

Social Capital and Agency in the Peer Socialization Strategies of Migrant Children in Poland

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The transnational transitions of migrant children are complex, mobility-affected processes during which they mediate between various social fields. Their attachment to these fields is often determined by different socialization agents, among which great attention should be paid to peers and friends. Peers not only introduce a new culture and society to migrant children but also affect the young migrants' motivation, formation of identity, and group socialization. This study adopts the theory of social capital and agency, defined by Putnam, to explore migrant children's peer socialization strategies. It draws on qualitative research with migrant children in Poland aged 8–13, their parents, and their teachers, and is based on a child-centered approach. The findings present three main ways in which migrant children exercise their own agency to build social capital by maintaining ethnic/non-ethnic ties in the receiving country. The age, gender, and ethnic differences that appear in the application of peer socialization strategies are also revealed.

Keywords: peers, socialization, transnational transitions, migrant children, social capital

Introduction

Transnational migrant families (Bryceson & Vuorela 2002) have been the subject of multiple studies within the social sciences over the last few decades, and this growing interest is linked to the increasing number of migrants globally (Grabowska 2014; Castells et al. 2009; Okólski 2012). Within the last 19 years, the number of international migrants increased by 51 million to reach 272 million in 2019. The same

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trend was also observed among children aged 0–19, the share of which grew to 14% (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2019). This growing number of international migrants has, in turn, led to the formation of super-diverse societies (Vertovec 2007).

The scholarship on transnational families, however, has often ignored the issues of migrant children, who have long been perceived as the “luggage” brought along with their parents (Orellana 2009). Nevertheless, over the last few decades, children’s issues have become central to studies that have taken an interpretative approach (Corsaro & Eder 1990; Qvortrup et al. 2009), which was adopted by migration studies and turned into the child-centered approach (Ni Laoire et al. 2010; White et al. 2011). Thus, young children and adolescents have begun to be seen as active agents (James & Prout 2015, Wyness 2015) of the migration process who have a great impact on their transnational transitions (Pustułka & Trąbka 2019).

To demonstrate youngsters’ active participation in migration and adaptation processes, contemporary scholars have investigated how migrant children negotiate their relationships with family members (Holland et al. 2007), relatives (Slany & Strzemecka 2016), teachers (Deslandes et al. 2012), and peers (Holland 2009; Reynolds 2007) within transnational spaces, namely “here,” “there” (Slany & Ślusarczyk 2015), and across borders (Popyk et al. 2019). A bulk of work has also been dedicated to the topic of building social capital (Bourdieu 1986; Putnam 2000) and language socialization (García-Sánchez & Nazimova 2017; Duff & May 2017) at school (Strzemecka 2015; Devine 2014) or in other socialization spaces (Sime & Fox 2015).

The research on migrant children in the Polish discourse has mostly investigated the transnational transitions (Pustułka & Trąbka 2019) of Polish migrant families abroad (Slany & Strzemecka 2016) and few studies have engaged with the processes of adaptation and socialization of immigrant children in Poland (see Popyk & Buler 2018) despite the increasing number of immigrant children in Polish schools. The Supreme Audit Office of Poland (2020) reported that an unprecedented number of more than 51,000 foreign-born children attended Polish schools in the 2019/2020 academic year. Some scholars have hitherto undertaken research to explore how the Ministry of Education, schools, educators, and pedagogues are coping with the growing number of migrant children (Błęszyńska 2010). Some works have also referred to migrants’ integrational practices and the educational challenges faced by the children of Polish repatriates from Eastern Europe and Asia (Grzymała-Moszczyńska et al. 2015) and of other groups of migrants, for example, Vietnamese children, Roma children (Głowacka-Grajper 2006), and Chechen children in Poland (Nowicka 2014). Nevertheless, very limited attention has been paid to the socialization process of migrant children and the ways in which they build social capital and maintain relations with their peers.

The present study aims to analyze migrant children’s socialization strategies, as viewed through the theoretical lens of two types of social capital, bonding and bridging, developed by Putnam (2000). The analysis draws on qualitative research

with migrant children aged 8–13 (n=20), their parents (n=19), and teachers (n=10). The following research questions were posed: First, what are the peer socialization strategies of migrant children in Poland? Second, what are the roles of age, gender, and ethnicity in the socialization strategies of migrant children in Poland? Third, what is the role of bonding/bridging social capital in the socialization strategies of migrant children in Poland?

This study contributes to the current research on migrancy and childhood by arguing that migrant children are active agents in the socialization process who deliberately choose certain ways and means to establish relationships with peers within the transnational field. Three main peer socialization strategies are presented that confirm that children are active agents in creating their relationships with peers and negotiating their own autonomy with adults. The study also illustrates the age, gender, and ethnic differences at play in maintaining peer relations.

The value of children’s agency

As a response to the growing cross-border movement, significant sociological research has been devoted not only to the conceptualization of transnational familyhood (Byceson & Vuorela 2002) but also transnational childhood (Orellana et al. 2001). The contemporary understanding of children “on the move” often relies on perceiving children as active agents who “affect and are affected by society and culture” (Corsaro & Fingerson 2006: 125): In other words, contemporary studies on childhood have switched from the deterministic model of socialization, which perceives children as passive agents of society, who should be controlled and trained, to the constructivist model, which sees children as active agents (Corsaro 2017; Ensor & Goździak 2010) in the “construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and the societies in which they live” (James & Prout 2015: 8).

Children’s agency, however, has to be seen not simply as autonomous but as “emerging from social relationships” and “embedded in their daily lives,” which helps to “contract a variety of environmental factors that impinge on their lives” (Wyness 2015: 14, 24–25). Thus, agency is an instrument for children to negotiate their relationships within family, school, and friendships. Consequently, agency is shaped by adult–child and child–child relationships: while school expects them to submit, children tend to be more powerful in family relationships and feel more freedom with their peers (Wyness 2015).

Peer and friend relationships have been seen as part of children’s social capital, where agency has also been central to the theory (Bourdieu 1986). Social capital, as one of the three capitals—the other two being economic and cultural—is distinguished as the “aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu 1986). Putnam (2000) further

developed the theory of social capital and distinguished its two forms, namely bridging (inclusive) and bonding (exclusive). The bonding form of capital is “inward looking and tend[s] to reinforce exclusive identities and homogeneous groups ... includ[ing] ethnic fraternal organizations” that can create “strong in-group loyalty” and “strong out-group antagonism” (Putnam 2000: 22–23). Meanwhile, bridging social capital is “outward looking and encompass[es] people across diverse social cleavages,” and is better for “linkage to external assets and for information diffusion” (Putnam 2000: 22). Weller (2010: 874) further mentioned that social capital “is not an ‘object’ but rather a set of interactions and relationships based on trust and reciprocity that have the potential to be transformative.”

Thus, peer and friend relationships become significant sources of migrant children’s social capital, which can be seen as the “resources individuals access through social interactions and relationships, the extent to which these interactions help migrants access resources seems key to examining their social lives” (Sime & Fox 2015: 525). Moreover, the “negotiation of friendships is an important way in which social inclusion and exclusion are lived out in daily life. For migrant children, who may have experienced considerable disruption in their personal and family relationships, friendship can be a particularly fraught and intense experience,” however, “[it] may be perceived [a] more important issue today” (European Commission 2007: 25, 72). As such, this study evaluates the role of children’s agency in building bridging and bonding social capital (Putnam 2000).

Migrant children’s peer socialization

Children are highly prone to face hardship in the socialization process, no matter their origin, length of stay, type of residence, economic status, or networks. Those with a migration background are even more likely to become vulnerable because they are more likely to experience the “exclusionary practices” (European Commission 2007: 24) that are realized through bullying and discrimination of different categories, such as for their distinct appearance, race, ethnicity, language, culture, habits, or simply their country of origin (Gardner & Mand 2012). Consequently, this leads to the formation of social homophily (Silbereisen & Titzmann 2007).

Migrant children’s socialization processes in the host country are shaped by both the host and home country contexts (Levitt & Jaworsky 2007; Suárez-Orozco, Marks, & Abo-Zena 2015) and the impact of multiple agents which can be placed on the three levels of macro, meso, and micro (Popyk et al. 2019). While the discourse on macro and micro-level socialization agents has been somewhat covered by researchers and public institutions in Poland (see Popyk & Buler 2018), the mezzo level—namely, the role of peers, friends, out-of-school activities, and neighborhoods—has been largely omitted. Nevertheless, it has been proved by multiple studies that peers and friends undoubtedly have a crucial impact on migrant children’s adaptation in a new

country (Slany et al. 2016; Slany & Strzemecka 2016; Silbereisen & Titzmann 2008; Weller 2010; Vandell 2000).

Peer groups create an essential context in which children try to understand who they are (Devine 2009), as well as the conception of “cooperative socialization” where “self and other are equally agents and recipients” (Youniss 1980: 7–8). Peers also impact the formation of a child’s identity and sense of belonging through the negotiation of relations with others (Slany & Pustulka 2016; Popyk et al. 2019). It should also be noted that peers are important agents of gender identity (Strzemecka 2017) and ethnic identity because “friendship relationships most closely matched the values associated with social capital, such as trust, reciprocity, emotional support, community and identity” (Reynolds 2007: 384).

Friendship does not simply support migrant children’s adaptation in a new country (Deslandes et al. 2012) but also helps to lower their levels of depression (Obradović, Tirado-Strayer, & Leu 2013), make them feel happier, and render them more motivated to go to school (Vandell 2000). Previous studies have shown that migrant children use different ways to negotiate peer and friend relationships; for example, those children who share similar, often traumatic, migration experiences or face racial discrimination and social exclusion are more likely to join the same ethnic group (Reynolds, 2007). Strong ties with an ethnic community can also provide children with a “safety zone” where they can build their ethnic identities (Holland 2009: 343). On the other hand, ethnic homophily (Titzmann 2014) can become a “constraint” (Holland 2009: 232) during socialization in a new society, and ready-formed ethnic groups can become obstacles for new members to join. Thus, lonely children tend to reiterate their anger and sufferings on others, while other children tend to be silent so as not to bring up other issues (European Commission, 2007).

Among the major obstacles to building bridging social capital, researchers have noted foreign language competency (Strzemecka 2015; Duff & May 2017; Moskal & Sime 2017) and limited access to socialization spaces at school and after classroom hours, such as leisure activities or clubs, which have been observed to be the most efficient means of socialization (European Commission 2007). Moreover, some children have limited access to the communication channels needed to create contacts with peers. Such means of communication enable children to plan their free time and to organize social activities with friends (Wyness 2015). These activities typically take place in local spaces; the neighborhood is thus not only a place for spatial orientation but also for engaging in different cultural and social activities (Sime & Fox 2015; Perez-Felkner 2013) outside of parents’ control (Weller 2010; Reynolds 2007). Further, digital devices became the key communication method during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, when personal meetings and leaving the house were restricted. Consequently, those children who had limited technical support and were locked at home found themselves isolated from their peers and friends (see Popyk 2021).

Methodology

This paper is based on a qualitative study that employed a child-centered approach and followed the relevant research guidelines with children (Clark 2004). The participatory research methods in the research with children allow for the viewing of young respondents as active agents of their own lives and experiences (Hyvönen et al. 2014). The research strategies, which anticipate active listening to children, are “respectful of children’s views and opinions” (Morrow & Richards 1996: 91) and seem to be less harmful and more child-friendly (Fargas-Malet et al. 2010).

Two principal aims of the interviews were to investigate socialization agents’ role, namely, family, school, peers, religion, and media in transnational transitions (Pustulka & Trąbka 2019) and examine the formation of migrant children’s sense of belonging in Poland. The study included three groups of respondents: migrant children ($n=20$), their parents ($n=19$), and teachers ($n=10$). The research with children is central in this study, while the interviews with parents and teachers aimed to acquire socio-demographic information about the children. The study included 10 girls and 10 boys; their mean age was 12 years old. The major ethnic groups were Turkish ($n=13$) and Ukrainian ($n=5$)². The recruitment process was based on approaching the respondents through the researcher’s contacts ($n=6$) and was followed by the snowball sampling technique. Participants’ main inclusion criteria were that they had no previous contact with Polish culture or language, attended school in at least two countries, and were aged 8–13. There were no gender, ethnicity, or length of stay specifications.

We conducted semi-structured interviews that lasted 40–45 min with the children and 60–90 min with the adults. The study gained approval from the appropriate ethics committee. This application included information about the project (the aim, the research questions, concept, methodology, methods of analysis, and storage and dissemination of the personal data and research data), an example of consent and assent forms, interview scripts, and examples of the research tools.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown and restrictions on face-to-face research, the interviews were conducted online, using the Zoom application, which allowed us to save the data directly to an external hard drive increasing our ability to ensure the confidentiality of personal data. It should be noted that the ethics committee approved all changes to the research.

The participants were informed about the aim, procedure, their rights to withdraw, outcomes usage, and dissemination before the interviews, which were held separately, and they gave their voluntary consent (adults) and assent (children). The consent forms were given to the participants in one of the selected languages (Polish, Ukrainian, Russian, English, or Turkish) to provide the participants with precise information. After the participants provided consent, the researcher started the interview

Table 1

Overview of the respondents' (children) socio-demographic characteristics

No	Pseudo-nym	Gender	Country of origin	Language of interview	Age	Grade	Time in Poland (yrs)	Type of school
1	Olga	Girl	Ukraine	UA	12	6	4	private
2	Igor	Boy	Ukraine	RU	13	8	2	public
3	Antony	Boy	Ukraine	RU	12	6	1	public
4	Michele	Boy	Romania	EN	12	6	6	private
5	Katie	Girl	Turkey	EN	9	4	3	public
6	Anna	Girl	Turkey	TR/PL	13	7	4	private
7	Ali	Boy	Turkey	EN	12	6	4	public
8	Emel	Boy	Turkey	EN	12	6	4	private
9	Zeliha	Girl	Turkey	TR/PL	10	5	3	private
10	Ismail	Boy	Turkey	EN	11	5	2	public
11	Rabia	Girl	Turkey	TR/PL	12	6	4	public
12	Omer	Boy	Turkey	EN	11	5	2	private
13	Sadik	Boy	Turkey	EN	13	7	2	private
14	Liliana	Girl	Lithuania	EN	11	5	4	private
15	Mehmet	Boy	Turkey	TR/PL	11	3	2	public
16	Duran	Boy	Turkey	TR/PL	10	3	2	public
17	Serife	Girl	Turkey	EN	12	6	3	public
18	Meryem	Girl	Turkey	TR/PL	13	6	3	public
19	Yulia	Girl	Ukraine	UA	9	3	2	public
20	Natalia	Girl	Ukraine	UA	12	6	1	public

Source: Author's own study.

with a parent first, followed by the interview with the child. The interviews were held in one of the languages listed above. For Turkish, the questions and answers were translated by a qualified interpreter.

In order to understand the socialization strategies of migrant children, each interview addressed the following topics: peer relations and friendships in the migrant's home country, as well as how they changed after the migration; the first moments of socialization in the host country (questions: How do you remember your first day at the new school? Who was the first person you talked to?); and socialization agents and locations in Poland (questions included: What do you do in your free time

during school hours—such as during breaks, common room, and after-lesson activities? Where and with whom do you like spending your free time? Do you know anyone from your neighborhood? How often do you meet your friends? Who are they?).

The data analysis was performed as following: meticulous transcription of recordings (voice-to-text), developing and applying codes to all material, identifying common themes, patterns, and relationships concerning the created codes, and summarizing the data (Saldaña 2016). The material was analyzed through thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006).

Findings

Friendship facilitates the socialization process

The present study supported the findings of existing research (Corsaro 2006; Moskal & Sime 2017; Silbereisen & Titzmann 2007), proving that peer relations and friendship are significant socialization agents of migrant children. All the children and parent respondents noted that sufficient peer relations, an amiable atmosphere in the class, and close friendships were beneficial for transnational transitions, especially at the beginning of the adaptation period.

Antony, who arrived in Poland less than a year ago, shared his concerns regarding not having “real friends” in Poland and being bullied for being Ukrainian. Moreover, his communication was limited to only those peers who were eager to improve their Russian language skills (Antony is fluent in Russian).

R: Where do you feel better, here or in Ukraine?

A: I felt better there because I had many friends. Not peers, but friends. I do not really have friends here, just some acquaintances ... I do not really think of it. Maybe sometimes. It does not really bother me. Whatever will be, will be.

R: If you had friends like your brother does, would it change the situation?

A: Totally. I would not start making videos. I would go out all the time. I would probably give up school. I think so. Because they [friends] would call me to go out, and I want to go. It would change totally. (Antony, UA, 12 years old/ 1 in PL)

All the children and parent respondents also mentioned that well-established peer relations in a host country are likely to smooth the transnational transitions of migrant children. The following statement from Iryna, the mother of the sixth-grader who came to Poland four years ago, reiterated the significance of peers in the socialization process of migrant children. Iryna stresses the negative role of bonding social capital (Putnam 2000) when children make friends, as it prevents newcomers from joining existing homophilic (Titzmann 2014) peer groups. The ethnic groups, which was a common phenomenon in the private school, require sharing a common language,

cultural/societal norms, skin color, race, or what participants referred to as “blood.” Hence, newcomers that do not share any of these characteristics cannot be accepted into such a peer group. Moreover, even when multiple ethnic groups exist in a school, some newcomers may not fit into any of them and will experience loneliness. Thus, after three years of attending a private international school in Warsaw, Iryna and her daughter decided she would change schools due to unfavorable peer relations.

She always suffered from not having friends. She has no friends at all... When we came [to Poland], and she went to school, she had some [friends]. She always tried to find a friend. She constantly fell in and out of friendships. The first six months were very difficult, it was not “sweet” for her. She constantly had issues and questions...for example, once when she came from school she said “Mom, the whole class does not talk to me”... Maybe I don’t have to say this, but it is clear, she is ambitious, and can “pull the blanket to herself.” But if they [classmates] have been in the school for a long time, and they are from one country, they “are of the same blood,” and, anyway, they “magnetize.” It seems to me, that those who are consanguineous, they make own group and do not accept others. It’s difficult ... They make ethnic groups. I have always said that it does not matter what skin color or blood you have. But they are children, they “attract by blood.” She couldn’t get anywhere [none of the groups]. It was hard for her. When we changed her school, she did not want to change, but she also did not want to stay in the other one. Again, the first six months were so hard. It is still difficult... in the previous school she joined in the second grade, but here she came in the sixth... so, she said “Mom, that was one of the best decisions we made in our life”, most of all because she made friends here. That’s the most important. Not the school, but the fact that she has friends, who accept her, she is happy. That’s very important (Iryna, UA, Olga’s mother).

Bonding social capital (Putnam, 2000) was, however, noted by the teacher respondents as an important socialization factor for migrant children:

There are many settlements with children from Vietnam. They live close to each other in apartment blocks, and even if they do not go to the same school, they often meet in the yard. Their parents [meet each other] because they come from the same country. When the parents meet, the children also start to make contacts, talk, and play together. I think it is very good because those children who have been in Poland for a longer time can positively impact those children who have just arrived. [They] can help them to learn the language and adapt. (Teacher 1, private school)

Apart from the common ethnicity in the peer groups, all the respondent groups (children, parents, and teachers) also underlined that children’s age is an important factor in the peer socialization process. The experiences of Igor (13 years old/UA), Olga (12 years old/UA), and Liliana (11 years old/LT) indicate that making friends is less stressful and complicated at a younger age (8–10 years old) because of the nature of the friendship, which is based on playing together; whereas friendship at later ages (11–13 years old) often requires the sharing of common interests, values, and views.

Igor's mother, Michalina, mentioned that peers have a greater impact on children when they enter adolescence and may become levers of influence on their future life choices:

R: What role do peers play in your son's life?

M: Before, I did not see any changes. He just had some friends with whom he talked and spent time. Now [that] he is reaching adolescence, his friends play a more important role. He trusts them more, trusts what they say. For example, when we start talking about future studies, he believes what his friends say and wants to go to the same school that his friends have chosen. At the current moment, friends are the most important to him. (Michalina, UA, Igor's mother)

Liliana, a fifth-grader, also noted the more complicated nature of friendship when children get older. Consequently, she had been struggling to establish good peer relations:

L: At the beginning, it was quite easy because it was just the first year and you could just, you know, merge into different groups. I have always just been there. It's just nothing. I think in the third grade, I was in the group. But then, half of the girls left the school, and the others just went to other groups.

R: Do you think that friendship was not that serious when you were younger? That's why it was easier to make friends?

L: Yeah, I think so. (Liliana, LT, 11 years old/4 in PL)

One of the teachers further mentioned that peer socialization is not merely influenced by age but also according to gender differences. She noted that girls generally find it easier to become part of a peer group at any age, while boys in the older grades (6–8) tend to exclude newcomers from their peer group, underlining their own position and significance in a form of "rivalry for the territory." Though, female friendships tend to be more fleeting than those of males, who are more likely to build durable and stable relationships. The study, however, shows that despite the fact that girls are more likely than boys to create friendships and quickly accept others into their peer groups, these peer interactions greatly depend on personality issues (as shown in the case of Olga), and the friend-making process can be demanding and troublesome for both boys and girls.

I think, that in the grades 6–8, peers have the greatest impact on the newcomer's adaptation at school. When it comes to the girls, I noticed that when there is a new girl coming to the class, other girls always want to take care of her. But, when there is a new boy joining the class, other boys test to what extent he wants to rule the class. I do not say they do it intentionally, but it looks like a competition for territory. It is not visible in the younger grades, but rather in grades 6–8. This is a significant difference between boys and girls in the upper grades. Because in the younger grades, I noticed, when a new boy joins the class, everybody wants him on their own team, everyone wants to play with him.

And sometimes, they even argue for that new boy to play with them. However, when it comes to the girls, despite the age difference they want to take care of someone new... In our school, boys take the territory and do not want to share it. (Teacher 2, private school)

Peer socialization strategies

Apart from the age, gender, and ethnic composition of the peer groups, the study's results indicated that migrant children and their parents use different peer socialization strategies that vary according to their own purposes and needs and are shaped by different factors, including interests, religion, family composition, kin relationships, etc., as well as previous migration experiences, current needs, and future plans. The apparent socialization strategies comprise:

- Spiritual
- Interest-based
- Prospect-based
- Mixed

The distinguished strategies comply with the notions of bonding and bridging social capital (Putnam, 2000). Figure 1 illustrates the extent of the use of social capital and network creation means in each socialization strategy, with a description of each type provided hereinafter.

