
Hope Lives in the Heart: Refugee and Immigrant Children's Perceptions of Hope and Hope-Engendering Sources During Early Years of Adjustment

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ABSTRACT

Children's adjustment to resettlement countries is vitally important to future outcomes, yet little attention is given to the role of hope in this process. This research focused on expressions of hope in 10 refugee and immigrant children during early years of resettlement. Using case study methods that employed arts-based data collection, categories were constructed from participants' visual images and associated narratives. Hope in newcomer children was conceptualized as a dynamic enduring trait that is intimately linked to each child's life context. Further, three hope-engendering sources were identified that facilitated an emotional connection to others, to self, and to the environment.

RÉSUMÉ

L'adaptation des enfants aux pays de réinstallation est d'une importance vitale pour les résultats futurs, mais peu d'attention est accordée au rôle de l'espoir dans ce processus. La présente recherche s'est concentrée sur l'expression de l'espoir chez 10 enfants réfugiés et immigrants au début des années de réinstallation. En utilisant des méthodes d'étude de cas se servant de la collecte de données basées sur l'expression artistique, des catégories ont été construites à partir des images des participants et des récits qu'ils y associaient. Chez les enfants nouvellement arrivés, l'espoir a été conceptualisé comme un trait durable et dynamique intimement lié au contexte de vie de chaque enfant. En outre, trois sources génératrices d'espoir ont été identifiées qui facilitent une connexion émotionnelle à autrui, à soi, et à l'environnement.

Despite the presumed importance of hope in the development of children (Erickson, 1982), few service providers such as teachers, counsellors, and social workers consider the need to intentionally engender hope in recently arrived refugee and immigrant children when planning or evaluating services such as English-as-a-Second Language classes, in-school psychosocial programs, or after-school homework clubs. Likewise, little attention has been given to considering hope from the perspective of the children receiving service. Research related to successful outcomes under conditions of adversity has suggested that success encompasses relationships among risks, resources, and contexts (McCubbin, Thompson, & Thompson, 1995; Rutter, 1987). Further, hope is consistently associated with positive adjustment and successful outcomes under a variety of circumstances (Snyder, 2000; Valle, Huebner, & Suldo, 2006). In a review of the correlates of hope that included research on children, Cheaveans, Michael, and Snyder (2005) concluded that "higher hope is virtually always related to more

beneficial outcomes" (p. 127). Hanna (2002) also theorizes that hope is an essential precursor to positive human change.

Refugee and immigrant children in school and community settings bring specific needs resulting from a unique culmination of stressors related to adjustment, language barriers, and possible prior exposure to war-related traumas. In this article we focus on refugee and immigrant children's views of hope and what gives them hope during their early years of adjustment in Canada. This period is often associated with high stress in immigrant and refugee families (Beiser, Dion, Gotowiec, Vu, & Hyman, 1995), and there is a growing recognition of the need for improved services for newcomer children.

Refugee children in particular can be considered at risk for adjustment difficulties due to the various pre-migration circumstances that led to resettlement (Bemak, Chung, & Pedersen, 2003). According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2007), a refugee is an individual who has left their country of origin due to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, political affiliation, or nationality, and, owing to such fear, is unable or unwilling to return. For the purpose of this article, the term "refugee" refers to children who left their home countries with the belief they could not return and who were exposed to war-related violence in the process. To date, there has been little research about how refugee and immigrant children maintain a hopeful outlook on life while negotiating and interpreting their experiences during their early years of adjustment in resettlement countries.

After reviewing literature on newcomer children's adjustment and hope, we discuss the use of creative approaches to engage children in describing personal understandings and sources of hope. Children's descriptions of hope are represented in two parts: as core experiences (the heart of hope) and as sources of hope. These findings are then reflected upon in relation to published literature. Implications for counselling and school psychology practice are then offered.

REFUGEE AND IMMIGRANT CHILDREN'S PSYCHOSOCIAL ADJUSTMENT

Literature on the mental health of refugees and immigrants has grown in the past two decades, with increasing attention paid to the psychosocial adjustment of children in this population (Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007; Kovacev & Shute, 2004). The literature presents a rather inconsistent picture of children's adjustment with much of it pointing to the prevalence of psychopathology (Hodes, 2000; Kinzie & Sack, 2002; Tousignant et al., 1999) and a few studies suggesting equal (Guarnaccia & Lopez, 1998; Munroe-Blum, Boyle, & Offord, 1989) or slightly lower (Harker, 2000) rates of mental health in newcomer children compared to children born in host countries. Other studies have pointed to positive social adjustment in refugee children and youth despite the presence of personal or family trauma exposure and trauma symptoms (Rousseau, Drapeau, & Rahimi, 2003; Sack, Him, & Dickason, 1999). Pre-migration literature focusing on the effects of war on children is heavily weighted toward posttraumatic stress as an outcome

(Berman, 2001). However, studies that employ more ecological or contextualized frameworks show differences in responses to war based on personal factors as well as the nature, type, and duration of exposure to war-related stress (Walton, Nuttal, & Nuttall, 1997). These differences highlight that pre- and post-migration experiences are extremely varied, and that there is a need for more information on what helps children adjust positively to their new home environments.

Pre-migratory conditions, such as exposure to war and lack of personal and family resources, and post-migratory experiences, such as the response of the host country, all contribute to how well children adjust to their new homes (Bemak et al., 2003; Cole, 1998). As such, there is an increased call for research approaches that recognize the interplay between various risk and protective factors that determine successful or difficult outcomes in refugee and immigrant children (Barwick, Beiser, & Edwards, 2002; Cole; Grizenko, 2002; Guarnaccia & Lopez, 1998; MacMullin & Loughry, 2000). While this literature provides a strong argument for contextualized approaches to studying the experiences of children, few studies present these experiences from the children's perspective. Indeed, subjective responses are particularly informative for understanding personal resources that can contribute to positive adjustment.

A Hope Perspective

The field of hope research has grown exponentially over the last 30 years (Elliott, 2005), consistently indicating that hope is associated with positive psychosocial adjustment for people ranging in age from childhood to middle adulthood (Benzein, Saveman, & Norberg, 2000; Cheavens et al., 2005; Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Valle et al., 2006). Definitions of hope are somewhat contested (Nekolaichuck, 2004), with considerably more attention having been given to the study of hope in adults rather than youth.

Erik Erikson (1982) was one of the earliest developmental psychologists to write about hope in children. He theorized that hope is an affective state born of children's early attachments to their caregivers. If children's emotional needs are met, they learn to trust, which gives them the ability to hope. Like Erikson, Smith (1983) maintains that hope is a prerequisite in adolescence for achieving a fulfilled adulthood. Research with youth in a Canadian school setting (Larsen & Larsen, 2004) suggests that youth may experience aspects of hope similar to those found in adults, including (a) engagement in life, (b) seeing good in self, (c) feeling capable, and (d) freedom. Larsen and Larsen conclude that hope appears to be an important and pervasive aspect of self during adolescence. Finally, meta-analytic reviews confirm that hope is an essential aspect of the human change/adjustment process beginning in childhood (Asay & Lambert, 1999). Research further suggests that hope can be learned in childhood and employed across the life span (Snyder, 2005).

Although few studies have specifically examined hope in refugee and immigrant children, the absence of hope or an orientation to the future is reported as a most distressing factor for traumatized children (Goodman, 2004; Terr, 1991; Yule,

1998) and children affected by war (Rosseau, Galbaud du Fort, & Corin, 2002; Walton et al., 1997). Alternatively, studies of hope with children suggest hope to be essential for coping with adversity (Baumann, 1993; Herth, 1998; Hinds, 1988; Turner, 2005) and relevant in the lives of refugee children and youth (Yohani, 2008; Goodman, 2004). In reviewing research on hope and children, several key aspects are evident.

First, children are often able to articulate a personal sense of hope even in the face of serious adversity. For example, in a study of children's hope during homelessness, Herth (1998) found strategies that children used to engender personal hope include connectedness, inner resources, cognitive strategies, energy, and hope objects. Likewise, in a study of the coping methods of unaccompanied refugee youth from Sudan, Goodman (2004) identified the progression from hopelessness to hope as an important factor in supporting the youth. Factors that contributed to hopefulness included the opportunity to migrate to the United States and obtaining independence through education.

Second, hope appears to have distinctively developmental qualities. Researchers suggest adolescent hope tends to be more future-focused than that of younger children (Herth, 1998), while it has a more unfettered quality than that of adult hope (Larsen & Larsen, 2004; Shepard & Marshall, 1999). Third, children appear most capable of describing their experiences of hope using qualitative, arts-based methods such as painting and drawing (Baumann, 1993; Herth), sandplay (Erdem, 2000), and photo-assisted interviews (Parkins, 1997; Turner, 2005). Finally, children's ability to hope contributes strongly to their ability to cope with serious life challenges (Baumann; Hinds, 1988).

RESEARCH APPROACH

In this current project, refugee/immigrant children's perceptions of hope and what leads to hope were explored using a qualitative case study approach (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). Case study methodology guided this study. It is an approach that focuses on a particular phenomenon, provides rich description, and offers new understandings (Merriam). The rich descriptive approach common to case study provides an important means of addressing the complexity of applications in counselling, social work, and education (Donmoyer, 2000). For this same reason, case study is frequently a methodology of choice for the study of hope-focused psychosocial applications (e.g., Harris & Larsen, 2007; Larsen & Stege, *in press*). In the present study, rich descriptions of the participants' hope along with descriptions of hope-focused programming were sought with the aim of gaining new understandings about supporting newcomer children's adjustment to Canada.

Further, case study methodology is composed of in-depth exploration within a single bounded system, often within a program (Stake, 2000). It is flexible in data collection and analysis methods (Merriam, 1998). Within this study, boundaries were clearly defined through intensity sampling (Patton, 2002), meaning that a

rich example of the phenomenon of interest was sought (i.e., hope-focused programming with immigrant and refugee children). As such, this research project was bounded by a focus on a specific community-based early intervention program. Further, creative arts-based methods were used as a platform for interviewing children in a manner that helped them express current experiences in a way that was child-friendly and reduced communication difficulties that could be brought on by age and culture.

Participants

The case unit of study was a group of 10 children (7 girls and 3 boys) between the ages of 8 and 18 years who were involved in a community-based early intervention program in a large city in western Canada. The goal of this psychosocial program was to assist with adjustment to Canada by creating a safe and comforting environment for refugee and immigrant children who have undergone difficult pre- and post-migration experiences. All participants had lived in the country less than four years at the time of the study and were conversant in basic English. All but 3 children originally arrived in Canada as refugees due to armed conflict in their countries of origin. The other 3 participants left their home countries for political and economic reasons. Table 1 provides demographic information on the participants who came from Sierra Leone, Sudan, China, the Philippines, and Iraq. This study was called “The Hope Project” and was conducted during the last 10 weeks of a six-month program for newcomer children at an established agency for newcomers. After sending a letter to all parents explaining the purpose of the Hope Project and the activities involved, we obtained parents’ verbal and written consent with the assistance of cultural brokers/translators to ensure that all consent was well informed. Finally, child participants’ assent was individually obtained by describing the program and the research project verbally to each child in simple English. During this initial description, the child was given an open opportunity to ask questions. Further, each child was reminded that he or she could ask questions at any time during the project and could change his or her mind about participating in the research at any point.

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of Research Participants

Age (years)	Females	Males	Sibling groups	Single parent	Without parent	Refugee	Immigrant
8–12 (<i>N</i> = 4)	4	0	1	3	0	4	0
13–18 (<i>N</i> = 6)	3	3	0	1	1	3	3

Data Collection and Analysis

For this research, children participated in two group interviews about hope and their life experiences followed by a series of arts-based workshops (that served as data collection activities) over a period of 10 weeks. Activities included making a collage, a story-quilt-making activity, and photography, all of which required the children to explore personal descriptions of hope and what helped them feel hopeful. Following the collage and quilt-making activities, children were asked to write or dictate to the researcher what their visual images were about, to ensure that the children's meanings of the images were more effectively understood by the researchers (Cronin, 1998; English, 1988).

For the photography activities, each child was given a disposable camera with instructions to take photographs of "things that describe hope to you" and "what makes you hopeful." Semi-structured photo-assisted interviews (approximately 45 minutes) were subsequently conducted with each child, during which they were asked to explain how each image said something about hope and made them feel hopeful (Miller & Happell, 2006). In summary, data included (a) participants' written descriptions of the story-quilt-making activity, drawings, and collages; (b) written transcripts from individual photo-assisted interviews; and (c) written transcripts from two group interviews.

Qualitative case studies typically utilize data collection and analysis methods from other research methods (Stake, 1995). In this project, data collection and analysis were conducted concurrently (Bassey, 1999). Using Colaizzi (1978) as a guide in analysis, transcripts of group interviews, photo-assisted interviews, and written descriptions of collages and quilt pictures were read and re-read as wholes. This was followed by coding of meaning units within each separate set of texts (i.e., group interviews, photo-assisted interviews, and written descriptions of collages and quilt pictures).

Next, categories were established based on similarity of content in codes. Finally, a cross-case analysis (across all text sources) was made to identify common categories in the study.

Throughout this process memos were used to search for patterns or consistency within certain conditions, both in individuals and across the group. Data collection was discontinued when saturation had been reached whereby no new categories were formed. Two main categories were identified.

A member check was conducted with participants at two follow-up group meetings. At these meetings, a verbal description of the thematic findings were provided to participants. This description was given verbally so that written English would not be a barrier to understanding for the participants. Participants then engaged in a group discussion about whether the research themes fit with their experiences. Group discussion was strong, and it appeared that participants had a clear understanding of the research findings. Trustworthiness was supported as participants confirmed the findings.

FINDINGS

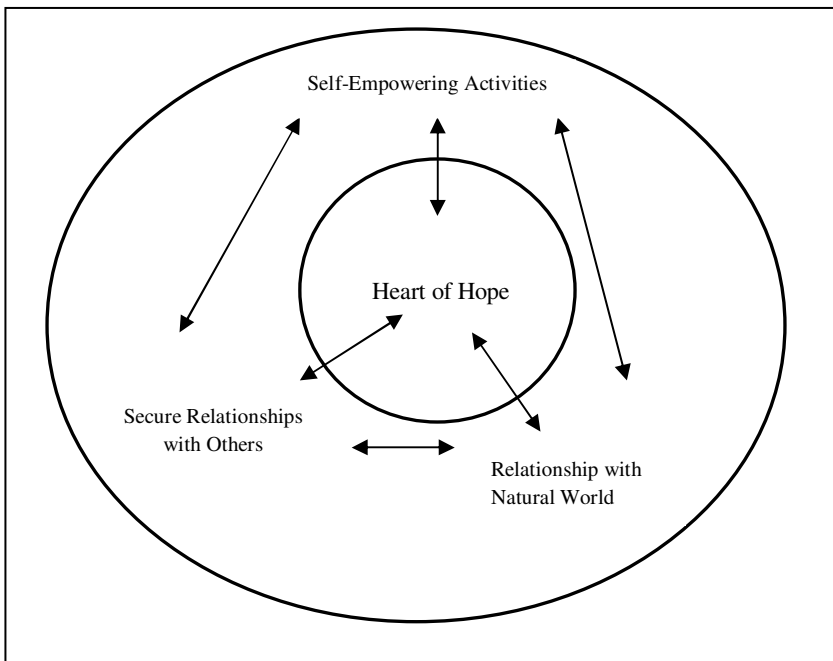
Two categories emerged from the children's description of hope:

1. The heart of hope, as a core experience.
2. Sources of hope, as processes from which children draw hope. Sources of hope were further composed of three subcategories entitled (a) self-empowering activities, (b) secure relationships with important people, and (c) relationship with the natural world.

The Heart of Hope

Children's descriptions of hope as depicted in Figure 1 suggest that hope has two different but related aspects. One part, the *heart of hope*, appeared to be an embodied or core experience of hope. Of the 10 children who participated in the photo-assisted interviews, 9 described hope as being present in their hearts. Children had some difficulty articulating this aspect of hope but were able to relay that it was within them and had an enduring presence: "Hope never goes away" and "It can get bigger and smaller" were common responses. Talking about hope did not diminish areas of stress and difficulty in the children's lives. Children referred to numerous challenges including learning difficulties at school, loneliness, parental unemployment, and even wars in their countries of origin.

Figure 1
Conceptual framework of hope and hope-engendering sources

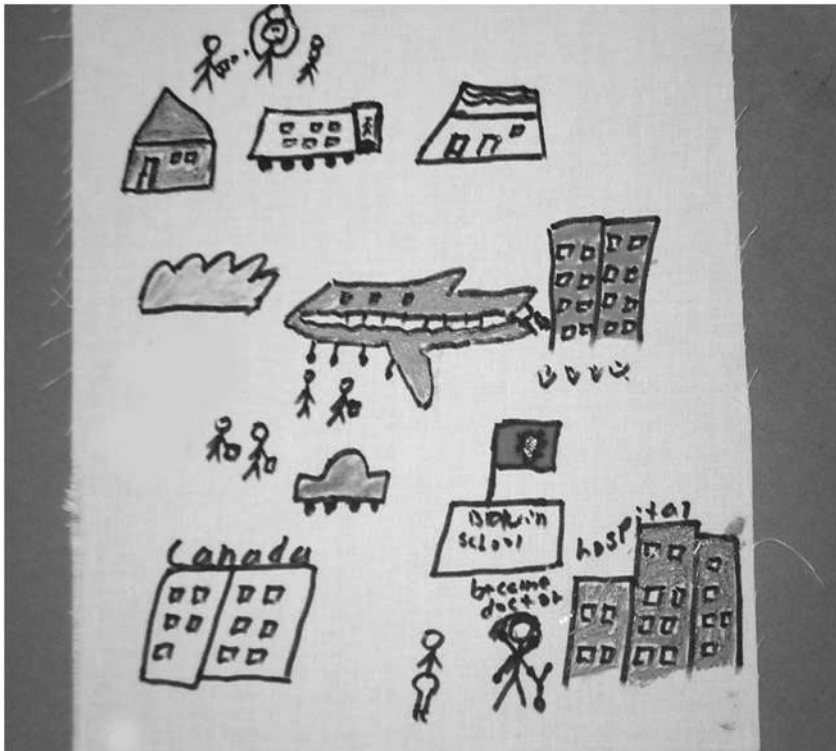


They suggested that hope did not take the struggles away, but instead gave them the ability or motivation to cope. "Hope makes me feel I can do it if I try harder," was one 10-year-old girl's comment regarding difficulties with learning at school. "Even though there is darkness in our lives, hope is like the light side which helps us to face obstacles" was a similar comment from a 17-year-old boy. Thus children indicated that hope was present, that it was an important personal experience, and that it lived in a heartfelt place. The heart of hope is further illustrated in a 14-year-old girl's drawing and story of hope (Figure 2) that involved survival from war. Her story highlights the presence of hope despite experiences of trauma, loss, and displacement:

First I was in Africa and we had a war. They were killing people. Some people were carrying things on their heads like food and clothes. We traveled to XXX. From XXX we flew to Canada. When we arrived, we stayed in a hotel until we could find an apartment. After that, about a month, we went to school. When I finish university, I would like to become a doctor. (14-year-old girl)

Figure 2

Hope story painted on a quilt



Hope-Engendering Sources

Hope-engendering sources, the second main category in this research, are defined here as the processes that engender or enliven the core aspect or heart of hope. One individual hope source (self-empowering activities) and two relational hope sources (people and natural environment) were identified in the children's work (Table 2). As illustrated by arrows in Figure 1, these sources are not independent but are interdependent in the hoping process. All children described activities and experiences within each source that supported a sense of hope, although there were differences in emphasis in the subthemes that appeared to be developmental and contextual. For example, the younger participants did not refer to cognitive processes that involved goal-setting, although goals were articulated by older children. A description of hope-engendering sources follows:

Table 2

Hope-Engendering Sources

Self-empowering activities:
Cognitive activities
Physical activities
Secure relationships with important people:
Reliable relationship presence
Reciprocity
Unconditional support
Relationships with natural world:
Peace and renewal
Supporting life
Interdependence for survival

SELF-EMPOWERING ACTIVITIES

This subcategory encompasses intrapersonal processes (cognitive and physical) that were described as supporting children's hope when it was low and helping children find hope when it seemed hidden. Children described various positive emotions emerging from engaging in these activities including feeling calm, happy, good, safe, and excited. These positive emotions seemed to give the children a sense of success or power that fueled further activity and engagement in their lives.

Cognitive activities. Cognitive activities included the various mental strategies that children described to facilitate experiences of hope for themselves. These included remembering supportive experiences that continue to infuse a sense of hope when recalled:

My hope collage is about my dreams come true. When I was in Grade 3, I had a chance to get up on stage with the hula dancers at my school and I was the lead dancer. After that I have had good hopes of being a dancer ... when I see people that act and sing, I feel hope and they give me lots of future thinking.
(12-year-old girl)

In addition, goal-setting, problem-solving, reflecting, and using symbolism through images and word metaphors were mental strategies described by participants. For example, an 18-year-old boy drew a United Nations food aid truck to symbolize and reflect on his memory of a personal hope story amidst stressful circumstances in a refugee camp. Likewise, a 14-year-old boy talked about a photo of a wall hanging given to him by his grandfather that contained ancient words of wisdom to encourage a person to work hard. Others described hope in relation to personal aspirations and goals as captured by this young girl:

That one [gesturing to photo of herself at school] I hope I grow up happy and an important person and have a good job anywhere I go. I hope I don't be enemies with people. Just like that. And I wish I finish my college and education. (13-year-old girl)

Physical activities. Physical activities were divided into energizing and calming activities based on each child's descriptions of the activity and its perceived effect. Examples of calming activities included lighting a candle, singing, and listening to music. One 13-year-old girl described lighting a candle to comfort herself when scared, and a 14-year-old talked about drinking cool liquids to calm herself. An 11-year-old girl described holding stuffed animals to comfort her when scared or unhappy, especially at night:

[T]hat one [pointing to photo of stuffed animals] makes me feel hopeful because I like teddy bears and sometimes when I am scared they keep me warm and stuff. And like umm ... at night time because I don't really sleep with the light off. (11-year-old girl)

Physically energizing activities included dancing, riding a bike, and participating in sports such as soccer and basketball. A 9-year-old girl described her enjoyment of riding her bicycle to school as "fun, safe, and soft" and "hope is like that." The physical experiences themselves were viewed as either supporting hope or metaphors for hope.

SECURE RELATIONSHIPS WITH IMPORTANT PEOPLE

This source of hope is embedded in the children's interactions with people who are important to them. It is captured in a 10-year-old female participant's observation that "If you feel very sad and someone cares for you and makes you feel happy, that means they are giving you hope in your life." It became clear throughout this study that adults and peers (friends and siblings) with whom the children had secure relationships were important sources of hope. Children's descriptions of how or why a particular person made them feel hopeful revealed that these secure relationships often involved a perceived sense of presence, togetherness, and support.

Reliable relationship presence. The importance of adults, siblings, and peers being present or "there for me" when needed was described by all children in this study. Photographs from children of single-parent families often portrayed mothers, with

descriptions of them being the most important source of hope because of their availability when needed. Likewise, teachers at school and program staff who were constantly present for assistance were viewed as sources of hope:

But I really like her [teacher] because she is really nice. She always helps me when I need it. Like when we go for break she is still there if I need help. (14-year-old girl)

Reciprocity. Reciprocity was reflected in children's descriptions of hope in relation to playing, laughing, and having fun with peers (siblings, friends, and cousins). These relationships were described as reciprocal. Specifically, give and take characterized these hope-supporting relationships for participants. The children were both needed by important others (friends and siblings) and they could turn to these same relationships for enjoyment:

The friends help with hope when you go together, eat together, laugh together, stay together. All help with hope. Like, if you have problem you tell him. If he have problem, he tell you, like share. That's good. Good friends, gonna be forever good friends. (17-year-old boy)

Unconditional support. Children also mentioned the role of non-judgemental adults and peers in supporting their adjustment to living in a new country. Accessing or having parental and peer support in assisting with difficulties was of particular importance to the children, as passionately described by one girl:

She [mother] is my very very hope. I like her so much ... Every time I need something, like for school she always helps me or something. She always does good. Like if I am in trouble she will go to the school and fix it. Yah, she is really, really good. (14-year-old girl)

They [friends] talk to me. Sometimes we got into trouble and they talk to the teacher and say she is like not knowing something and it is okay. They also teach me to play games. We play different games and I never seen them before. (14-year-old girl)

A number of children referred to family members who were not in this country but who they recalled as supporting hope. One 11-year-old girl described her grandmother as an important person in supporting the development of skills associated with womanhood in her culture. Another youth talked about his grandfather, who supported his education and gave him a wall hanging that he now uses to motivate himself to learn. These conversations evoked a hint of wistfulness in the children, as they appeared to miss these key individuals who now remain as hope-filled memories.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE NATURAL WORLD

This theme presents the natural world as a source of hope. Within this study, the participants referred to places, plants, and animals as connected to their expe-

periences of hope. Children's descriptions indicated that a connection with nature and places often evoked a sense of peace and renewal, belonging, and recognition of their interdependence with nature for survival.

Peace and renewal. Children's descriptions of places such as parks and forests and objects such as trees evoked feelings of peace, relaxation, renewal, and comfort:

The place ... peace and grass all green, I want to sit there. The place gives hope. You sit in a place like that, you can think and feel good. (18-year-old boy)

I feel comfortable in nature ... It is very peaceful. And sometimes I bring my CD ... beside the river in the river valley and listen to music. (15-year-old boy)

One 17-year-old Sudanese boy drew and described a peaceful place near the area where he was born prior to it being damaged by war. This boy noted that hope for the natural environment can only be maintained with the ending of wars.

Supporting life. A sense of hope in relation to supporting nature was captured in children's frequent references to affection for animals and wanting to have and care for pets and plants. This interest in caring for nature and the desire for a close relationship with a living object and ensuring its survival was captured by a 12-year-old girl's explanation of a hope:

When I grow up, I hope to have a house with flowers ... Well, I love flowers and we learnt plenty of things about plants and other trees and flowers and stuff, so I just want to take care of one, like it does not die. (12-year-old girl)

Children in this study expressed a desire to care lovingly for another's well-being and survival. Hope was linked to supporting life. The association of hope with survival seems important in the context of the life challenges many of these children face. The children appeared to be saying that they chose to support life and they understood this was intimately connected to hope

Interdependence for survival. Interdependence for survival with nature was suggested in the children's descriptions of nature as providing them with the necessities of life. One 14-year-old girl painted a fish as part of her hope story to relay the importance of food for survival. In turn, children indicated they wanted to reciprocate by caring for nature to ensure its survival. An 8-year-old talked about the need to take care of fruit trees as sources of food and hope. The importance of an interconnection with nature for life sustenance was also generalized by a few of the older children to larger environmental concerns. One boy related how the war in his country was destroying vegetation and animals as well as people.

