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Fostering resilience in schools : understanding the role of social capital on the educational outcomes of newcomer youth and implications for policy

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Ryerson University

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**FOSTERING RESILIENCE IN SCHOOLS: UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF
SOCIAL CAPITAL ON THE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES OF NEWCOMER
YOUTH AND IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY**

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By

Kamara Jeffrey, Honours Bachelor of Arts, University of Toronto, 2004

A Major Research Paper
Presented to Ryerson University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
In the Program of
Immigration and Settlement Studies

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FOSTERING RESILIENCE IN SCHOOLS: UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL ON THE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES OF NEWCOMER YOUTH AND IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

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Master of Arts
Immigration and Settlement Studies
Ryerson University

ABSTRACT

This research project synthesizes and analyzes existing research on newcomer and racialized youth within the Ontario school system and assesses some conditions under which the educational system is capable of assisting them in building positive social networks. Using the concept of social capital as a theoretical tool for exploration and policy analysis, this study analyzes two policy initiatives designed for economically disadvantaged children within the elementary school system and considers the implications for applying this policy framework to a secondary school system, while paying specific attention to the risk factors and resilience strategies relevant to newcomer youth in Ontario. Ultimately, this paper aims to bring to light the implications for a context-specific model of social capital accumulation for youth.

Key words:

Immigrant children and youth; risk and resilience; social capital; schools; educational policy.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

1. Coding System Utilized to Identify Themes in Policy Documents

Chapter 1: Introduction

One of the most important ideological premises underlying opportunity for all is the belief that education is the key to upward social and class mobility and a cornerstone of economic stability, particularly for ethnic and racial minorities.¹ In fact, as Horace Mann hopefully suggests, public education may be regarded as the “great equalizer of the conditions of men.”² Given the recent growth of ethno-cultural diversity in Canada, the issue of equity within public institutions continues to emerge as a core public policy concern. Schools are institutions called upon to react and respond to complex challenges imposed by political forces, and to maintain or establish rigorous academic standards while sensitively embracing the differences among students.³ Not surprisingly then, researchers and practitioners have highlighted the necessity of ensuring the successful settlement and adaptation of new immigrant students. Although publicly-funded education systems remain useful institutions through which to observe the existence of ethnic and cultural diversity, statistical data on the educational outcomes of newcomer children and youth suggest that as a political institution, the current educational system in Ontario has had limited success in accommodating and equalizing opportunities for newcomer and visible minority students. Immigrant and refugee students and their parents, particularly in low-income areas, face distinct challenges to successful settlement

¹ Li (1988) as cited in Larry Lam, “Immigrant Students”, Learning and Sociological Profiles of Canadian High School Students: An Overview of 15-18 year Olds and Educational Policy Implications for Dropouts, Exceptional Students, Employed Students, Immigrant Students and Native Youth, ed. P. Anisef (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1994), 121.

² H. Mann, Twelfth Annual Report of Horace Mann as Secretary of Massachusetts State Board of Education, 1848.

³ J. S. Coleman, “Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital,” American Journal of Sociology 94 (1988).

and adaptation within the school system. Moreover, immigration interrupts the flow of social capital, its accessibility, accumulation, and activation, processes that may have long-term effects on children and youth.⁴ In order to ensure the effectiveness of educational policies, it is therefore worthwhile to examine the role that institutions play in the mitigation of negative effects of immigration.

The purpose of this paper is to synthesize and analyze existing research on newcomer and racialized youth within the Ontario school system and to assess some conditions under which the educational system is capable of accommodating these students in order to assist them in building positive social networks. It does so by using the concept of social capital as a theoretical tool for exploration and policy analysis. This study analyzes two policy initiatives designed for economically disadvantaged children within the elementary school system and considers the implications for applying this policy framework to a secondary school system, while paying specific attention to the risk factors and resilience strategies relevant to newcomer youth in Ontario. The core contribution of this project is its examination of the capacity of school systems to encourage social capital accumulation in low-income areas so as to counter the negative socio-demographic and school-related factors which contribute to the social exclusion of immigrant youth. Ultimately, this paper aims to bring to light the implications for a context-specific model of social capital accumulation for youth.

⁴ Gauthier & Pacom, (2001) as cited in J. Voyer, "Foreword," Journal of International Migration and Integration 5, 2 (2004).

Relevance and Rationale

The focus of this project is school responsiveness to immigrant youth aged 15-19. To date, research on immigrant and refugee settlement and adaptation has focused predominantly on adult immigrants. The relative paucity of literature addressing the experiences of newcomer youth in Canada is striking, especially given Canadian youth demographics. Approximately 36 percent of immigrants to Canada are children and youth.⁵ Moreover, 30 percent of the youth population in Toronto is composed of immigrants, and between 1991 and 1996, the number of immigrant youth in Canada increased by 26 percent.⁶ Understanding the adaptation of youth in secondary schools is particularly crucial given the research which has indicated that the influence of concurrent social risk factors is strongest during childhood, as well as during adolescence (at age 16), since important decisions about future careers are made during this period.⁷ Thus, a more concerted effort to understand the intersection of youth issues and immigrant issues is crucial if school policies are to fully reflect the needs of newcomers.

This paper examines policies affecting the social capital accumulation of individuals who are enrolled within the secondary school system for several reasons. First, in addition to providing a locus for academic training, schools are public spaces in which youth form civic identities as either valued and contributing members of society—or as

⁵ OPSBA, "Ontario Public School Boards' Association Position Paper on Second Language Learning in Ontario", November 2005.

⁶ P. Anisef and K. M. Kilbride, Managing Two Worlds: The Experiences and Concerns of Immigrant Youth in Ontario, ed. P. Anisef and K. M. Kilbride (Toronto: Canadian Scholar's Press, 2003), 2.

⁷ I. Schoon and J. Bynner, "Risk and Resilience in the Life Course: Implications for Interventions and Social Policies", Journal Of Youth Studies 6, 1 (2003): 23.

being fundamentally excluded from it. Ultimately, the extent of social inclusion or exclusion within the school environment impacts the ability of students to contribute both economically and socially, and carries serious implications for the likelihood of future involvement in productive or maladaptive behaviours. Second, policies based in schools have particular relevance to newcomer families because schools are among the first institutions encountered by immigrant and refugee youth and their families. As Aronowitz points out, "a school-based program would be in a particularly good position to provide outreach services. Indeed, a school system would seem to be in a unique position to assist migrant families with children, as among the various societal human service institutions, it is the school which is most likely to have the broadest and most immediate contact. Moreover, migrant families are often more ready to accept services provided through this institution than those offered by some other government or non-governmental agency."⁸

A deliberate effort has been made to examine school systems within Ontario; however particular emphasis will be placed on specific Board policies in the Greater Toronto Area, as this is the area in which the vast majority of immigrants to Ontario settle. More specifically, the Toronto District School Board's *Model Schools for Inner City Task Report* and the York Region District School Board's *Performance-Plus Program Handbook* will be discussed and analyzed. Toronto's public schools serve as an extraordinary example of both ethno-cultural and socio-economic diversity: close to half the student body within the jurisdiction of the Toronto District School Board and York Region District School Board are from non-English-speaking families and represent over

⁸ B. Nann, as cited in M. Aronowitz, "The Social and Emotional Adjustment of Immigrant Children: A Review of the Literature", *International Migration Review* 18.2 (1984).

seventy-six different language groups. As well, more than 47,000 students or 24% of elementary students were born outside of Canada in more than 175 different countries, and 11.8% of TDSB secondary students have been in Canada for three years or less.⁹ Thus, given that the variables of socioeconomic status, immigrant status, and ethno-racial background interact to influence the educational outcomes of students, these two Boards serve as particularly interesting vehicles for policy analysis.

Finally, this paper explores the role of social capital on newcomer adaptation. An examination of the implications of social capital on educational policymaking is consistent with the current governmental interest in investigating the utility of social capital as a public policy tool. Gaining an understanding of the process of social network formation, it is believed, will allow governments to harness its potential and achieve specific public policy objectives. According to the Government of Canada Policy Research Initiative, “public policy researchers and practitioners have been keenly interested in social capital precisely because of its promise to provide a means to better identify and understand just how these resources and supports are invested in and developed, how they are accessed, and what kind of benefits flow from them...on the other hand, though recent years have witnessed worldwide interest in social capital’s public policy potential, its usefulness for policy and program development has yet to be fully realized.”¹⁰

⁹ Toronto District School Board, “Equity in Education: Diversity in TDSB”, Retrieved August 12, 2006 from <http://www.tdsb.on.ca/_site/ViewItem.asp?siteid=15&menuid=570&pageid=452>

¹⁰ R. Judge, “Social Capital: Building a Foundation for Research and Policy Development”, *Horizons* 6.3 Retrieved on August 12, 2006 from http://www.policyresearch.gc.ca/page.asp?pagenm=v6n3_art_03

Clarification of Terminology

As with most academic studies, it is helpful to define the employed terminology in order to avoid the conflation of meanings. The term “social capital” has become increasingly popular in social science literature in recent years. In general, it refers to social relationships between individuals and groups which make it possible to achieve specific goals. However, although social scientists tend to measure social capital by the quantity or quality of social relationships and structures, the measures of social capital are indirect, incomplete, and not comprehensive. As such, the term as will be employed in this study will refer generally to social interactions which assist advantageous aspiration and action.

Research in the field has suggested that certain groups, particularly low-income and racial minority groups, are particularly at risk of social exclusion and or limited success in school. Therefore, the term “risk” will be used here to identify relative disadvantage because of factors such as low socio-economic status, visible minority status, poverty, and poor nutrition, which decrease the likelihood of success. Similarly, the term “at-risk” describes individuals who are disadvantaged due to these factors. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defines children and youth “at risk” as “those failing in school and unsuccessful in making the transition to work and adult life and as a consequence...unlikely to be able to make a full contribution to active

society”¹¹. Likewise, The Ontario Ministry of Education defines “at-risk” youth within the school system as secondary students who are performing significantly below the provincial standard, earning marks in the 50s and low 60s, and who do not have the foundations to be successful in the new curriculum or to complete their secondary school education.¹² It is important to note, however, that not all newcomer and minority youth are at risk; it is a relative term which aims at identifying socio-economic and individual factors resulting in exclusion from society.

Analytical Frameworks

1) *Risk-Resilience*: Much of the theory on the wellbeing of newcomer and at-risk youth is informed by the concept of group and individual resilience in the face of disadvantage and adversity. Steinhauer defines resilience as the ability to achieve positive adaptation “in the face of severe stress and/or the ability of the stressed person to rebound to the pre-stress level of adaptation.”¹³ Conversely, those who cannot positively adapt in the face of adversity have a higher vulnerability to risk. Positive adaptation is usually defined in terms of manifested competence, or success, in achieving the appropriate developmental tasks at different stages in life.¹⁴ Thus, the risk-resilience framework stresses the importance of formal policy interventions and strategies to counteract negative risk factors such as low socioeconomic status, minority status, and stage in the

¹¹ Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development, Our Children At Risk (London: OECD, 1995).

¹² Ontario Ministry of Education At-Risk Working Group, “A Successful Pathway For All Students: Final Report”, January 2003.

¹³ Steinhauer, as cited in Kilbride, K. M. and Anisef, P. To Build on Hope: Overcoming the Challenges Facing Newcomer Youth At Risk in Ontario (Toronto: Joint Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement, 2001).

¹⁴ Schoon and Bynner, 22.

settlement process. It is noted that “risk fluctuates over time, based on circumstances and contexts, rather than being a fixed quality...exposure to multiple risk factors increases one’s likelihood of experiencing problematic outcomes.”¹⁵ Presumably, placing as much emphasis on competences, resources, skills, and assets as on the emergence of risk itself has some practical utility; it may assist in the design and delivery of intervention efforts aimed at offsetting risk factors, and, in some cases, even preventing their development.¹⁶ Further, resilience provides a construct which aids in an understanding of processes unique to the immigrant experience, namely the process of adapting to a new environment at a time of great stress.¹⁷ This policy analysis will therefore employ a risk-resilience framework to identify the protective factors which can modify the negative effects of risk faced by newcomer youth.

2) *Social Capital*: The social capital framework also offers considerable analytic utility, as it provides a useful vehicle for understanding access to resources which are critical to success. In fact, the degree to which groups are socially integrated or socially excluded is perhaps the most central predictor of their ability to utilize social capital.¹⁸ Moreover, youth have access to resources based on the extent to which their families and communities have such resources to offer them. However, not all families and immigrant communities are supported by robust networks of resources.¹⁹ The social capital theoretical

¹⁵ Community Health Systems Resource Group-Hospital for Sick Children, Early School Leavers: Understanding the Lived Reality of Student Disengagement from Secondary School (Toronto, Canada: Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, Special Education Branch, 2005), 4.

¹⁶ Schoon and Bynner, 22.

¹⁷ Anderson, A. et al., "Education of Refugee Children: Theoretical Perspectives and Best Practice," Educational Interventions for Refugee Children : Theoretical Perspectives and Implementing Best Practice, ed. Richard J. Hamilton and Dennis Moore (New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2004).

¹⁸ L. Tossutti, "A Tradition of Social Capital in Minority Communities," Canadian Diversity 2.1, 2003.

¹⁹ Anisef and Kilbride, 18.

framework is utilized because resilience is linked to access to robust social networks and resources, also referred to as social capital. As such, consensus within the literature on the elements most conducive to the enhancement of social capital will be the basis for the subsequent analysis of documents.

Methodology and MRP Outline

A qualitative, rather than quantitative method of inquiry is utilized in this study for a few reasons. First, there is no definitive method of measuring social capital, nor is there a method used to measure the accumulation of social capital over time.²⁰ Moreover, social networks, interactions and partnerships do not function in a vacuum, and thus the presence (or not) of social capital can typically explain only a moderate amount of variance in particular outcomes.²¹ Other factors, such as agency and personal and familial aspirations have a significant impact on educational outcomes for youth.²² Finally, conducting an evaluation of the two program initiatives which would simultaneously meet the current methodological standards for scientifically reliable program evaluations was unfeasible in this study. Due to time constraints, quantitative data on the measurable outputs of the *Performance-Plus* program were inaccessible. Furthermore, at time of this research the TDSB *Model Schools for Inner City* initiative was in its earliest stages of implementation, and therefore an outcome-based analysis is not yet possible.

²⁰ J. B. Richardson, "Social Capital and the Impact of Violence", Marginality, Power, and Social Structure: Issues in Race, Class, and Gender Analysis (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2005).

²¹ TDSB Model Schools for Inner Cities Task Force, "Model Schools for Inner City Task Report", May 2005.

²² C. Raffo and M. Reeves, "Youth Transitions and Social Exclusion: Developments in Social Capital Theory", Journal of Youth Studies 3.2 (2000).

As such, this study does not attempt to quantify or explain the formation of the social networks and interactions produced by newcomer youth within the school system; nor does it seek to conduct an outcome-based quantitative program evaluation of either school board initiative. What this study attempts to do however, is contribute to an understanding of the ways in which mainstream institutional policies may successfully create new social networks or tap into those which already exist within the school environment. Through a qualitative analysis of themes present in the relevant literature and selected documents, this project attempts to refine the concept of social capital in order to highlight its functional and practical elements.

The content analysis approach to policy studies examines the occurrence of selected themes within a text or texts. This method is often used to make inferences about the messages within documents and to identify the intentions or focus of an individual, group or institution.²³ In employing this approach, researchers typically quantify and analyze the presence, meanings, and relationships of words and concepts; these themes may be implicit as well as explicit.²⁴ Thus, the objective here is to reveal the underlying goals and approaches of the York Region District School Board and the Toronto District School Board: the former document outlines the guidelines for an existing program, while the latter clarifies the principles of a proposed initiative. The coding of phrases and terms within the policy documents emerges from the identification of three key requirements for social capital accumulation, as understood within the mainstream literature. The three common

²³ Robert Philip Weber, *Basic Content Analysis* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1985).

