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## Transition of Newcomer Youth in Ontario Educational Policies: A Critical Discourse Analysis

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Graduate Program in Education  
A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Master of  
Education  
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TRANSITION OF NEWCOMER YOUTH IN ONTARIO EDUCATIONAL POLICIES:  
A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

(Thesis format: Monograph)

by

Cameron J. Scott

Faculty of Education

Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Education

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
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## **Abstract**

Transition in school is an inherent function of each student's educational experience. However, newcomer youth face unique transitional challenges. This qualitative study was conducted to answer how Ontario educational policies shape the transition of newcomer youth. A critical discourse analysis was used to analyze practical guides and policy texts, framed through critical policy sociology and critical pedagogy. Findings illustrated that a fractured policy landscape exists, where there is a heavy emphasis on literacy, language development, and language acquisition for newcomer youth, but there remains a lack of policies to support a more holistic transition. Dominant policy discourses serve to construct newcomer youth through policy definitions of newcomers and power structures. Suggestions have been made for policymakers, administration, schools, and teachers. This research contributes insight into how current policies reproduce socio-economic and cultural norms and illustrates the importance of moving beyond English language learner curriculum to targeted transition policy for newcomer youth.

**Keywords:** Ontario, newcomer youth, immigration, transition, educational policy, acculturation, critical discourse analysis, critical policy sociology, critical pedagogy, qualitative.

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## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	ii
Acknowledgements .....	iii
LIST OF FIGURES .....	viii
LIST OF TABLES .....	ix
LIST OF APPENDICES .....	x
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION .....	1
Youth Immigration in Canada .....	2
Defining Terms: Understanding Youth, Newcomer Youth, and Transition .....	3
Defining Youth .....	3
Defining Newcomer Youth .....	3
Defining Transition .....	4
Statement of the Problem .....	4
Background .....	5
Research Questions .....	6
Significance of this Study .....	6
Organization of Thesis .....	7
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW .....	10
Introduction .....	10
Power Structures in Policy Affecting the Transition of Newcomer Youth .....	12
Settlement Issues Affecting the Transition of Newcomer Youth .....	14
Generational Status .....	14
Language and Integration Patterns .....	15
Importance of Schools as Multicultural Common Spaces .....	16
Academic and Social Barriers .....	17
Identity Formation and Development .....	20
Settlement and Acculturation .....	22

Gaps in the Literature .....	26
Incoherent Definitions of Transition .....	26
Over-representation of Newcomer Youth's Barriers to Acculturation.....	27
Emphasis on Acculturation, Identity, and Discrimination .....	27
Deficiency in Research Related to the Transition of Newcomer Youth .....	28
Contribution to Field of Education Policy .....	28
Summary .....	28
<b>CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....</b>	<b>30</b>
Overview of Critical Policy Sociology .....	30
Values (in Policies): Prunty's Definition .....	31
Power.....	33
Examining the Broader Context (Social, Political, Economic) of Policies.....	33
Critiquing Oppressive Social Practices .....	36
Proposing Alternatives .....	38
Critical Policy Sociology and Critical Pedagogy as it Relates to Newcomers and Transition .....	39
Summary .....	40
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>41</b>
Research Questions .....	41
Research Methodology and Design.....	42
Defining Critical Discourse Analysis.....	42
How This Research Employs Critical Discourse Analysis .....	43
Methods Used: Document Analysis.....	45
Sampling.....	46
Selection of Data Sources .....	47
Data Collection and Analysis .....	49

Limitations and Assumptions.....	50
Situating Myself as Researcher .....	51
Ethical Considerations.....	52
Summary .....	52
CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS.....	54
HOW IS THE TERM ‘NEWCOMER YOUTH’ TAKEN UP? .....	54
Ontario Educational Policies’ Definitions of Newcomer Youth.....	54
HOW IS THE TERM ‘TRANSITION’ TAKEN UP?.....	56
HOW ‘INCLUSIVITY’ IS UNDERSTOOD IN EDUCATIONAL POLICIES .....	57
The Discourse of Newcomer Youth.....	57
Multiculturalism, Equity, and Diversity.....	57
What it Means to be Canadian .....	62
English Language Learning .....	64
Social Cohesion.....	66
CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION .....	68
HOW ARE THE TERMS ‘NEWCOMER YOUTH’ AND ‘TRANSITION’ TAKEN UP? .....	68
Definitional Challenges and Assumptions .....	68
HOW IS ‘INCLUSIVITY’ UNDERSTOOD IN EDUCATIONAL POLICIES? .....	70
Terminology: Acculturation vs. Integration.....	70
Lack of Policy Integration.....	70
HOW DO THESE POLICIES ACT AS A FORM OF POWER? .....	71
Power in Policy: Constructing Newcomers in Educational Policy.....	71
Suggestions.....	78
Suggestions for Policymakers .....	78
Suggestions for Administrators, Schools, and Teachers .....	82

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION .....	86
Overview of Document Analysis Themes .....	86
Summary .....	87
New Discoveries .....	88
Implication for Theory, Research, and Policy.....	89
Future Research.....	91
Conclusion.....	92
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	94
APPENDICES .....	109
CURRICULUM VITAE.....	110



**LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1: Acculturation Strategies in Ethnocultural Groups and the Larger Society .....25

Figure 2: Critical Sociocultural Policy Analysis .....36

## **LIST OF TABLES**

Table 1: Positive Protective Factors Supporting Newcomer Youth Integration.....	20
Table 2: Title and Publication Dates, by Document Type.....	49
Table 3: Summary of Key Challenges in Educational Policies .....	77

**LIST OF APPENDICES**

Appendix 1: Permanent Resident Arrivals in Canada .....109

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

*We must first comprehend the fact that children – all children – come to school motivated to enlarge their culture. But we must start with their culture...and look first to determine how they seek to know themselves and others and how their expertise and experience can be used as the fuel to fire their interests, knowledge, and skills...for they are rich in assets. As teachers, we enter their world in order to aid them and to build bridges between two cultures.*

(Garcia, 1999, p. 82)

Immigration is a world-wide experience that involves millions of people across most countries (UN Population Report, 2002). As portrayed in the literature, immigration can be a source of problems and as an opportunity for individuals and societies (Baubock, Heller, & Zolberg, 1996). Transition to school is an inherent function of each student's educational experience. However, newcomer youth face unique transitional challenges posed by identity development, resettlement, the adaptation and integration process, language and societal barriers, academic and social aspects of school, and related struggles for self-esteem and self-worth (Khanlou & Crawford, 2006; Kymlicka & Norman, 1994; Ngo & Schleifer, 2005; Seat, 2003). Transition and newcomer youth are contestable constructs, as each holds different meanings and understandings depending on the vantage point of the individual using the term.

As the quote above suggests, educators, school boards, and policymakers must support newcomer youth by bridging mainstream culture with that of newcomer youth. It is the cultural experiences, knowledge, values, and dispositions of the individual newcomer that should mark the starting point for the youth's transition and adaptation to school and community. The transition of newcomer youth is shaped by a number of influences, including: academic and social barriers (Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009), community and school environments (Dib, Donaldson, & Turcotte, 2008; Gonzalez, 2009), racism and discrimination (Beaujot & Kerr, 2007; Richmond, 1989), gender, clash of cultural values between those at home and the values espoused at school (Ngo & Schleifer, 2005), language (Dei, Mazzuca, McIsaac, & Zine, 1997), and prior education experience (Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009), to name a few.

Education is of primary importance in the lives of immigrant and ethnic minority youth and families (Kilbride & Anisef, 2001). Academic achievement tends to be a landmark by which immigrant youth can improve their education and attain employment opportunities in a new society by developing social, economic, and educational mobility. Schools remain the contexts in which youth spend the majority of their time and have a profound influence on immigrant youths' exposure to Canadian culture. Therefore, educational institutions expose immigrant students to values and practices of the new society, particularly around policies and practices related to transitioning, and facilitate students' transition into the dominant, Canadian culture.

### **Youth Immigration in Canada**

The number of newcomer youth between the ages of 15-24 settling in Canada has been steadily growing during the last decade from 28,125 arriving in 1999 compared to 37,425 arriving in 2008 (24.9% increase). The trend in newcomer youth migration to Canada since 1999 is presented in Appendix 1. Generally, 35,000 immigrants and refugee youth between the ages of 15-24 settle in Canada every year which represents 15% of the approximately 250,000 permanent residents that come to Canada annually. The composition of refugee youth settling in Canada is slightly higher (20.4%) compared to youth in other groups. The majority (79.8%) of youth who settle in Canada are from racialized 'visible minority' backgrounds. Most immigrant youth settle in the three metropolitan cities in Canada (Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver). However, smaller cities such as Calgary, Edmonton, Windsor, Winnipeg, and Kitchener-Waterloo have significant visible minoritized populations (Statistics Canada, 2009). In the City of Toronto, for example, immigrant youth between the ages of 15-24 constitute 39.5% of all youth in that age group.

According to the 2006 Canadian Census, the unemployment rate for recent immigrant youth was 15.4% compared to 12.5% for Canadian-born youth. More strikingly, the low-income rate for recent immigrant youth was three times higher (45.8%) than that of Canadian-born youth (15.7%) (Statistics Canada, 2009). Moreover, at least one-fifth of the total Canadian student population currently enrolled in an

educational institution belongs to a visibly minoritized group (Dib, Donaldson, & Turcotte, 2008) and the majority of immigrant youth migrate from Africa, the Middle East, Asia, the Pacific region, and South and Central America (Canadian Council on Social Development, 2000).

### **Defining Terms: Understanding Youth, Newcomer Youth, and Transition**

One of the most critical factors in a successful transition to Canadian society is education (Anisef & Kilbride, 2003; Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009). The transition to new schools is one of the defining parameters of development for youth, where the academic, personal, and interpersonal functioning of students suffers after making the transition to new schools (Barber & Olsen, 2004). At the core of the transition to school, education is of central importance in the lives of immigrant and ethnic minority children (Costigan, Hua, & Su, 2010). Recognizing the important relationship between the educational outcomes of newcomer youth and the role of schooling and education, I want to acknowledge how the concepts of education, schooling and what it means to be a youth or a newcomer, require more careful critical analysis and theoretical ‘unpacking’. Transition and newcomer youth are contestable constructs, as each holds different meanings and understandings depending on the perspective and vantage point of the individual using the term.

### **Defining Youth**

Youth are defined as a social generation sharing a particular homogeneous value set and or experience, a birth cohort, a stage of life or a transition period, active subjects or victims of structural changes in society (Tanner, 2006; Wyn & Woodman 2007). In this research, I am examining school aged individuals focusing on secondary school youth.

### **Defining Newcomer Youth**

Some immigrant groups adjust well to their move to Canada, while others struggle to adapt to the new culture. Recent studies recognize immigrants by their ethnic and racial differences and, increasingly, by religion (Bloemraad, Korteweg, & Yurdakul, 2008). This research considers newcomer youth to be those school aged individuals who have

arrived to Ontario schools from a country other than Canada who may or may not be fluent in English and come from a variety of cultural backgrounds.

### **Defining Transition**

In transitioning to Canada, youth are labelled with various descriptors such as ‘immigrant,’ ‘ESL student,’ ‘refugee,’ ‘newcomer,’ ‘English Language Learner,’ and ‘Canadian-born.’ While some youth may identify with such labels, these identity markers cannot sufficiently address the diversity of lived-experiences and identities among newcomer youth (Khanlou & Crawford, 2006). As such, transition is a problematic and challenging term to define. At its core, the concept of transition suggests confronting the changes and challenges from one point to another. This study is about the transition between schools – from school in an immigrant/refugee’s home country to school in Canada.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Although much Canadian scholarly work has been done in the area of immigration and education, particularly related to the transition of newcomer youth in terms of social, economic, language, and cultural barriers (Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009), identity formation (Ngo & Schleifer, 2005), adaptation and integration (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006), and multiculturalism (Basu, 2006), there remains a paucity of research that examines Ontario education policies related to newcomer youth transition. Policies related to English as a Second Language (ESL) and English Language Development (ELD) programs, equity and inclusion, and guides to working with English Language Learners currently exist to serve newcomer youth. Given Canada’s increasing ethnic and racial diversity, particularly in schools, a better understanding of the academic and transitional experiences of immigrant youth is essential in better supporting the transition of newcomer youth and, to a greater extent, re-contextualizing educational policies and practice in schools.

Canada's newcomer youth population is a significant area of concern for schools, service providers, and most importantly, policymakers (Kilbride, Anisef, Baichman-Anisef, & Khattar, 2001). Developing policy to integrate cultural diversity and support individuals to retain and express such diversity proves a major challenge faced by policymakers (Anisef, Poteet, Anisef, Farr, Poirier, & Wang, 2007). With a lack of such research that could illuminate the unique needs of newcomer adolescents (Anisef et al., 2007), it is important to identify these needs and critically appraise Ontario educational policies, in order to determine the types of programs and services that are beneficial to the settlement, adaptation, and transition of newcomer youth. Diversity is challenging on many levels, as Canadian schools continue to face significant challenges in this area, but learning to accommodate diversity is also critical to Canada's future (Levin, 2008).

## **Background**

With the growth of newcomer youth, the challenge of understanding the impacts of immigration on the social, political, and educational landscape of Canada becomes more significant. Addressing the specific needs of newcomer youth and their transition is a significant theme, in both research and practice, demanding greater theoretical and empirical attention. Canada will continue to depend on immigration and significant numbers of newcomers where the transition "and the full socioeconomic inclusion of immigrants in Canadian society are pressing issues to be addressed...to better integrate current and incoming immigrants" (Madibbo, 2008, p. 48).

The implications of the transition of newcomer youth in schools are far-reaching for a number of reasons: immigrant youth are transitioning from non-Western countries, many do not speak English as their first language, and they enter Canada and become labeled in various ways. Given the increasing role immigrants are playing in Canada's labour market, economy, and social fabric, increased efforts must be made to support the transition of newcomer youth in schools. Research indicates that the process and effects of resettlement create distress that often results in maladaptation of newcomers (Beiser, Shik, & Curyk, 1999). Schools and communities "face major challenges in



bringing the human potential that immigrants bring with them fully to fruition” (Council of Ministers of Education, 2007).

Studies clearly identify the important role that the school system holds in promoting settlement and integration (Anisef et al., 2007; Basu, 2004). Integrative policy must be developed in order to meet the needs of newcomer youth most effectively. There is a pressing need for “a more responsive and flexible approach to classroom instruction, to the school as a community institution with open boundaries, and to the diversity of learning needs, backgrounds and expectations in our changing population” (Anisef & Bunch, 1994, p. 13).

### **Research Questions**

As a result of the growing number of immigrant youth in Ontario schools, and the implementation of multicultural policies, Ontario schools are increasingly becoming diverse, multicultural spaces. Despite these objectives, multicultural policies have been criticized as a way of containing diversity so as not to disrupt existing power hierarchies (Dei, 1996; Moodley, 1992). Thus, the main research question I pursue in this thesis is:

How do current Ontario educational policies shape the transition process for newcomer youth?

Emerging from this problem are several questions that deserve greater attention. The sub-questions I explore include:

- 1) How do these policies act as a form of power?
- 2) How is inclusivity understood by researchers and policymakers in policies related to the transition of newcomer youth?

### **Significance of this Study**

One way to support newcomer youth is to investigate the current policies to determine if they actually address the current issues described in the literature. An interrogation of existing policies is important to determine if policy goals align with current research. Ozga (2000) argues that there is a "need to *understand* education policy in a theoretically

informed way” (p. 42). Policies are systems of thought and action used to regulate and organize behaviour which construct a way of seeing those affecting and affected by the problem. Policies establish lenses for viewing the people they aim to address, where the language of policy uncovers who is dominant, who is subordinate, and what controls the dominant should exercise on the subordinate in order to effect desired change (Stein, 2004).

Attention is most often paid to the characteristics of individuals rather than the structures of society that contribute to unequal and inequitable life circumstances (Stein, 2004). Interrogation of “policy unveils the often-obscure assumptions built into policies, and the structural inequalities of power and privilege in which they exist” (Stein, 2004, p. 7). There are more systemic barriers at play within the education system, including: a lack of awareness and understanding of the plight of being an immigrant (or refugee), racism, poverty, and the attainment of equal educational opportunities. Examining policies potentially illuminates power and control that systematically exist in policy to maintain the status quo and comprise dominant discourses. Thus, research needs to explore existing policy to examine how the transition of newcomer youth is understood from an educational policy context.

### **Organization of Thesis**

This thesis is organized into the following set of chapters. This chapter introduced the topic, the research question, and the research objectives. Chapter Two provides a comprehensive review of the literature on the transition of newcomer youth to schools. The literature review centres primarily on scholarly and policy-based literature published within the last ten years. Examples of empirical and theoretical approaches will be highlighted to understand the context of newcomer transition to schools, to define some of the central terms of newcomer, youth, and transition, and to problematize newcomer youth.

Chapter Three examines the theoretical framework used in this study and sets out to provide a comprehensive review of critical policy sociology and critical pedagogy, by reviewing key concepts developed by Gale (2001) and Levison, Sutton, and Winstead

(2009). To accomplish this task, this chapter seeks to understand how critical policy sociology and critical pedagogy can illuminate the theoretical assumptions and underpinnings associated with newcomer youth specifically within the contexts of youth, education, immigration, and policymaking.

Chapter Four examines the methodology used in this study, specifically the selection of Ontario education documents, including practical guides and policies, to collect data. Theoretical reasons are provided for the significance of analyzing Ontario education documents, as well as detailing the process used to select documents for this study. The method of document analysis used to collect data is described, as well as the critical discourse analysis framework that I used to analyze and interpret the data. Empirical questions guided this methodological approach and frame the presentation of results. Namely, these questions were concerned with the reproduction of social inequalities, the maintenance of the status quo related to unequal power dynamics, and the consequences of ideological, political, and social underpinnings of the current Ontario education documents. Moreover, this methodological approach is framed by the question of whether policy texts challenge or ignore power positions by situating the social relations of newcomer youth to that of teachers, peers, and the school institution.

Chapter Five examines the Ontario education documents, presents the data, and explains the findings, framed through critical discourse analysis and guided by empirical questions. Chapter Six outlines the discussion based on the findings of this study as well as current literature. In framing the discussion by suggesting that the school environment plays a critical role in the acculturation process for newcomers, this chapter discusses the deficiency in providing a supportive transitional framework for newcomer youth who arrive in Ontario schools each year.

Finally, Chapter 7 provides the summary and conclusion of this thesis. This study concludes that specific educational policies in Ontario targeted towards newcomer youth lack an integrated and holistic transition framework. Support for the transition and settlement of immigrant youth is heavily focused on English language acquisition. As a result, dominant discourses in current educational policies construct 'newcomer youth' in

a deficit model. Specifically, newcomer youth are labelled as English Language Learners, where their mental health, social, and cultural issues remain largely unacknowledged.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

*The consequences for newcomer youth who slip between the cracks...are not positive for them or for the larger Canadian society – where the costs can be measured in such things as the loss of talent, or human capital, and the expenditures that become necessary to deal with ‘social problems.’*

(Anisef, 2005, p. 43)

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive and critical review of the literature on the transition of newcomer youth to schools. This literature review concentrates primarily on scholarly and policy-based literature published within the last ten years and focuses primarily on education issues from Canada and, more specifically, Ontario. Studies from other countries – including the United States, Australia, Britain, and several European countries – were included to provide a more in depth understanding of newcomer youth’s experiences in educational institutions.

Several practical challenges were encountered while conducting this literature review. In particular, I faced challenges of finding literature that was Ontario-based, as well as finding literature that focused specifically on the concept of transitioning as it applies to newcomer youth. In evaluating literature, the conceptualization of ‘transitioning’ as it relates to newcomers seems problematic and mostly absent. While there is much literature in the field of education related to the transition of students, the majority of this literature examines transitions from middle-to-secondary school, school-to-work, secondary school-to-post-secondary institutions, post-secondary-to-work, and the transition of students with special needs beyond secondary school. Whereas much literature is available related to the issues of identity, integration, acculturation, and multiculturalism surrounding newcomer youth in Canada, little research has been done in the area of newcomer transition to Ontario schools, especially in policy that supports the integration of students of immigrant origins. Given Canada’s increasing racial and ethnic diversity, and as an extension, the diversity of Canadian classrooms, a better understanding of the academic and transitional experiences of immigrant youth is

essential in continuing the success of Canada's multicultural mosaic and, to a greater extent, re-contextualizing educational policies and practice in schools. Given these challenges, I will present and analyze the literature available and will present a critical analysis at the end of this chapter.

The literature that could be consulted to consider this question are indeed diverse, vast, and wide-ranging. Fields of literature which consider questions of the transition of newcomer youth to schools include education, geography, sociology, community development, psychology, migration and immigration, youth studies, and political science. I scanned the fields to identify literature which met the following criteria: a) provided insight into the qualitative dimension of the transition of newcomer youth; b) illuminated transition to school in the Canadian context, when possible; c) included youth, when possible, as a methodological focal point and, d) specified the transition to secondary school, when possible. While the review is by no means exhaustive, it does identify dominant patterns and themes for further consideration and also provides a sense of some of the challenges associated when attempting to integrate literature from divergent, often theoretically dissimilar origins.

The goal of this chapter is to highlight existing Canadian research, specifically examples of empirical and theoretical approaches of how the process of transition of newcomer youth in schools is understood. This literature review will uncover the methodological assumptions and associated strengths and weaknesses in these bodies of literature, as well as to integrate and generalize findings from across diverse fields of literature (Randolph, 2009). It is important to state that there is a paucity of literature on the transition of newcomer youth to schools in Ontario and, more broadly, Canada. This literature review tries to capture what scholarly work exists on this issue, but focuses primarily on related literature concerning the general transition of newcomer youth to school, community, and Canada. The examination of how educational policy shapes the transition of newcomer youth is informed by looking to related general transition issues of youth. The incorporation of related literature on settlement issues creates a path for understanding the context that newcomers, and their transition, are situated in. The following listing identifies the topic concentrations for the chapter: (1) Power structures

in policy affecting the transition of newcomer youth; (2) Settlement issues affecting newcomer youth transition; and (3) Gaps in the literature.

### **Power Structures in Policy Affecting the Transition of Newcomer Youth**

Research is sparse concerning how newcomer youth are, and their transition is, affected by Ontario education policy. Outdated studies have looked at anti-racist education (see Mansfield & Kehoe, 1994), but little research has considered how contemporary policies affect newcomer youth. Recent Canadian studies that have examined diversity and multicultural policies, as well as social science curriculum, unveil dominant discourses and values that are at policies' core. Using a content analysis approach to examine secondary school social science curricula of Saskatchewan and Ontario, Clausen, Horton, and Lemisko (2008) found that although curriculum developers have good intentions to include multiple voices, the values and perspectives of the dominant culture are taken up in the discourse around notions of democracy in curriculum documents. These findings illuminate the ways in which curricula represent democracy, as a concept, but do not fully embrace the idea of diversity and multiculturalism.

Similarly, Thompson (2006) discovered that social science curriculum in Alberta links global citizenship with notions of Canadian national identity. Policy, which articulated a singular Canadian identity, while simultaneously viewing diversity as necessary for social cohesion, is fraught with the dominant narrative of neoliberal globalization. This is problematic in the discourse within Canadian education policy as it relates to newcomers; policy is dichotomous. On one hand, social cohesion and diversity are encouraged; on the other hand, dominant notions of acculturation are promoted. This is particularly the case with language policies in Canadian schools.

Peck, Sears, and Donaldson (2008) employed a phenomenographic approach to understand how 44 grade 7 students in New Brunswick conceive of ethnic diversity. Through semi-structured interviews, the researchers found that students had a very limited understanding of the many dimensions of ethnic diversity that were identified in the curriculum standards. The authors focused on three areas concerning students' understanding of diversity, and how these are connected to policy initiatives and

curriculum, which include: ignorance of diversity, tendency to see diversity as foreign from modern Canada, and hostility to diversity and accommodations for diversity. The majority of these students' conceptions of ethnic diversity were incorrect, inaccurate, or naïve, with some hostile tendencies reflected in describing difference with stereotypical connotations. However, Peck, Sears, and Donaldson (2008) note that there was one exception to these statements, where students described a deeper understanding of ethnic diversity and had an inclination to accommodate difference. Moreover, the authors note that there were very few students who demonstrated this understanding.

There are a number of researchers who have examined multicultural education policies in Canada. Many of these studies provide more theoretical accounts, and multicultural and diversity education policies have often been studied in ways that generate few demonstrable findings (Johnson & Joshee, 2007). Cummins (2006) argues that the absence of coherent policies within educational institutions that focus on the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity of the student population in Canada risks jeopardizing the principles of equity on which Canadian education stands. Addressing this concern, Cummins (2006) challenges three dominant assumptions: that instructional support for English Language learners (ELL) is the sole role of the ESL teacher; that “literacy” refers only to English literacy; and that cultural knowledge and home language proficiency of ELL students have little instructional relevance. Similarly, Gourd (2007) acknowledges that language policies give distinct advantages to particular groups while restricting others. This type of policymaking marginalizes groups that are perceived as more racially and linguistically distinct, while favouring groups that are most similar to the dominant group in power.

Gourd (2007) raises a vital point in examining language policy, suggesting that "Until issues of social justice are made foundational to all educational programs, language learners' educational opportunities will be restricted" (p. 127). Moreover, language programs in Canada have been developed to acculturate immigrants promptly (Gourd, 2007). This suggests that language policies play a role in assimilating newcomers to dominant norms, particularly around the importance of acquiring the English language, where language acts a form of control. As Derwing and Munro (2007)



argue, most provinces promote mainstreaming students into English classrooms as soon as possible. In reviewing language policy in Alberta, Derwing and Munro (2007) found that there are age caps, limited funding, and a lack of appropriate programming for newcomer youth. The researchers note that, for example, the year before September first in which a student turns nineteen is the last year that they can receive secondary school funding (Derwing & Munro, 2007). Similarly, Joshee and Johnson (2007) posit that the current dominant neoliberal approach to policymaking replicates existing inequalities of race, class, and gender, and threatens more socially just policy development.

### **Settlement Issues Affecting the Transition of Newcomer Youth**

Situating newcomer youth transition within broader transition and settlement literature is required in order to identify the meaning and understanding of transition relative to this study. The shortage of literature on policies related to newcomer youth transition points to the scarcity of particular resources and policies for newcomer youth themselves. Settlement issues affecting newcomer youth transition include: generational issues, language and integration patterns, the importance of schools as multicultural common spaces, academic and social barriers, identity formation and development, and settlement and acculturation.

**Generational Status.** Newcomers' transition to school is influenced by generational status. The first generation includes individuals born outside Canada, the second generation includes those born in Canada with at least one parent born outside Canada, and the third-plus generation includes respondents born in Canada both of whose parents were also born in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2011). Researchers also make a distinction between first and second generations, recognizing that 1.5 generation immigrants include those whose traits and experiences lie in between the first and second generation, who arrive to their new country before puberty (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). This distinction is useful when comparing the experiences of adolescents and children who arrive to Canada and are closer to the first or second generations, respectively (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Studies indicate that children who are secure about their ethnic identity and are simultaneously comfortable with a larger Canadian identity are the

most likely to have high self-esteem, initiate interethnic contact, empathize with peers with different ethnic/racial backgrounds, and have greater academic achievement (Beiser, Ogilvie, Rummens, Armstrong, & Martinez-Oxman, 2005). Using data from the *Ethnic Diversity Survey*, Reitz and Banerjee (2007) report that the second generation has the lowest rates of social integration of young people in Canada, regardless of level of family income, as well as a high sense of alienation and exclusion. However, large-scale quantitative analyses do not provide much information on individual lives and strategies used to cope with racism and discrimination (Hébert, Wilkinson, Ali, & Oriola, 2008). Regardless, newcomer transition to schools is impacted by a student's generational status.

**Language and Integration Patterns.** Language and integration patterns play a significant role in the transition to Canada, particularly to newcomer youth's transition to Ontario schools. Most immigrants do not speak either of Canada's official languages as their mother tongue: 70% of all immigrants—and 80% of those who arrived between 2001 and 2006—reported a language other than English or French as their mother tongue (Council for Learning, 2009, p. 2). Many immigrant and refugee children do integrate well, although some have difficulty learning English or French, in school, and with rapid integration (Beiser et al., 2005). This can result in familial role reversal, intergenerational conflict, and identity conflicts during adolescence. Newcomer youth may experience mental health risk due to pre-migration trauma suffered by refugees and the discrimination directed towards visible minority groups (Beiser et al., 2005). Young newcomers face social, cultural, and academic adjustments that are often exacerbated by racism, conflicting cultural values, educational gaps, language difficulties, culture shock, physical health problems, poverty, isolation and/or symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) due to war, violence or loss of family members (Ngo & Schleifer, 2005). One in five members of visible minority groups in Canada reported at least one experience with discrimination because of ethnicity, culture, skin colour, language, accent, or religion. Recently arrived, non-visible minority group immigrants also face discrimination as they were twice as likely to have experienced discrimination as longer-stay or second generation immigrants (Beiser et al., 2005).

Increased globalization and migration due to conflict have resulted in large waves of newcomers residing in Canada's urban centres—presenting significant new challenges for educators, school boards, and policy makers in Canada. Even though the demand for ESL services has been increasing, resources for these and other services for immigrant youth are becoming scarce (Ochocka, Roderick, Janzen, Westhues, Jenkins, & Sandbeck, 2006). As Canada increasingly relies on immigration for its economic and social growth, the success of its immigrant youth is critical to Canada's future. Moreover, public education is a way to provide equal opportunity for all students to succeed (Education Equality Task Force, 2002). However, the high dropout rate of immigrant youth, combined with the decrease in funding and supports for immigrant youth, provokes concern around the creation of an inequitable education system (Beiser et al., 2005). Some researchers believe that Canada is at risk of developing an immigrant underclass (Derwing & Munro, 2007; Ochocka et al., 2006).

**Importance of Schools as Multicultural Common Spaces.** Schools play an integral role in reducing dropout rates amongst, and creating supports for, visibly minoritized youth. In Canada, Dib, Donaldson, and Turcotte (2008) found that educational institutions are multicultural common spaces that construct and contest challenges related to: immigration history, security in pluralistic society, religious diversity, racism and discrimination, demographic changes, and social inclusion/exclusion. As the Canadian population becomes increasingly more pluralistic/multicultural, where there is a higher percentage of visibly minoritized citizens, culturally relevant and diverse curriculum and "targeted and culturally relevant pre-school and daycare programs based upon need and accessibility (e.g., due to low income of many visible minority groups) are among the many initiatives being taken to enhance this common space" (Dib et al., 2008, p. 172; Mitchell, 2005). These initiatives are important in providing visible minority groups the same access to education centres as other Canadians.

However, as Dib et al. (2008) suggest, the situation is far from adequate. They found that rates of high school dropouts are much higher among visible minorities and immigrant children and youth than among any other group in Canada (Dib et al., 2008).

Similarly, studies of school dropout rates of immigrant youth have indicated that over half of immigrant youth whose native language is not English fail to complete high school (Derwing et al. 1999; Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009; Watt & Roessingh 1994, 2001). In this context, the capacity of educational institutions to create a common space in which students feel a sense of belonging and are motivated to learn are integral to supporting the needs and reducing high school dropout rates amongst visibly minoritized youth.

**Academic and Social Barriers.** Newcomer youth's transition is seriously impacted by the lack, or abundance, of academic and social barriers inherent in educational policy and schools. Rossiter and Rossiter (2009) conducted a study and interviewed 12 stakeholders from social service agencies, community groups, criminal justice, and mental health systems who frequently come into contact with immigrant and refugee youth involved with gang and/or criminal activity. From their research, Rossiter and Rossiter (2009) found that there were issues with the integration of students into mainstream classes, keeping up with their Canadian peers, and suffering with feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem if newcomer students failed to keep up with school work. In addition to these main issues, newcomer youth face social, cultural, and academic adjustments that often intersect with issues of racism, physical and mental health issues, poverty, isolation and/or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder due to war, violence, or loss of family members (Ngo & Schleifer, 2005; Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009). Within school contexts, the low teacher-students ratios, lack of resources and appropriate programming for ESL youth, low expectations from teachers of newcomer youth and little understanding of educational, cultural, and family backgrounds of these students contribute to newcomer students' marginalization (Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009).

Youth in transition from one culture to another have to go through an internal process of separation. This process of separation can become prolonged due to traumatic events related to the relocation and significant differences in values and norms of behaviour in the new country (Cole, 1998). Despite these stressors and post-migration difficulties, some school age children successfully make the transition once their family lives have stabilized (Cole, 1998). Immigrants and refugees often differ in their pre-migration, migration, and post-migration experiences. For refugee families, the

resettlement process may follow traumatic circumstances related to persecution or life-threatening events. Such multiple sources of stress can result in cumulative effects and lead to feelings of instability, physical and somatic problems, as well as difficulties in psycho-social adjustment. Refugee children's developmental histories often include information about disrupted lives, malnutrition, deprivation, significant losses, and gaps in education (Cole, 1998; Williams & Berry, 1991).

Within community and family contexts, some parents of immigrant youth are unable to assist their children with homework because of their own English language limitations and lack of knowledge/familiarity with education system, economic hardships faced by newcomer youth who work in addition to school fewer role models, leadership roles, limited community support networks, intra-cultural differences and disagreements, lack of safe and affordable housing, and bullying are significant factors in further marginalizing youth of immigrant origins. Given these school and community barriers, Rossiter and Rossiter (2009) have identified positive protective factors that support the integration of newcomer youth, related to the areas of family, peers, individuality, school, and community. Although all of these areas are necessary to promote increased success in the integration of newcomer youth, most significant to the transition to school are specific school-based programs, which include: ESL, life skills training, career planning, job search skills, resume writing, computer training, employment mentoring, and positive relationships with adults in school (for example, teachers, counselors, school resource officers). Table 1 outlines a more detailed summary of the positive protective factors that are critical for the successful integration of newcomer youth.

In recognizing the social costs of immigration, newcomers face many barriers in their transition. These include issues, such as: housing problems, language barriers, non-recognition of credentials, experience of racial prejudice and discrimination, and frustrated expectations for upward mobility (Beaujot & Kerr, 2007; Richmond, 1989). While diversity across the country is welcoming, the challenge of integrating newcomers into Canadian society still persists (Dei, 2008; Ochocka et al., 2006). Many youth face problems of racialized and gendered poverty (especially among Somalis and Afghans), where a series of issues, including being homelessness, experiencing feelings associated

with lacking official status, post-traumatic stress, and discrimination in housing and the social services, lead to implications for the schooling and educational success of racialized and immigrant youth (Dei, 2008). There has been much scholarly interest that has resulted in numerous empirical studies on adjustment processes and educational outcomes for immigrant youth over the last half-century. Perhaps of greatest importance related to the overall outcome of research on immigrant youth is the sheer diversity of the immigrant population and, in turn, the educational achievement patterns of immigrant youth (Feyer & Winsler, 2009). Some groups appear to thrive while others struggle, with outcomes resulting from a complex interaction of social, economic, historical, cultural, familial, school, community, and individual child factors (Feyer & Winsler, 2009).

In order to cope with their transition, many immigrant youth use protective factors to navigate community and educational systems. These include competence in the mainstream language and academic skills, the development of a social network, family stability, and community services and supports (Cole, 1998). Youth must have coping mechanisms, school contexts, and economic resources in order to foster the racial/ethnic schemas that solidify a path toward academic success (Sheets, 1995; Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2005). While some coping strategies used by youth can buffer the effects of discrimination (Edwards & Romero, 2008), multiple protective factors are needed in order to cultivate a secure, positive identity. (Gonzalez, 2009). This has profound effects on youth to facilitate academic competence and success in school.

**Table 1: Positive Protective Factors Supporting Newcomer Youth Integration**

Protective Factor	Examples
Family	Supports at home, moral support
Individual	Gender, sense of cultural identity
Peer	Trust, friendship
School	School-based programs (ESL, life skills training, career planning, mentoring, etc.), positive relationships with adults in school (teachers, counselors, school resource officers, etc.)
Community	Faith communities, cultural organizations, and other groups

*Note:* Adapted from Rossiter and Rossiter (2009, pp. 10-13)

Language and social barriers create challenges for newcomer youth in establishing new friendships with Canadian-born counterparts, influence their cultural identity, and make it difficult for them to achieve high levels of success in school. Many newcomer families stress the importance of learning the dominant language, to the loss of the first, and newcomer children and youth “have a tendency to become dominant in the second language more easily than their parents, quickly losing aspects of the first language” (Cummins, 2000; Guardado, 2006, p. 67). This adds to language pressures newcomer youth face, especially amongst their peers. Communicating in English becomes a prime goal for immigrant and refugee children whose schooling is inevitably tied to their English proficiency. Success in second language learning lends itself to opportunity, while difficulties with language acquisition tend to impede education, social integration, and employment opportunities (Cole, 1998).

**Identity Formation and Development.** A variety of cultural, social, economic, and emotional aspects shape newcomer identity during their transition to Canada and becoming Canadian. Madibbo (2008) notes that the integration of minorities “and the full socioeconomic inclusion of immigrants in Canadian society are pressing issues to be addressed...to better integrate current and incoming immigrants” (p. 48). Adolescence

has long been recognized as a critical period in human development when all youth confront important issues regarding identity formation and development. However, newcomer youth face unique identity development challenges posed by resettlement, the adaptation and integration process, language and societal barriers, and related struggles for self-esteem and self-worth. The result may be heightened levels of apprehension and confusion around the complexities of becoming Canadian, and the tension between constraining individual agency and recognizing individual rights.

Identity formation of newcomer youth is influenced by a number of factors, including: the relationship between youth of immigrant and non-immigrant origins, gender, and aspects of integration that negatively impact newcomers. Family, school, community, and aspects of Canadian society play key roles in shaping how newcomers develop identity and how they define what it means to become Canadian. Newcomer youth negotiate identities that are linked to their new country of residence, its prevailing cultural norms, and their original cultural heritage, through the citizenship process and the process of what it means to become Canadian.

A number of studies have drawn attention to the particular problems of identity formation among newcomer youth (Ngo & Schleifer, 2005; Ochocka et al., 2006). As Ngo and Schleifer (2005) suggest, the identity of newcomer youth is influenced by family, school, and community. It is within these three spheres of influence that newcomer youths' needs and identity are impacted, through areas of social, health, justice, and education. It is important to underscore that cultural identity for youth with immigrant origins "may be complicated by internalized racism, resulting from exposure to pervasive negative stereotypes of ethnic minorities" (Ngo & Schleifer, 2005, p. 29). In looking at youths' own perception of their transition to school, and having youth themselves participate in the research process, Ochocka et al. (2006) found that immigrant youth are immediately influenced by their family, friends, and school, and subsequently influenced by the broader community in which they live.

Identity formation and development for newcomer youth to Canada is confronted with many unique challenges posed by resettlement, integration and belonging, self-



esteem and self-worth, gender, tensions around language, culture, and social limitations, and uncertainty around the process and multifaceted notion of becoming Canadian. With an increase in newcomers to Canada, especially those who are of a visible minority, the concepts of citizenship and identity begin to take on new, significant, and different meanings. Multiculturalism in Canada allows for the exploration of identity and development of what it means to become Canadian for newcomer youth. Kymlicka (1998) states that Canada has a “thinner conception of national identity” and minimal “terms of admission” for newcomers, which encompass elements such as learning the language, participating in public institutions, and expressing a commitment to the long-term survival of the nation (p. 147).

Khanlou and Crawford (2006) state that the post-migration experiences, which include “prevailing societal attitudes towards one’s gender, migration status, ethno-cultural group and racialized status can affect a newcomer youth’s sense of self-worth” (p. 46). Anisef and Kilbride (2000) reveal that the needs of newcomer youth between the ages of 16 and 20 are seldom examined. The authors found that the major issues immigrant youth faced were: identity development; language issues; lack of recognition of previous learning for older youth; and conflict in values between the home and school, and the home and peers (Anisef & Kilbride, 2000, p. 10). Individual strengths, support from family and ethnic community, and influences from Canadian society and peers of non-immigrant origins can also impact newcomer youths’ sense of identity, or detract from it. I will now turn to research that has examined policies that have explored diversity, multiculturalism, and democracy. Overall, the literature around Ontario education policy, and Canadian policy more broadly, affect newcomer youth peripherally.

**Settlement and Acculturation.** During the settlement and integration process in Canada, immigrant youth experience negative aspects associated with migration to Canada. In their adjustment to the new culture, immigrant youth often experience cognitive and emotional change because of culture shock, unfamiliarity with the new cultural norms and practices, the anguish of leaving their home language, culture, and community (Ngo & Schleifer, 2005). As a result, many immigrant youth struggle to

achieve a positive cultural identity as they confront community and cultural values that may not correspond with those within their home environment.

Many newcomer youth face the separation of family, difficulties in forming cross-ethnic friendships and tapping into established social networks that exist within their community or school. This can result in an over-reliance on support from co-ethnic peers, alienation and exclusion, and seeking positive role models (Ngo & Schleifer, 2005). Many immigrant youth experience and are impacted by a range “socioeconomic issues such as culture and language barriers, unemployment or underemployment, social isolation, illiteracy, discrimination and limited civic participation” (Ngo & Schleifer, 2005, p. 31). Concentrations of immigrant families living within neighbourhoods with low socioeconomic status also prevent immigrant youth from accessing opportunities, services, events, and resources within their communities or schools.

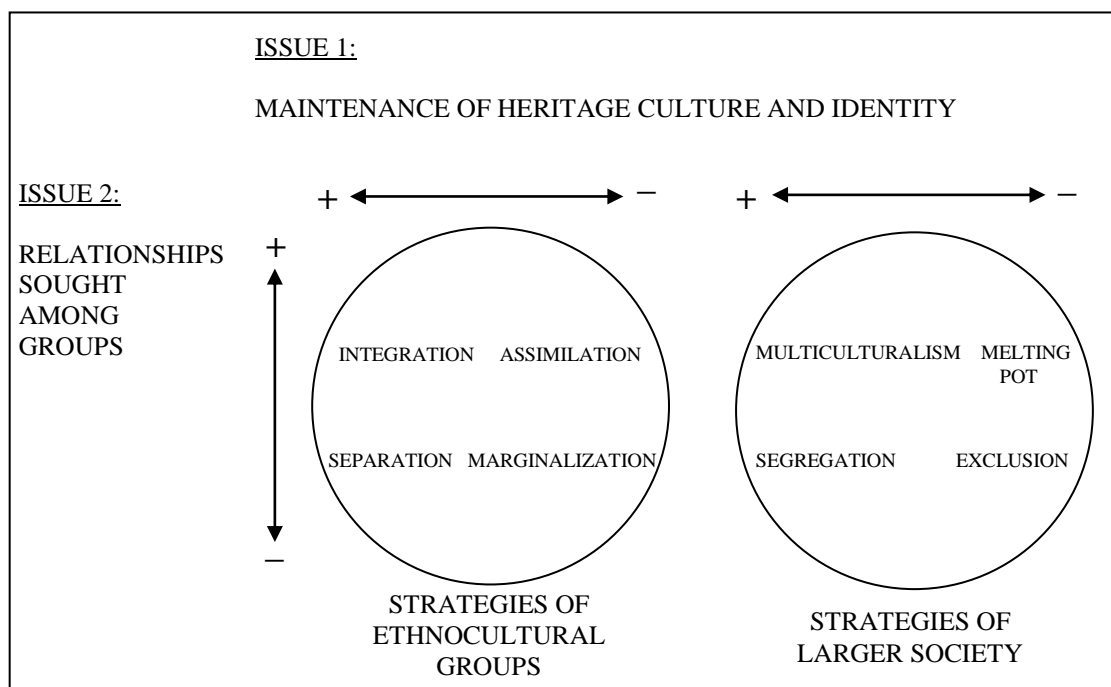
In school, immigrant youth may not have access to culturally competent support, resources, materials, and staff. As Ngo and Schleifer (2006) suggest, decisions related to language instruction and service for immigrant youth are left to the “discretion and political will” of individual schools (p. 31). This result in a lack of engagement of immigrant students in school activities and students may find it difficult to connect to a peer group or social network. Students with immigrant origins may also struggle to find identity at the community level. The limited awareness and understanding of community services, resources, and programs, as well as the lack of culturally inclusive programs has resulted in low levels of participation of immigrant youth in community and services. Similarly, “[i]ndividual, institutional and cultural racism and discrimination have denied many immigrant... youth a sense of belonging and driven them into social isolation and alienation” (Ngo & Schleifer, 2005, p. 31).

In exploring the relationship between immigrants and social capital related to social integration in Toronto schools, Basu (2006) looked at variables of immigrants by neighbourhood (percentage of recent immigrants, non-Canadian citizens, external migrants, and visible minorities) using 1996 data from Statistics Canada at the enumeration area level and 1998 Toronto District School Board (TDSB) school profiles

which provided a data source to examine parental and community participation (p. 64). Using a spatial-network framework in which school-based social capital is examined along the lines of 'intrinsic' (within neighbourhood) and 'extrinsic' (neighbourhood-city) relations, Basu (2006) found that diverse webs of civic engagement and social interactions in schools influence and are simultaneously influenced by the neighbourhood composition. Similarly, the overall results point out that prior to devolution and the implementation of neoliberal policies, many public elementary schools in the TDSB were supporting immigrant children in various ways during their settlement experience. In contrast to the work of Ngo and Schleifer (2006), Basu (2006) helps to illuminate that educational institutions play a prominent role in the adaptation process of immigrants. For recent immigrants, as with other marginal groups, schools provide the means for educational advancement as well as build the capacity for interaction and civic engagement in the daily life of the neighbourhood.

Similarly, Berry and Sabatier (2009) investigated the relationship between the acculturation and adaptation of second generation immigrant youth in Montreal, Quebec and Paris, France to address their differences. Four acculturation strategies were identified as paths that youth use in adaptation, which include: assimilation, integration, marginalisation, and separation. Berry and Sabatier (2009) measured acculturation attitudes, identity and behaviours along the two basic dimensions of cultural maintenance and social contact, and then cross-tabulated them, creating the four acculturation orientations (see Figure 1). The researchers found that immigrant youth who involve themselves in both their heritage culture and that of the national society, through integration, have the most positive psychological well-being, and are most adjusted in school and in the community. Conversely, those who are minimally involved with either culture (the marginalisation course), are least well-adapted; and those who are primarily oriented towards one or the other culture (assimilation or separation) generally fall in between these two adaptation poles. This finding was stronger in Canada than in France, of which researchers interpreted in terms of the differential social context confronted by youth in the two countries, particularly the differing national policies and youths' experience of discrimination (Berry & Sabatier, 2009).

**Figure 1: Acculturation Strategies in Ethnocultural Groups and the Larger Society**



*Note:* Reproduced from Berry and Sabatier (2009, p. 193)

Brenner and Crosnoe (2011) examined how the dimensions of racial/ethnic diversity of the student body and racial/ethnic matching between children and peers were related to socio-emotional and academic development after the transition into elementary school. Looking at the reading and math achievement, as well as behaviour and interpersonal skills of kindergarten students, the researchers found that students had higher achievement test scores in more diverse schools, especially when they also had more same-race/ethnicity peers in these diverse schools. These patterns were particularly strong for White students. Having more school peers of the same race/ethnicity, regardless of the overall level of diversity in the school, was associated with positive socioemotional development (Brenner & Crosnoe, 2011). Brenner and Crosnoe (2011) critically acknowledge that social adaptations are a key mechanism by which young children successfully navigate the transition to school, and they play an important role in children's continued success across their educational careers. Students "who have more same-race/ethnicity peers may find it easier to forge relationships with other children, which in turn may facilitate better adaptation to the new social context of formal schooling" (Brenner & Crosnoe, 2011, p. 640).

## **Gaps in the Literature**

There are limited studies that have examined the transition of newcomer youth through a policy lens. Most research has looked at the policy related to newcomers through peripheral ways – either through multiculturalism, citizenship education, language, social and academic barriers, or diversity. Inadequate attention has been paid to how Ontario (and more broadly, Canadian) educational policy support how newcomer youth transition to school. Few Canadian academics have explored this question. Gourd (2007), an American researcher, has written extensively on the current educational policy landscape, comparatively between the United States and Canada; for example:

A critical examination of the Canadian and US contexts indicates that changes in language policies to ensure education opportunities for language learners are likely to be limited as long as the policies are fuelled by conventional wisdom built on racist and exclusionary ideology rather than concern for the diverse needs of individuals...Until issues of social justice are made foundational to all educational programs, language learners' educational opportunities will be restricted. (p. 127)

Gourd (2007) has critiqued contemporary educational policies and has suggested that if newcomer students are not valued for their ability to speak their home language, as well as their ability to acquire the English language, then language policies (in particular) act as contested sites of power. It is within these spaces where newcomers' educational prospects are limited and controlled; social justice and social change are restricted elements which limits newcomers' school experiences. Determining how current Ontario educational policies shape the transition process for newcomer youth remains problematic for several reasons. Four main challenges in the literature on the transition of newcomer youth are:

1. Incoherent Definitions of Transition
2. Over-representation of Newcomer Youth's Barriers to Acculturation
3. Deficiency in Research Related to the Transition of Newcomer Youth
4. Emphasis on Acculturation, Identity, and Discrimination

### **Incoherent Definitions of Transition**

The conceptualization of 'transitioning' as it relates to newcomers is both problematic and mostly absent from the literature, where clear and coherent definitions are lacking.

There is an apparent deficiency in the literature regarding the transition of newcomer youth. Most literature examines transitions from middle-to-secondary school, school-to-work, secondary school-to-post-secondary institutions, post-secondary-to-work, and the transition of students with special needs beyond secondary school. Transition is, at best, defined as a temporal process which crosses social, academic, economic, and procedural issues. Missing from these definitions are voices from newcomer youth themselves, as well as parents, teachers, and school administration.

### **Over-representation of Newcomer Youth's Barriers to Acculturation**

The majority of research I came across in reviewing the literature in the field of newcomer youth focussed heavily on the barriers preventing newcomer youth to fully realize their educational and acculturative experiences. The most prevailing barriers to newcomer youth's transition include: academic, social, language, economic, settlement, gender, class, and race. The literature in this area is scattered; different barriers affect individuals differently depending on their family, community, academic supports, the ethnic group they identify with (i.e. Asian, Sudanese, Afghan, etc.), or their immigration status (i.e. refugee, planned immigration, international or 'visa' student, etc.), for example. However, research lacks youth voice, as well as the examination of educational policies that relate to newcomer's arrival to Ontario schools.

### **Emphasis on Acculturation, Identity, and Discrimination**

Recent scholarship in Canada examines how issues of identity, discrimination, integration, acculturation, and multiculturalism impact newcomer youth in Canada. However, little research has been done in the area of newcomer transition to Ontario schools, especially in policy and curricula that considers these students. Some recent scholarly work has examined policy through the lens of discourse. This research looks at policy texts, curricula, and practices to uncover how the language of policy limits the capacity and effectiveness of diversity policies (Joshee, 2007; Joshee & Johnson, 2005).

### **Deficiency in Research Related to the Transition of Newcomer Youth**

There is paucity of research that examines Ontario policy documents and curricula that relate to the transition of newcomer youth. Closely related are studies that have looked at diversity policies in Ontario and in the rest of Canada (Hughes & Sears, 2006; Peck, Sears, & Donaldson, 2008). These studies have particularly examined issues of difference and diversity. Inadequate attention has been paid to newcomer youth's transition to school and the dominant discourses that frame policy support transition.

### **Contribution to Field of Education Policy**

This research contributes to the field of education and immigrant youth transition. There is no coherent and focused policy that supports newcomer transition to Ontario schools. Research demonstrates that the holistic nature of newcomer students, unique barriers and challenges they face, complexities and nuances related to settlement and acculturation, and importance of identity formation in the transition to Canada impact newcomers' academic success and mental wellbeing. This research contributes meaningful insight into how current Ontario education policies reproduce socio-economic and cultural norms. Although policy rhetorically acknowledges the systemic barriers at play, this research illustrates the lack of, and much needed, policy for newcomer transition. Finally, given the increasing numbers of newcomer youth to Ontario schools, this research contributes to the shortage of research in the field of education policy.

### **Summary**

This chapter provided a comprehensive review of the literature on the transition of newcomer youth to schools. To accomplish this task, this literature review was centred primarily on scholarly and policy-based literature published within the last ten years. Although the focus of this review is on newcomer youth in Canada, studies from other countries – including the United States, Australia, Britain, and several European countries – were included to develop a better understanding of newcomer youth's experiences in educational institutions. Examples of empirical and theoretical approaches were highlighted to understand the context of newcomer transition to schools, define some of

the central terms of newcomer, youth, and transition, underscore methodological and epistemological biases associated with these terms, and problematize newcomer youth. The next chapter examines the theoretical framework used in this study, critical policy sociology and critical pedagogy.



### CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

*Whether granted the force of law or the power of suggestion, policy posits ideal behavior in a model world, and attempts to mold such behavior through a variety of carrots and sticks. Policy is the cultural-textual expression of a political practice; it makes governing statements about what can and should be done.*

(Levison, Sutton, & Winstead, 2009, p. 770)

The following chapter outlines the theoretical framework that underpins this research. Grounded in critical social research, and more specifically critical policy sociology (CPS), this study aims to understand how power and privilege pervasive in educational policy reproduce dominant norms, contributing to inequitable educational outcomes and experiences for newcomer youth. Key concepts as developed by Levison, Sutton, and Winstead (2009) are also emphasized as they underscore critical socio-cultural policy analysis to understand the educational policy process as a normative cultural discourse about how things should or must be done. This chapter also draws attention to critical pedagogy. In this chapter, I will examine two theoretical frameworks – critical policy sociology, as developed by Gale (2001) and emphasized through the concepts of negotiation, appropriation and reiteration developed by Levinson, Sutton and Winstead (2009), and critical pedagogy.

#### **Overview of Critical Policy Sociology**

Broadly speaking, educational policy may be viewed as a response to broader social, economic, political, and cultural change (Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard, & Henry, 1997). However, the values that enter into the policy process are influenced by normative, often middle-class value assumptions and dominant discourse(s). Earlier scholars have noted that policies produced by and for the state are clear illustrations of how language serves a political agenda, where meanings are constructed to conceal social issues and foster commitment to the notion of universal public interest (Taylor et al., 1997). Moreover, policy texts produce real social effects through their production and legitimization.

In the next sections, I outline some of the key focus areas of CPS in detail. These key ideas of CPS include: values, power, broader context of policies, critiquing oppressive social practices, and proposing alternatives. This chapter now turns to outlining the significance that values play in CPS.

### **Values (in Policies): Prunty's Definition**

Values form an inherent part of the policy process which are the result of broader issues of power and control, and critical policy sociology seeks to examine how values of the dominant group are legitimized in policies. Prunty (1985) defines policy as "the authoritative allocation of values" (p. 136). This definition helps to illustrate that policies are value-laden, where power and control are central to the policy process (Taylor et al., 1997). Debates exist within policy sociology about whose values are allocated in the policy process and, more critically, whose interests these values represent. Pluralists and those who believe in a government's approach to do good and equalize the playing field believe in a distribution of values and power throughout society. In this instance, governments endeavor to satisfy as many interest groups in the policy process as possible (Midgley, 2006; Taylor et al., 1997). The pluralist approach advocates a mix of commercial, not-for-profit, and government interventions in social welfare. Essentially, the pluralist approach recognizes that the government has a role to play in promoting social well-being; however, that well-being can be promoted by a variety of agents (Midgley, 2009). Conversely, the elitist (Taylor et al., 1997) or institutional (Midgley, 2009) approach argues that governments act in relation to the interest and values of dominant groups (Sinn, 2007; Tanner, 2004; Taylor et al., 1997). The institutional approach posits that social welfare is best enhanced through government intervention, including: regulations, fiscal measures, and social programs that are embedded into the social fabric (Midgley, 2006). Finally, the neo-marxist approach extends the elitist approach position further and argues that those who 'control' the economy are more politically influential than others (Taylor et al., 1997). In consideration of these differing approaches, Taylor et al. (1997) argue that dominant groups in society are more likely to influence governments in their exercise of power.

The importance of critical policy sociology, which sets it apart from other policy work, rests in its inclination to critique oppressive social practices (Gale, 2001). Critical policy sociology examines the relations between 'personal troubles' and 'public issues', and how these two concepts intersect. More recent theoretical accounts of what to look for have tended to emphasize policy as text and discourse (Ball, 1993; Gale, 1999; Taylor, 1997). This raises important questions regarding the epistemological and ontological nature of critical policy research; does data on policy exist to be found or do researchers produce such data? In defining policy in terms of text, discourse, and ideology, policy analysts will certainly find differences in their research (Gale, 2001). Critical discourse analysis (CDA) helps to illuminate the ways in which political ideologies are endorsed through policies by dominant social groups in way that make them seem that they are stemming from a commonly agreed upon set of values (Lingard & Rizvi, 2010). It is from this idea that critical policy sociology is informed by the belief that policy discourse must be pulled apart to determine whose interests they serve (Troyna, 1994).

This research is framed through a critical policy sociology lens and begins from two central assumptions, which are based on existing research on this topic. To begin with, critical policy sociology works towards progressive social change (Lingard & Rizvi, 2010). Secondly, policy is best conceived as a social practice, specifically a practice of power, where the result of the policy process is a normative cultural discourse that makes governing statements about what can and should be done (Levison, Sutton, & Winstead, 2009). Underpinned by critical policy sociology, the framework I use in this research is underpinned by two relevant concepts:

- The forms of power inherent in policy texts
- Practice approach: the negotiation, appropriation, and reification of policy

With this broad description of critical policy sociology, I will now examine these concepts in greater detail.

## **Power**

Lingard and Rizvi (2010) posit that there is a great significance in the “silences of a policy text”, where these silences reveal a lot about power (p. 61). Textual analyses of policies can reveal insights into the politics of policy processes and possible policy effects (Lingard & Rizvi, 2010). This analysis must consider various approaches and for critical policy sociology to support progressive social change, it must understand the historical and social effects on policy that are made up from perspectives of a wide variety of actors and interests (Lindgard & Rizvi, 2010). In order to understand the power that is associated with policy, different modes of analysis are required to see which discourses acquire authority.

Ball (1993) sees policy as twofold: as text and as discourse. It should be emphasized that policy is more than the policy text, as Ball (1993) sees policy not just as the articulation of the text, but also the processes before and after the text has been produced. Put differently, policy is both a text and a document that represents the values of those who make policy. This includes the adaptations to it as a statement of values and desired action, as well as in actual practice (Taylor et al., 1997). Due to power relations, and because power is inherent in the policy process, the outcome of policy is chiefly discursive; it creates a way of thinking of how things are done and puts limits on thinking about things how they otherwise might be (Ball, 1993). As such, policy as discourse has the effect of redistributing 'voice' where only certain voices are heard as meaningful or authoritative. Similarly, Vidovich (2001) posits that policy as discourse gives more significance to constraint, where policies “can become 'regimes of truth' (after Foucault) in which only certain voices (dominant discourses) are heard as authoritative (para. 27). In this way, analyzing policy framed in the context of discourse is vital in considering policy 'silences' and assumptions inherent in the policy process (Bank, 2011).

## **Examining the Broader Context (Social, Political, Economic) of Policies**

The policy process is a practice of power which varies to the extent to which it is democratic, depending on the ways that power elites are formed and legitimated, and the ways that social groups participate (or do not participate) in policy formation. Moreover,

policy as a practice of power can lead to the reproduction of inequality, inequity, marginalization, and hegemony, to name a few. Discourse analysis informed by critical epistemologies can expose the ways that authorized policy functions as ideology (Levison, Sutton, & Winstead, 2009).

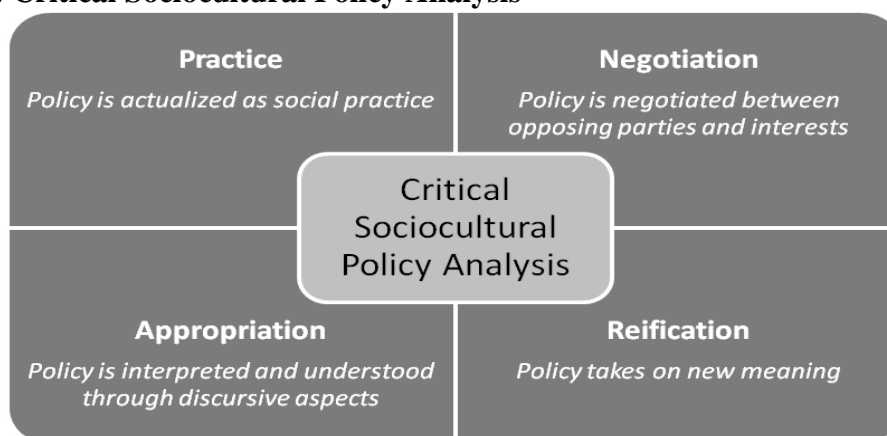
Howarth (2009) suggests that discourse is about more than representations and systems of meaning, which are theoretical in nature, where individuals conform to a shared set of values and ways of perceiving world. Discourse encompasses the complexity of all social relations and practices, where social relations and social practices are produced by the exercise of power. Critical to this point is that power involves the expansion of political limits and defining lines of inclusion and exclusion (Howarth, 2009). Similarly, power also supports the reproduction of social practice through various politics and ideologies. Thus, power functions “to *conceal* the radical contingency of social relations and to *naturalize* relations of domination” (Howarth, 2009, p. 310).

In this light, Levison, Sutton, and Winstead (2009) see policy as social practice as created by diverse actors about the way things should be done. Moreover, the result of the policy process should be understood as a normative cultural discourse about how things should or must be done (Levison, Sutton, & Winstead, 2009). Policy making is characterized by unequal power relationships that underpin both the formal and informal aspects of educational policy making (Liasidou, 2011, p. 888). As such, this discourse implicitly assumes a position of how things are, creating a model of the world or, more specifically, a model of school environment. In this view, policy “thus (a) defines reality, (b) orders behavior, and...(c) allocates resources accordingly” (Levison, Sutton, & Winstead, 2009, p. 770). A practice approach looks more closely at the social contexts where the interests and languages comprising a normative policy discourse are formed into something that is politically and culturally viable (Levison, Sutton, & Winstead, 2009, p. 778). *Practice*, in this sense, refers to how policy is actualized as a social practice, even though policy takes the form of language and text, and should be analyzed as such.

To understand this approach to critical sociology policy analysis, Levison, Sutton, and Winstead (2009) identify three key concepts: negotiation, appropriation, and reification. The concept of *negotiation*, in practice, describes how policy is often negotiated between opposing parties and interests. As Levison, Sutton, and Winstead (2009) posit, the negotiation of meaning is always a part of policy formation; the process of normative cultural production requires an active negotiation of meaning. Beyond the policy process, policymakers derive policy taking into consideration the various interests and institutions where policy takes shape.

*Appropriation* refers to the ways that individuals interpret and understand elements of policy, thereby incorporating these discursive aspects into their own preconceived interests, motivations, and actions (Levison, Sutton, & Winstead, 2009). The concept of *reification* gives form to an individual's experience of a more abstract concept by producing a concrete existence of it. Once policy (an abstract concept on paper) is formed, individuals create a concrete understanding of what that policy means. Reification suggests that an individual's understanding can take on a new meaning of their own, beyond their context of origin. In other words, policy texts can be interpreted in many ways, even outside the scope of what was originally intended. Figure 2 provides a brief overview and conceptual frame of critical policy sociology.

These same individuals appropriate policy texts, whereby individuals understand elements of policy through their own preconceived interests and assumptions. How a teacher interprets and implements policy relating to newcomer youth is dependent upon their own motivations and understanding of the particular policy. In this example, the meaning that a teacher gives to the policy text, and the experiences they bring to it, becomes the focus of their interpretation – thus reifying their beliefs in their interpretation and creating a new meaning beyond what the policy may have intended. Policy related to the transition of newcomer youth, and the interpretation of who newcomer youth are and how they are best taught, included, and integrated, becomes actualized through discursive aspects. Moreover, newcomer youth are the passive recipients of educational policy, where cultural production is constructed about who newcomer youth are, and how best newcomer youth are served in schools.

**Figure 2: Critical Sociocultural Policy Analysis**

*Note:* Adapted from Levinson, Sutton, and Winstead (2009, pp. 778-783)

The critical policy sociology framework established by Gale (2001), along with Levison, Sutton, and Winstead's (2009) concepts for critical sociocultural policy analysis, provide a theoretical underpinning to examine Ontario educational policies related to the transition of newcomer youth. Such approaches work simultaneously to understand how critical policy analysis is set apart from other policy work and inclined to the critique of oppressive social practices (Gale, 2001). Through the lens of critical policy sociology, this research will examine the intersection and relations between 'personal troubles' and 'public issues' (Gale, 2001). It is in this light that I will unpack Ontario educational policies to see them, as Levison, Sutton, and Winstead (2009) suggest, "as a kind of social practice, specifically, a practice of power" (p. 767).

Critical policy sociology scrutinizes existing forms of domination, where educational institutions and policy form the foundation of daily discursive reproduction of power, to establish social justice and non-domination. Inclusive policies, then, are regarded as subverting domination and providing capacity for fostering acceptance and respect through the interplay with issues of equality, power, and politics (Liasidou, 2011).

### **Critiquing Oppressive Social Practices**

I now turn to an overview of critical pedagogy to understand its theoretical underpinnings, to situate CPS within critical pedagogy and then relate it to newcomers

and their transition. Emerging from Paulo Freire's work on poverty in Brazil in the 1960s, critical pedagogy gained international attention after the publication of Freire's 1967 *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Critical pedagogy, formed by the foundations of critical theory, is concerned not only with offering student ways of thinking critically or acting as critical agents in educational institutions, but also involves critiquing the status quo. Educators working from a critical pedagogical framework understand the social, political, economic, and psychological aspects of the schools and education systems in which they operate (Kincheloe, 2007).

Critical pedagogues, as Kincheloe (2007) suggests, understand more broadly the information systems in the wider culture that impact the lives of students, including: media, knowledge produced by marginalized groups, and how power operates to support or oppress groups. In other words, what constitutes knowledge and the pedagogy it supports are in constant evolution; critical pedagogy supports new ways to challenge the status quo, by engaging dominant forms of power and privilege, to expose ideology, discourse, systemic inequality, and prevailing social norms. For example, dominant White, English-speaking, middle-to-upper class privilege functions by upholding values and power as the normative cultural discourse. To expose such discourses of power and control, critical pedagogy serves to draw upon diverse groups to critique these forms of oppression.

Critical pedagogy draws on social and critical education theory, as well as cultural studies, to examine education as part of the existing political and social landscape that characterizes the dominant society (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). One of the most integral tenets of critical pedagogy is to challenge the reproductive roles that educational institutions play in cultural, social, and political life. There is a commonly held belief that pedagogical practice should be devoted to social transformation in the best interests of subordinated and marginalized groups (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). At the heart of critical pedagogy, what the dominant group calls knowledge is complicated and complex, as that definition of knowledge inherently implies the values, assumptions, and power of the dominant group. Consequently, any voice of marginalized groups, or the oppressed, is dismissed. Critical pedagogy provides the conditions to question the ways



knowledge is produced and whose interests are served. As Kincheloe (2008) states, critical pedagogy is:

- Grounded on a social and educational vision of justice and equality
- Constructed on the belief that education is inherently political
- Interested in maintaining a delicate balance between social change and cultivating the intellect
- Concerned with "the margins" of society, the experiences and needs of individuals faced with oppression and subjugation
- Committed to resisting the harmful effects of dominant power (p. 10)

These key tenets influence both teachers and students to work towards social justice in the classroom.

### **Proposing Alternatives**

Critical pedagogy empowers students to develop core skills that help them to identify dominant power within the school, classroom, textbooks, and curricula (Kincheloe, 2008). Working with students, teachers reframe the ways that school views students – and vice versa – to challenge the underpinnings of power. In recent years, the classroom has become a hotbed for the theoretical and practical debate concerning the usefulness of particular culturally diverse instructional material (McKenna, 2003). This has a profound effect on the values and future of students, particularly for newcomer youth. For example, the rhetoric of diversity, which celebrates culture as an asset and enriching experience for all students in Ontario schools (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005; 2007a; 2007b; 2008b; 2009a; 2009b) is really, through the lens of critical pedagogy, an issue of “questioning culture as determined by conscious and unconscious policies of exclusion based on inequalities perceived in some cultural differences” (McKenna, 2003, p. 430). The rhetoric at the ministry (policy) level is fraught with both intentional and unintentional consequences – cultural difference and values are shaped by dominant discourses.

Students, particularly newcomer youth, are defined and categorized by cultural, social, economic, national, political, and educational factors. Jones (2006) identifies these factors as borders, where they have both affirming and marginalizing affects. Critical pedagogy does not simply single out newcomer or marginalized students, but empowers all students to critique what makes knowledge. In schools, there is a need for inclusive educational policies that incorporate these border pedagogies into the classroom to educate all students, not just newcomer youth (Jones, 2006). These borders:

can serve as the tapestry that will weave together educational practitioners, linguist, cultural and social brokers, youth advocates, and youths themselves to begin a dialogue about borders, education, and identity to jointly construct innovative ways of thinking and teaching through border pedagogy and border epistemology (Jones, 2006, p. 60).

Bartolomé (2003) paints a less upbeat picture, yet one quite important to note. Bartolomé (2003) notes:

it is erroneous to assume that blind replication of instructional programs or teacher mastery of particular teaching methods, in and of themselves, will guarantee successful student learning, especially when we are discussing populations that historically have been mistreated and miseducated by the schools" (p. 408).

Regardless of how inclusive policies attempt to be, assumptions of what is best for students is shaped by dominant ideologies, where historical notions of community, racism, language, poverty, discrimination, family, and education of marginalized groups are almost ignored. Importantly, as Jones (2006) notes, it "is necessary to examine the underlying notions of power within ideologies and institutions that function, both intentionally and unintentionally, to further fragment and compartmentalize youth through identity politics" (p. 59). These identity politics have a profound effect on newcomer youth and their transition to school.

### **Critical Policy Sociology and Critical Pedagogy as it Relates to Newcomers and Transition**

The two approaches that I have outlined, critical policy sociology and critical pedagogy, have implications for newcomer students in their transition to educational institutions in Ontario. These theoretical underpinnings, at their core, critique oppressive forms of

control that are found within dominant discourses related to immigration, education, and power. Through this framework, critical policy sociology provides a lens to view how values play a critical role in whose voice is heard, and who policy ultimately serves. Complementing this, critical pedagogy differs by offering a view on how roles are reproduced, how newcomer students are subjugated to minoritized roles, and how newcomers can act as critical agents to challenge dominant social norms and the status quo. Working together, these two approaches form my theoretical framework in this thesis.

### **Summary**

This chapter examined the theoretical framework used in this study, specifically the framing of this thesis through a critical policy sociology lens, influenced by critical pedagogy. I provided a comprehensive review of critical policy sociology, particularly by reviewing Gale's (2001) framework and Levison, Sutton, and Winstead's (2009) key concepts for critical sociocultural policy analysis. I also provided a brief overview of critical pedagogy after which I discussed both critical policy sociology and critical pedagogy as it relates to newcomers and their transition to schools. To accomplish this task, this chapter set out to understand how critical policy sociology and critical pedagogy can illuminate the theoretical assumptions and underpinnings associated with themes of power, domination, and values related to the educational policy process. The next chapter examines the methodology used in this study and looks at the method of document analysis used to collect data, as well as the critical discourse analysis framework used to analyze and interpret the data.

## CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

*We are surrounded by and immersed in discourses. They inhabit all written and spoken material and are embedded in all systems of signification.*

(Burr, 1995, p. 141)

The following chapter outlines the methodological framework that shapes this research. In this study, I employ a qualitative approach and use critical discourse analysis to examine current and recent educational policies in Ontario through an extensive documentary analysis related to the transition of newcomer students to the education system. This policy analysis of seven education documents provided the empirical foundation for this research and outlined the gaps that currently exist in the policy landscape, examine and uncover unequal power relations that exist within policy texts between racially/ethnically minoritized youth and the majority, what areas promote effective and successful transition and settlement, how cultural and ethnic diversity and inclusion is promoted, and what future direction Ontario educational policy should take in order to be relevant for an increasing immigrant population.

This study seeks to examine whether or not Ontario educational policy documents support the transition of newcomer youth to schools through their academic and social trajectory. As a qualitative study, emphasis will be paid to social and cultural reproduction, the shaping, reshaping, reflecting of social structures, and the creation and reproduction of unequal power relations between groups (Fairclough, 2003). In this chapter, I will outline the methodological approach of critical discourse analysis that I use to analyze Ontario educational policy documents and my approach to research design, data collection, and data analysis.

### **Research Questions**

Ontario schools are inherently becoming more diverse spaces, given the increasing population of newcomer youth. However, dominant cultural norms serve to contain diversity in order to maintain existing power structures. Thus, this research intends to answer the main question of:

How do current Ontario educational policies shape the transition process for newcomer youth?

The following is a list of the subsequent questions that this study will examine:

- 1) How do these policies act as a form of power?
- 2) How is inclusivity understood in policies related to the transition of newcomer youth?

### **Research Methodology and Design**

In this section, I highlight the methodological framework that guides this research. First, I define critical discourse analysis (CDA) and outline some of the various approaches to CDA. Next, I describe how I employ CDA as the methodology that frames this research. Finally, I explain how CDA is best conducted through the examination of educational policy documents.

#### **Defining Critical Discourse Analysis**

Critical discourse analysis explores the relationships between discursive practices, events, and texts, and the broader social and cultural structures, relations, and processes (Taylor, 2004). More significantly, critical discourse analysis explores how texts construct representations of the world, social relationships, and social identities (Fairclough, 2003; Taylor, 2004). CDA provides a framework for analysis appropriate for policy analysis because it permits a detailed examination of the relationship of language to other social processes; specifically, how that language functions within power relations (Taylor, 2004). As such, my methodology identifies a critical approach to educational policy studies using a critical discourse analysis framework, as outlined by Fairclough (2003).

In this research, I analyze the discourse of newcomer youth and the inherent themes of power, values, language, and inclusivity that form this discourse. How educational policy texts in Ontario construct and sustain ideological power relations, as well as the values that are expressed, are of particular interest to this research. In this

research, the term discourse is used to encompass how texts construct representations of the world, social relationships, and social identities (Fairclough, 2003; Taylor, 2004).

The coalescence of language and social analysis makes critical discourse analysis an effective tool for policy analysis when compared to other approaches (Taylor, 2004). CDA enables the research to find underlying ideologies, assumptions, and values within the policy text (Fairclough 2001). CDA is particularly concerned with social practice, driven by concepts of power, society, change, and values. Key to this research is how policy texts are shaped by relations of power. As Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) identify, power creates our social world and the ways in which the world can be talked about. As such, power is “both a productive and a constraining force” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 13). In this context, power should not be seen as simply oppressive but as producing the social world in which we live – which can have oppressive characteristics.

Key to discourse analysis, and to this research, is considering the potential importance absence of “what is not there”, in selected discourse excerpts and the discourse as a whole (Wood & Kroger, 2000, p. 91). Similarly, Harrison (2002) acknowledges, adopting a critical approach to document analysis involves much more than performing a content analysis, rather it questions “why the document was constructed, what is being said (overtly and covertly), and what is not being said” (Harrison, 2002, p. 130). Discourse is situated and must be viewed in its own context, where language is examined within a social context (Wood & Kroger, 2000).

### **How This Research Employs Critical Discourse Analysis**

The conceptualization of Ontario education policy “encompasses the things governments do intentionally in order to achieve change in society” (McArthur, 2007, p. 240). These political decisions cannot be isolated from their context; it is this insight that encourages a dialogue with institutional and discursive studies (Taylor, 2004). Additionally, educational policy is made by real people and is concerned with many interests, including: responding to problems, achieving goals, setting government mandates, satisfying particular constituents, improving educational outcomes, and bolstering political support, to name a few. Critical discourse analysis helps underscore the

ideological work of policy texts (Taylor, 2004). Fairclough's model for CDA provides the framework for this research. According to the framework, the analysis of a policy document should consider: (1) the language of the text (text), (2) the production and consumption of the text (discursive practice), and (3) the broader social norms that the communicative event takes place (social practice) (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 68). All three areas, text, discursive practice, and social practice, should be the focus in any communicative event (in this research, the analysis of a document). This study draws on Fairclough and Wodak (1997) and their five common features to critical discourse analysis as outlined by Jørgensen and Phillips (2002):

1. ***The character of social and cultural processes and structures is partly linguistic- discursive.*** Through the processes of text production and consumption, social and cultural reproduction and change take place;
2. ***Discourse is both constitutive and constituted.*** Discourse is a form of social practice which constitutes the social world and is constituted by other social practices. It “does not only contribute to the shaping and reshaping of social structures but also reflects them” (p. 61);
3. ***Language use should be empirically analyzed within its social context.*** CDA engages in concrete, linguistic textual analysis of language use in social interaction;
4. ***Discourse functions ideologically.*** Discursive practices contribute to the creation and reproduction of unequal power relations between groups (particularly, this research will examine unequal power relations between newcomer youth and the majority);
5. ***Critical research is not politically neutral.*** Critical discourse analysis aims to uncover unequal power relations and takes the side of the oppressed, to achieve social change.

Additionally, I will use questions to guide the examination of Ontario education policy documents with respect to three different contexts of the policy cycle: influences,

text production, and practices/effects (Vidovich, 2001). After an analysis of micro policy practices is conducted, I will return to identifying 'bigger picture' themes as part of my analysis. These questions include:

- What are the dominant discourses of the policy text and which discourses are excluded?
- Which values are reflected in the policy?
- What are the unintended consequences?
- What is the impact of the policy on different groups based on gender and ethnicity?

Given the potential for further study in this area, where the perspectives of administration, teachers, service providers, and newcomer youth themselves could define transition and their experience integrating into Ontario school systems, this research sets the context in which education policies currently exist to serve newcomer youth in their transition to educational settings. As constructed social products, documents reflect specific conventions and discourses, dependent on collective consumption and production (Bloor & Wood, 2006; Prior 2003).

### **Methods Used: Document Analysis**

There is a paucity of research that looks at documents surrounding the transition of immigrant students to Ontario schools and, as an underutilized method, document analysis can be used as a method in isolation from other methods (Bloor & Wood, 2006; Prior, 2003). Document analysis consists of the systematic examination of current documents as sources of data that supports the evaluation and improvement of social and educational practices (Chandra & Sharma, 2006). As such, I chose to analyze policy documents, as opposed to other research, media coverage, or ministry press releases about the policies. Employing documentary analysis for the purpose of this research is useful in examining educational policy documents as tools of policy, devices of rhetoric, and standards operation within educational contexts. Therefore, documentary analysis



helps to illuminate the interplay of government agendas, policymakers, school boards, schools (administration, teachers, and students), and parents, as both producers and consumers of documents.

There are several attractions to using document analysis methods in this research. Given the potential for further study in this area, where the perspectives of administration, teachers, service providers, and newcomer youth themselves could define transition and their experience integrating into Ontario school systems, this research sets the context in which education policies currently exist to serve newcomer youth in their transition to educational settings. These types of documents are critical to the study of educational policy as they are produced and used in social settings and provide insight into the values of education, ministries, and school institutions (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004). Examining these documents also illuminates the need to situate existing Ontario educational policy within current and emerging educational, sociological, and demographical shifts in Canada. Atkinson and Coffey (2004) posit that the “systematic relationships between documents actively *construct* the rationality and organization that they purport transparently to record” (p. 69). As constructed social products, documents reflect specific conventions and discourses, dependent on collective consumption and production (Bloor & Wood, 2006; Prior 2003). In this view, Ontario policy documents are products that are manufactured and consumed by individuals and/or the collective in educational settings and have effects, on the education system, as well as collective groups and individuals (Prior, 2003), particularly on those that are racialized, visibly minoritized and, subsequently, marginalized.

### **Sampling**

A sampling strategy was developed to examine a number of relevant documents (Bloor & Wood, 2006). An initial keyword search Ontario education policies was conducted using the Internet, searching the Ministry of Education website. Broad search terms of "transition", "immigrant", "newcomer", "English language learner", "English-as-a-Second Language (ESL)", "literacy", "student success", "English Language Development (ELD)", "visible minority", "equity", "inclusion", "diversity", "integration", "adaptation", "acculturation", and "transculturation" were used in order to ensure that all relevant

policies would be located. The keyword search was refined to "newcomer", "immigrant", "English language learner", "visible minority", "equity", and "inclusion" once an initial set of policies were retrieved in order to select relevant policies, guides, strategies, and reports for analysis.

As all of the Ministry of Education documents are electronic, keywords were identified using the search tool. This allowed for a quick overview of the relevancy of each document. The final sample for the present analysis consisted of seven documents, which included: 5 Ontario education policies and 2 teacher-focused guides. For all individual documents, the following information was entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet under the following broad headings: (1) text, (2) discursive practice, and (3) social practice. From here, an analysis was conducted in order to identify themes and codified context.

### **Selection of Data Sources**

The interest in discourse analysis for this study is in language, not language users, and, more broadly, discourse. Therefore, the units of analysis are texts or parts of texts rather than participants (Wood & Kroger, 2000). The research identified types of text that were likely to contain instances of discourse related to the transition of newcomer youth. Saturation, or the endpoint in this discourse analysis, was reached when the analysis of the data was thorough and no new themes emerged. Wood and Kroger (2000) inform that it is the researcher that must judge whether there are sufficient data to make and justify an argument.

The question around number of sources comes down to having sufficient data, to make quality arguments that are well grounded – “bigger is not necessarily bigger” (Wood & Kroger, 2000, p. 81). Therefore, this study is based on analysis of seven Ontario education documents developed between 2005 and 2009. The documents consist of the following policies and guides: *Many Roots, Many Voices: Supporting English Language Learners in Every Classroom, A Practical Guide for Ontario Educators* (2005); *English Language Learners ESL and ELD Programs and Services: Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12*

(2007a); *The Ontario Curriculum Grades 9 to 12: English as a Second Language and English Literacy Development* (2007b); *Reach Every Student: Energizing Ontario Education* (2008a); *Supporting English Language Learners: A Practical Guide for Ontario Educators, Grades 1 to 8* (2008b); *Realizing the Promise of Diversity: Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy* (2009a); and *Realizing the Promise of Diversity: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation* (2009b). These policies and guide are all publicly available, and have, as their intended primary audience, school boards, administrators, teachers, and students, parents, and public as a secondary audience. These documents thus provide an overview of Ontario's official educational policy discourse of newcomer youth over the past eight years. These documents also specify Ontario's outcomes, program activities, and planned results pertaining to the education of newcomer youth.

*Many Roots, Many Voices* (2005), as well as *Supporting English Language Learners* (2008b) although with a focus on grades 1 to 8, addresses teachers, principals, and educational professionals and provide practical guides to support English language learners. *English Language Learners ESL and ELD Programs and Services:* (2007a) and *The Ontario Curriculum Grades 9 to 12: English as a Second Language and English Literacy Development* (2007b) are policies directed towards school boards, principals, and teachers to support English language learners, where *Realizing the Promise of Diversity* (2009a) outlines a strategy for school boards to develop equity and inclusion policies, and *Realizing the Promise of Diversity: Guidelines* (2009b) is designed to help Ontario school boards develop, implement, and monitor equity and inclusion policies. *Reach Every Student: Energizing Ontario Education* (2008a) outlines a broad strategy to meet the needs of every student in Ontario's publically funded schools. Table 2 provides a summary of the documents used in this study.

**Table 2: Title and Publication Dates, by Document Type**

<b>Type of Document</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Publication Date</b>
Guides (n=2)	Many Roots, Many Voices: Supporting English Language Learners in Every Classroom, A Practical Guide for Ontario Educators	2005
	Supporting English Language Learners: A Practical Guide for Ontario Educators, Grades 1 to 8	2008
Policy (n=5)	English Language Learners ESL and ELD Programs and Services: Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12	2007
	The Ontario Curriculum Grades 9 to 12: English as a Second Language and English Literacy Development	2007
	Reach Every Student: Energizing Ontario Education	2008
	Realizing the Promise of Diversity: Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy	2009
	Realizing the Promise of Diversity: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation	2009

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The documents were selected based on an examination of current Ontario policies that relate to newcomer youth, set out by the Ministry of Education, involving key components of the transition process based on: language acquisition, equity and diversity, literacy (English), teacher guides, initial language assessment, and English Language Learner. The themes I looked for in selecting the policy documents were driven by the

critical policy sociology framework. Selected documents include policy and guides which were read and analyzed using qualitative content analysis. I chose the final seven documents, and analyzed them specifically, because they were particularly concerned with newcomer youth, immigration, and themes identified from the critical policy sociology framework. Other documents I consulted in narrowing my search helped to inform my final selection; some documents were specific subject curriculum documents or outdated policies that helped in my selection of current policies specific to newcomer youth. Documents were initially read in chronological order without being coded so that an overall sense of the document could be established (with respect to framing, critical framing, foregrounding, backgrounding, and presupposition). A second reading, again in chronological order, was performed and major themes were initially identified. A third reading was conducted by section (in instances where sections were repeated in reports published in different years). For example, policies and guide documents that referred to English language learners were read together in isolation from other sections of the documents in order to clarify commonalities and differences across documents.

The same process was repeated for all recurring topics/sections. From here, all documents were read again and were coded to the point of thematic saturation (until no new themes emerged after additional readings). Once the major themes were finalized, portions of the documents corresponding to each theme were read together in order to identify sub-themes. Once again, coded segments for individual themes across all documents were read to the point of thematic saturation. Finally, the codified content of each sub-theme was interpreted in terms of the thesis's framework. Overall, I analyzed the seven documents to pull out overarching themes, driven by my theoretical framework, and then analyzed documents with related themes together in order to find subthemes in the policy texts.

### **Limitations and Assumptions**

As with any type of research, there are limitations to this study. Document analysis research, although an excellent approach to gathering rich, substantive, and in-depth information, has its weaknesses. In particular, researcher bias and sampling have

affected the reliability of this research. Qualitative research involves data gathering and data analysis, which is performed and interpreted by the researcher. Therefore, there is a high risk of researcher bias. To reduce this risk, I followed Patton's (2002) recommendation that the researcher "explore one's predispositions, making biases explicit, to the extent possible, and engaging in mental cleansing processes" (p. 553). Before this study began and during the data gathering, data analyzing, and report writing processes, I consistently reviewed any biases or standpoints that I had that could affect the validity of this study, but chose a critical stance. Regardless, my particular viewpoints and experiences could have affected the research findings. Also, how I acquired my sample size did limit the generalizability of this study. Self-selected sampling, although refined through keyword searches, does not control for selection bias.

Specifically, potential challenges to conducting the method of documentary research include: authenticity (the soundness and authorship), credibility (similarity and accuracy), representativeness (survival and availability), and meaning (literal and interpretative understanding) (Harrison, 2002). There may have been, unknowingly, omissions made relating to these areas. There is also a potential struggle to discourse analysis, as good analytical work takes time (Wood & Kroger, 2000). Although great care and thorough procedures were incorporated into this research, systematically reading through the documents at least six times while refining themes and finally reaching saturation, the identification of some themes may have been missed.

### **Situating Myself as Researcher**

As an educator, academic coordinator of the Pathways to Education program, and manager in the non-profit sector, I have been involved in the construction of education and community, as a full participant, but have often felt an internal tension between schools and community. Whereas I envision the two working collaboratively towards building educational success for all, I know there are challenges inherent to this being a reality. As such, I have not acted as an agent who perpetuated the status quo, rather I have attempted to create contexts to question dominant practices. As a graduate student, I have been afforded the opportunity, vernacular, and power to question, discover, and

critique dominant policy discourses and practices so that I may lend my insights to policy and be an agent for change. I have worked with youth at both sides of the economic spectrum, those living in low-income areas through a poverty-reduction program, as well as youth living in upper-income environments teaching in an independent school.

Although these two groups differ greatly in economic, cultural, and social capital, there is one consistent trend – newcomer youth, regardless of economic background, experience similar transition experiences upon arrival to Canada and as they enter school. However, their transition varies, for example, in terms of family support, ties to the community, academic and language barriers, and socioeconomic status.

By building on existing research, as well as setting the context for future research in this area that could involve school staff, administrators, service providers, and youth themselves, I feel that I am expanding on the current research boundaries, contributing to a relatively unexplored area, and furthering the field of education through this study. My contextual perspective may identify some of the gaps in Ontario education policies from where recommendations can be made to change the political landscape for newcomer youth as Canada's population composition changes. Situating myself as researcher using this method, I am limited to my reaction, influence, and bias on the interpretation of the document research data. I elaborate more on this in the preceding section on limitations of this study.

### **Ethical Considerations**

There are no known ethical considerations with this intended study. There are potential practical and political implications as a result of this research. My research intentions are to explore the gaps in policy and intended practice within educational contexts in order to discuss newcomer youth transition frameworks and possible future directions of Ontario educational policy.

### **Summary**

This chapter examined the methodology used in this study, specifically the selection of Ontario education documents, including practical guides and policies, to collect data. I

provided theoretical and intuitive reasons for the significance of analyzing Ontario education documents, as well as detailing the process I used to select documents that were used in this study. The method of document analysis that I used to collect data was described, as well as critical discourse analysis framework that I used to analyze and interpret the data. Empirical questions guided this methodological approach and frame the presentation of results. Namely, questions regarding the reproduction of social inequalities, maintenance of the status quo related to unequal power dynamics, consequences of ideological, political, and social underpinning of the current Ontario education documents, and whether policy texts challenge or ignore power positions by situating the social relations of newcomer youth to that of teachers, peers, and the school institution. The next chapter examines the Ontario education documents, presents the data, and explains the findings, framed through critical discourse analysis.



## CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS

*Canada, and particularly provincial ministries of education, have been dabblers, providing little, if any substantial capacity for implementing their policies.*

(Peck, Sears, & Donaldson, 2008, p. 68)

*Whatever the mandate, equity and fairness are common tenets of social justice movements that are manifested in broad goals such as equality for all, a fair distribution of resources, achievement of the greatest good for the greatest number, and enhancement of the life conditions of marginalized citizens.*

(Beswick & Sloat, 2006, p. 23)

The following chapter outlines the data collected as a result of the findings of the document analysis. The discourse analysis examined the themes of the Ontario Ministry of Education policy documents related to the transition of newcomer youth, with a focus on critical policy sociology and critical pedagogy. The documents examined are listed in the previous chapter on pages 49 to 51. This chapter is organized according to the questions set out in this thesis, which include: How is the term ‘newcomer youth’ taken up? How is the term ‘transition’ taken up? How is inclusivity understood in Ontario educational policies?

### **HOW IS THE TERM ‘NEWCOMER YOUTH’ TAKEN UP?**

#### **Ontario Educational Policies’ Definitions of Newcomer Youth**

Educational policy in Ontario provides a set of definitions for newcomer children and youth. In Ontario, newcomers arrive from countries around the world may arrive at any point between Kindergarten and Grade 12, and newcomer youth between Grade 9 and Grade 12 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a). Newcomers from other countries may include: (1) children who have arrived in Canada with their families as part of a voluntary, planned immigration process, where these students have usually received formal education in their countries of origin, and some may have studied English as a foreign language; (2) children who have arrived in Canada as a result of a war or other crisis in their home country, where these young people have often suffered traumatic experiences, and some may have been separated from family members; and (3)

international or “visa” students who have paid fees to attend school in Ontario and often plan to attend a Canadian university (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a; 2008a). Generally, visa students are of secondary school age, typically arrive in Canada without their families, and may live with extended family, a host family, or alone. Some have had instruction in English but may still have considerable difficulty learning English in Ontario classrooms and require support for success in Ontario schools (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a; 2008a).

The majority of English language learners entering secondary school are newcomers from other countries (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a). The inclusion and equity policy (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009a) refers to racialized and visible minority groups who may experience social inequities on the basis of race, colour, and/or ethnicity, and who may be subjected to differential treatment. Although newcomers to Ontario schools are comprised of racialized and visibly minoritized groups, definitions of newcomers in Ontario educational policy avoid any such connections. The policy refers to the term “newcomers” in isolation from the terms “visible minorities”, “youth”, and “students” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009a).

As a result, there seems to be a deficit understanding of newcomer youth. In addition, newcomer youth are viewed as contributing to the multicultural fabric of Canadian society, so in this respect they are seen as an asset and benefit to our society, schools, and classrooms. Thus, newcomer youth and their transition is understood in a way that holds Ontario schools and policies as multicultural in nature, where policy seems to suggest that diversity and social cohesion are attainable simply with the presence of newcomer students. However, this view in Ontario policy is lacking. Newcomer youth as a whole lack English skills, as well as cultural adaptability skills and need to be taught these skills. Current Ontario educational policy is deficient in providing cultural adaptability skills and, in some cases, addressing newcomer students who do not speak English or French proficiently. Moreover, policies do not address mental health risk, discrimination, the high dropout rate of immigrant youth social, cultural, and academic adjustments that are often exacerbated by racism, conflicting cultural values, educational gaps, culture shock, physical health problems, poverty,

isolation and/or symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) due to war, violence or loss of family members. Conversely, policies, such as *Many Roots, Many Voices* (2005), do generally address acculturation and settlement issues that newcomer students face when they arrive at Ontario school. However, these often address the issues broadly without providing substantive support to students.

In regard to the policies examined, there is an assumption that newcomer youth who immigrate to Canada all speak a language other than English or French. Although Canadian (federal) immigration policy mandates proficiency in one of Canada's official languages, English or French, an increasing number of newcomer students do not speak either or. Therefore, there is an assumption Ontario educational policies are geared towards refugees and family immigrant classes, rather than economic immigrant students. This corresponds to recent trends between 2001 and 2011, where more newcomers are comprised of refugee and family immigrant classes (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Permanent Resident Data System, 2011)

### **HOW IS THE TERM 'TRANSITION' TAKEN UP?**

In transitioning to Canada, youth are labelled with various descriptors such as 'immigrant,' 'ESL student,' 'refugee,' 'newcomer,' 'English Language Learner,' and 'Canadian-born.' All of the Ontario educational policy documents refer to youth's transition as integration. *The Ontario Curriculum Grades 9 to 12* states that ESL and ELD curriculum is meant "to support English language learners, to help them integrate successfully into the academic and social life of the school" (Ministry of Education, 2007b, p. 9). Transition in this context is based on the definition of integration. The dominant usage of transition in education literatures focuses on transitions involving other populations. For example, research typically examines transitions from a largely capitalist and individualistic theoretical starting point—literatures typically look at issues related to the transitions from: school-to-work (Sanchez, Esparza, Colon, & Davis, 2010), secondary school-to-post-secondary institutions (Abada, Hou, & Ram, 2009), school to community (Benz, Lindstrom, Unruh, & Waintrup, 2004), the transition of students with special needs (Cimera, 2010; Gil-Kashiwabara, Hogansen, Geenen, Powers, & Powers,

2007), and transition to adulthood (Glick, Ruf, White, & Goldscheider, 2006, Sanchez, Esparza, Colon, & Davis, 2010). According to most of these examples, transition assumes that an individual moves from a space (physical, mental, familial, etc.) that is familiar, to a space that is unfamiliar.

## **HOW ‘INCLUSIVITY’ IS UNDERSTOOD IN EDUCATIONAL POLICIES**

### **The Discourse of Newcomer Youth**

Several themes emerged from the research which forms the discourse of newcomer youth. These themes, which encompass multiculturalism, equity, and diversity; what it means to be Canadian; English Language Learning; and social cohesion, define how inclusivity is comprised in educational policy and will now be discussed.

### **Multiculturalism, Equity, and Diversity**

Policies recognize an educational and Canadian commitment to multiculturalism. Ontario’s equity and inclusion strategy explicitly states at the beginning of the policy document that “Canadians embrace multiculturalism, human rights, and diversity as fundamental values” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009a, p. 7). Educational policy documents note that “Ontario schools serve a student population from a rich array of cultural and linguistic backgrounds” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008b, p. 2). Policies emphasize that as “educators, we share a deep commitment to the success of every student, and, as professionals, we are working to meet the challenges of an increasingly multicultural and multilingual society” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005, p. 4). There is a reliance on educators to “build on English language learners’...cultural backgrounds to enhance their understanding of English and ease their integration into the mainstream classroom, while increasing all students’ awareness of the benefits of cultural diversity” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005, p. 14).

Policy rhetoric stresses the significance of culture to foster a sense of belonging. *Many Roots, Many Voices* notes that it “is important that all student have the opportunities to share information about their languages, cultures, and experiences” and in this way “all student can experience a sense of belonging” (Ontario Ministry of

Education, 2005, p. 17). *The Ontario Curriculum Grades 9 to 12* asserts that the “wealth of linguistic and cultural diversity in ESL and ELD classrooms allows students to share experiences of their native countries and as newcomers to Canada. This will help students to develop a sense of personal identity and belonging.” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007b, p.51). Similarly, policy positions cultural diversity as providing opportunities for global learning and cultural understanding. *The Ontario Curriculum Grades 9 to 12* affirms that “Ontario’s increasing linguistic and cultural diversity provides students with many opportunities for cultural enrichment and for learning that is global in scope” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007b, p. 3).

Inclusion, in policy discourse, is held as a defining characteristic of Ontario schools. Rhetorically, the outcome of creating inclusive schools “is a dynamic and vibrant school environment that celebrates linguistic and cultural diversity as an asset and enriches the learning experience of all students” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008b, p. 18). The Ministry of Education bolsters that quality education involves “an inclusive society where diversity is the hallmark, and where all cultures are embraced within a common set of values” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008b, p. 8). An emphasis on celebrating diversity, multilingualism, and multiculturalism is clearly articulated in Ontario educational policy.

The high degree of rhetoric that describes equity in education for newcomer youth espouses many values of social justice, particularly relating to themes of critical pedagogy and critical policy sociology. For example, *Ontario’s Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009) states that: to “improve outcomes for students at risk, all partners must work to identify and remove barriers” (p. 5); “to promote inclusive education, as well as to understand, identify, and eliminate the biases, barriers, and power dynamics that limit our students’ prospects for learning, growing, and fully contributing to society” (p. 11); and “equity is a shared responsibility...establishing an equitable and inclusive education system requires commitment from all education partners” (p. 12) However, this policy lacks substantive programming to accomplish equity goals. The equity and inclusive policy describes programs and initiatives in the appendix, listing various policies that are stated as

supporting equity, but do not address the removal of barriers for students. One area listed as “Curriculum and Courses” notes that revised curriculum contains “a section on antidiscrimination education that encourages teachers to recognize the diversity of students’ backgrounds, interests, and experiences” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009a, p. 25). The second area listed is English Language Learners Policy that “sets standards to help students in all grades who speak English as an additional language; the majority of these are recent immigrants or students from Aboriginal communities” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009a, p. 25).

Policy texts state the need for supports, especially for newcomers that are higher at risk. However, policy fails to address the types of supports available to students. For example, the Ministry of Education states that “Immigrants/refugees coming from regions of instability may need additional supports to address issues related to trauma and stress” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a, p. 16). It is clear that the ministry identifies that specific supports are needed for newcomer students facing trauma or stress due to their immigrant status, but the discourse in the policy texts is highly rhetorical and falls short of providing guidance for these supports.

The equity and inclusive policy sets out a broad description of equity and inclusive education, that:

- is a foundation of excellence;
- meets individual needs;
- identifies and eliminates barriers;
- promotes a sense of belonging;
- involves the broad community;
- builds on and enhances previous and existing initiatives;
- is demonstrated throughout the system. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 11)

The policy “aims to promote inclusive education,...to understand, identify, and eliminate the biases, barriers, and power dynamics that limit our students’ prospects for learning, growing, and fully contributing to society” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 11). The barriers that are identified “may be related to the following dimensions of diversity and/or their intersection: ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, language,...,intellectual ability, race, religion, ...,socio-economic status, and others (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 11).

In an abstract level of discourse, the language used in *The Ontario Curriculum Grades 9 to 12* obscures at least four different concepts in describing how newcomer students should “adapt” to the Ontario school system (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007b). In blurring concepts of equity, anti-bullying, respectful interaction, and citizenship education, it posits that:

Students are entitled to receive equitable treatment in Ontario schools, regardless of differences in race, gender, place of origin, ethnic origin, citizenship, religion...or class and family status. Schools will not tolerate abuse, bullying, discrimination, intimidation, hateful words and actions, or any form of physical violence based on any of these differences...In addition, students will acquire knowledge about the contributions of the many linguistic and cultural groups that are at the heart of our diverse Canadian society, as well as a knowledge of Canadian geography, history, and civic issues that will empower them to participate fully as Canadian citizens." (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007b, p. 21)

Discourse in *The Ontario Curriculum Grades 9 to 12* strives for ambitious outcomes for equity and for students to recognize inherent power dynamics within society, where

students develop the ability to detect negative bias and stereotypes in literary texts and informational materials. They also learn to use inclusive and non-discriminatory language in both oral and written work. Active, responsible citizenship involves asking questions and challenging the status quo. The ESL and ELD program leads students to look at issues of power and justice in society, and empowers them by enabling them to express themselves and to speak out about issues that strongly affect them." (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007b, p. 51)

Policy documents reinforce the Ministry of Education’s promotion of diversity. The equity and inclusion policy states that the Ministry “acknowledges and values the diversity in our schools” and that “[e]very student is a unique individual and learns in different ways” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 14). *Many Roots, Many Voices* emphasizes the importance that “all students have opportunities to share information about their languages, cultures, and experiences” so that they can become aware “of both the differences and similarities among their cultures and languages, and all students can experience a sense of belonging” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005, p. 17). The English Language Learner policy document maintains that it is

diversity that has shaped education policy, and that, in turn, policy helps ELLs' achievement stating that the:

diversity that exists in Ontario's classrooms has helped to shape the policy outlined in this document, which is intended to promote good outcomes for English language learners...Implementation of this policy will promote academic achievement among English language learners at the level expected of all learners in Ontario...This language-acquisition policy is designed to help all English language learners in the province by engaging them in learning that enables them to develop their talents, meet their goals, and acquire the knowledge and skills they will need to achieve personal success and to participate in and contribute to Ontario society." (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a, p. 7)

The Ministry replicates the benefits of diversity in *Many Roots, Many Voices* and *The Ontario Curriculum Grades 9 to 12* which both state that:

Creating a welcoming and inclusive school environment for English language learners and their families is a whole-school activity requiring the commitment of the principal and vice-principal, teachers, support staff, and other leaders within the school community. The reward for this committed effort is a dynamic and vibrant school environment that celebrates diversity as an asset and enriches the learning experience for all students. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005, p. 36; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007b, p. 6)

Policy also gives some guidance to teachers, staff, and administration in supporting newcomers at the school level. *Many Roots, Many Voices* states the following list as being important in a well-defined process for welcoming newcomers:

- Our school has a specific process for welcoming newcomers.
- All staff members, including administrative staff, are aware of and understand the process.
- Our school has a designated reception team.
- Multilingual welcome signs, in the languages of the community, are posted in the school. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005, p. 36)

The discourse provides surface-level practical steps for teachers to “make new English language learners feel welcome, accepted, and supported in their classrooms by taking a few simple steps”, which include:

- Practise and use the correct pronunciation of the student's name.
- Seat the student where he or she can see and hear all classroom activities.
- Introduce yourself and the students who sit near the newcomer.
- Assign the student a classroom partner – someone of the same gender and, if possible, the same language background – to explain or model routine classroom tasks or to help the student in other ways.



- Ensure that the student understands school routines and is familiar with school facilities.
- Teach the student basic phrases, such as hello, goodbye, and I don't understand.
- Help the student learn to express important personal information in English – for example, to respond to questions about his or her name and address.
- Provide the student with some basic language learning materials, such as a picture dictionary or simple books on tape.
- Incorporate images and examples of linguistic and cultural diversity into all subjects in the curriculum, and celebrate diversity in all aspects of your practice. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005, p. 40)

### **What it Means to be Canadian**

Policy goals are concentrated on developing newcomer students' experiences to defined cultural norms. Rhetoric places a strong emphasis on progressing students to mainstream classrooms as quickly as possible while meeting specific standards. The ESL and ELD curriculum states that the program "is based on the belief that broad proficiency in English is essential to students' success in both their social and academic lives, and to their ability to take their place in society as responsible and productive citizens" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007b, p. 3). *The Ontario Curriculum Grades 9 to 12* addresses these specific standards in the areas of: Listening and Speaking, Reading, Writing, and Socio-cultural Competence and Media Literacy. The following excerpts illustrate the Ministry's policy goals (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007b):

The Listening and Speaking strand has three overall expectations, as follows:

***Students will:***

1. demonstrate the ability to understand, interpret, and evaluate spoken English for a variety of purposes;
2. use speaking skills and strategies to communicate in English for a variety of classroom and social purposes;
3. use correctly the language structures appropriate for this level to communicate orally in English. (p. 16)

The Socio-cultural Competence and Media Literacy strand has four overall expectations, as follows:

***Students will:***

1. use English and non-verbal communication strategies appropriately in a variety of social contexts;
2. demonstrate an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of Canadian citizenship, and of the contributions of diverse groups to Canadian society;
3. demonstrate knowledge of and adaptation to the Ontario education system; (p. 20)

Policy aims to support students through English language learning to "take charge of their own learning, independently and in groups", "make a successful transition to

their chosen postsecondary destination (work, apprenticeship, college, university)”, and “participate fully in the social, economic, political, and cultural life of their communities and of Canada” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007b, p. 4). To support these policy outcomes, the ESL and ELD curriculum states the overall expectations of ELLs where,

For many English language learners, achievement of the expectations may require them to adopt new ways of learning and new ways of interacting with others...A major goal of any instructional program for English language learners should be to encourage students to value and maintain their own linguistic and cultural identities so that they can enter the larger society as bilingual and bicultural individuals. Such young people are able to choose language and cultural norms that are appropriate in any given situation or cultural context, and can fully participate in and contribute to our multilingual, multicultural Canadian society. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007b, p. 4)

Ontario ESL and ELD policy further states that:

To be fully proficient in any language, speakers of that language must learn to interact appropriately at different levels of formality with peers, teachers, community members, and employers. The ability to understand and use the different language forms and observe the behavioural norms that are appropriate in a wide variety of situations is an important part of socio-cultural competence and is also a critical factor in English language learners’ attainment of full proficiency in English. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007b, p. 20)

Curriculum policy documents in Ontario have a direct influence on newcomer youth in shaping their understanding of Canada and diversity, as well as what it means to be a citizen. Under the specific expectations of ELL’s curriculum in *The Ontario Curriculum Grades 9 to 12*, it states the following:

2. Developing Awareness of Canada, Citizenship, and Diversity  
By the end of this course, students will:

Knowledge About Canada

2.1 demonstrate knowledge of some basic facts about Canada (e.g., identify Canada’s regions, provinces, territories, and capital cities; identify some Canadian symbols, animals, attractions, and sports; communicate information about common Canadian observances and holidays such as Remembrance Day and Canada Day)

Canadian Citizenship

2.2 demonstrate knowledge of a few basic elements of Canadian citizenship (e.g., explain the symbolism of the Canadian flag; say or sing the words to the Canadian national anthem; demonstrate awareness of and respect for diversity of culture, language, physical and intellectual ability, age, gender, and sexual orientation; identify elements that should be included in a code of behaviour for a Canadian classroom)

#### Canadian Diversity

2.3 communicate information about some basic social forms and practices that may vary from culture to culture (e.g., naming customs, forms of address, relationship to elders, responsibilities within the home, celebrations) (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007b, p. 66)

Education policy, particularly related to the curriculum documents, constructs newcomer youth's understanding of what it means to be Canadian. Knowledge, concepts of citizenship, and diversity are constructed to shape newcomers' notions about these various areas.

### **English Language Learning**

Policy discourse constructs terminology to characterize newcomer youth. *Many Roots, Many Voices* posits that the term English language learner “distinguishes the students themselves from the programs that support their language learning needs” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005, p. 48). Programs and policy place heavy emphasis is on language acquisition and proficiency for newcomer youth as well. Section 2.5.3 of *English Language Learners* asserts that:

School boards will design programs and services for English language learners so that they are flexible in response to changing needs and reflective of the needs of the students. The length of time that it will take for an English language learner to develop the level of proficiency in English that supports academic success will vary. Most English language learners are able to function effectively and confidently in everyday language situations within a year or two. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a, p. 24)

Section 2.3.2 of *English Language Learners* states that:

If initial assessment indicates that an English language learner has had limited prior schooling, the board will provide additional support to the student. The assessment should provide information about the type and amount of support the student will need to develop English language skills and bridge gaps in learning. Additional support should be provided through an intensive program designed to accelerate the student's acquisition of proficiency in everyday and academic English and the appropriate knowledge and skills of literacy and numeracy. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a, p. 18)

Similarly, *The Ontario Curriculum Grades 9 to 12* suggests that “English language learners need to learn to navigate the Ontario education system to maximize their potential for success” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007b, p.

20). In order to do this, Ontario education policies place an emphasis on English language acquisition, where curriculum is set to maximize a newcomer student's English proficiency. *The Ontario Curriculum Grades 9 to 12* goes on to state that:

Ontario's increasing linguistic and cultural diversity provides students with many opportunities for cultural enrichment and for learning that is global in scope. At the same time, however, this diversity means that a significant and growing proportion of Ontario students arrive in English-language schools as English language learners – that is, students who are learning the language of instruction at the same time as they are learning the curriculum. The curriculum in English as a Second Language and English Literacy Development for Grades 9 to 12 has been developed to ensure that English language learners have the maximum opportunity to become proficient in English and achieve the high levels of literacy that are expected of all Ontario students. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007b, p. 4)

*The Ontario Curriculum Grades 9 to 12* is clear in its language that ELL students must adapt and integrate into the normative culture. It states that:

The rate at which an English language learner acquires proficiency in English, adapts to the new environment, and integrates into the mainstream academic program will be influenced by a number of general factors. Factors affecting the successful acquisition of English include the following:

*The acculturation process.*  
*The migration experience.*  
*The level of development in the first language.*  
*Prior experience with English.*  
*Personality or motivational factors.*  
*The amount and quality of prior schooling.*  
*The presence of learning exceptionalities.*  
 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007b, p. 10)

*Many Roots, Many Voices* provides examples of general assumptions and overbroad policy goals which states that:

English language learners naturally want to develop a grasp of the language for social, as well as academic, purposes. To achieve that goal, they have to start with the essentials – the language of everyday life, in the community and at school. Through a variety of simple techniques, you can play a powerful role in helping students to add English to their repertoire of languages. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005, p. 8)

*Many Roots, Many Voices* constructs the view of newcomer youth as being merely English language learners, where language proficiency is over-emphasized and more holistic transition is absent. The policy emphasizes that:

Some English language learners arrive in the classroom with limited or no experience of the Roman alphabet, and may be unable to recognize individual letters...Regardless of age, students need to learn the letters of the alphabet, be able to speak the name of each letter, and begin the process of forming letters in print. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005, p. 12)

Moreover, the Ministry stresses that “[b]y incorporating language learning into all subjects, you not only give English language learners an equitable opportunity to experience success in school, but also enhance the literacy development of all students.” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005, p. 25)

### **Social Cohesion**

Social cohesion is a prevalent theme throughout Ontario’s educational policies. The Ministry of Education sees itself as a social change-maker, positing that “[a]s an agent of change and social cohesion, our education system supports and reflects the democratic values of fairness, equity, and respect for all” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 6). The Ministry states that “[e]quitable, inclusive education is also central to creating a cohesive society and a strong economy that will secure Ontario’s future prosperity” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 5). The goal of Ontario’s education policy “is to foster social cohesion through a publicly funded education system that respects diversity and brings all students together to learn through a shared set of experiences” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 8).

Most prominent in the policy rhetoric is the connection between concepts of equitable, quality education, diversity, inclusion, and social cohesion. The Ministry states that:

[p]roviding a high-quality education for all is a key means of fostering social cohesion, based on an inclusive society where diversity is affirmed within a framework of common values that promote the well-being of all citizens. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009b, p. 5)

The absence, and lack, of transitional supports for newcomer youth in education policies creates a symbolic and rhetorical version of social cohesion. Without policy and

programs to support newcomer youth's holistic transition, that going beyond mere English language proficiency, social cohesion remains merely the ideal not the standard.

## CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

*Transitions can best be conceptualized as a journey along a path across momentary gaps and shifts in schools. The pathways are diverse and can be bridged by students, educators, parents and communities.*

(Tilleczek & Ferguson, 2007, p. 10)

This section presents the analysis and poses questions for further consideration. I will begin by first setting out some meta-themes that arose from this study. The chapter will examine themes related to definitional challenges, terminology, lack of policy integration, and discourses in educational policy, organized according to the questions set out in this thesis, which include: How are the terms newcomer youth and transition taken up? How is inclusivity understood in Ontario educational policies? How do these policies act as a form of power? A set of policy suggestions follows this discussion and outlines further considerations for education policy related to the transition of newcomer youth in Ontario. These suggestions are targeted at key stakeholders in the successful educational and social transition of immigrant youth, whom include: policymakers, senior administrators, schools, teachers, parents, and students.

### **HOW ARE THE TERMS ‘NEWCOMER YOUTH’ AND ‘TRANSITION’ TAKEN UP?**

#### **Definitional Challenges and Assumptions**

Definitions amongst the texts are inconsistent, and there is no unified or coherent definition in policy texts that adequately describe the transition or newcomer youth. Newcomer youth are most commonly referred to as “English Language Learners”, where a more holistic notion of a newcomer is reduced to an immigrant student who is learning, or who does not speak, English. In Chapter Two, I drew a distinction between the terms used in the Ministry’s policy documents where “newcomer” is used in isolation of other terms such as “student”, “youth”, and “visible minorities”. Similarly, there is a heavy emphasis and focus on literacy, language development, and language acquisition of newcomer youth; lack of focus on holistic transition. This obfuscates newcomer youth realities, as language acquisition for some newcomer youth is only one part of a larger

transition and cultural change. Different education policies analyzed take up terms differently. The policies most dedicated to newcomer youth are: *Many Roots, Many Voices* (2005), *Supporting English Language Learners* (2008), *English Language Learners* (2007a), and *the Ontario Curriculum Grades 9 to 12* (2007b). These policies take up newcomer youth as primarily English language learners. The remaining three policies that I analyzed mention newcomer students, addressing them mainly as English language learners, but focus on more broad notions of diversity and support for marginalized students. These policies are: *Reach Every Student* (2008), *Realizing the Promise of Diversity* (strategy) (2009a), and *Realizing the Promise of Diversity* (guidelines) (2009b). Policies related to the transition of newcomer youth, specifically the seven I analyzed in this study, fail to address social and mental health issues, academic and social barriers, or broader systemic issues such as racism, poverty, and decreased access to healthcare.

There is an implicit assumption that newcomer youth, particularly ELLs, will adapt and integrate in schools and community on the basis of language acquisition. The assumption implies that once an ELL develops the use of English, that student will be competent in integrating in classrooms, schools, and community. The ESL/ELD Policy and Programs document (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a) states that the length of time that it will take for an English language learner to develop the level of proficiency in English that supports academic success will vary. Most English language learners are able to function effectively and confidently in everyday language situations within a year or two. For example, they can follow classroom directions and maintain simple conversations about familiar topics and routines. However, it will take longer for English language learners to catch up to their age peers in academic language (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007). This is troubling, particularly as current policy maintains that teachers are not required to hold ESL Part 1 qualifications, although policy texts state that "All teachers are responsible for supporting academic success for all students – including English language learners" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 31). However, making all teachers qualified as ESL teachers is also problematic. This is an area that I address in the following section on recommendations.



## **HOW IS 'INCLUSIVITY' UNDERSTOOD IN EDUCATIONAL POLICIES?**

### **Terminology: Acculturation vs. Integration**

Ontario Ministry of Education policy documents do not refer to a newcomer's transition to school as one of acculturation; rather, the term integration is used to describe how a newcomer transitions into a school setting. Whereas acculturation refers to the psychological and sociological changes that take place upon the arrival of newcomers to Canada, which encompasses differences in language, culture, and the internalization of change that an immigrant goes through when they interact with members of the host society, integration suggests that newcomers must adhere to social norms and 'fit in'. The former concept recognizes social identity, social cognition, stigma, and cultural competence as key tenets of acculturation (Padilla & Perez, 2003). As stated in current educational policies, "Well-planned integration also fosters a positive attitude in all students to cultural diversity" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005, p. 23). The emphasis in current educational policies is placed on integrating newcomer students, and English language activities in the classroom, to achieve cultural diversity, rather than developing authentic environments that promote diversity. Ontario policies dealing with newcomer transition lack any clear distinction between these concepts; however, the acculturation process is referred to in the ESL and ELD policy as a factor affecting the successful acquisition of the English language (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a).

### **Lack of Policy Integration**

It is clear that there is a lack of integration between policies - each policy document examined functions in isolation from similar policies designed to assist students or teachers with newcomer youth in schools. There is an implicit reliance on settlement services where a gap exists between school responsibilities and settlement services. The seven educational policies that I analyzed in this study acknowledge issues of increasing immigration, increased enrollment of newcomer youth, and need for equity and equality; however, does not clearly outline action plans to target these issues.

Policies set from the Ministry of Education acknowledge local capacities to deal with newcomers/ELLs and provide support in the form of a guide only. Individual schools are responsible for implementing current policy related to equity and inclusion and ELL policy, programs, and curriculum. Teachers are left to support newcomer youth on their own, where individual variance between teachers could create a gap between the level of support newcomer youth receive in schools. Lack of hiring policies/practices to have multicultural representation in schools, particularly around language needs, is also absent from current educational policies in Ontario.

## **HOW DO THESE POLICIES ACT AS A FORM OF POWER?**

### **Power in Policy: Constructing Newcomers in Educational Policy**

Power and dominance are associated with Ontario education policy and documents where educational institutions and policy form the foundation of discursive reproduction of power. Those targets of such power are students from immigrant origins, particularly those that are racialized and visibly minoritized, as they are dependent on institutional and organizational power of schools. This thesis reveals that dominant policy discourses serve to construct newcomer youth, through the Ontario Ministry of Education's definition of newcomer youth, goals for their educational success, and specific sets of knowledge they should acquire. Diversity is emphasized, but a holistic and authentic understanding of acculturation and transition are lacking.

Policy goals are concentrated on progressing students to mainstream classrooms as quickly as possible and, extending this, to become civically-minded, responsible, and productive citizens. Similarly, goals are heavily focussed on performance, where specific standards mandate newcomer youth's outcomes. Policy emphasizes precise expectations, where "students will..." achieve a desired outcome. Ontario educational policy, developed by policymakers, determines what constitutes knowledge – that which is measurable, based on performance, and assimilates newcomer students - and is absent of the voice of marginalized, oppressed, and immigrant students and parents. Moreover, the policies aim to support students through English language learning to be autonomous

learners in school and participate in the political, social, cultural, and economic aspect of Canadian society.

Ontario policy clearly reinforces dominant cultural norms is in the overall goals for ELLs' development of socio-cultural competence. Policy language suggests that an ELL's ability to reproduce behavioural norms and socio-cultural competence in various, and nuanced, levels of formality is critical to their success in English. On the surface, Ontario policy promotes fundamental notions of multiculturalism, diversity, equity, and inclusion. From the educational policy documents, there is a clear understanding that newcomer youth (and all Canadian students) benefit from diversity in our society and schools. There is an emphasis on the diversity of the individual student, and less on the larger education system as a multicultural institution. Clear normative underpinnings are pervasive in education documents, such as *Many Roots, Many Voices* (2005), *The Ontario Curriculum Grades 9 to 12* (2007b), and *Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy* (2009a). Policy rhetoric suggests that in ELL students' adoption of new, culturally-dominant learning methods, they should maintain their own linguistic and cultural identities at the same time as developing cultural competence. There is an assumption that ELLs are able to identify the nuances of dominant social, cultural, and historical norms while simultaneously contributing to multicultural Canada. This seems to defeat the authenticity of a true multicultural nation. Although the acquisition of language is important, current policy dismisses the wider culture that impacts newcomer youth, where the status quo is maintained rather than challenged.

Acting as a form of power, current Ontario educational policies limit newcomer youth's educational opportunities and transition to Ontario. The silences of policy text – the distinct, implicit values of Ontario educational policymakers in policy – suggest that although inclusivity, diversity, and equity stand as core tenants of the education system, ultimately policy serves to assimilate newcomers through language acquisition. Policies make reference to how teachers can support and encourage the historical, cultural, and sociological backgrounds of newcomer students to add to the diversity and cultural mosaic of schools; however, it does not currently take into account the perspective of newcomers themselves. Newcomers' voice is redistributed, where policies define who

newcomers are, what their needs are, and how they are best supported. The absence of both newcomers' perspective and recent scholarly work serves to constrain how newcomer youth are understood.

Moreover, the absence of coherent policies within educational institutions that focus on the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity of the Ontario student population puts at risk the principles of multiculturalism on which Canadian education stands. Ontario's focus on language policies as the means to serve newcomer youth actually restricts marginalized groups that are more racially, ethnically, and linguistically distinct, by inherently preferring groups (English language speakers) most similar to the dominant group in power. As a result, policies place importance on, and have been implemented to expedite, newcomers' language acquisition, assimilating them to dominant norms. In this way, both language and language acquisition policies act as a form of power. Thus, policy reinforces and reproduces existing school cultures, curriculum mandates, and power relationships through the emphasis of English language learning and policy values, where policies prescribe what the best needs for newcomer youth are, rather than newcomer youth themselves.

Similarly, Ontario educational policy suggests that ELL students should be empowered to confront social justice issues in the classroom. Policy states that the ESL and ELD program will lead students to look at issues of power and justice in society, and empowers students to speak out about issues that affect them. In understanding how these policies act as a form of power, when juxtaposed with this statement in the ELL policy, there are a few issues that emerge. First, this issue prompts further research, where interviews with ELL teachers could provide insight into whether this type of social justice education is happening in the classroom. Second, the classroom teacher is responsible for encouraging students to challenge the status quo and question power relations. This seems to suggest that the teacher's perspective, experience, and cultural background may lend itself to reproducing existing cultural norms and her or his vantage point on power relations. This seems highly problematic. Lastly, working with students whose first language is not English (or French) to confront social justice issues suggests that this is something that may occur later on in their education, as they first need to

acquire the appropriate language skills and critical thinking skills in order to articulate and understand such important ideas. Empowering students to be change agents in challenging the status quo is of great importance in education. However, given the limited resources and direction in the policy text, this is an area that should be further explored and recast as the general framework for all educational policy.

In applying the theoretical framework of Levinson, Sutton, and Winstead (2009) to this research (presented in chapter three), the practice approach to sociocultural policy analysis can be situated in the context of policy related to the transition of newcomer youth. How policy related to the transition of newcomer youth is actualized as a social practice depends of three factors. Policy that affects newcomer youth is negotiated in different spaces, where normative cultural production occurs by different individuals. Policy implementation depends on teachers (who interpret and implement policy) and newcomer youth (whose educational outcomes are influenced by educational policy). Teachers and newcomer youth don't always interpret and implement educational policies in the ways that policymakers intend them to be. The meanings of policy texts, therefore, are held in tension between these various groups.

Newcomer students are often labelled as English language learners throughout the policy texts, where the terms newcomer, immigrant, and English language learner are used synonymously across ministry documents. This conflation of terms creates power differentials between students – current policies suggest that newcomer students whom are most in need of supports and resources are those who are English language learners. The key risk is for those newcomer students who may require less support for English language acquisition, but may have significant needs related to systemic barriers, accessing and navigating school/education system, and settlement issues. The implications for defining and conceptualizing newcomer youth as ELLs are that other important factors in the successful transition of newcomer youth are ignored. Scholarly work indicates that although English language acquisition is important, policy should be recast to include important settlement factors, currently absent from policy, such as mental health risk, discrimination, the high dropout rate, social, cultural, and academic adjustments that are often exacerbated by racism, conflicting cultural values, educational

gaps, culture shock, physical health problems, poverty, isolation and/or symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Moreover, newcomer youth who already speak English are at a loss regarding policy supporting their transition, as the current focus rest on English language acquisition. There is an assumption in current policy that newcomers who are already proficient in English do not require transitional supports, that English is the key factor in transition and student achievement.

English Language Learning, through ESL and ELD programming, is positioned as the essential keystone to newcomer students' development in Ontario schools. Allocating resources and focussing importance solely on language acquisition dismisses other critical factors integral to newcomer youth's transition to Ontario schools and, more broadly, Canada. Ontario policies emphasize and acknowledge that language acquisition is imperative, but downplay the importance of first language, home culture, and multiliteracy. Policy texts implicitly assume that the acquisition of English language (and the sooner the better) will position newcomer students to achieve academic success, realize career options, and integrate into schools, and Canadian society, more generally. These representations serve to keep marginalized newcomer groups within the scope of the status quo. English language learning thus serves to control how immigrant youth develop their socio-cultural competence as newcomers to Ontario and Canada.

There is a distinction to be made between the policies analyzed that target ELL students and the other equity and diversity policies. Three core priorities run as a common thread through all of the policies examined in this research: (1) high levels of student achievement, (2) reduced gaps in student achievement, and (3) increased public confidence in publicly funded education. The ministry states that an inclusive education system is fundamental to achieving these three core priorities. The emphasis on diversity and inclusivity is on supporting, accepting, and respecting every student to promote belonging, eliminate barriers, and meet individual needs. Acknowledgement of ELL students is almost absent from diversity and inclusion policies, where only two aspects are mentioned. First, that ELL policies exist to help students in all grades speak English, where the majority of these students are recent immigrants. Second, these policies acknowledge that recent immigrants are among groups who may be at risk of lower

academic achievement. What is most striking is that there is no focused strategy for newcomer youth, although current strategies include Aboriginal policy framework, Ontario Focused Intervention Partnership, and improvement of boys' literacy, to name a few.

Similarly, the absence of any substantive text concerning ELLs or newcomer youth in diversity and inclusion policies is shocking. This is particularly the case considering that the ministry emphasizes that an equitable education system does not allow for systemic barriers like race, gender, and socio-economic status to prevent student success. The equity and inclusion policy states that the ministry has made significant gains in addressing barriers and improving student achievement, due to the implementation of the 2007 ELL policy. Diversity, equity, and inclusion policies in Ontario take a general approach to supporting and valuing human rights and removing systemic barriers for all students. Remarkably, diversity does not refer to support for newcomer students, but a general recognition for human rights. This is, of course, a very important initiative. However, in the context of newcomer students, policymakers view these students as enriching the diversity of schools, rather than identifying specific transition strategies to make policies more inclusive to newcomer students. Table 3 provides a further outline of some key gaps within current Ontario educational policy texts.

**Table 3: Summary of Key Challenges in Educational Policies**

Definitional Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Definitions of transition or newcomer youth are inconsistent</li> <li>• The term transition is absent from policy texts; terms such as 'entering' and 'integrating' are used to describe transition. Downplaying the need for newcomer youth to transition from their culture, country of origin, traditions, family, friends, etc. to a completely new environment, has many implications. Literature addresses the many challenges newcomer youth experience in their transition, not just to school, but to Canada in general. Including the term 'transition', and developing broader supports for newcomer youth in their transition to school, provides a more holistic and authentic picture of newcomers' experience.</li> <li>• Limited use of the term acculturation to describe newcomer youth's transition; the focus is on mainstream integration. As the alternative, education policies use terms such as 'integration', 'entering', and 'adaptation' to describe transition. The implication of this is that the responsibility inherently becomes that of newcomer youth and families, not that of educational institutions.</li> </ul>
Policy Limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policies are fractured and there is no comprehensive transition policy; proxy policies currently exist and there is a lack of integrated policies</li> <li>• Policies do not address social and mental health issues</li> <li>• Reliance on settlement services – a gap exists between school responsibilities and settlement services</li> <li>• Lack of policy that supports a holistic newcomer transition</li> </ul>



Current Policy Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policies acknowledge increasing immigration, increased enrollment of newcomer youth, and need for equity</li> <li>• Ministry of Education policies acknowledge local capacities to deal with newcomers/ELLs and provide guidelines only</li> <li>• Teachers are responsible to support newcomer youth, where individual variance results</li> <li>• Heavy emphasis and focus on literacy, language development, and language acquisition of newcomers for social and cultural capital</li> </ul>
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## Suggestions

Although certainly not exhaustive, this chapter outlines some key suggestions to support the transition of newcomer youth. In considering the methodological and theoretical approaches of this research, policy suggestions have been developed as a result of the findings of this study in hopes to reduce borders and extend bridges for newcomer youth. The suggestions address future considerations that educational policy in Ontario could adopt to support the transition of newcomer youth, targeted specifically at: (1) policymakers and (2) senior administrators, schools, and teachers.

### Suggestions for Policymakers

Policymakers are the most significant group to which suggestions for policy changes should be directed to. The lack of policy in Ontario education related to the holistic needs of newcomer students has created inequity. As such, school policy should consider the power of student self-reflection and critical agency. Policy should promote students, and educators, to tackle the grey areas and ambiguity that lies at the heart of inequity, marginalization, and transition, while also having students discuss/interact with critical thinking curriculum and programs.

A more coherent, holistic definition is needed as there is an apparent lack of consistency amongst the documents examined in this study related to how newcomer youth are defined. Newcomer youth are almost always ubiquitously referred to as English language learners – the policy documents fail to note the distinction between newcomer youth and their varied backgrounds. Some newcomer youth may be English language learners, which certainly presents barriers to settlement; however, others may be English speaking but face other barriers due to race, ethnicity, or cultural beliefs.

*Many Roots, Many Voices* (2005) provides the most comprehensive definition of newcomer youth by recognizing their diversity of backgrounds, language acquisition, and the process of adjustment when students arrive in Ontario. *Many Roots, Many Voices* acknowledges the different factors that impact newcomer youth development, particularly their “knowledge of English, the opportunities they have to experience social inclusion, their interactions with the larger community, and whether they experience success at work or at school” (p. 39). Policy must consider a more holistic version of newcomer youth and their barriers to settlement, based on current literature.

Similarly, policymakers must consider a newcomer youth strategy for settlement, adaptation, and integration in schools, in addition to working with community partners (SWIS, newcomer/reception centres, etc.). An integrated policy framework, working across ministries and with federal ministries, would likely serve youth in a widespread way. As schools are important environments where immigrant youth socialize and develop notions of what it means to be Canadian, schools should foster strong connections so that newcomer youth can negotiate their identity paths. Efforts to examine social capital in policymaking have been seen as helping populations at risk of social exclusion. Educational policy to support the human and social capital of newcomer youth in policymaking also points to targeting key transition points and the negative influences of social ties on the behaviour of individuals and groups at risk, such as dropping out of school, for example. The recognition of these dynamics opens up a range of actions to counteract or minimize these negative network effects, through preventive services or positive peer mentoring.

Curriculum documents must also be inclusive of the needs of newcomer youth, to offer relevant strategies and materials for very different and distinct groups of students with often dissimilar competencies in language and literacy skills. Employing a 'one size fits all' approach to language, curriculum, critical thinking, and subject content is irrelevant and outdated for newcomer students in Ontario schools. Current policies must go beyond the rhetoric that exists in these documents to support newcomer youth with translation services, ethnic representation, and culturally diverse pedagogy. Moreover, language policies must extend beyond dominant discourses of language acquisition to foster educational equity, inclusion, and the development of newcomers as critical agents of their own learning. Policies should address a deeper understanding of the challenges (social, cultural, economical, academic, mental, etc.) of newcomer youth in order to achieve a more holistic development of newcomer youth in Ontario schools. Academic literature points to these various issues as barriers to newcomers' transition to schools. However, these issues remain largely unaddressed in Ontario policy texts. Educational equity and greater educational achievement for newcomer youth could be attained through policy that is targeted at reducing, and removing, these barriers.

Many determinants of the mental health of newcomer youth and their families are closely linked to settlement related stressors and barriers (Shakya, Khanlou, & Gonsalves, 2010). Current limitations in education policies and services not only undermine the socioeconomic wellbeing of newcomer youth and their families but also pose multiple risks to their mental health. Based on their work, Shakya, Khanlou, and Gonsalves (2010) note that systemic discrimination and exclusions are salient risks to the socio-economic and mental wellbeing of racialized newcomer youth and their families. Based on their study, a multipronged approach to promoting the mental health of newcomer youth is recommended, particularly as it relates to school supports. Policy should consider the following: (1) proactively address the determinants of newcomer youth mental health, specifically those linked to settlement and discrimination/ exclusion; (2) make mental health services more accessible to the needs of diverse newcomer youth, particularly in their communities; (3) promote collaboration between the education, settlement, and health sectors; and (4) implement youth empowerment and community development programs that build youth leadership and involve newcomer youth

meaningfully as agents of change in critical pathways (research, planning, decision making, and community building) (Shakya, Khanlou, & Gonsalves, 2010).

Federal funding for Ontario language policies, programs, and services in elementary and secondary schools must be significantly increased and school boards should be held accountable for this funding. Provincial funds should be provided across all grades (K-12), where elementary students should not be excluded from funding support based on the idea "that they will eventually 'catch up'" to their Canadian-born peers (Derwing & Munro, 2007). As Derwing and Munro (2007) note, there is "a general consensus across governments that the limited funding dedicated to ESL should be concentrated in the higher grades" (p. 100). It is imperative that funding be used to support newcomer youth and their language acquisition, particularly if immigrant students enter Ontario schools in elementary school.

Although this thesis makes the argument that language policies act as a form of control, research does suggest that it takes at least five years for English Language Learner newcomers to become fluent in English (Cummins, 2010). Support for older students, newcomer youth between 16 and 20 years of age (Anisef & Kilbride, 2003), must be a focus for policymakers in the development of Ontario education policy. There is a critical need for increased and concentrated resources to provide language acquisition support (with consideration of translators and/or technological support); counselling support, as well as trained guidance counselling, (while maintaining cultural sensitivity) to respond to significant psychological, social, academic, economic, and emotional needs; programs that promote multiliteracies for newcomer youth, particularly those with limited prior schooling (see Cummins, 2010); and differentiated newcomer student placements that acknowledge and take into consideration the challenges in placing immigrant students in environments with younger students. These considerations could help prevent the early leaving rate of immigrant youth (see Tilleczek & Ferguson, 2007; Wayland, 2006) and build capacity for critical pedagogical and policy sociological approaches to ministry, school board, and school policy.

### **Suggestions for Administrators, Schools, and Teachers**

School boards should consider more holistic versions of the transition of newcomer youth. There is a heavy emphasis and focus on literacy, language development and acquisition, and supports for English language learning through curriculum and practical guides for teachers. Teachers should receive training and professional development working with newcomer youth, not only English language learners, so that schools can foster more inclusive communities and acknowledge the barriers that newcomers face upon entering a new country. A commitment to coherent, holistic, and integrated support by all stakeholders (policymakers, administration, teachers, parents, students, community, etc.) to the education of newcomer youth is necessary for the acculturation, transition experience, and equity to educational opportunities of immigrant students. Derwing and Munro (2007) argue that “a coordinated effort is lacking in many jurisdictions” and “it is not clear who has responsibility for ESL - a situation that sometimes results in no one taking responsibility, or more often, the implementation of Band-Aid efforts that are doomed to fail” (p. 104).

A targeted newcomer transition policy would likely improve current policy initiatives related to immigrant students' entry to both school and Ontario. This comprehensive policy should include a road map of how language, curricula, and equity and inclusion policies interconnect, as well as how settlement services, parents and family, and community are included in newcomer youth's transition to schools. Clear accountabilities should be delineated in regards to who (teachers, administrators, community and settlement services) oversees newcomer youth's transition; what services and programs are available, implemented, and utilized by newcomer youth; and, most importantly, how newcomer youth and parents are included in the process, where they can act as their own critical agents in the transition process. Incorporating policymakers, school programming, community, and parents and youth themselves is imperative to creating a newcomer transition policy framework. Additionally, councils could be set-up at the school board level (much like Special Education Advisory Committees; SEAC) to discuss, guide, and consult on policy, programming, funding, and activities related to immigrant students (perhaps a Newcomer Education Advisory Council; NEAC). If such

a council were to be created, it should include parents of newcomer youth, senior school board administrators, school board trustees, community and social service representative (from counsellors to ethnic community leaders), and youth representation.

Subsequently, teachers must have appropriate training in English language learning. English as a Second Language Part 1 qualifications should be a part of a professional development plan for new teachers recently graduated from university, as they are hired on by school boards, or as part of their Bachelor of Education degrees, where they could complete these qualifications during their degree. Ontario policy documents and guides refer to the importance of having all teachers familiar and educated on newcomers' stages of language development, as well as "the rates at which they acquire English language and literacy skills - and adapt their instructional program, including their assessment and evaluation strategies, accordingly" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005). Webster and Valeo (2011) recently examined teacher preparation practices through interviews with recent Bachelor of Education graduates and found that, although moving toward greater ELL understanding and inclusive approach, well-intentioned teachers lack the competence necessary for effective classroom practice.

A transitions partnership is another way in which school boards, and subsequently administrators, principals, teachers, and staff, could support the transition of newcomer youth. The transitions partnership is a group of professionals from various disciplines (e.g. education, psychology, social work, health care, etc.) who work collaboratively and are directly involved with primary to secondary transition or any resultant issues within that local authority (Jindal-Snape & Foggie, 2008). The notion of a transitions partnership could be expanded to also include newcomer students, primarily from immigrant origins, so that a group of professionals could work in a cross-disciplinary fashion to support all aspects of newcomers' transition to Ontario schools. In this way, these teams could identify and respond to the social, psychological, educational, and health needs of immigrant youth. Similarly, school transition programs (Smith, Akos, Lim, & Wiley, 2008) could be developed to address the information gap between students' prior experience and their expectations of what the Ontario secondary school experience will be like. Given the importance of families in supporting their child with

the transition, it is important that parents have accurate information about what to expect when their child goes to high school. Specifically, transition activities should present multiple opportunities for students and families to discuss, explore, and experience the academic, social, and organizational aspects of high school (Mizelle, 1999). According to Mizelle (1999), successful transitional programs must involve collaboration and provide parents with curricular and logistic information, as well as resources for academic and social support (Smith, Akos, Lim, & Wiley, 2008). The development of newcomer transition programs must provide more attention to critical factors other than learning English - they must consider multiliteracies, barriers to education and transition, and the determinants of health (see Public Health Agency of Canada, 2012).

To complement a transition partnership program, newcomer students - particularly those who are English Language Learners - should be monitored, tracked, and supported over a long-term period. This would assist in tracking the level of proficiency in English that newcomers have acquired, as well as attendance, grades received, and courses attained/taken (as indicators of engagement and performance. I'm cautious here to rely on 'performance' as a reliable indicator of school experience, engagement, and 'success'). Similarly, this could include school programs, extra-curricular activities, etc. that newcomer students have participated in.

In light of this point, the collection of student data must extend beyond simply examining 'student success' and 'academic achievement' for newcomer students (see Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a). Other indicators (determinants of health, for example, referred to in this chapter) must be used to support newcomer youth holistically. Monitoring newcomer students would support teachers and schools to acknowledge and identify students' proficiency more accurately so that more concentrated or focused supports could be developed to further facilitate the transition of newcomer youth. Additionally, supportive language programming for newcomer youth should include not only supports for newcomer youth themselves, such as encouragement and resources to maintain ties to first language and home culture, but also to teachers. Supports for English language instruction and transition (cultural, emotional, psychological, physical,

etc.) should not just be the responsibility of ESL teachers and guidance counsellors, but of the entire school (which I referred to earlier).

A number of suggestions for fostering new immigrant parent involvement in their children's learning have emerged from case study research examining particular school initiatives (Kauffman, Perry, & Prentiss, 2001; Pecoraro & Phommasouvanh, 1992). From this research, Pecoraro and Phommasouvanh (1992) propose principles for effective parent involvement to guide school initiatives:

- building on the culture and experiences that new immigrant parents bring to Canadian schools;
- building bridges between new immigrant parents' experiences in their new and native countries;
- helping parents to perceive themselves as teachers of their children, alongside the schools' teachers.

These principles support specific recommendations such as: hiring bilingual (or multilingual) administrative and teaching staff; providing cultural awareness training for teachers and principals; making available translation services for written communication going home and verbal communication in formal and informal meetings of parents and school personnel; and integrating bilingual and multicultural materials in regular classroom instruction (Kauffman, Perry, & Prentiss, 2001). Although current Ontario policies acknowledge the important role newcomer parents play in supporting their children at school, it assumes that parents do not confront barriers (for example, literacy, economical, etc.) to participating in their children's learning, partaking in school activities, and navigating new systems (for example, school, social, economic, etc.).



## CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

*...we take the border with us everywhere, and at all times.*

(Swanson, 2010, p. 430)

This final section outlines the summary, new discoveries, implications for theory and policy, future research, and conclusion based on the findings of this study as well as current literature. I conclude that current Ontario education policies remain unclear and fail to sufficiently address the specific needs of newcomers in a holistic approach towards transition.

### **Overview of Document Analysis Themes**

The analysis of Ontario education policy documents reveals that there is an absence of targeted, coherent support for newcomer students. Policy documents related to the transition of newcomer youth operate as symbolic policies, where little in the way of sanctions or incentives are associated with their uptake and implementation. Policy is heavily focused on language learning and acquisition programs and lacks consistency of how newcomer youth are defined. Additionally, no comprehensive transition framework exists to support newcomer students. Instead, support is found across several documents, ranging from policy to practical guides. Policies refrain from addressing social and mental health issues and there is a strong reliance on settlement services – gaps exist between school responsibilities and settlement services. The policies acknowledge issues of rising immigration, increased enrollment of newcomer youth, the need for equity and equality, and local capacities to deal with newcomers/ELLs, and the assumption is that teachers are left to support newcomer youth individually.

To address the research question, a qualitative approach was used through critical discourse analysis which included a document analysis of practical guides and policy texts published by the Ontario Ministry of Education. The findings illustrated that there are elements of practical guides and policy texts that support newcomer youth in their transition to school. However, a fractured policy landscape emerged from the findings, where there is a heavy emphasis on literacy, language development, and language acquisition; strong rhetoric related to multiculturalism, equity, inclusion, diversity, and

social cohesion; and inherent manoeuvring, in *Many Roots, Many Voices* (2005) and *The Ontario Curriculum: Grades 9 to 12* (2007b) for example, to reproduce dominant norms. Overall, a lack of policy initiatives to support a holistic transition for newcomer youth is evident.

Educational policy discourse of newcomer youth includes widespread acknowledgement of the value of immigration to Canada, multiculturalism and notions of diversity, equity, and respect, the structure of the English language learner program, and the impact of immigration on the success and vitality of Canada's future and economic well-being. However, this thesis reveals that dominant policy discourses serve to construct newcomer youth, through the Ontario Ministry of Education's definition of newcomer youth, goals for their educational success, and specific sets of knowledge they should acquire.

## **Summary**

There is an inherent tension that exists amongst newcomer youth upon their arrival to Canada, as they negotiate between two identities – that of their ethnicity and that of becoming Canadian. Swanson (2010) views this tension as an identity shift where newcomers become constructed as ‘the other,’ both geographically and literally, and focuses on the borderlands of the mind, where youth must regularly navigate intersecting social, linguistic, cultural, and political borders. Caught within the geographical, literal, and mental spaces between the different worlds they inhabit, newcomer youth struggle to navigate tenuous identity paths (Swanson, 2010). