Culturally Diverse World: Creative Expression of an Immigrant/ Refugee Child in
an Art Welcome Class

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ABSTRACT

Culturally Diverse World: Creative Expression of an Immigrant/ Refugee Child in an Art Welcome Class

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The following paper summarizes some issues relating to the cross-cultural dimension of art therapy. The paper describes a creative and verbal expression of an immigrant child in a classroom setting. Art and creative expression is seen to be a powerful tool in expressing the experience of immigrants and refugees.

The primary goal of this study was to observe and discuss graphic representations in the content of the drawings as well as to discuss the themes in the content of verbal (narrative) description produced by a nine-year old boy of immigrant parents.

Art therapists are confronted with unusual problems in the areas of intervention, interpretation and communication when dealing with clients from other cultures. However, drawings and paintings (graphic representation) reflect the participants' message about their conflicts and their means of dealing with them.

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Introduction

My personal interest in topics that deal with culture and multiculture did not happen by mere accident, although that was my original belief. Talking and writing about issues concerning immigrants' lives and experiences, discussing problems and obstacles they face, when for numerous reasons they decide to leave their country, was at one point in vogue. Rather naively, I believed this was the main reason I found the subject interesting and significant. It did not take much time, nor did it take profound analysis to realize that the reason I was attracted to the topic was very personal in nature. Politics; wars; changing places, countries and continents; meeting new people; encountering different cultures; avoiding problems and at the same time trying to solve them; starting life all over again; learning new languages --all that and more has been my life for the last ten years.

The roots of my being drawn to the issues of multiculturalism and working with culturally diverse populations go into the past. Many years ago I had to leave my country and join the army of many who tried to find a new place under the sun, a new home. I become a refugee. Ever since, I have been torn between different worlds, apparently same but different cultures, different languages.

The experience, no matter how painful and difficult, was also enriching as I become multicultural myself. As an art therapy intern, I worked with people who came from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds and my personal experience helped me better understand those with whom I shared a

great deal of similar problems. Another reason that heightened my interest in exploring and gaining knowledge about multiculturalism and art therapy was the fact that we live in a culturally diverse world. Canada is also a real melting pot where many cultures merge and coexist. It is a great place for plunging into cultural diversity. So, personal grew into professional...

The impact that culture has on therapeutic practice is enormous and there is a growing need to explore the area in a deeper and more systematic fashion. To be acquainted with cross - cultural issues is no longer a matter of personal interest but an ethical responsibility. Multiethnic societies with a large number of immigrants and refugees could be an excellent place for researching multi- cultural issues.

In Chapters 1 and 2 a discussion about culture and art and art therapy in a multicultural context will be explored. Also, concepts of culture and worldview will be defined, as they appear to be important for mental health practitioners who work with culturally diverse populations. The culture we are born in defines us in a personal, professional and every other way; therefore, it is crucial to be aware of the body of literature about art therapy and culture and its relevance to ethical practice in the field of mental health. The theoretical frame for the study will be outlined and Winnicott's notions of culture and transitional phenomenon will be discussed as well.

Chapter 3 will address some questions and answers about immigrants and refugees and their experiences prior to their immigrating, as well as while trying to establish their new lives in a new country.

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Chapter 4 is entirely devoted to the most vulnerable segment of the refugee/ immigrant population: children. Immigrant and refugee children's mental health and the problems they face in a school setting will be touched upon. It appears that school plays a central role in a child adaptation/ acculturation process in a new country. School is the first link between the world of the child's family and society at large. How creative / art therapy services within a school system could help children find their places in a new-host culture and how these programs could help them live their lives more efficiently and productively will be addressed as well. An overview of art/expressive services in an educational environment will also be presented.

Chapter 5 will describe the Creative Expression Children's Intervention Program designed to implement art therapy techniques in the welcoming class for immigrant/ refugee children. A case study about a young nine-year-old boy will follow. I will conclude with a discussion in chapter 6.

Chapter 1: Culture

Art and culture

Art in the most general terms is universal and it is known to every single society. Many art forms have been used to better mental health since antiquity. Henderson and Gladding (1998) pointed out that almost all ancient societies have been aware of the power of arts. They would very often, in their rituals, employ different art modalities such as dance, music, and drama. Also, art has been used to heal and treat what today is classified and known as a variety of mental disorders. Spencer (1996) talks about many culture universals and says that because our biological heritage is similar (no matter what race, color or origin), we all have the capacity to express ourselves in various arts modalities. Dissanayake (1994) goes even further and states that as humans, we have much more in common with each other than we commonly believe. She also points out that we are by our very nature aesthetic and that as a species we deserve to be called "artistic" (p.19). Beside the universal need to handle and make things, there is a need to make things artfully, or to as she says, "artify"(p.19) them.

Art Therapy and Culture

If we take this universality into consideration than there is no wonder that art and art therapy, as Lewis (1997) pointed out, have played a crucial part in the development of cultural sensitivity of those who professionally come

in contact with a culturally diverse population. She further stressed that "because art, dance, story telling, singing, the playing of instruments and drama have been pivotal in many cultures as vehicles of healing...it is understandable that creative arts therapists have become some of modern day healers and shamans" (p.127). Lewis (1997) talks about creative arts as a power that goes beyond and above culture, enhancing development. While there are differences in expression and interpretation, it is the value of the process and its calming effect that counts.

Soothing and stimulating roles of the creative arts, according to Henderson and Gladding (1998) "offer a bridge that can span many dimensions of human existence and therapeutically link people to one another" (p.183). These particular characteristics of the creative arts are among the most important ones in therapeutic work, especially when working with people from different cultures. Many mental health practitioners use art to enhance the therapeutic process. Henderson and Gladding (1998) summarize the power of creative arts in multicultural settings and say that:

> The creative arts draw people out of self - consciousness and into self-awareness by having them express themselves in a symbolic manner, call attention to the process of expression and the universal and unique nature of strategies employed in this process, provide a set of concrete experiences clients can carry with them to help them relate to others and themselves, help clients develop new ideas and interests to use in relating to themselves and others outside of therapy, bring clients together by

giving them experiences that link them together with their past, their

present, and their future, help clients appreciate the beauty and wisdom of

cultural backgrounds, promote positive feelings and affects within people

that can be tapped when celebrating and coping with life's highs and lows,

engender hope, confidence, and insight into person who have never

realized their potential for living life to the fullest. (p.184-186).

These strengths and benefits of the creative arts therapies summarize what

other researchers (Beaudry, 1997; Bradt, 1997; Coseo, 1997; Johnson, 1987)

discussed and came up with as well.

It is apparent that the creative arts and art therapy can help transcend

the differences in clients whose new cultures differ from their own. The

creative arts are a universal language and as Dokter (1998) stated it could be

seen and used as a useful alternative to verbal therapies. The use of arts

therapies in the area of the multi/cross cultural field can possibly be a therapy

of choice.

Culture defined

It seems that there is not one single definition of culture that would

encompass, if not all, than most aspects of what belongs and goes under the

umbrella of culture. Rather, there are many definitions and each one of them

discusses only parts and aspects of culture. While reading and researching

about culture, I realized that it would be impossible to choose only one

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definition that would satisfy all that it stands for. However, for the purpose of this paper I will try to give as complete a definition as possible.

The North American continent is a melting pot in which many people from all over the world find their new cultural identity either by adapting to a new culture or by expanding on their culture of origin. It has been recognized (Calisch, 1996; Sit, 1996; Coseo, 1997; Beaudry, 1997; Lewis, 1997), that all human behavior is dependent on the cultural frame one lives in. It is this cultural frame that conditions our behavior and development. Calisch (1996) stressed that "all human behavior is conditioned and is a reflection of the cultural context in which it is nurtured. Culture includes such features as attitudes, forms of emotional expression, patterns of relating to others, and ways of thought"(p.64). The power of culture on human development is emphasized in Beaudry's (1997) article in which she says: "One thing that gives humans our distinct identity is culture. Culture provides us with the rules of the ways we may express ourselves, behave, think, work, make love defend ourselves and organize ourselves economically and politically"(p.129)

At this point it is important to define culture, as it appears to be a very broad and elusive term partly due to the fact that culture has been used to reflect many meanings. However, Collins English Dictionary (1997) defines culture as a sum of ideas, customs and arts of a particular society. Spencer (1996) defines culture very broadly and states that culture represents "a way of life shared by a group" (p.45). She further expands on this by adding that a

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culture is something like "a blueprint for behavior. It is produced by society and in turn, a society depends on its culture. No culture no society"(p.45).

Spencer (1996) also stated that the major elements of culture include "values, norms, folklore, law, and ideology"(p.46). Among the characteristics mentioned by Spencer there is an additional one that is equally important if not, as stated by Goodenough (1989), even more significant. That is language. Language as a part of culture is also mentioned by Coseo (1997). She says that: "The concept of culture includes a people's history, traditions, values, language, communication styles, socialization patterns and behaviors" (Coseo, 1997, p.145).

It is more than obvious that many of these definitions overlap. Some of them place an accent on some particular aspect of culture while others emphasize a different one. It seems that Sue and Sue (1990) gave the most comprehensive definition of culture. They said that culture includes " all those things that people have learned to do, believe, value, and enjoy in their history. It is the totality of ideals, beliefs, skills, tools, customs, and institutions into which each member of society is born" (p.35). No matter what definition we adopt as the most comprehensive and the most encompassing one, it is important for therapists to bear in mind that the culture we are born in stays with us and shapes our lives in many ways. The same could be said for our clients.

World view

One of the concepts that has to be mentioned that appears to be relevant for a more meaningful understanding of culture, is familiarity with the culture's worldview. Worldview includes group identity, individual identity, beliefs, values, and language. Being culturally competent is being acquainted with one's world view.

Calisch (1996) and Krause (1998) insisted that as professionals we have a responsibility to be familiar with our culture's view and how it effects our interaction with persons from other cultures. Also, the knowledge of other people's world views is an asset to a good practitioner. The world view of a culture functions to make sense of life experiences that might otherwise be perceived as hectic, haphazard and insignificant.

For a therapist in today's modern society it is extremely important to be aware of all cultural differences as we are becoming a multicultural society very quickly. Bradt (1997) goes even further when stating that if unaware of the importance of cultural differences, the therapists may engage in cultural oppression, using unethical practice. Calisch (1996) points out that culturally knowledgeable service providers are believed to be able to provide appropriate services to multicultural populations. Bradt (1997) stresses that cultural knowledge is not the only prerequisite for effective multicultural therapy. He points out that the therapists' effectiveness depends on their self-knowledge about their own attitudes, feelings and stereotypical views about ethnic minorities as well.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Art therapy ethics

In the American Art Therapy Association (AATA) Ethics Document (2001) the multicultural component is listed as one of the defining ethical standards for art therapists. It states that "art therapists acknowledge and incorporate into their work the importance of culture...they are sensitive to differences that exist between cultures and they are aware of their own values and beliefs and how they may affect cross-cultural therapy interventions"(p.7). However, art therapists are human as everyone else and in that regard are not any different when it comes to being culturally biased.

Both Lewis (1997) and Calisch (1996) mentioned that there are still therapists who are very ethnocentrically oriented. This is understandable if we take into consideration that entire mental health and psychotherapy has its roots in western European and North American theory and practice. It is clear that all of this will have a great influence on how one conducts himself as a mental health practitioner. When clients and therapists come from different cultural backgrounds, with different beliefs and values, misunderstandings are almost unavoidable.

Coseo (1997) says that "a therapist may unknowingly superimpose their belief system onto their clients and may enter into treatment and elicit responses that can negatively impact treatment" (p.145). Being sensitive to cultural differences is according to Sit (1996) very important for the art

therapist. Also, a deep and systematic understanding of the root of problematic behavior is essential in providing appropriate therapeutic interventions.

Art Therapy Practice

However, there is no clear guidance or strategy for how to implement the knowledge to these cultural interventions. Lewis (1997) suggested that the important thing, when working with refugees and immigrants, is to find out whether or not immigrants/refugees wanted to migrate and what is behind their decision to change cultures. Other things that the therapist might want to know are about their plans for the future. Would they like to return to their own country or to stay in the host one?

Fitzpatrick (2002) pointed out that for the therapists to be successful they "needed to guide refugees through a process in which they are able to direct and manage the stress of self- disclosure, while also struggling with the many demands of resettlement" (p.151). Many people from nonwestern countries do not disclose personal stories to a stranger that easily, nor is it a common thing to do. Views about disclosure are highly culturally influenced.

Another thing to consider for the positive result when working with culturally diverse populations is to be aware of and to know ourselves. The therapist must be aware of his/her own misconceptions, biases and his/her personal philosophy. Fitzpatrick (2002) argued that if not examined " personal attitudes and beliefs have the capacity to interfere with the therapeutic relationship" (p.152). The fact that the self-analysis is important has been

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stressed by Cherry (2002) who stated that" the therapist's identity and views of others will directly affect how she or he reacts to and interacts with clients. Examining their personal worldviews enables therapists to make sense of the world and to better understand how others view it" (p.159).

Knowing Culture

Besides knowing himself and his own culture, the therapist must possess a great deal of respect and knowledge about his/her client's culture. Fitzpatrick (2002) wrote: " Effective cross-cultural art therapy acknowledges the importance of learning about the respecting clients and their way of looking at and experiencing the world." She proposes this holistic approach to therapy, as it "offers art therapist and client an opportunity to build bridges and to span the cultural divide" (p.152).

Winnicott on culture and transitional phenomenon

Winnicott's (1971/2001) idea about creativity being transitional space and his idea about the origin of the culture are appealing to me because they are applicable to art therapy and could be easily translated into art therapy practice. He equates creativity with healthy living and said that "it is creative apperception more than anything else that makes the individual feel that life is worth living" and added that "living creatively is a healthy state"(p.65). Cultural space for him is something that is nice and worm, something that fulfills.

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Winnicott (1971/2001) emphasized the role of creativity and stated that creativity provides ways of dealing and coping with the demands of real life. In this case, creative expression becomes the place that is neither outside nor inside but somewhere in between. This transitional space can serve as a safe place for immigrant children to reenact past experiences in a less painful way, through art. The location of this space is vague. It is the place that is in-between. According to McSweeney (1990):" this space becomes a meeting ground where a drama unfolds through the creation of an illusion" (p.63). Dreams and fantasies provide that space, but what art therapy and creative expression provide as Johnson (1987) said: "a concrete and impersonal transitional space of the art work, music, role play" (p.11). Rousseau and Heusch (2000) said that the transitional space may "in the case of refugee and immigrant children enable them to play with various external realities until they can achieve relative coherence in their inner world"(p.31). In adults' lives it is the culture that equivocates the transitional space of children's lives. Winnicott (1971/2001) made connection between transitional phenomena and cultural life and said that "the term cultural experience is an extension of the idea of transitional phenomena and of play ...the accent indeed is on experience. In using the word culture I am thinking of the inherited tradition"(p.99). So, according to Winnicott (1971/2001) "without tradition there is no creation, there is no creativity...it is not possible to be original except on a basis of tradition"(p.99). In my opinion, this is important to emphasize, especially when working with immigrant and refugee children. For their healthy development, it

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is crucial to help them stay in touch with their original culture while at the same time adapting to a new one. Staying in touch with the culture of origin would promote a healthy development at the present while at the same time investing into the future. Winnicott (1971/2001) further stated that," It is these cultural experiences that provide the continuity in the human race that transcends personal existence" (p.100). Important for the cultural experience is that, according to Winnicott (1971/2001) it is located "in the potential space between the individual and the environment. It, cultural experience, begins with creative living first manifested in play". He further stated that "for every individual the use of this space is determined by life experiences that take place at the early stages of the individual's existence." (p.100).

However, for Winnicott this cultural experience is something positive, something that could be constructive. While little children have teddy bears and security blankets, the older ones and adults have culture and art. In this in-between space (where art is happening) children who come from different cultures could find satisfaction while creating.

Chapter 3: Refugees and Immigrants

Refugee/immigrant defined

In the last decade or so, all of us, directly or indirectly have witnessed various political turmoils, wars and economic disparity between western and non-Western nations. We also have witnessed massive movements. Thousands upon thousands of people have been relocated due to many reasons. Some of them became refugees while others were categorized as immigrants. No matter what title one acquired, all of them had to deal more or less with the stress of adaptation; new language and customs; rejections by the new culture; confusion of one's role; the sense of helplessness...

In the booklet titled The Canadian Task Force On Mental Health Issues Affecting Immigrants And Refugees (After the door has been opened, 1988), it has been recognized that relocation from one country to another that is from one culture to another does cause stress. However, the fact that one changes the culture does not necessarily endanger mental health. Immigration combined with many other factors that people face when they arrive to the host country could cause mental problems. It has been said that "in Canada, negative public attitudes, separation from family and community, inability to speak English or French, and failure to find suitable employment are among the most powerful predictors of emotional distress among immigrants" (in After the door has been opened1988, p. i).

An immigrant as defined by Canadian task force on Mental Health Issues in After the door has been opened (1988) is "a person who seeks lawful permission to come to the country to establish permanent residence." (p.3) A refugee defined by the same Force is

> any person who by reason of a well –founded fear of persecution of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion a) is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, by reason of such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country, or b) not having a country of nationality, is outside the country of his former habitual residence and is unable or, by reason of such fear , is unwilling to return to that country (1988, p.4).

While there are differences between immigrants and refugees there is something that they have in common. No matter what their reason for arrival to Canada, all of them experience a significant amount of difficulties when trying to establish their new lives in the new country. However, the differences are also evident, the clearest being the choice to migrate. In After the door has been opened (1988) is said that "people usually choose to become immigrants, whereas they are forced to become refugees" (p.5). Generally speaking, this may be true for some. However, the real question here is whether or not anyone has a choice. There are so many factors in the decision-making process about immigration and personal choice is, in my opinion the last on the list of reasons for leaving one's country.

Experience of refugees/immigrants

The experience of the refugees has been described by Fitzpatrick (2002) as going through three phases that are almost inevitable for all refugees. These phases are: "preflight, flight, and resettlement" (p.151). The first phase - preflight - is characterized by a high level of stress that is usually caused by events such as: difficult political situations in the country; possibility of war etc. Some people experience a trauma of some sort. The second phase -flight - is characterized with what the name actually implies - flight. People leave their country and the only certain thing awaiting them is uncertainty. The old home is to be replaced with a yet unknown one. The third phase – resettlement -is actually the beginning of as Fitzpatrick (2002) stated "a long process that plunges the refugee into the unknown" (p.152).

