

Being in Between: Exploring Cultural Bereavement and Identity

Expression through Drawing

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When leaving their country of origin, immigrant children experience various losses that can lead to a grief reaction called cultural bereavement. Being an ambiguous loss, cultural bereavement can complicate children's identity construction by creating a gap between home and host country identities that may affect children's sense of belonging and identity. Yet, drawing can support immigrant children in the meaning-making process necessary to work through the experience of cultural bereavement, as it is a non-threatening way to safely express emotionally charged material. This article presents the case study of an 11-year-old immigrant Egyptian girl who used drawing in the context of classroom-based creative expression workshops to express her cultural bereavement process and create a new meaningful identity.

Keywords: cultural bereavement; identity construction; immigrant children; drawing; classroom-based; creative expression program

Introduction

Leaving one's country of origin to resettle elsewhere creates disruptions and ruptures that can lead to cultural bereavement for immigrant children, even if migration is voluntary and desired. As migration intensifies on a global scale, the phenomenon could affect a growing number of children in Canada. In 2015, the country accepted 54385 immigrant children below the age of 15, of whom 38498 were in the economic migration category (Government of Canada, 2016). While economic immigrants are generally believed to be in favorable conditions to adapt well to their new society, they can also experience negative impact from migration (Duparc, 2009). Immigration involves losses on numerous aspects of life, like culture, language, social norms, family and community ties (Bhugra & Becker, 2005; Boehm, Hess, Coe, Rae-Espinoza, & Reynolds, 2011). Economic immigrants can also face disenchantment when they cannot find a job that lives up to their expectations and

when they experience a loss of social status (Boudarbat & Cousineau, 2010). The situation can also affect children who experience lifestyle adjustments in the host country (smaller house, less toys and activities, etc.). The disappearance of familiar sociocultural markers exposes children to a more complex identity construction that could even lead to identity conflicts and affect their psychological well-being (Vinsonneau, 2012; Ward, Stuart, & Kus, 2011). When adding the fact that most children do not choose to leave their country of origin, it might be difficult for them to comprehend the reasons underlying immigration and to find meaning in this experience. The cumulating losses can thus lead immigrant children to develop a reaction close to grief but which is specific to the migratory context: cultural bereavement. While this is a normal reaction to what was lost, cultural bereavement can also cause a great deal of distress among immigrant children, thus affecting their mental health (Bhugra & Becker, 2005). Children may feel sad and long for what they lost, but they can also feel they do not belong neither to the culture of their home nor that of their host country (McBrien & Day, 2012). The ambiguity of the loss adds a layer of complexity and could complicate the grieving process (D'Amore, 2015).

Yet, in spite of the psychological repercussions cultural bereavement can have on immigrant children, scholars paid relatively little focused attention to the phenomenon, except when related to traumatic grief. The situation is even worse when it comes to evaluate the impact of intervention programs on the cultural bereavement process. In light of the preceding information, this article presents a case study pertaining to the cultural bereavement process of an 11-year-old immigrant Egyptian girl. The data consist of under-explored information from a larger study on immigrant children's identity expression in their drawings. Based on a family interview and analysis of drawings made in the context

of a school-based and arts-based intervention program, the case study explores 1) how the girl expressed her identity in her drawings and 2) how cultural bereavement informed her identity expression.

Literature review

Grief and cultural bereavement

Many theories exist to describe the grieving process through phases. For instance, Kübler-Ross and Kessler (2014) conceptualize grief in five different stages: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. Although these authors state that the stages do not necessarily develop in a linear fashion and do not constitute an obligatory passage for all grieving people, constructivist scholars criticized the use of these classical stage-models of grief (Lister, Pushkar, & Connolly, 2008). Constructivist authors underscore the need to be cautious when using these models with individuals from different cultures. According to this school of thought, these models highlight a Western conception of the grief process which may differ in other places (Bhugra & Becker, 2005; D'Amore, 2015). Furthermore, they also emphasize the existing relationship between grief and identity construction, the importance of the meaning-making process and the extended social context in which grief occurs (D'Amore, 2015; Lister et al., 2008; Nadeau, 2008; Niemeyer, 2001). Grief is thus a social construction that depends on the individual's characteristics as well as his or her environment.

Grief is essential to good mental health because it is a universal and healthy reaction following the loss of someone or something meaningful. Indeed, the grieving process helps in preventing adverse effects related to the severed attachment bond (Papazian-Zohrabian, 2015). While grief is generally associated to the death of a friend or relative, any situation implying a significant loss and discontinuity in the attachment bond could lead to grieving

reactions (Papazian-Zohrabian, 2015). Immigration is one such situation. When migrating, individuals lose most of their familiar sociocultural markers (Bhugra & Becker, 2005; Douglas, 2010). The importance of the loss varies as a function of the discrepancy between the new and pre-migratory lives (D'Amore, 2015). Although being a normal response to loss, grief can have possible implications for physical and mental health, hence the importance to propose appropriate interventions to address this issue (Bhugra, Wojcik, & Gupta, 2011; Eisenbruch, 1988).

Anthropologist Maurice Eisenbruch first addressed the concept of cultural bereavement in 1988. He devised this term as an attempt to differentiate refugees' suffering reactions from post-traumatic stress disorder symptomatic manifestations. According to Eisenbruch (1991), cultural bereavement refers to the "experience of the uprooted person – or group – resulting from loss of social structures, cultural values and self-identity" (p. 674). Eisenbruch's definition involves a certain kind of violence, a sense of being forcibly removed from the place one belongs. It also refers to a particular state of deprivation caused by this removal. Thereby, cultural bereavement is very close to grief, as the bond between an individual and his or her "home" is severed. Yet, compared to the loss of a loved one through death, cultural bereavement involves specificities. The first one relates to the ambiguity of the loss. When someone dies, the loss is definitive. The chances to be in contact with the deceased are non-existent, despite the mourners' wish for this to occur. In the case of immigration, the country persists in the psyche of those who left their home irrespective of the broken physical connection (D'Amore, 2015). This ambiguity makes it difficult for immigrants to mourn their country. The latter continues to exist in reality but going back is impossible due to several reasons such as security, lack of employment or

educational opportunities. The second specificity of cultural bereavement involves its multidimensionality. The phenomenon of cultural bereavement touches different spheres of an individual's life such as family, culture, geographical reference points, verbal and non-verbal communication. Its multidimensional characteristic is thus very different from other forms of grief that are usually restricted to one area, such as the death of a friend or a family member (Elghezouani, 2016). Consequently, the multi-faceted and ambiguous nature of cultural bereavement may make it harder for immigrants to work through their grief, especially since identity plays an important role in the process.

Interaction between cultural bereavement and identity

As children grow up, the experiences they live, the people they meet and the places they go shape their identity. In most cases, children are attached to their birth land because it is the symbolic location for filial relationships as well as their ancestors' place of origin where the family heritage and story are rooted (Jacques, Lamjahdi, & Lefebvre, 2009). Therefore, moving away from this land does not entail a sole change on geographical level. It is also associated with deep changes with respect to identity (Bhugra & Becker, 2005; Eisenbruch, 1988). According to Erikson (1968/1994), young immigrants question their sense of identity as a developmental task. Immigration and the ensuing cultural bereavement therefore add an extra layer of complexity. Leaving one's country challenges one's sense of belonging and by extension affects one's identity construction (Jacques et al., 2009). Considering that identity is in perpetual transformation, identity thus changes in accordance with the context in which children evolve (Frie, 2011). Identity also refers to an individual's integration of past, present and future experiences and connects him or her with the sociocultural environment through the development of a sense of belonging (Flum

& Kaplan, 2012). Just as grief work, immigration is about finding meaning in a new experience, which is also at the core of identity construction (Beauregard, Papazian-Zohrabian & Rousseau, 2017a). Young immigrants face the challenge of developing an identity that makes sense of the different connections they have with their host country and their country of origin (McBrien & Day, 2012). Owing to the fact that the country continues to exist in the psyche, immigrant children must construct their identity regardless of the seriously damaged but not completely severed attachment bond with the country and culture of origin. Accordingly, cultural bereavement can become an obstacle to identity construction by disrupting its harmony (Papazian-Zohrabian, 2015). However, the impact of cultural bereavement can be minimized when young immigrants are successful in integrating their different identities into a significant whole (Bhugra & Becker, 2005). Hence the necessity to support immigrant children in the meaning-making process in order to prevent the potential negative impact cultural bereavement may have on their identity and mental health.