REFLECTIONS

In this section, we discuss selected findings from the study, as they relate both to previous research and to practice. The following subsections frame this discussion in relation to (a) descriptions of hope, (b) sources of hope, (c) the resourcefulness of children, (d) the reciprocal nature of hope, and (e) nature as a source of hope.

Reflections on Descriptions of Hope

The themes and images the children used in this study indicate that they see hope as dynamic and enduringly present within each of them. These themes and images also indicate that the children see hope in activities that are important to them and in relationships with others (people and nature) who are important to them. Herth (1998) described a similar view of hope from the perspective of homeless children, suggesting that an inner hopeful core was always present while an outer ring of directed (specific) hopes remained flexible for the participants.

Like the participants in Herth's (1998) study, children in this study identified hope as something that is deep inside of them and that remains positive in the face of many challenges they experience. Herth further identified hope-engendering strategies as resources in children that serve to enable hope by facilitating the hoping process in some way. This study extends this previous research by distinguishing between hope sources and strategies. *Hope-engendering sources* are defined here as the processes from which children draw resources that somehow enable the *heart of hope*. The hopeful core described by participants in this study, when viewed together with the part of hope that is linked to sources (with intra- and interpersonal characteristics), is more similar to Benzein et al.'s (2000) description of internal (being) and external (doing) hope processes in their study of healthy Swedes. That is, the *heart of hope* described in this study is an internalized experience, while the sources of hope involve an externalized and active engagement by the children.

Thus, results of this current study show hope in refugee and immigrant children to be similar to findings in earlier studies. In addition, this study contributes to current understanding of hope as it identifies it as an important personal resource for newcomer children during early years of adjustment to Canada.

Reflections on the Sources of Hope

When the participant children's expressed desire for connections is placed against the very real possibilities of loss and isolation faced by child refugees, the importance of connections in sustaining hope comes into sharp relief. During member checks with the children in this research, this need for hope found in relationships was clearly evident as they elaborated on how hope was threatened in the face of loneliness and loss. Thus, self-empowering activities and maintaining connections beyond themselves took on particular significance as sources of hope when understood from the context of experiences of loneliness, disconnection through many personal losses, and current difficulties in their new country.

Benzein et al. (2000) note that the "future" aspect of hope is risky, as the future always contains an element of uncertainty. Therefore, to hope for something requires courage. In the case of refugee children leaving war situations, the ability to trust that the future will offer something good is often challenged by real threats to personal safety and multiple losses. The relationship between hope

and trust—trust in key relationships—seems especially important for children who have experienced real threats to key attachments. Erickson (1982) believes that children's hope emerges from relationships that build trust. Herman (1992) elaborated that basic trust, which emerges from experiences of care, allows a person to "envisage a world in which they belong, a world hospitable to human life" (p. 51). In other words, having experiences that build trust gives individuals the courage to envision themselves belonging in the present and offers the possibility of a trustworthy, hence hopeful, future. Correspondingly, the sources from which children drew hope in this study appear to facilitate relationships that foster trust and safety. From these relationships emerges the possibility of hope during early stages of resettlement in Canada.

Reflections on Hope and Resourcefulness in Children

Participants in this study described a tremendous resourcefulness in the face of struggles. Recognition of resourcefulness amongst an "at risk" population supports holistic approaches to working with children that take into account existing resources (Barwick et al., 2002; Cole, 1998; Grizenko, 2002; Guarnaccia & Lopez, 1998). These children initiated activities that supported their own hope, such as singing and dancing, demonstrating how they seemed to find ways to care for their own psychological well-being. Interestingly, participants in Herth's (1998) study with homeless children and Hind's (1988) study with seriously ill adolescents also identified self-initiated energizing activities as resources that contributed to children's sense of hope. Participants in the current study further identified activities that physically and mentally calmed themselves, such as lighting a candle, drinking iced tea, sitting under a tree, or looking at a river. Thus, hope for children in the current study was clearly an embodied experience and linked to both energizing and calming activities.

Children's resourcefulness is also seen in the participants' repeated references to playing, laughing, and having fun as being associated with hope. Play as an activity contains the ingredients of expression of affect, creativity, imagination, and mastery that are associated with self-healing (Landreth, 2001). Furthermore, hope scholarship suggests that it holds several aspects in common with play, including fluidity (Barnard, 1995) and imagination (Simpson, 2004). Viewing play as a natural resource for children is the basis for play therapy, a therapeutic approach to working with children who have undergone difficult life experiences (Landreth).

Several scholars have delineated hope as involving a creative process (Lynch, 1965). As such, stories and other creative methods are often used in hope research (Turner, 2005) and psychotherapy (Larsen, Edey, & LeMay, 2007). Furthermore, the use of humour to sustain hope during times of uncertainty is supported in the literature with children (Herth, 1998). Finally, humour and play may offer moments of transcendence from struggle, an important facet of hope (Harris & Larsen, 2007). This study suggests that the maintenance of emotional well-being while negotiating the stresses of adjustment in a resettlement country can be facilitated in children's natural inclination toward play.

Reflections on the Reciprocal Nature of Hope

In this study, the three sources of hope involving a relationship to self, with others, and with the natural world appear to be reciprocal and interrelated. This reciprocal nature of hope across hope sources appears to be important in the maintaining the child's overall sense of hope. A child's relationship with people or the natural environment can provide a sense of support and belonging along with the belief in one's place in the world necessary to engage in self-empowering activities. A feeling of empowerment in turn can fuel further activity that results in stronger relationships to others. For example, the 9-year-old girl who described feeling hope that she "can do something" after being taught how to use a computer by supportive program staff later reported a sense of hope brought about by teaching a young friend to read. In this example, drawing hope from one source seems to provide the motivation to engage in other activities that further engender hope.

Reflections on Nature as a Source of Hope

The representation of nature as a key source of hope is relatively unique in the small body of research that currently addresses hope and children. While Herth (1998) and Baumann (1993) found references to nature in their studies of hope with homeless children, participants in this study explicitly name a relationship with nature as a source of hope. Specifically, giving meaning to places and objects in the natural environment created important links with the environment to engender hope in the children. Erikson (1982) considered this connection to the environment and larger universe as a mature form of hope involving a sense of cohesion regarding what is meaningful to life. A sense of connectedness to nature also implies a moving from a focus on self and other people as sources of hope, to sources in the natural world that are often associated with spirituality. Spirituality as a source of hope has been identified in pediatric (Baumann; Erdem, 2000) and adult (Farran, Herth, & Popovich, 1995) studies. Further research on developmental aspects of hope may serve to clarify the possible relationships among hope, nature, and children's sense of spirituality.

IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING AND SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY PRACTICE

Current findings have relevance for individuals within counselling and school psychology practice as well as individuals who work in community settings. Six key implications are discussed below. First, sources of hope associated with a sense of security and empowerment bolster the case to be made for interventions that aim to assist children who have experienced loss and other adverse events. Second, it appears that the process of talking about hope, in itself, allows children to begin the process of intentionally accessing strategies to enhance hope and build resilience. Therefore, respectfully exploring hope can be used as an intervention to empower a child and build safety and trust in the child's relationship with the adult, thereby providing a base for further work. This implication is consistent with current scholarship on hope practice, which suggests that making hope explicit

during therapy permits clients to intentionally access the therapeutic benefits of hope more readily (Larsen et al., 2007).

Third, practitioners who understand the sources from which children draw hope (i.e., self-empowering activities, important people, and nature) can use these hope resources intentionally to facilitate a sense of safety and self-empowerment with children who have faced migration stresses. Fourth, in addition to providing support for academic learning, practitioners may engender hope in children by promoting activities that help children to feel energized, feel calm, develop friendships, and excel in other non-scholastic domains—which may contribute to initial adjustment in resettlement countries and development in general.

Fifth, in the service of enhancing hope, practitioners can also foster connections that reduce isolation and loneliness by linking children to community resources such as existing sports leagues and other recreational programs. Finally, practitioners can incorporate both energizing and calming activities within a counselling context, thereby teaching children how to access these hope resources on their own.

SUMMARY AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Findings from this study are specific to a group of children enrolled in an early intervention program, and therefore future research should focus on expanding the current study to explore hope with larger numbers of children across more diverse ethnicities and settings, such as schools. This study provides a strengths-based lens through which to understand and work with newcomer children. The playful and creative approaches, such as photo-assisted interviews, build on children's play-based orientation to the world while inviting them to assess their own social and physical environment in the context of hope. A key factor in this approach is that it pays attention to the ecology of the children's lives and their personal interpretations of their experiences, thereby giving children a chance to tell their stories, voice their opinions, and explicitly name their relationship with hope.

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