In my opinion, this third phase is the longest one. It actually never ends. The process of resettlement is a life - long endeavor. One never leaves his/ her country of origin and one never integrates a hundred percent into a new culture. There is always some sort of overlap between the two cultures. For some this could be enriching and turned into a positive experience while for others the same experience could be considered to be a burden. However, all of us who had to leave our countries and our homes continue to live our lives as being neither here nor there but in between.

It has been stated by Rousseau, Drapeau and Corin (1996) that children make up "half the world's refugees"' (p.239) and as such they are more prone and susceptible than others to many problems in a new country,

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including mental health problems. Whatever the reason for migration from one country to another, the experience could be traumatic for some children. Sit (1996) says that "children who have immigrated to Canada from different countries experience loss and face many new challenges within their new cultural environment" (p.69). Many of the children do not speak the language of the host country and that significantly heightens an already difficult situation. The children of immigrants/ refuges, regardless of whether first or second-generation migrants, do struggle more often than we think they do to become part of a new society. Problems they face are numerous, the biggest being language barrier. Very often children are torn between their homes, values and beliefs that have been transmitted onto them from their parents on one side, and on the other a new culture. In some instances, as has been stated in After the door has been opened (1988) some "youth are trying to relinquish the culture of their parents, the culture which they see many Canadians devaluing and which seems to them to constitute a barrier to full acceptance by the majority society" (p.65). However, many children go through this process of integration into a new culture relatively painlessly, while some "struggle with conflicts in self-identity and culture shock" (Sit, 1996, p.70).

Integration, Assimilation, Acculturation and Adaptation

In literature, there is confusion between the terms integration, assimilation, acculturation and adaptation. Very often these terms are used synonymously to describe a process of accepting a new culture as one's own.

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However, there are differences and it is important to make a clear distinction between them. As defined in After the door has been opened (1988) assimilation is "a process of eliminating distinctive group characteristics which may be encouraged as a formal policy" (p.97), while integration is defined as "a process by which groups and/- or individuals become able to participate fully in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the country" (p.98). It is clear that assimilation as defined here has a negative connotation and as such denies one's cultural particularities. Gerity (2000) sees assimilation as a negative process as well that rather hampers one's development because of "the dominant culture's demand for conformity from nondominant cultures" (p. 202). Berry (1986) uses the term acculturation to describe changes that one goes through when migrating to a new culture. Berry says (as cited in Redfield, Linton and Herskovits, 1936) that "acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups" (p.294). Stated like this, acculturation compared to assimilation has a much more positive impact. However, the definition of acculturation implies that there is a two -way process. The change occurs in both the dominant and the nondominant culture, and it is more likely it will be the nondominant culture that will endure the greatest change. Acculturation is also happening on two levels: group and individual. Costes, McCall and Schneider (1997) said that acculturation is "both individual and group phenomenon" and that changes that inevitably

occur when two or more different cultures intervene will result in "changes in shared cultural values and traditions of the groups involved, and also in the culturally linked values and traditions of individuals in those groups"(p.170).

When children immigrate, they also go through numerous changes. However, acculturation in children is a topic that is not as researched as the acculturation in adults The culture of origin, the host culture, and the child's characteristics and personality will certainly have an impact and will influence the process and the result of the child' acculturation. Costes, McCall and Schneider (1997) tried to develop a list of the characteristics that could be blamed for the child's successful or unsuccessful acculturation result. Those characteristics are: "age at migration, language facility, gender, personality characteristics, and contact with the receiving culture. Societal factors that influence acculturation include the child's premigration experiences, reason for migration, disparity between the sending and receiving cultures, and characteristics of the receiving society" (p.172). All of those who work with children should have this in mind and try to "custom make" programs that would best suit a child's needs.

Adaptation is according to Berry (1988) "the generic term used to refer to both the process of dealing with acculturation and the outcome of acculturation"(p.43). Berry (1988) further proposed "different strategies of adaptation that lead to different varieties of adaptation, and he identified three such strategies for the individual. These have been termed adjustment, reaction, and withdrawal" (p.43).

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It is important to distinguish between these different processes when working with immigrant/refugee populations as the distinction could influence the way we approach this vulnerable segment of population. According to Gerity (2000) positive outcome is possible if we as therapists approach our clients "from an increased respect for personal and cultural differences" (p. 203).

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism would be the word that best encompasses and describes the idea and approach that in my opinion suits the immigrant/refugee population needs. Multiculturalism defined by the Canadian Task force in After the door has been opened (1988) is "the official ideology of cultural pluralism, where all cultures have equal status and merit in Canadian society, and none has more power than another. Multiculturalism policies promote integration, not assimilation, of minority groups into society" (p.98). From this definition it is more than obvious that multiculturalism has political value, and it is in a way a political doing. It is the state's political apparatus with its laws, values and morals that makes one society multicultural. It does not suffice that many different cultures coexist and simply live one by another. There has to be more to it in order for the society to claim multicultural I would say way of living. Multicultural in my opinion as defined by the Canadian Task Force (1988) does not imply that one culture is superior to another and that is the real value of this society.

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Chapter 4: Children and School

Children

When it comes to refugee children, it is highly likely that the decision to migrate was not their own but rather one that their parents made. However, all the challenges and problems that their parents face and struggle with (either directly or indirectly) influence the children's behavior. In addition, children also have to integrate two cultures; the one at home and the one at school.

School is very often the first link between the child's home in a new culture and the new culture. This transition from home to school and further into a larger society can be problematic for both parents and children. Sit (1996) pointed out that "stress on the family is often increased as children attempt to fit into the social expectations of western culture" (p.70). Because of the family's difficult situation children very often feel anxious, guilty, and overwhelmed.

There is not that much research on art therapy in school settings that has been done. However, research about art therapy in school settings with refugee children is almost non-existent on the art therapists' research agendas.

From what has been done it appears that benefits of art therapy and creative projects are encouraging. Sit (1996) who did the study with Chinese immigrant children in school settings stated that the success of art therapy was due to the following reasons: academic achievements were obvious, the

use of art therapy was more acceptable for Chinese parents than a verbal therapy, self-esteem was improved.

Rousseau, Drapeau, and Corin (1996) in their study with refugee children found that there was an association between emotional problems and learning difficulties. However, the link between these two variables was not clear, and the results were dependent on the culture the children came from, difficulties they have experienced, and the measurements of these difficulties.

Rousseau and Drapeau (2000) in their study on scholastic achievement of adolescent refugees found out that the relationship between these variables was not significant and concluded that more research is needed because there are so many factors that could influence the results.

It was even harder to find more research on art therapy and refugee children. Beside some case studies that were culture specific (from which a generalization could not bee made), there was nothing out there that would suggest that we as professionals are interested in answering many questions about the most vulnerable part of the refugee/ immigrant population- children.

However, many art therapy based creative programs have been organized in different parts of the world either within school settings or separately. The main aims of these programs were to help refugee children better cope with their situation, help them bridge two different worlds (the one of a new country and the one of the old home country), and to protect them from any further damage (Robb, 2002; Sit, 1996; Ballbe, 1997; Rousseau and Heusch, 2000; and Rousseau, Lacroix, Bagilishya and Heusch, 2003).

Robb (2002) in her work with Russian orphans found that "art therapy helped address anxiety-provoking issues that the children faced, such as immersion in American culture and adjusting to the adoption process, as well as serving as a tool to meet their individual mental health needs" (p.146).

Rousseau and Heusch (2000) argued that schools should serve as one of the main factors in the process of acculturation and at the same time should help new -comers integrate into a new environment. In their article, they discussed the role of the schools in refugee children's lives and it has been proposed that the role of the school should be the one of a mediator between the family of origin and society at large. Rousseau and Heusch (2000) initiated a creative expression project for refugee and immigrant children using creative expression and myths from their homeland. Its first part was done with third graders in one of Montreal's public schools. The program was designed to "help immigrant and refugee children build bridges between the past and the future by attaching meaning to experience." (p.31). They found that "the meaning conveyed by myths help children make sense of traumatic experiences and dislocation to devise their own culturally acceptable adaptive strategies." (p.39).

In the follow up part of the program, its second half, using qualitative analysis of the children's art works, Rousseau, Lacroix, Bagilishya and Heusch (2003) concluded that "the use of a wide variety of mythic referents frequently helped children better represent the gaps between home and school, past and present, and offers the possibility of hybridizing their worlds". Also, according

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to the same authors "myths serve as a link between inner reality, interpersonal; relationship, and the social order." (p.3)

It is more than obvious that schools have a place in young refugees' and immigrants' lives, and that with better support and organization of the larger society much more could be done. Art and creative expression deserve attention as it proves to be a great vehicle in the lives of those who found refuge here in Canada.

Immigrant and Refugee Children's Mental Health

Every year thousands upon thousands of people leave their homes and flee into the unknown called immigration. Very often they pack their lives into several suitcases hoping that life in a new country will bring a better future for them and their children.