Art as a support to find meaning

Mental health and school professionals can implement arts-based interventions in order to facilitate the meaning-making process necessary to both cultural bereavement and identity construction. Literature has long suggested that drawings reveal children's inner world in a non-threatening way (Abraham, 1992; Anzieu, Barbey, Bernard-Nez, & Daymas, 2012; Schaverien, 1992; Swan-Foster, 2016). Image-making supports the safe disclosure of emotionally charged material such as experiences of immigration and cultural bereavement, because images transmit information on their creator through symbols (Wilson, 2016). In a recent study, Robertson and colleagues (2016) found that photography helped young

refugees to make sense of their experience. Photography helped youth develop a sense of belonging to the host country by allowing the creation of connections between past experience in the country of origin and present experience of resettlement. In this regard, artistic production fosters the creation of bridges between different conflicting aspects of identity (Huss, 2009; Kruger & Swanepoel, 2017). In a larger study from which this paper is derived, researchers found that drawings showed how newcomer children reinvent their identities to suit the context in which they evolve (Beauregard et al., 2017a). This transformative process also suits the exploration of cultural bereavement owing to its non-linear aspect. Art could thereby help immigrant youth engage in this oscillating path, since it allows the expression of ambivalence and change (Huss, 2009; Kruger & Swanepoel, 2017; Lister et al., 2008).

Considering that cultural bereavement is about the loss of identity sociocultural markers relating to identity, image making can thus give important information on how both identity construction and cultural bereavement interact in young immigrants. Thereon, this paper explores how drawings, created in the context of classroom-based creative expression workshops, support the expression of cultural bereavement and identity construction for a young immigrant girl from Egypt.

Method

Art and Storytelling program

Art and Storytelling is a classroom-based creative expression program consisting of a series of 12 weekly workshops of a duration of one hour each (Sherpa, 2010). Sherpa, a research and intervention team of which the author is a member, elaborated the program in the late 90s as a means to prevent the exacerbation of immigrant children's emotional difficulties and to help children explore their daily life, concerns, memories or whatever experience

they would like to share with others. When establishing the bases of the program, team members believed that offering a free space for expression could be beneficial for immigrant youth's psychological well-being. Evaluations of the program later supported this conviction. Qualitative evaluations suggested that *Art and Storytelling* fostered meaning-making, the reconstruction of social links and the creation of bridges between different worlds, especially for children who experienced uprooting and traumatic experiences due to immigration (Rousseau, Bagilishya, Heusch, & Lacroix, 1999; Rousseau, Lacroix, Bagilishya, & Heusch, 2003; Rousseau & Heusch, 2000). As for a quantitative evaluation, results showed that the program contributed in reducing internal and external symptoms as well as increasing self-esteem (Rousseau, Drapeau, Lacroix, Bagilishya, & Heusch, 2005).

The program offers a safe and structuring space in which children can freely explore their emotions. In that respect, the activities follow the same structure every week and unfold according to the following four steps: (1) an opening ritual consisting of a short game in order to foster a playful atmosphere; (2) a storytelling period, where stories are told by facilitators or the children themselves; (3) a free drawing period where children are invited to draw on the topic of their choice with oil pastels and to comment them to the workshop facilitators; and finally, (4) a closing ritual consisting of an activity in which participants can share what they liked or not about the workshop. Two team members, who are either art therapists, artists, psychologists or other psychosocial workers, facilitate the workshops in collaboration with the teacher.

Study design

This article presents a case study derived from a larger qualitative study about immigrant students' identity expression through drawing. In the larger study, immigrant students in two integration classrooms from an elementary school in Montreal (Canada) participated in the *Art and Storytelling* program. The age of the 29 study participants was between 8 and 12 years old. In the context of this research, the researcher, who is also an art therapist, led the workshops with a colleague artist. The author's dual position as a researcher, but also as an art therapist, enabled her to gather rich information from within and for a prolonged time; although at times, a therapeutic rather than a research framework guided interventions and data analysis. This dual role also brought other drawbacks to the relative superficiality of the data collected, particularly because of the minimal time spent with each child (there were about 15 students per class) and the inability to take detailed notes while conducting a group intervention. Nevertheless, the researcher and her co-facilitator pooled the information gathered by each and discussed it at the end of each workshop, which helped to overcome the lack of depth of the data and to ensure minimum bias. They recorded their notes at the end of each workshop, in order to minimize data distortion caused by the time between note taking and the event.

In addition to the field notes, the researcher collected 478 commented free drawings in the context of the *Art and Storytelling* program (during step 3 of the workshop), while she amassed 116 self-portraits on the theme of "me from within" and "me from without" by way of pre- and post-tests. At the end of the program, the author conducted semi-structured interviews with 4 children and their parents that lasted between one and two hours. The interviews, conducted in collaboration with an interpreter, were intended to deepen the children's narratives about their drawings by asking children what was happening in each

image. Interviews collected information about the family story by addressing themes such as school, friends, family, language, religion and migration process through open-ended questions like “Tell me how your arrival in Canada unfolded” or “How did your child adjust to his or new environment?”. The researcher also conducted hour-long semi-structured interviews with the two classroom teachers to learn more about their teaching philosophy as well as their students’ interpersonal relationships and identity in class, especially concerning the four children chosen for the case studies.

From the four case studies carried out, the case of Safia (pseudonym) stood out because both the drawings she made during the program and the content of the interview could be related to the theme of cultural bereavement. In order to explore the relationship between the young girl’s identity expression and cultural bereavement in her drawings, the researcher thus completed a thematic analysis of field notes regarding Safia, the girl’s drawings and the content of the transcribed interview with the family using an inductive approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Crowe, Inder, & Porter, 2015). The overall analysis strategy was one of immersion, emergence and intuition, that is to say that the researcher did not resort solely to the creation of pre-determined categories in advance, as is suggested by Crabtree and Miller (1992). The researcher started by organizing the data into tables to facilitate the identification of similar and discordant content found in the images, the field notes and the interviews. Keeping in mind the research question, the content of the material was first coded in an open manner and then through axial coding (Strauss, 1987). The coding process paid special attention to symbols and content related to home and host country that were found in both the drawings and interviews (e.g. flags, geographical landmarks or family members). Main themes were then built from the most recurring

symbols and themes not having sufficient data to be supported were disregarded (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Finally, the researcher made sure the remaining themes fitted into the overall narrative that was developed (Nowell et al., 2017).

Since knowledge in the context of this research was part of a particular sociocultural context of co-construction between the researcher and the participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006, Miles & Huberman, 2003, Patton, 2002), the interpretation of the data and its meanings was inevitable. However, in order to create plausible narratives and to strengthen trustworthiness, triangulation of data collection methods and sources of data were at the core of the research design (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017; Yin, 2017). Thereby, the researcher gained credible information by putting in perspective field notes from the workshops (children's comments and stories related to their drawings, as well as social interactions in the group), analysis of the child's drawings, and by interviewing the child, her parents and her teachers.