The spiritual socialization strategy

Spiritual socialization characterizes the way that migrant children and their parents fulfill a spiritual need for shared experience, where place and time remain as a context. The key aim of this strategy is to build bonding social capital (Putnam 2000) that satisfies the spiritual and emotional needs created by the migration experience. This social capital provides children with the emotional closeness and satisfaction of peer contact; thus, spiritual socialization anticipates children getting along with peers from the same ethnic group because such group members are more likely to share a common language, culture, values, needs, and experiences than members of different ethnic groups (Titzmann 2014).

The case of Ali, a 12-year-old boy from Turkey, demonstrated that friendship requires sharing common ground and communication, and, thus, culture and language are critical. Ali's mother shared her concerns about her son not being able to make friends during the first year of adaptation in Poland; forbidden to speak Turkish at school, Ali suffered from a lack of friends or the possibility to express himself:

R: Did your son tell you about his peers or friends at school?

B: At the beginning, ...my son was very shy. And when he got to know that there are some Turkish children, at first, he was glad that he would actually be able to communicate

with them. We, on the contrary, got scared because it could be a hindrance to learning English. But it was quickly decided at school that children could only speak English, so the Turkish children did not even speak Turkish with each other. ...Friendship...is something complicated, and it needs some basic communication, some kind of emotional sharing, and so on. My son did not know the language, [and] he had a very big problem with friends. And to be honest, he hasn't had any friends or acquaintances for a long time. We even tried to talk to the families at parents' meetings and suggest that maybe our children could be friends, [that] maybe we would meet after school one day. But somehow nothing came of it. After some time, we met the family of one of the Turkish students in our neighborhood. We were very happy when we found out that they live close, and my son became friends with them very quickly. They also started going to school together on the school bus and just hanging out, and it was very important to him. It was like his first good friend. I think the country itself is not that important at this age. Rather, it was important whom he could play with. This is what he is looking for as a child. When he found a friend to play with, things got much better. (Beyza, TR, Ali's mother)

Most of the respondents who were born in Turkey stated that they used to attend the basketball training organized by their parents, the prime aim of which was to make a space for socialization and communication within the ethnic group. The "entry ticket" to the group was being fluent in the Turkish language and cultural/religious norms and values. Thus, the sporting event was a context for migrant children to satisfy their spiritual needs. In this way, the children had a chance to strengthen their previously established relationships and make new ones within the same ethnic community while spending time actively and strengthening their bonding social capital:

R: What do you like doing in your free time?

S: I play basketball. I meet my friends, and I play with my brother and sister.

B: Who are your friends?

O: Some Turkish girls. (Serife, TR, 13 years old/3 in PL)

The interest-based socialization strategy

The interest-based peer socialization strategy comprises socialization based on creating and maintaining relationships with peers that share common interests and hobbies. The findings indicated that interest-based socialization is not limited to the ethnic composition of groups. Rather, nowadays, children's interests are connected through the use of digital devices and the Internet, which enables digital socialization at a distance with both new and old friends.

Igor, a 13-year-old boy from Ukraine, revealed that his hobby of playing computer games was the key socialization factor for him in Poland: After finding this common interest with his Polish peers, he managed to establish relationships far beyond his primary interests. Moreover, the interest strategy transformed into spiritual, emotional support, and prospect-based socialization through language, culture, and special

socialization, along with relationship development. Igor described his socialization in a new school as follows:

R: How do you remember your first day at school?

I: Just did my schoolwork, answered the teachers' questions, and went home. I did not get to know people on the first day. I wanted to get used to learning the language and so on.

R: Do you remember when you first started talking to someone?

I: It was the IT lesson, when I was on the social network. My friend noticed that I'm interested in the same computer game as he is. He started talking to me. This [is how] we started communicating. Well, he was my first friend in Poland.

R: Do you still share the same interests?

I: We do not talk about the games that often now. We prefer going out, riding bikes. We are still friends. I also have another friend. We meet together, play computer games online, talk. But more often we just meet outside, in real life. ...Those are my friends from school. But I have other friends, also.

R: Who are they?

I: I have an extra basketball lesson. I need to go to another [city] district. There I have just basic relationships. There, people are not communicative. But I have another friend, who is a friend of my friend. Generally, we have a big group, and we often meet outside.

R: Are they from the same city district?

I: Some of them are from mine, others are not.

R: How often do you meet?

I: Before quarantine, we met almost every day.

R: What do usually do together?

I: It's different. Either we meet and just talk. Or we go to another district or the city center. (Igor, UA, 13 years old/2 in PL)

Additionally, digital interest-based socialization is likely to support long-distance friendships; thus, interest-based socialization indicates that peers' social lives can often be maintained transnationally, across borders (Popyk et al. 2019).

