

“BE YOURSELF, REDISCOVER YOURSELF, AND FIND NEW ASPECTS OF YOURSELF”:

NEWCOMER YOUTH INTEGRATION IN A FRANCOPHONE SCHOOL SYSTEM

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BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

- A large proportion of newcomers (immigrants and refugees) who resettle in Canada are youth aged 15 to 24.
- They may face some challenges adapting to the host culture, navigating new systems, and broader adolescent development, which may negatively impact their healthy development and wellbeing.
- There is a need for research that enables newcomer youth (NY) to use their agency in the research process to construct meaningful knowledge about **school integration** - This phenomenon refers to the adjustment of NY inside and outside the school context.
- **Arts-based engagement ethnography (ABEE)** - an innovative and critical ethnographic research design that elicits rich, multi-layered data in a relatively short time span.

STUDY PURPOSE

To explore how French-speaking NY, in a predominantly anglophone Canadian province, experience school integration in a francophone public school.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How do NY experience a public francophone school?
2. How do these experiences influence their positive integration into the francophone school system in a predominantly anglophone province?

PARTICIPANTS

Six French-speaking NY enrolled in grade 10 or 11 at a public francophone school in BC.

RESEARCH PROCESS



(1) Participants used cultural probes (drawings, maps, photos) for two weeks to document daily life, then did related individual qualitative interviews.



(2) A few months later, 2 planned group discussions (PGDs) were conducted 3 months apart (N=5).



(3) Follow-up individual qualitative interviews were conducted to track progress/gain a deeper understanding (N=3).

KEY FINDINGS: 4 SHARED EXPERIENCES

1. Navigating School Integration Challenges



NY navigated learning both English and French, adapting to new school tools, curriculum, and environments, all while seeking out peers with similar backgrounds to ease the transition.

2. Negotiating Identity



NY balanced Canadian and Francophone norms with their diverse backgrounds, worked to preserve their home culture and language, and experienced changes in self-identity as they pursued new goals and aspects of self.

3. Confronting Biases



NY faced stereotyping at school, leading to teasing and bullying, as well as more overt discrimination and racism in the broader community setting in the form of microaggressions

4. Helping Other Newcomer Youth



NY suggested easing school integration by providing dedicated school support workers, creating opportunities for newcomer-to-newcomer support, and encouraging school staff to offer more proactive and culturally responsive assistance.

IMPLICATIONS & TAKEAWAYS



- The use of ABEE empowers youth and generates richer, more creative data.
- More research that includes NY in the early stages of research is needed to fully understand their lived integration experiences and inform practices / policies that drive change and positive outcomes.
- To help NY thrive, policies and practices that foster self-discovery, resilience, and agency must be put in place.
- **Advice from NY to NY:** lean on friends, seek support when needed, and be yourself.
- **Advice from NY to school personnel:** empower NY and support them with autonomy and agency, ask rather than assume, and give students patience and empathy.



STAY TRUE TO YOURSELF AND SHOW YOURSELF COMPASSION AND GRACE!