Case presentation

Safia is an 11-year-old Egyptian girl who arrived in Canada 13 months before the research took place. She is the eldest of three children who were all born in Egypt. The family immigrated to Canada as economic immigrants. Despite a relatively easy immigration process, both parents (who held university diplomas) had to quit prestigious and well-paid jobs. At the time of interview, the parents were in the process of completing the requirements needed to meet Canadian professional boards' standards and get jobs corresponding to their qualifications. Even though the father acknowledged the necessity for this process, he also admitted feeling stagnated (his actual words could be translated as "*cycling on the spot*" [sic]). As for Safia, she said she did not really like her new life in

Canada. At that time, she did not master French, the official language of the province of Quebec, and could no longer engage in sports activities like she used to when she was living in Egypt (she was involved, like her father, in elite sports). Furthermore, she did not like the fact that her extended family stayed in the home country. This was obvious during the interview when she said, crying, “*but here, there is no family*”. Like her parents, she took advantage of the interview to share her experience of Egyptian culture and Arabic language. Interestingly, her mother claimed that she no longer knew Arabic, that she forgot how to speak and write it properly, to Safia’s dismay. The young girl also showed her attachment to her country of origin when she said that her favorite drawing was the one she made representing the Egyptian flag and a green landscape reminding her of the Nile fertile valley. Safia’s nostalgia and longing for her home country was also present in the drawings she made during the *Art and Storytelling* program.

Sadness and longing for home

Pretest: “I’m sad because I left Egypt, the Mother of the World”

Sadness and longing for Egypt were obvious in Safia’s drawings right from the beginning. The young girl created self-portraits in which her eyes’ expression evoked sadness and melancholia when asked to produce images on the theme of “Me from within and from without” (Figure 1 near here). While on the outside Safia said that she was at once happy and sad, she admitted that she felt sad inside herself. She even wrote a message in the inside panel of the paper supporting this feeling. During the interview, Safia first maintained that she could no longer read her own Arabic handwriting to which her mother added that her daughter could no longer write Arabic correctly, that she forgot her mother tongue. Safia vehemently replied that she had not, but that it was difficult to write Arabic with oil pastels. With the help of the interpreter, she finally shared the message with me: “*I*

am sad because I left Egypt, the Mother of the World". From the start of the workshops, the departure from her home country and the associated emotions were major themes of her artistic productions. Sometimes Safia brought the topic directly, but at other times, she used symbols and metaphors to convey this idea, as was the case with the drawing created during the third workshop.

Workshop 3 : « The sea is sad because people throw things out »

The young girl also expressed reminders of Egypt in the drawing she made during workshop 3. In this image, she used anthropomorphism to depict the sea that was angry because people threw things in the water (Figure 2 near here). However, here again, the emotion shown through the eyes is much more related to sadness than anger, especially with the overturned mouth and with the tear-filled eyes. The thrown out objects might be related to Safia's feelings of being angry to be "kicked out" of Egypt, of having to leave despite her desire to stay where she feels good. In spite of this resentment, the image became a pretext to relate good memories of Egypt during the interview. This drawing was even one of the girl's favorite. Safia and her mother talked about the trees, the date palms found throughout the country. They were so involved in the sharing of their culture that Safia's mother went to get some dates for the researcher to taste. However, they also added that the dates found in Canada were not the same as those found in Egypt, thus creating a gap between home and host country. The distance between Safia's home and host cultures was a theme that also appeared at the beginning of the program.

Not belonging

Workshop 1: "On the moon, there's nothing"

Safia was inspired by the story told during the first workshop when she drew a colored raven trying to reach the moon (Figure 3 near here). This story is about a raven that is different from the others because of its colorful plumage. To be recognized by its peers, the bird tries to fly to the moon but it gets so tired during the trip that it falls back to the earth. However, the little bird wakes up with a silver feather colored when it touched the moon. What Safia remembered from this story was that the bird failed to reach this remote, non-hospitable place. She thought that the bird preferred to be on earth rather than on the moon, because on earth, there was oxygen, gravity, plants, there was everything. Whereas on the moon, there was no gravity, no water, no food; it was an uninhabitable place. Safia's interpretation of the story reminds of the state of being in between two worlds, two cultures, of having to go to a place that is not home. At this time in the program, it may have been difficult for Safia to think of Canada as being a new home, a place where it was possible to survive. Maybe she felt out of place and not belonging to her new place as if she was alien to it. Although she did not depict herself as being alien, alienness is nevertheless the theme that came out from the following workshop.