According to Human resource Development Canada (HRDC) a quarter of a million people immigrate to Canada every year. Almost 20 percent are children under the age of 12. To compare this with the total number of children in Canada Beiser, Hou, Hyman, and Tousignant (1998) came up with the following numbers: "In 1994, there were 3,129,038 children in Canada between the ages 4 to 11 years. Of this total, 7.7 percent, or 240,184 were new immigrants or children of new immigrants" (p.19). According to Minas and Sawyer (2002) of the 6.1 million refugees worldwide for whom demographic data are available, 45.6 percent are under 18 years of age. If we look at this number carefully it is more than clear that immigrant and refugee children are

the segment of the population that must not be overlooked and that, due to their living conditions, more attention has to be given to their well-being. The experiences of the children in the first couple of years upon arrival to a new country can influence their acculturation and adaptation process. Considering that prior to the arrival to a host country many families went through a rough time, it is even more likely that additional stress of immigration will have an enormous impact on their settling. In a new country most of the immigrant families are faced with new challenges such as learning a new language, adapting to a new and sometimes completely different culture, going back to school to acquire new skills necessary for obtaining new jobs. HRDC research shows that 30.7 percent immigrant families are poor, compared to 13.2 percent of Canadian families. Whatever the reason, and there are many, it has been stated by HRDC that it takes almost 10 years for most of the immigrant families to overcome their harsh living conditions. There is no need to emphasize that stress of immigration does not only have an impact on parents but on children as well. According to this one might expect that the mental health of immigrant and refugee children would be negatively affected. If so, than the future of these children would be affected as well, their school performance, and their overall success in life.

According to Beiser et al. (1998) poor family conditions do have a negative impact on the mental health of Canadian children. However, there is evidence, contrary to expectations that immigrant children are at least as healthy as native- borne children and often out-perform them in school. Even

though immigrant families are poorer and live in more adverse living conditions, their children on the other hand, had lower rates of mental health problems than the children in the national population. The three most common mental disorders of childhood are hyperactivity conduct disorder, and emotional disorders. The results of Beiser et al. (1998) study suggest that "only 3.8 percent of immigrant children have severe symptoms of hyperactivity compared to 10.8 percent of Canadian children. Fewer immigrant children, 5.3 percent had emotional disorders compared to other children in Canada 9.1 percent. Canadian children had double the rate of conduct disorders, 13.2 percent, compared to immigrant children 6.7 percent"(p.2).

Minas and Sawyer (2002) in their study with Vietnamese immigrant children found that the prevalence of the psychiatric disorders in this population was not significantly different from that found in a general national sample. It appears that immigrant children after the adaptation period do better in school than native-born Canadians.

Rousseau and Drapeau (2000) in their study with Cambodian adolescents found that the relationship between the emotional problems and school achievement was not as significant as one would expect. However, they also said that "certain pre and post migration variables, particularly trauma experienced in the homeland, seem to be associated with the academic achievement of some refugees" (p.243).
Nevertheless, all children are affected by poor family conditions, effect of immigration and by the adaptation process in a new environment. But, what

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protects immigrant and refugee children from being susceptible and from exhibiting more mental health and school problems seems to be a positive family environment, societal acceptance of immigrants and refugees, and various school and community based prevention programs.

Minas and Sawyer (2002) stated that the main factors that had an impact on immigrants' and refugees' well-being are: "the capacity to accept immigrants and refugees from all over the world, to integrate new arrivals into a general harmonious and well-functioning multicultural society, to create the conditions necessary for refugees to recover from trauma, and to provide an environment that is conducive to normal development, especially in children and adolescence" (p.2).

Kataoka, Stein, Jaycox, Wong, Escudero, Tu, Zaragoza, and Fink (2003) in their study with Latino immigrant children found that school based intervention programs demonstrated modest improvements in symptoms of post traumatic stress disorders and depression among immigrant Latino children. These programs included relaxation training, social problem solving, and writing and drawing exercises.

Structured art programs can, according to Weitz (1996) provide "structured, supportive, and supervised environment for processing emotions and feelings, identifying strengths and assets, and examining issues related to identity, communication, relationship, and anxieties about the future"(p.10). In a study done by the President's Committee on Arts and Humanities, Weitz (1996) reported that arts programs for at-risk youth helped young immigrants

and refugees improve in many areas. These programs helped them increase their interpersonal skills, such as appropriate expression of anger. Communication with peers and adults, and children's attitudes towards school improved as well as their self-esteem and self-efficacy.

Immigrant and refugee children start their new life in Canada (as well as anywhere else) disadvantaged. This is for many of them temporary conditions. However, these conditions could harm their development, school performance and could cause mental health to deteriorate. Different programs, either within a school system or within a broader community can help immigrant and refugee children to progress and pass this transitional period with more ease. The benefits will eventually pay off to both immigrants and refugees and to society in general.

Art therapy and creative expression in schools

Art therapy is becoming more visible to a larger population and more and more people are acquainted with its basic premises. Somehow art therapists manage to find jobs in different clinical and community settings, hospitals, prisons, and many other facilities. However, there is so much more to be done for art therapy to become recognized by mainstream mental health professionals. One area where a lot could be done and where art therapy is almost non-existent is an educational setting - the school. Considering that the child, after the family circle, spends most of his/her time at school, there is no

need to state how important it is to include creative art therapy expression in this segment of the child's life.

Literature about the use of art therapy in schools and educational settings is scarce and it is my impression that art therapists are rather reluctant to seek for employment at schools. The reverse is also true. Schools are reluctant to offer jobs to art therapists. The genesis of this dispute is not within the scope of this paper. Some of those who are fortunate to obtain employment in schools are very often, according to Wengrower (2001), required to do and perform odd jobs and tasks, some of them being art teachers, and school class reorganizers and observers. In my opinion this statement applies to art therapists who practice in both Canada and The USA.

Wengrower (2001) insisted that there was a "need for an encounter between the culture of education and the culture of therapy"(p.113). Wengrower (2001) also stated that art therapy in school could have a preventative function simply because many children who would benefit from therapy do not receive the service. Hospitals' programs for children and youth are overloaded and the waiting lists to get the service are several years long. There is no need to say that having art therapy services in educational settings would help those who need it here and now. Wengrower (2001) said that art therapy in educational settings could make a great impact on children's lives due to the following: "Expression through art is an activity that has social value and is socially acceptable and therefore therapy based on such activity is less stigmatizing"(p.114). It is well known that creativity involves many aspects of

human personality and as such "employ's one's entire personality, employing emotional, cognitive, and motorical skills; it therefore meets the multidimensional needs of special education pupils, such as children with learning disabilities, mental impairments, and/or emotional and behavioral problems"(Wengrower, 2001, p.114).

Drewes (2001) who wrote and talked about play therapy in educational settings argued that play therapy in school settings can have both preventative and therapeutic functions. This could be easily translated into art therapy and I found that the reasons for introducing play therapy in school settings are very similar, if not the same, for implementing art therapy into schools. The reasons according to Drewes (2001) can be summarized as follows: more children could be helped this way as the outside services are very often inaccessible to a larger population of children; professionals who already are employed by schools could be asked for additional help if needed; access to children's families would be easier and the families could be brought in as a part of the treatment; through art, children would be able to express their inner state of being easier; because the child is already in school he or she is familiar with the school's facilities and personnel which lessens an anxiety level; organization of children's time would be easier as the children are at school for a long time; teachers could be a part of the process and a great source of information about the children and their families; the multidisciplinary approach could be utilized in one setting as there are many stuff members that could get involved and help children reach their full potential.

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In those educational settings where art therapy programs exist, success is, according to Sit (1996), who worked with Chinese immigrant children, guaranteed. Both the children and their parents were pleased with the benefits of creative art therapy. According to Sit (1996), they saw it as a non-threatening approach as opposed to traditional verbal therapies- as the Chinese value creative expression more than a verbal one. Many children improved academically, which was very important for the parents. Having had the opportunity to express their feelings through art improved the children's self-esteem. Sit (1996) said that "Improvement in self-esteem is essential to the immigrant child's ability to face and overcome the many challenges that they encounter in t heir new environment"(p.75). Sit (1996) also emphasized the importance of the therapeutic relationship between the therapist and the children as well as among the children themselves for their "ability to cope through the transition period"(p.75).

Immigrant and refugee children are an especially vulnerable segment of the school population and modern school-school for the twenty first century should made certain adjustments to best serve this population. School is very often the first link with a host society for these children. Bush (1997) insisted that art therapists in schools could rise to the challenge by "upgrading programs designed to assist youngsters at risk" and added that "art therapy can help youngsters to better understand themselves and how they function as individuals an d as apart of a family or group system. Art expression, spurred by the aims of art therapy, lends itself well to analysis and as result to

individual adjustment to life" (p.16). Bush (1997) was a huge supporter and protector of art therapy in school and insisted that "art therapy in school setting can offer children the opportunity to work trough obstacles that are impending their educational progress. It can facilitate appropriate social behavior and promote healthy affective development, maximize social and academic potential" (p.16).

Art therapists in school settings do perform a variety of tasks and are assigned different duties. Sometimes the job description of an art therapist in a school setting is not quite clear and many art therapists, in order to maintain their jobs, take on roles of art teachers and educators, teacher assistants and reorganizers and observers in a classroom. However, in order to make our profession more respected by other professionals who work in schools Bush (1997) suggested the following job description of a school art therapist. An Art Therapist in school:

> plans, organizes, and develops an art therapy program for the
> individually assessed special emotional needs of students from
> preschool through grade twelve; administers art therapy, provides
> documented assessments and follow-up interpretive conferences, and
> reports to interdisciplinary treatment teams; designs an individualized
> treatment plan for each student based upon information from the art
> therapy procedure and from the student's case history, reflecting the
> student's emotional and cognitive levels of functioning; caries out
> treatment plan by providing individual and small group art therapy

services; assesses and documents the progress of students in art therapy; participates in meetings with interdisciplinary teams, collaborating with significant participants involved in case management; meets with parents when possible; conducts in-service lectures, workshops, and presentations, and serves as a resource person to the staff regarding therapeutic intervention; performs administrative tasks, such as maintaining records, ordering materials and equipment, requisitioning supplies, and organizing an art therapy room; performs other assigned duties as required by the school program" (p.45).

In my opinion this description can serve as an excellent starting reference for developing more specific and more suitable programs for our clients and the population we work with. This is even more emphasized and required when working in schools where there is a high concentration of children with different cultural backgrounds.

Refugees and immigrants are a specific segment of the school population and they, in order to adapt easier to the new environment and new culture, deserve a different approach and more involvement on a school part. Rousseau and Heusch (2000) see school as an "acculturation agent" and stated that the role of the school is "to help assimilate new arrivals into the host society while ensuring the children's welfare and development" (p.31). They saw school as a middle ground between family and society at large. Different creative programs that have been developed served exactly that role- the link between home and a new culture. When working with immigrant and refugee children, art therapy and

various programs based on creative expression could do a lot to help those

children better cope with all aspects of immigration.

Chapter 5: Case study

Program Description

In my second year of the Art Therapy program, as apart of my practicum, I was a member of the Creative Expression Children's Intervention team that was designed to implement art therapy techniques in welcoming class for immigrant/ refugee children. Rousseau, Lacroix, Bagilishya, and Heusch have developed the Program inspired by art therapy techniques. The purpose of the Program was to intervene with immigrant and refugee children and to promote creative expression. The description of the Program and its objectives is taken from the work done by Rousseau, Lacroix, Bagilishya, and Heusch (2003) as well as from the Park Extension and Youth Organization's (PEYO) proposal.

The Creative Expression Children's Intervention Program has been developed to intervene with immigrant and refugee children between the ages 6 and 12 with the following objectives in mind:

-to allow immigrant children to express their feelings through art allowing them to integrate more fully into the school system,

-to give immigrant children an opportunity to tell their own stories and validate their own culture and their own heroes,

-to show immigrant children how to deal with conflict in their school, community and family in non- violent ways, and

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-to break the isolation and the loneliness of immigrant children as they first arrive in their new school (PEYO's proposal).

This program was implemented in one of the welcoming English speaking classes in Montreal's public school during the period from January 2003 to April 2003. Welcoming classes are classes designed to integrate newly arrived immigrant and refugee children into Quebec's public school system. Most of the children in this class were from low socio-economic status and of south Asian descent (Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh).

The program, as stated by Rousseau, et al. (2003), "was designed for welcoming classes, as an attempt to bridge the gaps between home and school, past and present" (p. 4). The first phase of the program consisted of the activity "The Trip." The second phase consisted of the activity called "Working with Myths" and the third phase of the program was "Memory Patchwork."

Working with Myths

In this phase the storyteller relates a myth that involves a trip, its problems and the possibility of overcoming them. The myth that deals with the dangers and fears within us, and strategies for controlling them was also introduced to the children in this phase. The children were asked to draw and talk about a part of the stories that caught their attention. They were allowed to change or continue the story. In these two activities the children were given a metaphoric framework that could help them express and discuss their own

experiences directly or indirectly. The goals of the activities were the assimilation of past experiences, discussion of adaptive strategies, and establishment of links between past and future, and appreciation of the wisdom of minority culture.

The Trip

The children drew pictures about migrating characters they have chosen, and commented on them to the rest of the class. There were four stages of this activity (Rousseau, et al., 2003): "(1) life in the character's homeland before the trip; (2) the journey itself; (3) arrival in the new land; and (4) the character's future" (p.32). The goal of this activity was to prompt the children to work through their experience using their imaginary worlds, allowing them to distance themselves from their experiences by choosing a protagonist with whom they do not necessarily identify to a large extent. The aspect touched upon was the same as those in the work with myths, but this part demanded greater personal input from the child.

The Memory Patchwork

In this phase the children were asked to illustrate and tell the stories from their homelands that their parents or grandparents have told them. After this they were required to put their drawings together to make a mural and discussed it. The purpose of these two activities were to create and reinforce a dialogue between children and their parents about positive aspects of their

past, bridge the gap between home and school, and foster appreciation of the children's different cultures.

Twenty-seven children participated in this project. Sessions were held once per week for twelve weeks. Each session would start with ten-minute visual presentation and a story told by a storyteller who was a part of the team. After this, children were asked to draw by themselves using different art materials and supplies provided by art therapists, also members of the team. The final portion of the session was reserved for children telling about their arts and their stories.

My role as an art therapy intern was to supervise the use of graphic tools by children, observe the art making process and offer help in the use of the art materials to facilitate free expression and creation.

Case study

Identification of a participant

The following case study presents a 9-year-old boy who was involved, among twenty-six other children, in the Creative Expression Children's Intervention Program during the period from January 2003 to April 2003. The program inspired by art therapy techniques has been developed to intervene with immigrant and refugee children to promote a creative expression.

The criteria for choosing this particular boy was based on my personal observation of the child, his readiness to participate in class activities, his engagement in art production as well as his verbal description of it. What was eye catching about this boy was his aggressive behavior in the class, aggressive vocabulary that he used to address other children and his uninhibited openness about it. He would make comments about other children's work that were not always nice and would often tease others.

Arman (pseudonym) is a nine-year-old boy who lives with his parents and four other siblings. He has two older brothers with whom he does not get along very well. He attended third grade in one of the city's English schools. His parents came to Canada from India. Even though Arman was born in Canada, he considered himself to be, as he stated: "an Indian, spoke Indian and practiced Indian religion". When I first met Arman he appeared to be very talkative, outgoing and cooperative. He was confident about his abilities and would engage in art relatively easily. In my conversation with his third grade teacher I learned that Arman was very active and often enjoyed helping other

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children. He was average in his school activities. The teacher also stated that Arman was not always respectful to others, and would tease children making mean comments about their work.

Before our first session all the children made and decorated their portfolios. Arman's portfolio (figure 1) depicts a person whom he named John. John stands on the top of a green pyramid like shape ready, to jump on a "green guy." When talking about the picture Arman said that the green guy was scared for his life because John (black figure) could jump on him. The green guy did not want to die. The green pointy pyramid represents a spider web. Arman was able, even before the program started, to express the aggressive side of himself. The aggressiveness is depicted with the pointy, sharp pyramid, as well as with the relationship between two characters. It is interesting to notice that Arman had chosen an Anglophone name for the black character, the potential attacker, suggesting his fear of the host culture and his own insecurity and vulnerability. The spider web-the pyramid could represent the host culture with its complexity, obstacles and danger. It is also interesting to notice that both characters are represented with unusually small heads that according to Ogdon (1984) in children's drawings could indicate adjusting problems.

In our first class the storyteller, after short relaxation exercise tells a story, a myth about a trip, problems facing the main character, potential danger and possible resolution. The summary of the story has been taken from Rousseau, et al. (2003) and it goes as follows:

Chea Sim is a fisherman who loses his way in his boat and is

stranded in another country. He ends up living with an old man and

woman who treat him as their son. One day, he discovers that he

has special powers. In his new identity, he undertakes a journey of

initiation and must fight to protect a princess and her kingdom. He

uses various strategies to overcome a number of dangers,

including taming a giant and killing a dragon. The memory of his

adoptive parents and of the princess helps him to face adversity,

and in the end he triumphs (p.6).

The story has been told over two consecutive sessions. Inspired by the

story, which he liked very much, Arman painted a picture using watercolors

(figure 2). When describing the picture Arman said that the guy whom he

named John again, a small figure of a person hidden in the wave, helped the

guy on the boat to "come to the world." Thanks to John, the guy on the boat

becomes a king who after that found his mother and his father. And here again

Arman uses the typical English male name for a guy who is, in this case, a

rescuer. This could suggest that Arman identifies with the hero. The host

country appears to be represented by a big wave coming from the left,

threatening to submerge the boat and the person on it. At the same time there

is a positive force in it, represented by the rescuer. In this picture Arman it

seems, struggles with his identity issues. The flag on the boat as stated by

Rousseau and Heusch (2000), often represents them. However, the flag is not

a recognizable one, but rather a very indistinctive one. That could also

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indicate identity confusion. Another indicator that the identity issues are a central theme in this picture according to Rousseau and Heusch (2000) is Arman's use of the impersonal form "he" in his narrative.

The aggressiveness in the first picture represented by sharp forms and dark, dim colors is even more emphasized in the second picture (figure 3). Jerky lines, pointy contours, thunder and the clouds as well as the narrative that goes with the picture, all indicate, according to Ogdon (1984), hostility, impulsive acting-out tendencies and possible anxiety. Arman was very excited to tell the story which he accompanied with very elaborate facial expressions and grimaces. The story is as follows:" Someone stabbed a dragon in the back. The dragon had eaten all the pigs and was just about to eat the queen and other animals. However, when he went inside, the mysterious man shoot him with a sword."