²⁴ Busch, C. et al., "Content Analysis", Colorado State University Department of English_2003. Retrieved on May 22, 2006 from <<http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/research/content/>>

characteristics for social capital are: norms, trust, and shared values*; the existence of partnerships; and access to resources.²⁵ This project observes the existence and frequency of these themes based on an implicit assumption that frequency of themes and ideas signify importance or relevance for the producers of a text. It is important to note however that while explicit terms are relatively easy to identify, a major limitation of this methodology is the fact that coding for implicit terms and deciding their level of implication is complicated by the need to base judgments on a somewhat subjective coding system.²⁶

This research project addresses the following questions: 1) What are the structural barriers to educational adaptation and success among newcomer youth? 2) To what extent may school policies foster resilience and improve the well-being of newcomer youth thorough the application of social capital theory to educational policy-making?

Chapters two and three provide a comprehensive review of the key themes in the literature on social exclusion, youth at risk, and the protective value of social capital. The review examines key tensions and accords in the literature, specifically as they relate to social network-building as an institutional response to risk arising from socioeconomic and minority status. The specific focus of the literature review is (1) social and economic exclusion and marginalization of racialized and newcomer communities in Ontario and its implications for newcomer youth (2) the concept of social capital as a protective asset which enhances resilience to adverse circumstances and facilitates newcomer adaptation. Consideration of this prior research in the field with an emphasis on Canadian and Ontario

²⁵ See Appendix A for coding system utilized for identifying themes in documents

²⁶ Busch, C. et al.

literature will provide a backdrop of the broader social, political, and economic factors influencing educational outcomes of youth. I draw from this broad literature base to make the argument that young people's agency and resilience to risk is conditioned to a large extent by the characteristics of their individualized systems of social capital.²⁷

Chapter four undertakes an analysis and comparison of two distinct school board policy documents which outline resiliency-building initiatives for at-risk children in the elementary school system. The policies analyzed are: 1) The Toronto District School Board's *Model Schools for Inner City Task Report*, and 2) York Region District School Board *Performance-Plus Program Handbook*. The documents have been selected based on their foundation in the risk-resilience approaches to intervention and their intended policy outcomes of reducing the impact of socioeconomic disadvantage within schools. Ultimately, examination of the content of these policies will assess the extent to which they constitute viable models for youth social capital accumulation. More importantly, given that the predicament of both newcomers to Canada and individuals living in poverty are converging, such a policy analysis will also examine the extent to which parallels between socioeconomic disadvantage and newcomer social exclusion within the school system may be made in order to inform educational policy.

The fifth chapter discusses the implications of the social capital approach for educational policymaking; specifically in the context of immigrant youth aged 15-19. While *Performance-Plus* and *Model Schools for Inner City* guidelines are useful vehicles through which to examine the practical application of social capital on risk created by socioeconomic

²⁷ Raffo and Reeves, 148.

context and other forms of disadvantage, these policies were designed specifically for elementary school students and thus do not take into account the unique predicament of newcomer youth. This study therefore engages with recently collected data and literature on the experiences and concerns of immigrant youth in Ontario and proposes recommendations toward a model of social capital accumulation that is youth-specific. It concludes with a summary of findings and ultimately argues that while programs and initiatives do exist which accentuate the importance of norms, school-community partnerships, and positive social networks in fostering resilience, efforts must be made to develop similar programs which are youth-specific, and which formally articulate mechanisms for addressing and engaging the needs of immigrant and refugee youth.

Chapter 2: Social and Economic Exclusion of Newcomers and Implications for Youth

Social Exclusion and the Racialization of Poverty

A significant body of literature exists on the concept of social, political, and economic exclusion of newcomer and visible minority communities. The common thread in all accounts is that the resulting exclusion and marginalization is linked to an inadequate realization of social rights. In general, the literature holds that the process of social exclusion leads to various forms of economic, social, and cultural disadvantage. According to Evans, there are four dimensions of social exclusion: exclusion from civic integration, the labour market, welfare state provision, and family and community.²⁸ Thus, factors such as health, education, income, access to services, housing, debt, quality of life, dignity, and autonomy, interact to result in various forms and degrees of social exclusion.²⁹ The foundations of such social exclusion processes are laid down early in life through exposure to risk factors identified with adverse circumstances at both home and school.³⁰ Ultimately, children and youth who experience social exclusion pose challenges to society because they grow up with little stake in the existing social order.³¹

One of the most commonly cited sources of disadvantage is economic exclusion due to poverty. Recent studies in immigrant poverty have indicated that there continues to be a

²⁸ L. G. Gingrich, "Theorizing Social Exclusion: Determinants, Mechanisms, Dimensions, Forms and Acts of Resistance", *Emerging Perspectives on Anti-Oppressive Practice*, ed. Wes Shera (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 2003), 3.

²⁹ Gingrich, 4.

³⁰ Schoon and Bynner, 22.

³¹ Anisef and Kilbride, 21.

significant increase in poverty amongst racialized immigrant groups.³² In comparison to earlier cohorts of immigrants, research suggests that recent immigrants are increasingly more economically and socially vulnerable than their predecessors. Historically, immigrants to Canada have demonstrated consistent and persistent earnings patterns in the labour market. Compared to the average native-born resident, immigrants earned less upon arrival, but their incomes rose rapidly through the initial years. After 10 to 14 years, they caught up to or surpassed the Canadian employment earnings average. As well, economic class immigrants have historically obtained average earnings equivalent to or greater than, the average earnings of the native born as soon as one year after arrival. Despite higher average educational attainments however, the experiences of immigrants who landed in the 1990s contrasts with this historical trend, and this has resulted in both the labour-force and residential segregation of newcomers.³³ Additionally, the statistical data indicates that recent immigrants also have lower rates of employment than those of comparable native-born residents and these rates declined markedly between 1986 and 1996.³⁴ As a result, poverty rates among recent immigrants have increased from 24% in 1980 to 35.8% in 2000.³⁵ Even more disturbing however, is the fact that the working poor are increasing in number, earning less, and facing extremely limited earnings mobility which reduces over time.³⁶

³² G. Galabuzi, "Canada's Creeping Economic Apartheid: The Economic Segregation and Social Marginalization of Racialized Groups," (Toronto: CJS Foundation for Research & Education, 2001) ; M. Ornstein, Ethno-Racial Groups in Toronto, 1971-2001: A Demographic and Socio-Economic Profile (Toronto: Institute for Social Research, York University, 2006).

³³ Human Resources Development Canada, "Recent Immigrants Have Experienced Unusual Economic Difficulties," Applied Research Bulletin 7.1: 7.

³⁴ S. Kassim and L. Rothman, "Immigrant Poverty in Canada: Focus on Toronto" (Toronto: Family Service Association of Toronto, 2000).

³⁵ F. Hou and G. Picot, "The Rise of Low Income Rates Among Immigrants in Canada" (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, June 2003), 10.

³⁶ D. Herd, "Rhetoric and Retrenchment: 'Common Sense' Welfare Reform in Ontario," Benefits 34.10 (2002).

Indeed, the educational attainments of immigrant adults is often not rewarded or recognized. The literature suggests that this has a significant impact on children and youth. To illustrate, Jackson and Scott have argued that the conditions for youth social inclusion or exclusion are determined in large part by the labour force experiences of their parents. Essentially, they contend that children thrive when their parents have stable family incomes and are able to make a positive contribution to their communities.³⁷ Thus, given that many immigrant parents hold precarious jobs and work in professions unrelated to prior training, the structure and functioning of the contemporary labour market in Canada increasingly works against the creation of inclusive conditions and circumstances for children and youth. As well, it is likely that discrimination in the labour market, which is evident in disparities in employment income and occupational status, also affects the motivation of children to capture educational opportunities in Canada. According to Lam, "the low socioeconomic background of many students may be a result of their parent's marginalized employment in Canada's ethnically stratified labour market...moreover, a significant portion of these youth may feel pressured by a sense of familial obligation to enter the labour market, rather than increase the burden on an already strained family income. This may result in a decision to leave school prematurely, and may contradict their parents' primary intention for emigrating-to provide them with an opportunity to acquire post-secondary education."³⁸ Coleman also points out that children are strongly influenced by the human capital of their parents.³⁹ Thus, existing research on school success seems to suggest significant relationships between

³⁷ A. Jackson and K. Scott, "Does Work Include Children? The Effects of the Labour Market on Family Income, Time and Stress" (Toronto: Laidlaw Foundation, 2002).

³⁸ Lam, 125.

³⁹ Coleman, 120.

levels of parental schooling, occupation, and revenue to student performance in both immigrant and non-immigrant families.

Moreover, since most recent immigrants to Canada have come from non-European countries previously deemed “undesirable” by earlier generations,⁴⁰ this economic segregation has taken a racialized form. Galabuzi and others have noted that recent immigration has seen the persistent overrepresentation of racialized groups in low paying occupations and low income sectors, higher unemployment, poverty and social marginalization.⁴¹ Thus, in addition to labour market segregation, residential segregation has accompanied this increased racialization of poverty. The increase in racially homogeneous neighbourhoods with high poverty levels in Canada’s urban housing market is striking. The demographic data indicates that with current mobility trends, racialized groups will soon form economically disadvantaged majorities in some of Canada’s major urban centres. As a result of fears by many landlords that “undesirables” in a neighbourhood depress property values, many immigrants from racialized groups report difficulty in securing affordable housing, often leading to their overrepresentation in substandard housing. As well, like most economically vulnerable individuals, those who fall into this category are also hampered by high rents.

Consideration of the data on social exclusion which manifests in the racialization of poverty and residential segregation also requires an examination of the extent to which low-

⁴⁰ N. Kelley and M. Trebilcock. The Making of the Mosaic History of Canadian Immigration Policy (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1998), 315.

⁴¹ Galabuzi (2001); Kassim and Rothman (2005).

income neighbourhoods are more, less, or equally likely to contain avenues for social capital accumulation. According to Liviana Tossutti's study on the associational life of minority communities, the intersection of socio-economic status and ethnicity does indeed have an impact on the type of social capital: "the analysis of sub-samples of immigrants demonstrated that an understanding of social capital in Canada's ethnocultural communities is often contingent on how immigrant status intersects with other identity markers."⁴² Similarly, Galabuzi also argues that the quality of a neighbourhood significantly affects the life chances of its residents.⁴³ Kazemipur and Halli also note the impact that poverty has on group ability to form social networks for the purpose of improving socio-economic status: "the overrepresentation of racialized groups in poor neighbourhoods...impedes the opportunities of future generations by limiting access to networks in which, for instance, job opportunities are routinely presented through word of mouth."⁴⁴ This suggests that the ability of communities to tap into robust and beneficial social networks is a function of their local contexts, and by extension, the community resources available to them. Research conducted by Fong and Gulia supports also supports this view. Using the 1991 Census data from the United States, their research considers the effects of socio-economic resources on neighbourhood qualities among racial and ethnic groups. Their study shows that groups with lighter skin colour reside in better neighbourhoods than groups with darker skin colour.⁴⁵ Fong and Gulia conclude that differences in the neighbourhood qualities of racial groups are influenced by resources, acculturation and locational stratification that reflect the

⁴² Tossutti, 17

⁴³ Galabuzi, 76.

⁴⁴ Kazemipur and Halli (2000), as cited in Galabuzi, 79.

⁴⁵ Galabuzi, 71.

discriminatory experiences of some of the groups in the housing market.⁴⁶ Consequently, “poor communities are often characterized as resource deprived, and this translates into few sources of community-based social capital for families to draw upon that will foster the escape from poverty.”⁴⁷ These studies suggest that not only does poverty determine the extent of tangible and indirect resources for individuals and families, but it also limits the likelihood that these resources will be available within entire geographic communities.

Non-School-Related Risk Factors for Youth

Given the links between poverty and low levels of social capital and the fact that students are assigned school based on geographic neighbourhood, it is not surprising that racialized poverty has a considerable impact on the educational outcomes of newcomer and visible minority youth. In fact, there exists considerable literature on the reproduction of social inequalities as part of school life. Research on the educational outcomes of at-risk youth has examined academic performance in low income schools as compared to non low-income schools. For example, a study by Human Resources Development Canada found that schools in neighbourhoods with fewer resources have more children who perform poorly on measures of cognitive, social and physical development than schools situated in communities richer in facilities, including libraries, parks and family resource centres.⁴⁸ Additionally, Anisef and Bunch, among others, have noted a high correlation between socioeconomic status and academic performance. They have argued that low-income

⁴⁶ Fong and Gulia (1995), as cited in Galabuzi, 76.

⁴⁷ United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, “Social Capital and Poverty Reduction: Which Role for Civil Society Organizations and the State?” (Paris: UNESCO, 2002).

⁴⁸ Human Resources Development Canada, “Building and Understanding of the Relationship Between Children and Their Communities,” Applied Research Bulletin 7.1 (2001).

households often cannot provide an environment conducive to learning since many of these children consume less nutritional foods, have less access to private space for homework, are less likely to own computers.⁴⁹ Presumably, the overrepresentation of racialized groups and immigrants in poor neighbourhoods acts as a barrier to their economic success as a whole and hampers children's educational opportunities.

In a slightly different vein, Hertzman⁵⁰ has pointed out that the social exclusion of children and youth works through an interplay of conditions in addition to poverty and unemployment. Hertzman's model includes several other variables that influence the incidence of risk, including attitudes (such as fear of differences and racism within society), and processes (such as marginalization and institutionalization). Hertzman's analysis is echoed by many newcomer youth in Ontario, who have cited acculturation and resettlement difficulties such as the need to learn a new language, linguistic difficulties, and language barriers as contributing to their difficulties with school adaptation.⁵¹ Immigrant status is another variable which plays a role in determining a student's level of risk. In particular, there is a relatively new category of immigrant families known as Government Assisted Refugees (GARs). These newcomers are selected to reside in Canada based on humanitarian grounds. As a result, many GARs are poor, have low levels of education, minimal life-skills suited to the Canadian context, and do not speak

⁴⁹ P. Anisef and M. Bunch, "Introduction," Learning and Sociological Profiles of Canadian High School Students, ed. P. Anisef (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1994).

⁵⁰ C. Hertzman, "Leave No Child Behind! Social Exclusion and Child Development" (Toronto: Laidlaw Foundation, 2002).

⁵¹ Community Health Systems Resource Group, Hospital for Sick Children (2005) ;Anisef and Kilbride (2003).

either English or French and are often illiterate in their first language.⁵² In addition, a large number of school-aged GARs have grown up in refugee camps and have never been to school, which poses serious challenges for school systems. In effect, this demonstrates, as Hertzman suggests, how in addition to the challenges presented by economic hardship, there is serious potential for institutional marginalization due to multiple risk factors.

Indeed, not all of the literature makes a clear link between poverty and the educational outcomes of newcomers. A recent qualitative study by the Hospital for Sick Children's Community Health Systems Resource Group suggests that although many newcomer families live in low-income areas:

"The downward social mobility and non-recognition of professional credentials experienced by many newcomers to Canada are unfortunate aspects of the migration experience, and do not, in and of themselves, necessarily translate into educational disadvantage [for youth]. However, the concomitant need to have both parents working more than one job and/or seeking additional training or re-qualification, can translate into relatively less parental supervision as well as increased youth responsibility for childcare of younger family members, household responsibilities, and family financial contributions."

Clearly, while researchers advance divergent opinions about whether economic, institutional, or individual factors play a larger role in determining the level of risk or underperformance in schools, all concede that the consequences of non school-related social exclusion, influenced by immigrant or minority status and socioeconomic status, can

⁵² OPSBA. "Ontario Public School Boards' Association Position Paper on Second Language Learning in Ontario", November 2005.

be devastating for children and youth: they are more likely to have diminished life experiences, suffer a lack of recognition and acceptance within the school system.⁵³

School-Related Risk Factors for Youth

There are several risk factors within the school system that have a significant impact on newcomer educational outcomes. First, newcomer youth (many of whom are racialized) face discrimination and racism within the school environment. Paul Anisef and Mary Bunch contend that visible minority youth as a group face unique problems within the school system; this is due to the discriminatory attitudes of many teachers as well as the organizational structure of schools where achievement or success among minority youth is not encouraged.⁵⁴ Further, respondents from the Hospital for Sick Children study spoke of a school climate in which “stereotypes, prejudice, racism, and differential treatment were common and left unchallenged. Repeated exposure to negative messages was cited as particularly demoralizing.”⁵⁵ Not surprisingly, racialized youth are often overrepresented in reports of poor class performance, behavioural problems, and early drop out rates due to these discriminatory attitudes within schools.

The literature further suggests that school policy (or lack of policy margins) pose problems for newcomer youth. The Ministry provides school boards with approximately \$225 million a year of English as a Second Language (ESL) and English Literacy

⁵³ Hertzman C. (2002).

⁵⁴ Anisef and Bunch (1994).

⁵⁵ Community Health Systems Resource Group, Hospital for Sick Children, 33.

Development (ELD). However, a report by the Auditor General notes that in many schools more than half of the ESL/ELD funding is spent in areas other than ESL.⁵⁶ Moreover, the Ministry of Education has limited information on how much school boards were actually spending on ESL/ELD programs, because this information is not required by any specific policy. In addition to this, Anisef and Kilbride report that English as a Second Language classes may isolate and alienate newcomer youth within the school environment.⁵⁷ This is especially pertinent in the context of adolescents, who define themselves to a large extent by their ability to relate to peers. Newcomer students in the secondary school system cited also inappropriate linguistic assessment and non-recognition of prior educational achievements as presenting major barriers to their school success. Ultimately, they report, this translates into rigid age-grade placement practices regardless of prior educational achievements.⁵⁸ The risk factors are further compounded by factors such as whether an immigrant or refugee has experienced the trauma of war, separation and persecution. Other risk factors associated with poor academic outcomes articulated by early school leavers of all backgrounds include perceptions of an ineffective discipline system, lack of adequate counseling/referral, negative school climate, lack of relevant curriculum, and disregard of student learning styles by classroom teachers.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Office of the Auditor General of Ontario, "English as a Second Language and English Literacy Development," 2005. Retrieved on May 14, 2006 from http://www.auditor.on.ca/en/reports_en/en05/307en05.pdf

⁵⁷ Anisef and Kilbride, 239.

⁵⁸ Community Health Systems Resource Group, Hospital for Sick Children, 33.

⁵⁹ Community Health Systems Resource Group, Hospital for Sick Children.

It is important to note that despite the prevalence of multiple school and non-school related risk factors, the outcomes of youth are by no means entirely predictable. A number of studies have demonstrated the capacity of human beings to overcome extreme adversity and to show positive adaptation in the face of adversity, or demonstrate resilience.⁶⁰ However, when these difficulties do manifest within the school environment, access to specific subject choices and career advice at school, and by extension youth labour market opportunities and outcomes are severely limited. The subsequent section reviews the literature on one such strategy for resilience, the development of social capital in order to aid in adaptation and positive action.

⁶⁰ Schoon and Bynner, 21.

Chapter 3: The Role of Social Capital in Fostering Resilience

Defining Social Capital

Given the elusive nature of the term, it is not surprising that social scientists have advanced differing explanations for the term 'social capital'. Despite the variation in points of emphasis, these accounts suggest that the necessary requirements for the production of social capital may be classified into the notions of norms and shared values, partnerships, and access to resources. Indeed, several scholars emphasize that inherent in social capital are elements of trust, norms, and the common good. For example, Robert Putnam, in explaining the concept in his book *Making Democracy Work*, refers to social organizational features that include "trust, norms and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions". He argues that the most important of these features is trust, as obligations and reciprocal relations determine the extent of civic engagement, which in turn determines the well-being of a nation.⁶¹ Similarly, Cox's definition echoes this notion of norms and reciprocal relations. He defines social capital as "the factor that allows collective action in the public sphere and for the common good."⁶² In short, a group within which there is extensive trustworthiness and extensive trust is able to accomplish much more than a comparable group without that trustworthiness and trust.

⁶¹ R. Putnam, as cited in Anisef and Bunch (1994).

⁶² Pooley, J.A. et al., "Can Sense of Community Inform Social Capital?" Social Science Journal 42.1.

Other scholars have expanded the concept of trust and shared norms to emphasize the importance of sustained human relations⁶³ and partnerships and thus regard social capital primarily in terms of particular social structures, referred to as social networks.⁶⁴ For example, Jacobs and Tillie regard strength of associational life as a key factor determining whether a minority group has built social capital. For them, the key indicator for strong associational life is the density of social networks: the denser the network of associations of a particular ethnic group (that is, the larger the number of individuals), the more political trust they have and the more they will participate politically. These social structures may be formal or informal connections. Membership in organizations such as parent associations or labour unions is formally organized with recognized officers, membership requirement, dues and regular meetings. Informal networks include family dinners and gatherings at pubs.⁶⁵

Yet another group of scholars prefer a functional definition of social capital whereby it consists of those social resources that enable cooperation and collective action.⁶⁶ Capital has been traditionally been understood as a resource which one might invest and develop, and which may be then employed to generate a future flow of benefits.⁶⁷ In this vein, Putnam has argued that social capital can enhance collaboration within a nation and thus ultimately has the function of strengthening its democratic institutions. Interestingly,

⁶³ D. Jacobs and J. Tillie, "Introduction: Social Capital and Political Integration of Migrants," Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 30.3: 420.

⁶⁴ Judge, (2006).

⁶⁵ Tossutti, (2003).

⁶⁶ Judge, (2006).

⁶⁷ Judge, (2006).

Coleman's definition identifies social capital as social structures which make it possible not just to achieve goals at the nation-state level, but also at the local level. According to Coleman, social capital is a concept, paralleling the concepts of financial capital, physical capital, and human capital—but embodied in relations among persons.⁶⁸ He argues that communities with high social capital can offer a variety of supports and constraints that assist advantageous aspiration and action. Thus, James "Social capital is defined by its function...Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that in its absence would not be possible."⁶⁹ However, there are some limitations to the functionality of social capital, as it is not an unqualified good in all situations: "social capital is not completely fungible, but may be specific to certain activities. A given form of social capital that is valuable in facilitating certain actions may be useless or even harmful in others."⁷⁰

In short, the literature distinguishes two components of social capital: the first is the social networks themselves, which people inherit and cultivate within a social context. The second is the *ability* of groups to actually draw upon resources arising from these networks when pursuing social and economic goals.⁷¹ Yet, the components that demarcate the literature are inter-related: those who take a functional approach to social capital often simultaneously identify social networks as the unit through which to pursue common objectives.⁷²

⁶⁸ Coleman (1988).

⁶⁹ Raffo and Reeves, 151.

⁷⁰ Coleman, (1988).

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Judge, (2006).

Forms of Social Capital: Bonding, Bridging, and Linking

The preceding section aimed at defining and illustrating social capital in general. However, several scholars have been concerned with the practical utility of social capital as both a collective and individual resource. Both Putnam and Hebert regard the forms which social interactions take as most important in determining the function of social capital. This is in sharp contrast to Jacob and Tillie's explanation, which focuses solely on quantity (the number of social networks that are made available). It is argued that these forms of social networks shape the integration of immigrants and establish their future patterns of social capital accumulation and uses.⁷³ According to Robert Putnam,⁷⁴ ethnic group social capital can be demarcated into separate categories, one of which brings together people who share common socio-demographic characteristics (including ethnicity), and helps them to act cohesively. Bonding links presuppose geographical proximity, frequent interactions, and greater functional specificity for strong ties that form among people who have opportunities to get to know each other well.⁷⁵ For example, James Coleman examined how social capital in tightly bonded communities helped support family and community expectations for their children's education and thereby reduced high school dropout rates.⁷⁶

⁷³ Voyer, 233.

⁷⁴ R. Putnam, "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital," Journal of Democracy 6 (1995).

⁷⁵ Voyer, 233.

⁷⁶ Judge, (2006).

The second category is “bridging” social capital, which develops bridges between individuals or groups, enabling them to move beyond their particular setting. The acquaintances involved in bridging relations would be at greater social and geographic distance and know each other less well, but would be more likely to provide greater access to information and diverse people, resulting in a broadening of horizons. He further notes that in the context of immigration, it consists of networks which bridge minority groups to the institutions within the host society. Finally, “linking” relations, as noted by Woolcock, refer to vertical dimensions within a hierarchy where there are differing levels of power between different social classes and groups. The latter two types of links, bridging and linking, are of critical importance to immigrants in the process of integration, for they enhance autonomy and access to a range of resources.⁷⁷ Further, these types of networks assist in accessing support from formal institutions.

Social Capital and Resilience

It is suggested that high levels of social capital increase civic engagement and inclusion for minority groups and newcomers by counteracting the negative effects associated with isolation, and in the case of immigrants, adaptation. Woolcock and Narayan explain that “the basic idea of social capital is that a person’s family, friends and associates constitute an important asset, one that can be called on in a crisis, enjoyed for its own sake, and leveraged for gain. Moreover, the authors argue that what is true for

⁷⁷ Voyer, 233.

individuals is also true for communities: those with a stronger stock of social capital are able to negotiate the various challenges they may face more effectively. Empirical evidence on newcomer settlement has suggests that historically, formal and informal organizations have been particularly useful to newcomers. They have helped to satisfy immediate material needs, protect civil and legal rights, and preserve minority language and traditions.⁷⁸ Moreover, scholars have argued that the aforementioned “bridging” social capital has been of particular assistance; it is of “critical importance to immigrants in the process of integration, for [it] enhances autonomy and access to a range of resources.”⁷⁹ However, it is important to note that “bridging social capital” is not an unqualified good. In a pluralist society, one must be mindful of the way in which the dominant institutions determine the legitimacy of minority group representation and engagement, or networks across different groups may result in assimilation rather than integration. The availability of emotional and practical supports has a unique impact on youth resilience and success. Contemporary studies on the educational adaptation of immigrant youth have examined the role of social capital in youth academic outcomes. In general, these studies have found that low levels of both bonding and bridging social capital within ethnocultural groups result in low academic outcomes. In fact, both Bankston and Gibson hold that those at highest risk for failure in school are those who feel disenfranchised from their own culture⁸⁰ and at the same time are experiencing pressure from mainstream society.

⁷⁸ Tossutti, (2003).

⁷⁹ Voyer, 232.

⁸⁰ Deyhle (1995) as cited in Kilbride and Anisef, (2001).

Conversely, while groups who demonstrate low levels of social capital tend to under - perform, research has revealed that groups possessing high levels of social capital are able to succeed academically. Scholars⁸¹ have suggested that the extent of bonding (as distinct from bridging) social capital within communities is significant in determining the educational attainments of immigrant groups. Using a case study of Vietnamese youth in the United States, Bankston,⁸² argues that several aspects of an immigrant culture work as social capital to affect the adaptation experiences of immigrant youth. Furthermore, he asserts that Vietnamese students who possess a strong association with traditional values, commitment to a strong work ethic, and significant involvement in the ethnic community, tend to perform remarkably well in school. Other studies on specific ethnic communities have also shown that culture, family and the sense of belonging to an ethnic community have fostered intra-group academic excellence.⁸³ Additionally, Cummins and Gibson have argued that that minority youth do better in school when they feel strongly anchored in the identities of their families, communities and peers, and when they feel supported in pursuing a strategy of selective or additive acculturation.⁸⁴ This 'anchor' asset is referred to as cultural capital.

As is evident from this review of literature, there has been limited research conducted on school-implemented policies directly affecting the ability of newcomer youth in low-income areas to access and utilize crucial social and personal resources and networks, known as social capital. It is clear that social capital matters for young people, however what counts

⁸¹ C. L. Bankston "Social Capital, Cultural Values, Immigration, and Academic Achievement: The Host Country Context and Contradictory Consequences," Sociology of Education 77.2 .2004; Anisef and Bunch (1994).

⁸² C. L. Bankston, (2004).

⁸³ Margaret Gibson, as cited in Kilbride K.M., and Anisef, P. (2001).

⁸⁴ As cited in Anisef and Kilbride, (2003).

as social capital is often poorly specified.⁸⁵ The literature presents many accounts of inequalities and disadvantages faced by young people; yet few of these studies set their concerns in terms of social capital accumulation. The following section aims to refine the concept and consider its application in a school setting through an analysis of two policy documents.

⁸⁵ Voyer, 230.

Chapter 4: Document Analysis

Overview of Policy Documents

This section offers a comparative analysis of two policies: the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) *Model Schools for Inner City Task Report*; and the York Region District School Board Performance-Plus Program Handbook. *The Model Schools for Inner City Schools Task Report* is a document developed by the Inner-City Task Force of the Toronto District School Board. The report was presented to TDSB's Program and School Services Committee and it provides a vision for implementing infrastructure renewal and providing educational resources and extra teaching staff to meet the distinctive challenges that inner-city schools face.⁸⁶ More specifically, its mandate is "to identify up to five inner city elementary schools based on criteria presented in research and by looking carefully at resources already in the community, to present the most effective inner city school models."⁸⁷ TDSB will officially launch three Model Schools for Inner Cities on September 12, 2006. The *Performance-Plus* Program emerged in response to the low academic performance of York Region District School Board students in province-wide tests, and the handbook serves as the Board's official document highlighting the program's beliefs and core strategies. The long-term objective of the program is to help children attain higher levels of achievement, as well as to assist in developing deep bonds of trust among colleagues and real support from/for parents and others in the community.⁸⁸ The concurrence of these two documents with the underlying

⁸⁶ TDSB Model Schools for Inner City Task Force, "Adventures in Learning: Model Schools for Inner Cities," *TDSB Today* 2006.

⁸⁷ York Region District School Board, "Performance-Plus Program Handbook, Third Edition," 2005.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

assumptions of social capital theory (namely, the existence of norms, trust, and shared values*; ongoing partnerships; and access to beneficial resources), are discussed in light of the settlement issues of newcomer youth.

These documents present an interesting opportunity for comparison and analysis for two main reasons. First, both initiatives maintain that they respond to risk factors arising from the socio-economic disadvantage of children and families within the school system. For example, the TDSB describes the target population of *Model Schools for Inner Cities* as “schools with a large concentration of students living in poverty” and identifies seven different neighbourhoods with significant socio-economic challenges within the jurisdiction of the TDSB. Similarly, the York Region District School Board’s *Performance-Plus* program initially identified 12 communities which would benefit from support based on EQAO scores, access to financial and other resources including support services, and socio-demographic data.⁸⁹ Currently, there are 25 schools out of approximately 175 schools participating in the *Performance-Plus* program in York Region. Consequently, there exists significant potential for the utilization of a resilience framework through a focus on strengths and existing resources available within these specific geographic communities.

Second, both documents describe strategies which are rooted in a holistic approach to education and acknowledge the role that positive social networks play in a child’s academic and social development. This suggests a parallel with the social capital approach. To quote the *Performance-Plus* handbook, “Performance-Plus recognizes that

⁸⁹ York Region District School Board, 5.

relationships in school, at home, and in the community are the key determinants in a child's success in school.”⁹⁰ According to each of the school boards, the role of risk factors such as poverty, immigrant status, language facility, and family status have been increasingly important in the lives of students, and is particularly acute for inner-city students.⁹¹

Norms, Trust, and Shared Values

According to the literature review findings, a key indication of the existence of social capital is the extent to which there exist norms, trust, and shared values amongst individuals and groups. To put it another way, “groups, families, neighbourhoods, and societies in which people are willing to cooperate, in which people are predisposed to trust one another, and in which collective action is welcome, encouraged, and enabled, will be able to accomplish much more than where this is lacking.”⁹² Similarly, Wehlage asserts that “within a school a lack of social capital can be seen if people have abandoned hope of working as a team, where individual goals are pursued without thought of the collective good, and where the quality of relationships among staff at best is superficially cordial—without any deeper bond or trust that can be relied upon or even that they share a common philosophy.”⁹³

⁹⁰ York Region District School Board, 4.

⁹¹ TDSB Model Schools for Inner Cities Task Force, 2.

⁹² Judge, 2006.

⁹³ Wehlage, as cited in York Region District School Board Performance-Plus Program Handbook, 7.

Both policy documents demonstrate a clear adherence to a culture of norms, trust, and shared values for teachers and students within the learning environment. In the *Performance-Plus* document, phrases indicating the primacy of shared values⁹⁴ occurred frequently. In fact, the document explicitly states that a “shared vision” is linked to the motivation of students.⁹⁵ To quote the handbook, “Schools are likely to be more successful when leaders work with staff and the community to build a *collective educational vision* that is clear, compelling, and connected to teaching and learning.”⁹⁶ In the TDSB Model Schools for Inner Cities report, the theme of commonly shared values is not an explicit objective, however the document does highlight a “vision” comprised of several goals such as ‘fairness and equity’, ‘school as the heart of the community’, ‘inclusive culture’, and ‘high educational expectations for students’ as crucial to addressing disadvantage in low-income areas.

A crucial norm, or standard within the *Performance-Plus* family of schools, according to the document, is “high expectations”⁹⁷ for both students and teachers. This is built upon the underlying premise that “all children come to school with the capacity and desire to learn.”⁹⁸ According to *Performance-Plus*, a shared vision and norms are, in part, what motivates students within the school environment. In the TDSB document, standard behaviour such as “respect for children, parents, and staff” and “encouraging the

⁹⁴ See Appendix A

⁹⁵ York Region District School Board, 10.

⁹⁶ York Region District School Board, 10 (emphasis added).

⁹⁷ See Appendix A

⁹⁸ York Region District School Board, 6.

strongest academic skills of which [students] are capable,”⁹⁹ among several others, are highlighted as exemplary and inclusive approaches.

Existence of Partnerships

The notion of a network or ‘web’ of support is also evident in much of the social capital literature. As noted by Coleman, all social relations and social structures facilitate social capital, however “actors establish relations and continue them when they continue to provide benefits.”¹⁰⁰ Further, Joyce Epstein argues that one component of a school learning community is an organized program of school, family, and community partnerships with activities linked to school goals.¹⁰¹ *Performance-Plus* acknowledges the importance of collaboration between stakeholders and makes frequent reference to the need to actively work to increase partnerships. For example, the document states: “Schools working alone cannot do enough to guarantee success for all children.” A key foundation of the program is thus “a supportive community of dedicated parents, school staff and community members...that are interconnected.”¹⁰² Similarly, the *Model Schools* document makes frequent reference to collaboration through ongoing community partnerships: “community members are welcome in the school as valuable partners in the education of children.”¹⁰³ It also provides examples of these sustained partnerships, such

⁹⁹ TDSB Model Schools for Inner Cities Task Force, 4.

¹⁰⁰ Coleman, 98.

¹⁰¹ J. L. Epstein and K. C. Salinas, "Partnering with Families and Communities," Educational Leadership 61.8 (2004): 12-18.

¹⁰² York Region District School Board, 12.

¹⁰³ TDSB Model Schools for Inner Cities Task Force, 3.

as school representation on external groups that advocate for children and their families, as well as community groups and external agencies involved in school based programs.

Access to Resources

While there appears to be a consensus amongst researchers that the ability of individuals and groups to access resources is the prime benefit of social capital, the review of literature also suggests that some qualitative differences exist in the kind of information fostered by different types of social capital. According to Coleman, “certain kinds of social structure...are especially important in facilitating some forms of social capital.”¹⁰⁴ Bonding, bridging, and linking social capital are all advantageous, however each form of social network has a distinct impact on immigrant adaptation. Bridging and linking social capital are more likely to connect newcomers to resources, information, and networks of mainstream institutions. The approach of York Region’s *Performance-Plus* initiative seeks to provide such resources, as it is based on the underlying assumption that “schools can help fill the gaps as well as assist families and communities to build on their assets.”¹⁰⁵ Similarly, the TDSB document cites providing links to supports such as counseling and community outreach staff, social work professionals, health services, and cultural and recreation programs as information available to students and families in the proposed model inner-city schools.

¹⁰⁴ Coleman (1988).

¹⁰⁵ York Region District School Board, 7.

Chapter 5: Toward a Youth-Focused Model of Social Capital

Accumulation

Given that adolescents who have difficulties achieving academic and developmental milestones have a dramatically greater chance of having problems in their early twenties and later on in life,¹⁰⁶ it is worthwhile to consider the extent to which policies such as *Performance-Plus* and *Model Schools* can effectively address adolescent issues and enhance the social capital of youth. In examining the policy implications of the two aforementioned elementary school initiatives for the situation of newcomer youth in secondary schools, one must consider the developmental differences between children and adolescents, as well as the specific acculturation challenges faced by immigrants and refugees in schools.

Inclusion of Diverse Identities into the Formation of Institutional Norms

Data from a quantitative study on the developmental needs of youth suggests that “meaningful involvement” is particularly important for youth in the early stages of high school: “opportunities for optimal meaningful involvement early in high school can decrease by one-third youth’s chances of poor developmental outcomes in high school.”¹⁰⁷ Further, it is suggested that for minority groups who experience disproportionate levels of

¹⁰⁶ M. A. Gambone, A. M. Klem, and J. P. Connell, Finding Out What Matters For Youth: Testing Key Links in a Community Action Framework for Youth Development (Philadelphia: Youth Development Strategies, Inc. and Institute for Research and Reform in Education, 2002), 26.

¹⁰⁷ Gambone, 26; Klem; Connell, 37.

academic failure, the extent to which students' language and culture are incorporated into the school program constitutes a significant predictor of academic success.¹⁰⁸ Undoubtedly, not only is it crucial to understand the traditions, family structures, and moral values of immigrant and refugee youth, but also, as Corson argues, to consider a more flexible and inclusive framework so as to account for the variability of academic outcomes in students. This may include opportunities for youth and their parents to take part in the visioning of collective goals, as well as ensuring that student cultural capital is reflected in pedagogy.¹⁰⁹

From an examination of the mission statements of the *Performance-Plus* and *Model Schools* initiatives, one may observe that there is an attempt to promote norms and shared values within the school environment through frequent reference to high expectations for both students and staff. Yet, the development of an institution's vision requires continuous action, reflection, and re-evaluation in order to ensure its continued effectiveness.¹¹⁰ While the two initiatives rightly acknowledge the importance of a collective vision, only one of the documents makes reference to the inherent value in inclusiveness of ethno-culturally diverse identities in the development of such a vision. The *Performance-Plus* guidelines cite the need for school councils to be broadly inclusive and reflect the diversity of the community.¹¹¹ In contrast, the *Model Schools* document's discussion of parental involvement does not make reference to reflecting newcomer or ethnic minority students. Indeed, it is likely that this lack of formal

¹⁰⁸ J. Cummins, *Empowering Minority Students*, 1st ed. ed. (Sacramento: California Association for Bilingual Education, 1989).

¹⁰⁹ D. Corson, *Changing Education for Diversity* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1998)

¹¹⁰ York Region District School Board, 2005, 3.

¹¹¹ York Region District School Board, 22.

articulation within the policy guidelines further encourages the marginalization of youth, and newcomer and minority students in particular. Respect for educational attainment is strongly embedded in many newcomer cultural traditions,¹¹² which may provide a form of resilience for these young people. It would thus be a mistake to disregard the frames of reference through which immigrant and refugee youth perceive the world. As such, in developing a model of social capital accumulation which is specific to the newcomer and ethnic minority youth context, a first step must be the articulation, within the official mission statement, of a collective vision which is inclusive of the cultural assets and richness of ethnically diverse students. Further, in order to promote opportunities for the “meaningful engagement” that is so crucial to youth well-being, the youth themselves must be afforded the opportunity to become engaged in the leadership process.

Cultivating Sustained and Predictable Partnerships

The notion of collaboration through partnerships is more practically oriented than that of shared norms. Among educational policymakers, it is generally believed schools can no longer function as isolated, self-contained institutions; they must become part of a network of organizations all concerned with the entirety of children’s development.¹¹³ Cummins notes however, that although much lip service is paid to community participation through school-family partnerships, parents are often manipulated through

¹¹² P. Anisef and K. M. Kilbride (2003), 22.

