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Abstract

This study takes an intercultural friendship approach to understand the social integration process of newcomers in Calgary high schools. We examined adolescents' experience, perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and assumptions about intercultural peer relationships, and considering them within networks, situations, and hierarchies of power. The preliminary results are based on in-depth interviews with 24 students from 3 Calgary high schools, including international students and their Canadian peers.

Social Integration of Young Newcomers

- Policy research has focused more on newcomers' socio-economic integration with less attention to the social and cultural integration processes of young newcomers.
- Countless studies have documented adolescent newcomers' feelings of alienation from mainstream society.
- Social and emotional integration only happens in a RELATIONSHIP context where it is deliberately nurtured.
- Intercultural friendship is a key indicator of successful social integration.
- Schools have the potential to promote social integration by offering salient knowledge, social connections, and a sense of belonging to their new country.

Theoretical Framework and Assumptions

Guided by Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural approach to human development, we assume:

- Social integration is a process of constantly negotiating between old and new cultural tools to construct and reconstruct their identities.
- Process involves the newcomers' cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses to the new environment, and teachers and peers, whose openness to learning new cultural norms and practices and whose motivation and skills in doing so.
- Process is shaped by diverse individual experience, such as the continuities and discontinuities between the home country and the host culture and new influences (e.g., language, religion, life skills, sex roles, racial profile, religion.)

Research Questions

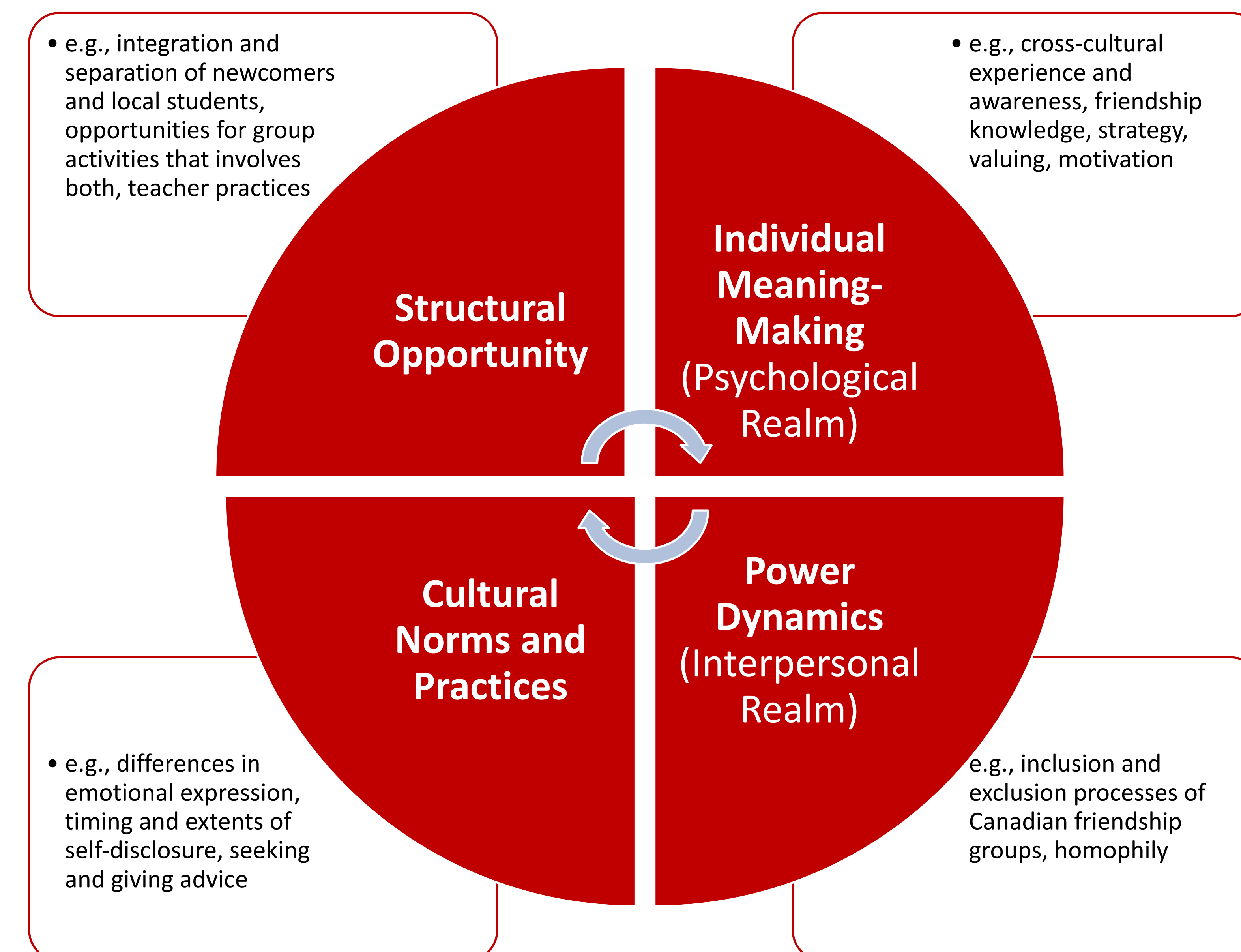
- How do newcomers and their local Canadian peers perceive and experience intercultural peer relationships in school?
- How do they perceive the power dynamics and processes of inclusion and exclusion that influence their experience of peer relationships?
- What strategies and cultural norms are invoked?

Research Method

- A constructivist grounded theory study (Charmaz, 2014)
- Pilot study: 24 newcomer students; grades 10-12; 19 girls, 5 boys
- Countries: Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Israel, Japan, Mexico, Philippines, Spain, Syria, Tibet, Turkey, Vietnam
- Semi-structured questions to elicit stories about context, scenes, situations, actions, conditions, participants' friendship-related beliefs and experiences
- Grounded theory data analysis: aiming to develop a conceptual framework that delineates the barriers that hinder the development of intercultural friendships as well as the individual strategies and structural opportunities that promote it

Findings

Factors that facilitate or hinder intercultural friendships in three interrelated processes:



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