Here again, Arman uses impersonal forms to tell his story. He also uses a non-human imaginary character to deal with his anger allowing himself to express it on paper. As stated by Rousseau and Heusch (2000) "allowing children to choose an imaginary character, even a nonhuman one, gives them a means of distancing themselves from a traumatic situation...or a family conflict" (p.39). It is interesting that in his picture (figure 2) Arman had chosen a human figure to represent himself, while in figure 3, he turned into an angry dragon. This is not uncommon among immigrant and refugee children and Rousseau and Heusch (2000) said that "the complexity of identity construction sometimes translates into difficulty in identifying with a single character"(p.39).

When further describing his picture Arman said that the black patch coming from the dragon's mouth was fire. However, the black color Arman linked with anger and said that when he was angry he "came" black. It seems to me that his anger is associated with the unknown. As we can see from the picture, the dragon is just about to enter into the castle that looks rather frightening with its gray walls and spiky towers. Also there is this mysterious man who stabbed the dragon when he came in. The unknown which is the castle, which is a new country, makes him frightened at the same time, and because he is faced with his fears the only way for Arman to express it is anger. He also added that his older brother makes him angry. In this second picture Arman introduced his family into the conflict.

After the introductory part, when the storyteller told a story (myth of the origin of kites-first part) that dealt with dangers and fears within us and about the strategies for controlling them, children drew and talked about their drawings. Arman used watercolors, the medium that he was comfortable with. He painted (figure 4) a blue see and a big wave similar to his second picture. This time the wave is not as big and not as frightening. There is not a big, dark cloud this time in this picture. The colors in this picture are brighter and more vivid. A flag, still undefined, is reappearing again He again uses a boat and two characters to tell his story. Arman talked about his picture a dream, and said that there was a queen running away from the monster. The monster in the picture appears to be a king, a person with a crown on his head. The boat and the king were coming from the left side of the painting and if we look at the

map of the world it is obvious that in order to come from India to Canada you have to travel from the right side to the left. If so, than one could think that this picture represents his past or the past of his parents chasing him, from which he wanted to escape. The queen on the other side was carrying a big bag on her back and is legless, without a stable base and with a burden? This dream/ picture was a scary one for Arman. However, he insisted that he liked scary dreams. Arman's dream ends when a man kills the monster and the queen saves the village. He also said that: "From this point they put the dream in the cupboard." Whatever the dream and whatever the conflict was in this picture, it appeared that Arman resolved it and in the safetiness of the classroom, he managed to control it and put it in a contained place. If the dream was his past, than it seems that Arman dealt with it using creative ways of expression accompanied by verbal explanations.

It seems that the next picture (figure 5) marks the beginning of an exploration of more personal issues located in present time. The picture depicts the guy with red hair, a fifteen-year-old boy who ran away from home. Arman said that the redheaded boy liked killing others for fun but in doing so he got killed by a volcano. The boy outside of the volcano is the older eighteen-year-old boy who also likes killing. Killing and violence of any kind has been mentioned several times by Arman who claims that making people suffer could be fun. He also added that scary things make him happy. There is an indication that this picture "talks" about brothers' rivalry. Arman who lives with several siblings has two older brothers and there is an ongoing conflict

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between them. They, the brothers very often tease Arman who in turn thinks of ways to get back at them. A volcano that killed the guy, who wanted to kill others, sanctions, metaphorically speaking, violent and aggressive feelings depicted in this picture. That possibly indicates that a certain degree of maturity is present in Arman's actions and thoughts. He is aware that any bad behavior or act that could harm others could and will be eventually sanctioned. The volcano also has a protective role in this picture as it contains a person inside and at the same time protects the boy who is inside from the outside threat. The burning read hair is a repetitious element, a sort of a continuation from the previous image where a running queen had red hair. This image will resurrect several more times in Arman's art. Ogdon (1984) suggested that human hair, treated unusually, could represent aggressive assaultive tendencies.

Arman used the following session to tell me about himself through the image (figure 6) of a car and a race driver. The race driver is a fifteen-year old boy who likes boxing, motorcycles, and videogames. Indeed the image of the car is borrowed from one of the many popular videogames available. As a product of the North American culture these videogames could be seen as metaphors in children's art and belonging to as, stated by Rousseau, et al. (2003), "host country myths, which incorporated symbols and heroes of the dominant culture of the host country propagated chiefly by television (Walt Disney or comic-book heroes and characters). These mythic elements represent North America (and, to some extant, global) popular culture"(p.6).

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Beside the host country myths, Rousseau, et al. (2003) said that there are two other types. They are homeland myths and stimulus myths. The first ones "included traditional or modern symbols of the culture or history of the homeland and served as identity referents and often bore a meaning that established continuity with the family's past" (p.5). The second ones, the stimulus myths were told in class. They "included various elements (hero, setting, or events) that could be taken up by children for use in their own narratives or to illustrate more specific elements. The elements used were recognizable, but they had been transformed by the children by their imagination" (p.5).

This session, the children were asked to choose a character and to draw a picture about him/her or it. In his next (figure 7) painting Arman once again uses the popular North American character, this time James Bond. This is how he explains his picture: "The guy with red is killed by this sword that sucks everything in. He did something bad lied a lot of times and burned down some villages and houses and stuff. The sword sucked in his brain. The sword is magical, it sucks anything that touches." Arman also wrote something in, as he said, secret language. The content of the message is: "'I am going to kill you." Once again there is the violent and aggressive feeling dominating in the picture. This time there is a reason and it is very clear. Someone lied to someone about something. So certain amount of shame is present as well. It seems that Arman worked through his personal experiences using an imaginary character. It is not quite clear weather or not Arman identifies with

any of these two characters, and if so, which one he identifies with. I am assuming that the guy who lied represents Arman and that this is something that frightens him. Personal input is greater in this picture than in previous ones.

For this session, children were asked to bring stories from their homes to the class. First they told stories that their parents and grandparents had told them, and then they illustrated either their own stories or someone else's story. Arman was very excited about his story and was eager to tell it in front of the class. He even wrote his story on a piece of paper. However, his story sounded much better than it does as it is written. This is a verbatim transcript of his story (figure 8).

" Once upon a man was a sheep keeper he brag the sheep up the hill to feed the sheep and he liked to make joke every time he made a joke he called out help, help a tiger and all the people came with knife and ax and fire all the time he made that joke and when the real tiger came he called help help but no one came. The moral is never to lie."

This story is very well known in many cultures. It has universal appeal and flavour. In my culture, Eastern European one, there is a similar story with the same moral and plot. The characters might be a bit different as in my country they are not tigers. Instead, wolves are the threat to the sheep.

Interestingly enough Arman had chosen the story about the lying and getting in trouble because of it. In his previous drawing (figure 7), he in a way announced the theme of lying. It is obvious that Arman uses the creative

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space and expression to further discuss and talk about personal concerns. He also painted a picture (figure 9) about the story he has told the class. The story has been, according to Arman passed from his great grandfather to his grand father, to his father, to son, to school all the way from India. He also told me that he knew many stories from India.

The picture about his story was the first one that Arman titled which could suggest the importance of the picture for Arman. The title he gave the picture was "The man who lied." After the series of pictures with aggressive content and images this picture is a real refreshment in his repertoire. There are still some jerky, aggressive paint strokes. However, they are very well contained in green smooth lines of the "hills of India" as he said. The Shepard is crying for help, looking to the right where the Niagara Falls, the blue part, is placed. In this picture Arman incorporated two worlds: one being the old-home of his parents, and the new one, Canada, the country where he was born and where he lives. Arman also threw the gun into the Niagara Falls. With this symbolic act, it appears he repressed some of his anger and frustration as he managed to tell the story about some deep personal concerns. He not only was able to tell the story but also to write and to paint it. The Shepard has a recognizable appearance, the image that Arman repeated several times in his art. It is a character with red burning hair that could also look like a crown. In this picture the character is holding onto an old walking stick and a gun. The old walking stick is a representative of the old world, an old system and values that he inherited from his ancestors. The gun

represents a new, present, and possibly future life as well. And because it is frightening and unpredictable the gun is at the same time a protection from all the bad and evil, from all the monsters and bad dreams.

Going further away from the aggressive and violent imagery has advanced in the last two classes. First, after the story about the peacock and the swan Arman choose to paint (figure 10) a swan's feather. The story is about two beautiful birds, a swan and a peacock. They are both beautiful in appearances but still different. Both birds are very territorial and would not allow strangers onto their piece of land. However, they got into this huge fight and they both died at the end. Luckily, the eggs they had laid survived and hatched. The baby swans and peacocks did not know the differences and they became friends. They also lived in the same land. The moral of this story is that people are different in their appearances but deep inside we are all human, flesh and blood. Arman worked very patiently, and devotedly on the painting. Even though the image was a nice one, Arman talked about killing and fighting. He added that the frightening movies with blood and killing were the ones that he liked the most. It turns out that Arman watches numerous Indian action movies that are loaded with violent and aggressive content. Next to the feather Arman added a tree. The tree was without roots that according to Ogdon (1984) could suggest feelings of insecurity and inadequacy.

The last class was one where all the children came together and made a mosaic, putting a drawing of their choice into a mural. Arman was eager to finish his picture and he added a fishpond, a flower, a cloud and a grass

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around his peacock feather and a tree (the figure is missing). However, Arman

did not want to include his drawing into the big picture and said that he did not

know why he painted the picture he did.