Workshop 2 : "What does not look like me is strange"

The following week, Safia drew an image of a girl that she identified as being an Arabic peer and of an alien representing a Hispanic classmate (Figure 4 near here). This drawing evokes the idea that people who were too different from her were strange, even not human. In short, they did not share any common characteristics. While Safia did not directly identify with being the alien, it might be possible to think that she did feel estranged in her new country owing to her difference.

Workshop 5 : "A princess who is tied and surrounded by irrelevant things"

The feeling of being irrelevant also appeared in the drawing made during the fifth workshop, but through different symbols. In this image, Safia described a princess who was tied to a chair, surrounded by a looming ghost and irrelevant things (Figure 5 near here). Interestingly, these “out of place” elements were the Arabic alphabet, her name in Arabic (hidden for confidentiality purposes), the words “princess” and “ghost” in Arabic. There again, the young girl said that her Arabic writing was poor and she exclaimed, “what’s all this?!?”, while her mother wondered how she could have forgotten Arabic. Once again, Safia seemed hurt and insisted that she had not forgotten her mother tongue. What her drawing can tell us, however, is that the young girl might have felt trapped in her new world and unconnected to her home culture, and/or that her own culture might have felt strange to her, even irrelevant. In both cases, this drawing and the discussion during the interview evoke acculturative dissonance, i.e. tensions between the child’s rhythm of adaptation to the host culture and his or her parents’ (Frazer, Rubens, Johnson-Motoyama, DiPierro, & Fite, 2017). Both this feeling of incongruity and of not quite belonging may have intensified the experience of cultural bereavement for Safia (Bhugra & Becker, 2005).

Discussion

Working through an ambiguous loss with drawing

As suggested by Bhugra and Becker (2005), cultural bereavement and identity construction are interconnected for immigrants and mutually influence their development. In the case of Safia, her drawings show the expression of this interconnectedness. The images indeed reveal an impression of not being quite right, of being “off the track” or of being stuck in between two worlds. This feeling of “in betweenness” seems to be uncomfortable for Safia and to intensify her cultural bereavement. Indeed, the negative impact of cultural bereavement appears to be more important when paired with an ambiguous belonging. As

her sense of belonging clarifies in her drawings, the adverse effects of cultural bereavement seem to lessen. These findings corroborate earlier ones in which a strong connection with one's cultural identity of origin play a protective role for identity construction and cultural bereavement (Beauregard et al., 2017a; Bhugra & Becker, 2005). These points will be explored in the following sections.

Being in between

From the content of the interview and the images Safia produced, the young girl was most likely experiencing a process of cultural bereavement. Themes and emotions associated with the loss of cultural markers and loved ones are recurring both in her drawings and in her words. This is especially apparent during the first workshops (see Figures 1 and 2). The loss of sociocultural markers seems to provoke a feeling of confusion in terms of Safia's identity. At the beginning of the *Art and Storytelling* program, Safia expresses a feeling of being stuck in between. The character of the colored raven that can reach neither the moon nor the earth is a good example of this intermediary position (Figure 3). Due to its colorful plumage, the raven does not completely fit in either. Like the bird, Safia does not share the cultural markers necessary for belonging to a group and to aspire to a certain identity (Song, 2003; Vinsonneau, 2012). The sharp differences in both home and host country culture may create a sense of discontinuity for Safia, that is reminiscent of inherent identity conflicts (Ward et al., 2011). The ambiguity of her position further exacerbates these inner conflicts.

As stated earlier, cultural bereavement represents an ambiguous loss. The longed-for country and people do continue to exist elsewhere but the physical contact with them is ruptured (D'Amore, 2015). In the case of Safia, this rupture seems to create a gap between

her home and host country identities. She even draws this fracture, this space between two states, when she attempts to draw an earthquake during workshop 6 (Figure 6 near here). In this image, the left side of the paper is clear compared to the right area that is grey and blurred. The image could represent the difference between the relatively easy process of constructing her identity with clear cultural markers while in her home country and the difficulty of knowing who she is in her host country, i.e., not quite Egyptian and not quite Canadian. In this drawing, Safia would be in the intermediate space in the middle of the paper, a breach created because of migration. A young Chinese immigrant boy also showed this state of being in between in one of his drawings, albeit in a different form. He drew a baby ladybug with 5 dots, a characteristic that makes her not completely Chinese according to the father, as ladybugs normally have 7 dots in Chinese culture (Beauregard et al., 2017a). In both cases, drawing seems to have allowed both immigrant children to express the state of transformation of their identity, albeit differently. As opposed to the example of the Chinese boy who succeeded in reconciling conflicting identities, Safia drew how her identities are torn apart. However, she also says that in Figure 6, she drew “when the earth moves”. Because identity construction is closely linked to the process of cultural bereavement (Bhugra & Becker, 2005; Eisenbruch, 1988; Papazian-Zohrabian, 2013), the movement evoked by Safia could be a hint of how she was working through both cultural bereavement and identity conflicts.

For Safia, the rupture engendered by migration might have created quite a big gap, as an intermediate space is created between both realities. However, this “in between” state does not seem comfortable for Safia. In fact, the gap might have provoked a feeling of estrangement, which would explain the representation of an alien in Figure 4. The act of

drawing might have helped Safia progressively get in touch with and overcome her sense of alienation (Beauregard, Papazian-Zohrabian & Rousseau, 2017b) and disorientation caused by cultural bereavement. Like young refugees in Australia who used photography to “remake, reimagine and reconstitute places as a way to garner a sense of belonging and security” (Robertson et al., 2016, p. 40), Safia may have used drawing as a way to reunite elements of her cultural identity of origin with those of the host country. Jacques and colleagues (2009) suggest that this reconciliation is necessary for the construction of a harmonious identity. The authors also question the possibility for immigrants to integrate new identity elements when their heart is still in their home country. Similarly, McBrien and Day (2012) point out that these “children [refugee youth] face the immense challenge of realigning their sense of identity to incorporate components of their host culture while maintaining some connection to their native roots” (p. 549). When producing images, immigrant children can thus negotiate alternative identities that facilitate the creation of an equilibrium between their sense of strangeness and their need to belong, which promotes a positive identity transformation (Beauregard et al., 2017b).

On the way to integration

In the context of the *Art and Storytelling* program, drawing appears to be a powerful tool for Safia to express emotions related to her grief and to her adaptation to the new country. At the end of the program, Safia still depicts Egypt in her drawings. It is during the last workshop that she produces a drawing of the Egyptian flag, her favorite image from the series. Even if Safia created the image quite rapidly, she still took time to represent the national emblem, the Eagle of Saladin. Safia chose to fold the paper to create an outside and inside space. She drew the flag and an image depicting the fertile valley of the Nile on

the external surface (Figure 7 near here). When talking about this image, Safia says she remembers “E-VE-RY-THING” about Egypt: the Nile River, pyramids, family, mosques, friends, “many, many things”. In this image, the presence of Safia’s country is obvious through the flag. It is as if she was announcing her cultural identity to others. The state of being in between seems to have faded. When looking at the final self-portraits (post-test) she made the following week (Figure 8 near here), Safia seems to feel much better. Both on the outside and inside of the folded paper, her eyes are bright and lively. Her mouth even evokes a certain sense of happiness or at least of comfort. Safia is conscious of this change: “For me, there is a difference [between the first and the last self-portrait]. She is happier”.

Drawing supported Safia in creating links with her cultural identity of origin, links that protected her from most of the adverse effects of migration. This was also the case with another child (Beauregard et al., 2017a). The process of filling the gap caused by migration probably supported Safia in reconciling with her lost identity and made her feel better as illustrated by Figure 8. As a matter of fact, art and more specifically photography also helped young immigrants adapt to their new society by allowing them to unite past and present elements of their lives (McBrien & Day, 2012). This is also in line with the idea that the maintenance of a close connection with one’s culture of origin may reduce the impact of cultural bereavement (Bhugra & Becker, 2005). The implementation of arts-based intervention in schools thus appears to be a strong tool to support immigrant children in their cultural bereavement process. In the case of Safia, the Art and Storytelling workshops provided her with a space where she could reconnect with her lost cultural identity and recreate the severed bond. The workshops also offered her the opportunity to experiment with aspects of her transforming identity, especially with elements relating to

the host country. In return, this helped her find meaning in her loss and contributed to her well-being (D'Amore, 2015; Niemeyer, 2001; Ward et al., 2011).

Limitations

The small and exploratory scale of this study does not allow for generalization.

Nevertheless, it does provide important hints on how immigrant children experience the migration process and the possible cultural bereavement that ensue. The case study presented in this paper is derived from a larger study on immigrant children's identity expression through drawing. Initially, the exploration of cultural bereavement was not the main study's objective. Consequently, some important information may have been omitted in the research process. For instance, the theme of cultural bereavement was not specifically included in the interview guide. The latter focused on open themes such as family, friends, migratory process. Nevertheless, the interview was established as semi-structured, which allowed the researcher to explore identity expression while leaving space for important topics to arise (Savoie-Zajc, 2016). One may thus speculate that cultural bereavement was an important aspect of Safia's identity expression and family story. This may have not emerged if a more rigid framework had been used for data collection.

Although supporting the emergence of rich information, resorting to more flexible data collection tools also has some pitfalls. While the creation of images may reveal unconscious material and complex experiences that would not be possible through verbal means (Anzieu et al., 2012), the interpretation of images is inevitable in a research context. Whereas multiple interpretations are possible, this research attempted to come up with a credible narrative by triangulating the researcher's, Safia's and the parents' points of view

(Karsenti & Demers, 2011). This process reinforced the credibility of the narrative hence created.

In the context of this case study, the researcher chose to conduct the interview with Safia in her parents' presence. This way of proceeding undoubtedly influenced the content of Safia's narratives about her drawings. The young girl may have omitted information in front of her parents or may have said things to please them. Still, Safia's cultural bereavement process seemed to be aligned with her parents' grief. This also allowed the researcher to understand Safia's process in a broader context, although this was not included in the scope of this paper.

Conclusion

Even if immigration is carefully planned and chosen, it is important not to underestimate the impact it can have on immigrants, especially regarding cultural bereavement. Although cultural bereavement differs from grief following the death of a loved one, it remains nonetheless a painful experience that may affect immigrant children's identity and sense of belonging to the host country. In turn, adaptation to a new place may result in identity conflicts that negatively affect children's school success and psychological well-being (Ward et al., 2011). This underlines the importance of adequately supporting immigrant children in schools. This paper presented a case study showing how drawing, in the context of classroom-based creative expression workshops, may have supported a young immigrant girl in the meaning-making process associated with cultural bereavement and identity construction. Safia may have used the creative space provided by the *Art and Storytelling* program to experiment with alternative identities in order to come to terms with her sensation of being caught in between two worlds. This underlines the significance of having

spaces in schools for immigrant children to safely explore and express their grief for their culture and country of origin. It also stresses the importance of increasing teachers' awareness of what students can express in the images they produce. As Safia's cultural bereavement process seems to have been inscribed in her parents' own grieving process, it could be interesting in future researches to explore the role of art creation in cultural bereavement within a family context. On one part, this could allow for a better understanding of the role family dynamics may play in the cultural bereavement process. On another part, it could also help family members understand their grieving experience in a way that could allow for better support within the family itself, support that is much needed when grieving a significant loss.

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Figure 1. Pre-test, "Me from within".

Figure 2. A sad sea.

Figure 3. An uninhabitable place.

Figure 4. "What does not look like me is strange".

Figure 5. Being irrelevant.

Figure 6. A fracture.

Figure 7. Remembering E-VE-RY-THING about Egypt.

Figure 8. Final self-portrait, happier.