might have been frightening at that time, potentially because he was afraid of losing his Chinese identity in favor of his Canadian identity. Perhaps the boy felt disconnected to many of his Chinese identity markers that got overrode by Canadian identity markers, in a minority context. For another boy in his class, this disconnection with the cultural identity of origin was traumatic (Beauregard et al., sous presse). For Tao, his family and school environment may have given him tools to protect himself, by giving him space to connect with elements from his culture of origin, which is a source of strength and resiliency for immigrant children (Phinney & Ong, 2007).

Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that, compared to many of his classroom peers, elements related to the school environment (e.g. school, teacher, peers...) were essentially absent from Tao's drawings. For one of Tao's peers for whom the cultural identity of origin was wounded, the school milieu provided adaptive support and the opportunity to create a

sense of school belonging which helped him adjust to the migratory experience (Beauregard et al., sous presse). Since Tao's Chinese identity seemed to be intact and robust, perhaps the boy did not need to rely on school as much as his peers in order to integrate his different identities into a meaningful whole. Still, even if Tao had a strong cultural identity of origin, the act of drawing seemed to have supported the boy in expressing elements of his culture of origin and in showcasing them in a positive way, while also helping him to express ambivalence towards both his Chinese and Canadian identities (Ferrara, 2004; Huss, 2009).

Conclusion

Although children never cease to construct and express their identity, immigration is a situation in which the identity process is intensified in reaction to contact with new identity markers provided by host society. For this reason, immigration brings conditions more likely to engender identity conflicts (Ward et al., 2011). In this context, drawing is a good way to support identity conflict resolution in immigrant students, especially when creative expression activities are integrated within the regular activities of the classroom and are thus endorsed by the school. In this study, children projected their inner identity conflicts onto the image through different symbols such as characters, sceneries or buildings. In some instances, children also identified to some elements of their drawings. These evoked an apparent or implied struggle between children's home and host cultural identities, through fighting characters or protective elements. Children in this study resolved their identity conflicts using three different identity strategies. The case of Tao illustrates one of these strategies, the protective withdrawal on the identity of origin to allow movement between identities. For the boy, it was possible to highlight the protective role played by his cultural identity of origin. Tao's case also shows how drawing portrays the evolution of immigrant students' identity expression and supports them in organizing their identities in multiple ways. However, these results must be considered with caution, given the small sample size and the subjective nature of drawing analysis. While the interpretation of images in this study was supported by children's comments about them, the researcher's observation notes and in some cases, by the family history as is recommended by Annie Anzieu and colleagues (2012), it is difficult to know if immigrant students drew what they

are or what they would like to be or not to be (Greig, 2001). The sole presence of the teacher, peers and the researcher might have generated a distortion of what was drawn by children that would be impossible to eliminate completely (Devereux, 2012). Nonetheless, when teachers are aware of these influences the results highlight the usefulness of drawing as a tool for teachers. It constitutes indeed a unique, flexible and non-threatening way to gain access to the internal world of children, knowledge which can assist teachers in supporting immigrant students more adequately and thus do justice to the mission of social and school adjustment that was given to them.

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