Chapter 6: Discussion

Discussion

In his art Arman was able to move from very graphic and aggressive representation to smooth and calm imagery. His drawings and paintings suggest that Arman used art to deal with some personal issues. Through John, the character in his two paintings, Arman moved form being threatened by the unknown, possibly hostile new environment, to accepting it and seeing it as available help. Identity issues were also brought into account, which are represented by using "external marks of identity" (Rousseau and Heusch, 2000, p.38).

Arman moves from dealing with his aggressiveness and identity issues to more personal ones, situated in the present time. His conflicts with his brother are represented both graphically through art and verbally using narratives. Brothers' rivalry, lying and getting in trouble because of it, dominated Arman's work. He used different visual references such as a name (John), a character (James Bond) and objects (racing car) from popular western culture to just for a moment in the safety of art, get away from his problems. As Rousseau and Heusch (2000) stated "allowing children to choose an imaginary character, even a nonhuman one, gives them means of distancing themselves from traumatic situation"(p.39).

The story Arman told in front of the class is a traditional one, borrowed from his native India. It is also a universal one as it can be found in many cultures. The use of the story serves many purposes and as Rousseau and

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Heusch (2000) suggested "children make use of a wide variety of mythic referents, borrowed chiefly from the home culture...to represent their experiences. Symbolic and mythic referents frequently help children represent the culture gap between home and school, past and present"(p.9.).

If we look at Arman's art we can notice that there are several themes that are dominant. Visual representation, complemented with his narrative, reveals that the issues Arman tried to deal with are his family relationships and concerns as well as the story from his native country. This corresponds to what Rousseau and Heusch (2000) had found in their study with refugee children. They suggested that "three main themes run through the children's drawings and stories (1) family, which represents continuity of attachments and values; (2) friends, which make up the human environment in the host country; and (3) myths of homeland, which seem to provide a basic framework on which to build experiences and emotions" (Rousseau and Heusch, 2000, p.39).

Conclusion

The Creative Program organized and implemented in class, it seems, formed a transitional space for Arman to express his feelings and concerns freely and openly. Winnicott (1971/2001) stressed that creativity, which is very important for a child's healthy development provided ways to deal and cope with the demands of real life. In this case, creative expression becomes the place that is neither outside nor inside but somewhere in between. This

transitional space can serve as a safe place for immigrant children to reenact past experiences in less painful ways through art. The classroom and art produced within this frame became this in between area. In this neither here nor there place Arman was able, in my opinion to accept his role and status here and now and was also successful in managing the fears and concerns of everyday life.

Winnicott (1971/2001) made a connection between transitional phenomena and cultural life and said that "the term cultural experience is an extension of the idea of transitional phenomena and of play …The accent indeed is on experience. In using the word culture I am thinking of the inherited tradition"(p.99).

It is important to stay in touch with one's own culture and tradition, as it seems to be a prerequisite for healthy development. Winnicott (1971/2001) further stated that "It is these cultural experiences that provide the continuity in the human race that transcends personal existence" (p.100). Arman showed through his art expression, and this is my opinion as well, that he is in touch with his culture and that he made use of transitional space created in a school system.

However, utilizing art therapy/creative expression in the school's setting has its limitations. The program is highly dependent on the principle's good will and his/ her approval for implementing the program into a highly structured class schedule. Other school staff members very often interrupt creative sessions, which could create feelings of insecurity among the students. The

financial limitations are to be considered as well, because the art supplies could be costly. Beside these limitations, when working in the school setting, I can only encourage art therapists to try and use creative expression/ art therapy in their work with immigrant/ refugee children. For me it was a unique professional experience.

Art therapy and creative expression can offer a great and safe avenue for immigrant and refugee children to express themselves, to deal with their struggles, fears, concerns and to use it to make those connections that one very often looses when for whatever reason he/she trades one country for another, and replaces one culture with a different one.

And, to finish on a more personal note. Through art I found my long ago lost teddy bear. I think there is hope for everyone who is willing to dive into art of any form. There is a chance that one will find his/ her roots just to keep them grounded, connected and healthy.

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

Figure 5
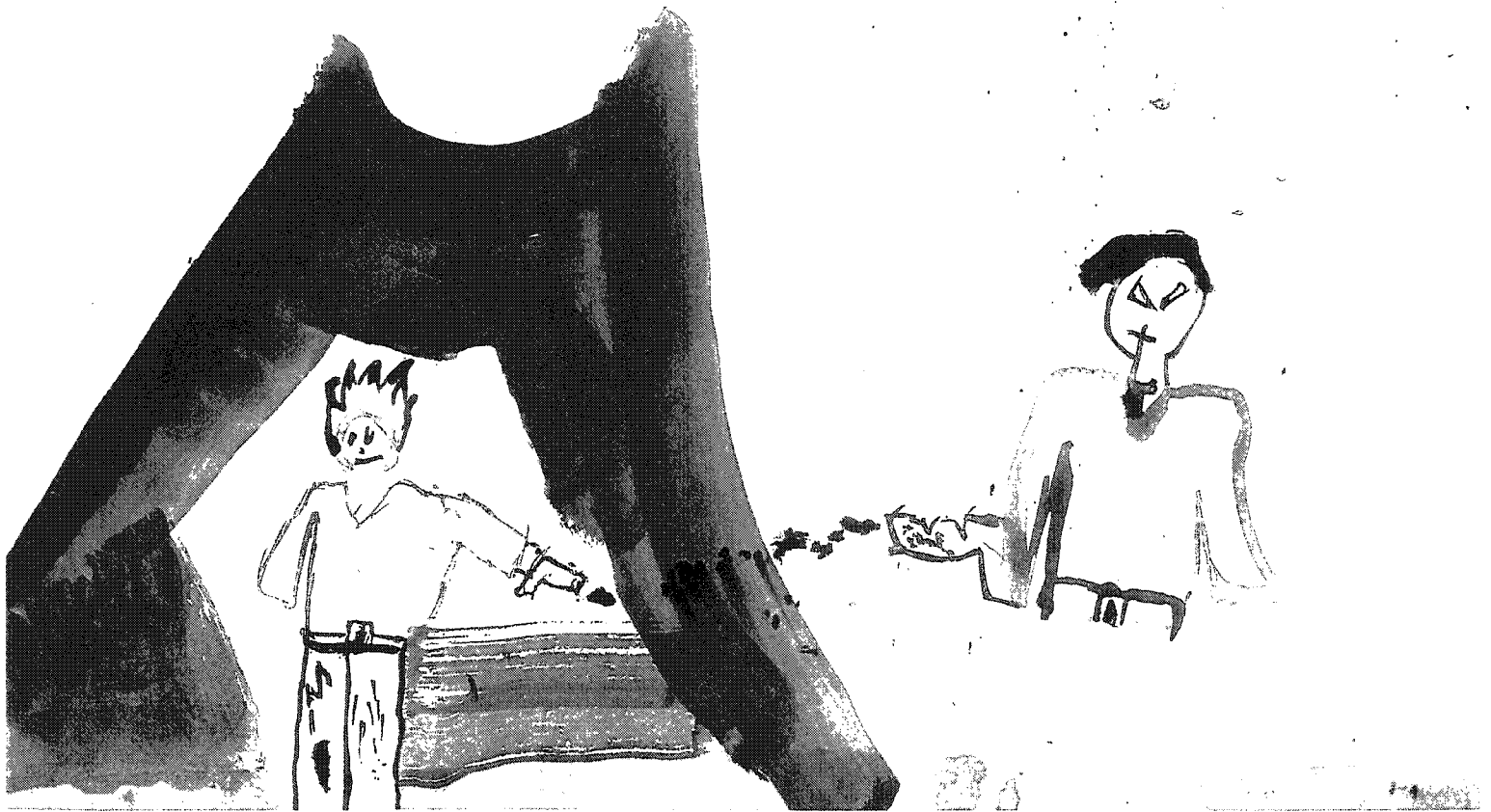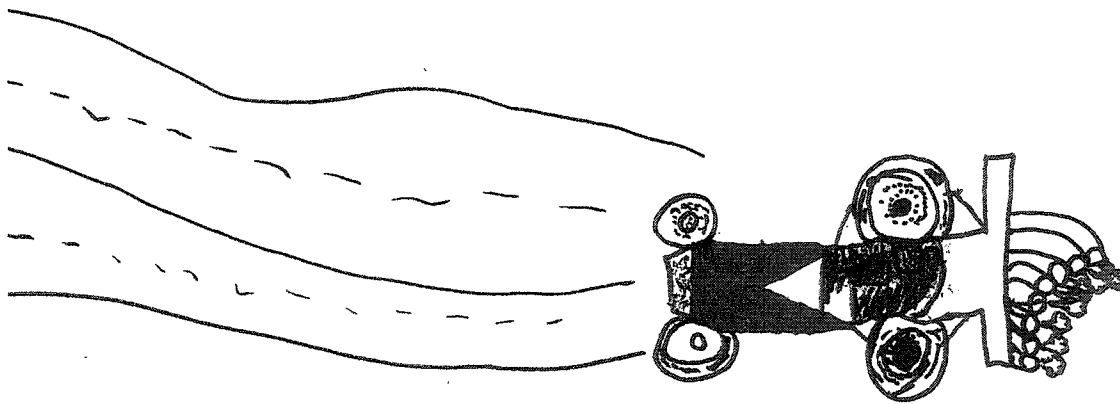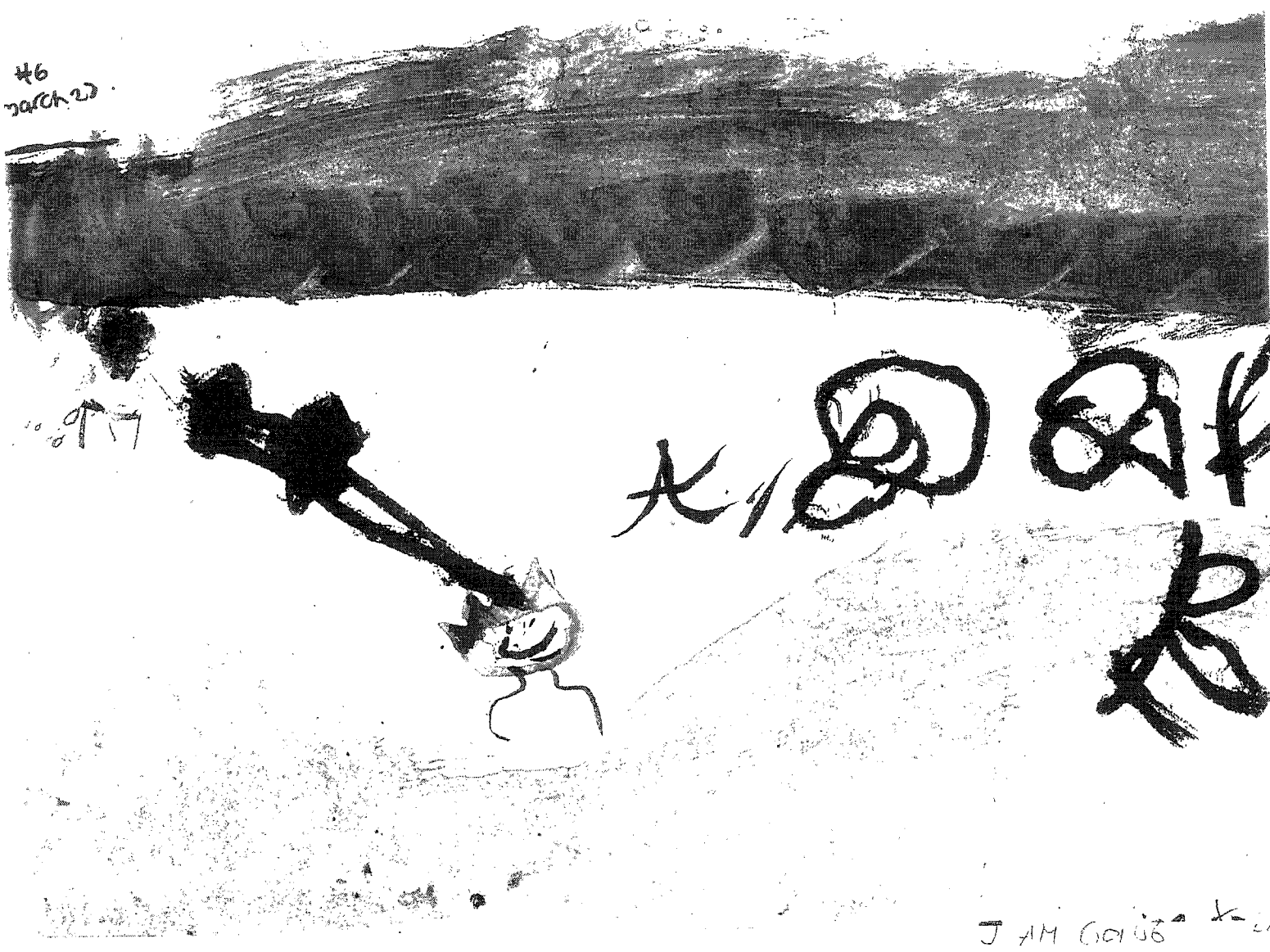
dét. Marc
#5

Figure 6

Figure 7

Once ▮ upone a man
was a sheep keper he
brag the sheep oup
the hill to feed the
shee and the like
to make joke avery
time he made a joke
he cold out ▮▮▮▮
help help a tiger
and all the people
came with knife and ea
and fire all the time
he made that joke
and ▮▮▮▮ when
the reil tiger came
he cald help help

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but no one came.
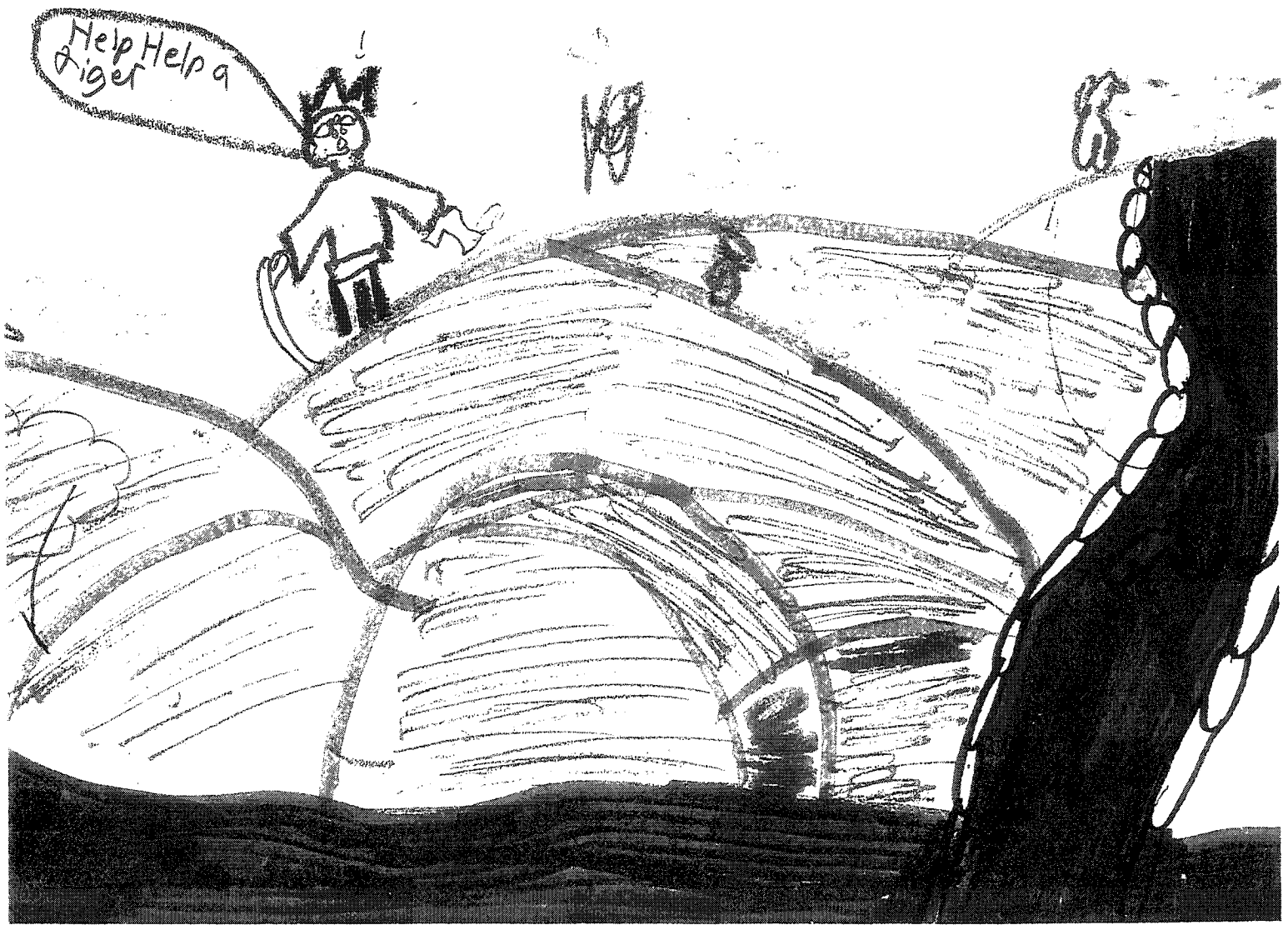
The moral is
neve to lie.

Figure 8

Figure 9

Figure 10

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Appendix

    1. Client Consent Form

Consent Form

Art Therapy research Paper
Art Therapy Student, Branko Kajzer
Concordia University
Montreal

Dear parents,

Your child will be participating in a weekly Expressive Art Program during his winter semester. During these creative classes the art work as well as the verbal explanation of it will be collected for research/Master thesis project purposes. As a student in the Master's Creative Art Therapies Program at Concordia University, I am asking you for permission to look at and write about your child' art products. I am also asking you for the permission to make/take photographs and to utilize and/or publish them for scientific and educational purposes while preserving anonymity.

It is understood that the confidentiality of your child will be respected in every possible way. Neither his name, the name of the institution nor any other identifying information will appear in the research paper. This permission will not cause any personal inconvenience. You can withdraw your child from the research at any time.

Please sign the enclosed consent and return it as soon as possible.

Child's name (please print) _____

Signature of the parent _____ Date

If you have any questions please call_____ at _____
phone number.

Thank you for your kind attention