Interest-based socialization through digital devices being used as a means of communication across borders was exemplified by Michele, a 12-year-old boy, who mentioned that he maintains communication with an old friend by playing games online:

R: You said you play some computer games. With whom do you play?

M: I had a friend from America, and he went back to America. Sometimes we play games on the computer. (Michele, RO, 12 years old/6 in PL)

The prospect-based socialization strategy

In the prospect-based peer socialization strategy, children take steps to establish contact and maintain relationships with peers to gain certain benefits, for example, learn the foreign language or culture and be introduced to the host society. This type of

socialization leads to relationships with members of other ethnic groups, often the representatives of a host society. Thus, bridging social capital (Putnam, 2000) is key for this socialization type. The prospect-based strategy also requires children's personal efficiency to negotiate the relationships, which do not necessarily fulfill their spiritual needs.

This peer socialization strategy was presented in the case of Ali, a sixth grader from Turkey who suffered from the lack of opportunity to talk in his native language and the inability to express himself. Despite being at school with quite a number of Turkish children, students were not allowed to speak their native language so that they could learn English and Polish faster. Consequently, the case of Ali presents a unique situation in which a migrant child was keen to establish friendships through the spiritual strategy and obtain psychological support through the adaptation process, but was unable to due to the external requirements of the school and parents who want their children to assimilate. Thus, Ali had to use the prospect-based socialization strategy while establishing relationships with his peers:

R: With whom did you like to spend free time?

A: I wanted to spend time with my Turkish friends, but I had to learn English more, that's why spend my time with people whom I did not know and who know English, or who can help me. (Ali, 12 years old/ 4 in PL)

Another case, that of Mehmet and Duran, also indicated that the prospect-based socialization strategy is often based on parents' decisions regarding the socialization conditions for their children—for example, limiting their communication only to the native language, confining them to contact with peers from the same ethnic group, and so on. Thus, children become the active agents of own socialization though within the limits set by their parents or institutions.

These two brothers, Mehmet and Duran, were enrolled in parallel classes to limit their communication and enhance their adaptation to the host culture and society.

R: What grade are you in?

D: Third.

R: So, are you in the same class as your brother?

D: No, different.

R: Different? But the same grade?

D: My brother is in class 3B, I'm in 3C.

R: I see. Why are you in different classes?

D: I sometimes argue with my brother. And also [so we don't] speak Turkish, [our] parents decided to sign us up for different classes. (Duran, TR, 10 years old/2 in PL)

Nevertheless, despite attempts to strengthen the adaptation process through the prospect-based strategy, migrant children turned to satisfy their spiritual needs by

maintaining relationships with those who share common values and views, regardless of these peers' ethnicity and origins, thus building both bonding and bridging social capital (Putnam 2000). For example, Duran mentioned that his best friends were Turkish, but he also had a good friend from Poland:

R: What do you like doing in your free time?

D: I like to talk to my friends after lessons. I also have a good friend from a different class, [who I] meet on breaks. I like to meet my friends the most.

R: Who are your friends?

D: Both of my best friends are Turkish. But, as I said, I have a friend from a different class, he is Polish, and likes Turks a lot. That's why he treats us well. We also like him. (Duran)

Mixed socialization strategy

The results also indicated that migrant children do not use just one peer socialization strategy, which can be changed along the socialization process, but are also likely to apply different strategies at the same time. Firstly, children search for the appropriate means of socialization with different peer groups in various contexts. The case of Olga, a 12-year-old girl from Ukraine, depicted how children negotiate their peer relationships while aiming to fulfill their spiritual needs, share their interests, and reinforce their educational achievements.

Olga described how multiple changes in her family and her parents' employment led to numerous changes of setting. She attended three different kindergartens, two schools in her home country, and two schools in Poland. Olga was aware of her problems in maintaining long-term relationships with peers; thus, when joining a new school, she set herself the task of making a friend:

R: What kind of peer relationships did you have in your previous school?

O: It was very difficult to find out, but the class just didn't like me.

R: What about your new school?

O: At the beginning of the year, when I came, there was a girl in the class, she is Polish. And when I saw her, I set myself a task: I want to be her best friend because she's a copy of me, [she] just looks a little different. And she also likes to do TikTok, that's all. She also studies English. She goes to extra English lessons. At first, it was...not very good, but now it is very good, and we are best friends. I'm very happy. (Olga, UA, 12 years old/4 in PL).

Further, Olga's mother mentioned that her daughter had created relationship ties with peers regardless of their ethnicity or age. Thus, Olga had friends who were Polish, Ukrainian, German, and Vietnamese. She also shared her hobby of drawing with the other children online.

For example, here at school, she [Olga] communicates with girls who are Polish, she also goes to the Ukrainian [weekend] school, [where] there are Ukrainian girls. Now she thinks,

"Oh, maybe I'll meet friends from the previous school..." Well, she does not choose those [friends] or those [nationalities]. She loves everyone...She has friends whom she has never seen. She makes...drawings, and she found girls with the same interests.

R: On the Internet?

Yes. They are from different countries. Sometimes they chat. What I like is that she practices her English. They even organize some teleconferences and discuss things. They call each other, and she says, "Mom, do not disturb me, I have a teleconference." (Iryna, UA, Olga's mother)

To summarize, the results indicate that migrant children become active agents in the process of peer socialization, in which they take different strategies. To fulfill their own needs and interests, children also tend to apply different techniques to maintain contact with the same or different peer groups. It was also noted that migrant children from neighboring countries, namely Ukraine, Lithuania, and Romania (Michele's mother is Ukrainian), were more likely to build bridging social capital with children from other ethnic groups, including Polish children. Migrant children from Turkey, in contrast, were more likely to remain in their ethnic groups, at least at the beginning of the socialization process, due to their lack of foreign language skills, cultural differences, and parents' methods of building social capital.

Discussion

This study analyzed the socialization strategies of migrant children in Poland through the lens of two types of social capital, bonding and bridging, proposed by Putnam (2000). The research outcomes indicate that migrant children tend to use various ways to build and maintain relationships with peers and friends in the host country, the most common of which can be classified as spiritual, interest, prospect, and mixed strategies.

Due to the differences between the Polish and Turkish languages and cultures, migrant children from Turkey demonstrated a high necessity for emotional support during the transnational transitions (Pustułka & Trąbka 2019). On the contrary, those children who did not experience hardship in language socialization (Moskal & Sime 2017; Titzmann & Silbereisen 2009) were able to socialize in a shorter time, and, thus, were more likely to concentrate on building their bridging social capital (Putnam 2000). It was also shown that some parents impose certain socialization strategies upon their children (e.g. Mehmet and Duran), which are aimed at speeding up socialization and improving the child's societal knowledge. Consequently, migrant children are drawn from their "ethnic bubble" and establish a prospect-based socialization strategy.

This study also demonstrates that the most favorable socialization strategy was the interest strategy, which tends to fulfill children's emotional needs and help them develop the necessary social skills for adapting in a new country. Moreover, the

interest-based socialization strategy enables children to build and develop their own skills and hobbies and favors transnational transitions (Pustułka & Trąbka 2019).

The outcomes, however, demonstrate that children become active agents in negotiating their relationships with adults and peers through combining different strategies, though the preference for a strategy depends on the variables, such as age, gender, and ethnicity. Hence, primary school migrant children (aged 8–10) are more flexible in maintaining peer and friend relationships than older migrant children (aged 11–13). This further confirms that friendship becomes more important during adolescence (Titzmann 2014), while younger children depend, to a greater extent, on their parents' and teachers' decisions (Deslandes et al. 2012; Perez-Felkner 2013; Strzemecka 2015). Older children are also more likely to possess their own digital device, and, thus, have more opportunities to establish contacts with peers through these media or by arranging to go out and socialize without being under their parents' control (Reynolds 2007).

However, it should be noted that while friendships can support children's motivation to attend school, they can also prevent them from better educational achievements as children tend to want to spend more time socializing than learning, as noted by Antony, who has been struggling with not having friends in his host country.

Overall, the study confirms that migrant children use different strategies for the socialization process and the formation of their peer cultures (Corsaro & Eder 1990; Devine 2009; Holland et al. 2007; James 2007). The children's agency is key in negotiating peer relationships when children are left alone after being "displaced" by their parents—all the respondents stressed that the decision to migrate was made by the parents, bringing their children along with them to another country (Orellana 2009). Importantly, the study also represents research that adopts the child-centered approach, including active listening (Clark 2004) to children, to guarantee their rights to be heard and represented.

To summarize, the outcomes of this study demonstrate that, despite having no influence on their parents' decision to move to Poland, migrant children shape their own socialization processes by implementing one or more friendship-making strategies. By defining their own needs and possibilities, children use different strategies to establish and maintain peer relations in their home and host countries, or elsewhere, as well as across borders. As such, often perplexing peer relations (Corsaro & Eder 1990) become even more entangled due to the clash of different cultures, languages, experiences, and values.

Some limitations of this study should be noted. The research sample comprised 20 migrant children from different backgrounds and migration contexts. Despite a wide range of ages, genders, ethnicities, social and cultural capitals, and socialization contexts (both private and public schools) in the sample, the study only features a few representatives for all the mentioned groups. Thus, future studies should address the socialization strategies of migrant children in Poland at a greater scale.

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