¹¹³ Community Health Systems Resource Group, Hospital for Sick Children (2005).

intimidation, or limited due to language barriers. The result is often that parents from marginalized groups retain their powerless status, and their internalized inferiority is reinforced.¹¹⁴

While the *Performance-Plus* and *Model Schools for Inner Cities* initiatives acknowledge the importance of partnerships and parental involvement, they do not emphasize sustained, predictable, and permanent partnerships. With specific regard to the youth context, the continuity of services and programs are crucial, since youth base their utilization of services and programs on the extent to which they are visible, predictable, and sustained. The Settlement in Education Partnership of Toronto (SEPT) was a pilot partnership of the Settlement sector, school boards in Ontario, and Citizenship and Immigration Canada. This partnership is delivered by school-based settlement workers who provide information and referral to parents and students, acting as a liaison between the school and the community. The broader program which followed, referred to as the Settlement Workers in Schools Program (SWIS), is highly successful and is celebrated for its ability to provide a specific service alongside school administration and faculty, as well as to respond to immediate newcomer needs, particularly during the first stages of immigration. Admittedly, the SWIS program's mandate is to provide settlement services for schools in which there exists a significant newcomer population. However, youth note that service should be more broadly based.¹¹⁵ Moreover, another difficulty identified by newcomer and visible minority youth is the inadequacy of youth employment services.¹¹⁶ Given that the transition from school to employment is particularly difficult for

¹¹⁴ Cummins (1989).

¹¹⁵ Anisef and Kilbride, 112.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 28.

newcomer youth, the development of a permanent partnership based on a school-to-work co-op model would likely benefit all youth, and particularly the needs of newcomer youth who are hesitant to utilize mainstream employment services outside of school. Epstein's framework for fostering successful partnerships may be useful for cultivating sustained collaboration between sectors, particularly if properly adapted to fit a youth-specific context.

Enabling Access to Diverse Networks and Resources

Research has shown that access to supportive relationships and networks acts as a particularly positive resource for youth. In fact, according to the study of adolescents by Gamboni and others, youth with unsupportive relationships in their early teens were 94 percent more likely—almost twice as likely—to have poor developmental outcomes at the end of high school.¹¹⁷ Similarly, Anisef and Kilbride note that according to youth themselves, successful integration was facilitated by supportive friends, family and institutions.¹¹⁸ Inherent to this idea of supportive relationships as a resource is the notion of belonging. Despite this, adolescents who have recently immigrated to Canada feel isolated, passive, and uncertain for a number of years.¹¹⁹ Likewise, newcomer youth in schools who are also ESL students often feel removed from the wider school context; since they enter the school system at an age when most of their peers are well-established in friendship circles, their relationships with Canadian-born peers tend to be

¹¹⁷ Gambone, 26.

¹¹⁸ Anisef and Kilbride, 249.

¹¹⁹ Anisef and Kilbride, 242.

uncomfortable.¹²⁰ According to Anisef and Kilbride, although ESL classes proved helpful for adaptation and language acquisition, ESL students did not want to be “treated by a different standard to other students...this was particularly true as their time in Canada lengthened..they wanted to be included in the mainstream of school.”¹²¹ Moreover, given that youth get much of their information from peers. It is important that policies encourage information transfer between different groups of youth, rather than invariably singling out newcomers. Thus, in light of this disconnect felt by many newcomer youth within the school system, considering how to include non-newcomer students in the settlement process must be part of the information strategy for youth.¹²² It crucial to note that the concept of linking and bridging social capital as providing resources for newcomers by linking them to mainstream institutions should not be confused with the ‘cultural deficit theory’ which essentially asserts that people of certain backgrounds are more likely to fail no matter what support they are provided.¹²³ Rather, these resources are seen as providing opportunities for empowerment of youth and families because in addition to settlement for newcomers, non-newcomer students benefit by becoming exposed to the cultural capital of newcomers. Implementing policies that foster bridging and linking social capital must provide structured opportunities for immigrant and mainstream youth to get to know each other and for newcomer youth to become empowered by the transfer of their cultural capital. Such activities include sports or school-based peer matching programs.

¹²⁰ Anisef and Kilbride, 240.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² M. Campana, and P. Dorfinan, “Snapshots and Directions in School-Based Settlement Work: Recommendations” March 2006.

¹²³ York Region District School Board, 8.

Conclusions and Implications for Policy and Practice

From this discussion, it is clear that regarding the school environment as a social and policy network relevant to academic success is important in the analysis of educational policies. A major challenge facing urban schools is equipping students from diverse backgrounds with the resources with which to participate fully and equally in an increasingly complex Canadian society. Consequently, any attempt to evaluate the success of educational interventions needs to focus not only on the individual child's adaptation as evidenced by academic outcomes, but also on the school's adaptation as evidenced by changes in school official policies and practices.

This research project has argued that the socioeconomic environment and ethno-cultural context in which a young person is situated influence, to a large extent, the amount and types of social capital available to them. An exploration of relevant literature indicates that in the context of socioeconomic marginalization and racialized poverty, multiple risk factors will threaten the positive development of youth; this impact will be most acute for those who are recent immigrants. The literature review has also suggested that being at risk makes a student more vulnerable to school experiences and policies.¹²⁴ Since socioeconomic advantage is often concentrated within a geographic area, it is worthwhile to address these risk factors as a school community.

¹²⁴ Anisef and Bunch (1994).

However, this study also suggests that relatively lower socio-economic status in and of itself does not necessarily represent a risk factor for newcomer and minority youth populations. Multiple factors (a major one being the degree to which youth are embedded in a network of social relations) play a role in the likelihood of success. Until further research is undertaken, direct parallels between interventions that target both low-income and newcomer students should be made with caution.

For immigrant youth living in low income areas, it is clear that social capital plays an important role in an array of key areas including issues of belonging and adaptation, inclusion and exclusion, violence and security, economic opportunity, as well as educational outcomes.¹²⁵ Belonging to a system of positive social networks, although not guaranteeing success, can provide opportunities for authentic and informal learning that can result in resilience with which to deal confidently with adversity and adaptation.¹²⁶ However, as the lived experiences of newcomer youth indicate, the resources, both materially and symbolically, that are available for social capital enhancement in schools are often limited and/or culturally inappropriate. Without appropriate resources to support them in academic endeavors, the prospects of acquiring positive employment and lifestyle options may be few.

From a policy perspective, this discussion re-affirms the practical and analytic utility of the social capital framework. Knowledge about the protective factors and

¹²⁵ Voyer, 230.

¹²⁶ Raffo and Reeves, 165.

processes involved in positive adaptation in the context of adversity can bring a new impetus to the development of social policies aiming to promote the well-being of disadvantaged, at-risk children.¹²⁷ Nonetheless, an analysis of two policy initiatives designed to counter socioeconomic disadvantage demonstrates that however insightful the theoretical constructs employed to classify the main elements of social capital, any attempt at model-making or policy development must refer to and be applicable to the influences of ethnocultural communities and the involvement of youth themselves, especially in the settlement process.¹²⁸

An analysis of documents further suggests that several shortcomings exist when attempting to assess the viability of these initiatives in the adolescent context, and the situation of newcomer youth in particular. While these programs show promise, what is required is an approach which simultaneously acknowledges the developmental issues of youth and acculturation difficulties of newcomers. In order to design school-based initiatives which are inclusive of these youth, one must first ensure that the policy guidelines are expanded to include an articulation of a shared vision which includes diverse identities in order to encourage meaningful involvement for youth. Second, sustained and reliable partnerships between stakeholders must be developed, particularly those which have an impact on youth school-to-work transitions. Last, policy developments should be particularly concerned with fostering resilience through bridging and linking social networks through structured activities between newcomer and non-

¹²⁷ Schoon and Bynner, 21.

¹²⁸ Voyer, 233.

newcomer students, which may widen the scope of information available to both newcomer and non-newcomer students.

Appendix: Coding System Utilized to Identify Themes in Policy Documents

a) Norms, Trust, Shared Vision:

'obligations'
'shared expectations'
'standards'
'high expectations'

b) Existence of Partnerships:

'collaboration'
'interconnectedness'
'teamwork'
'partner'

c) Access to Resources:

'access to information'

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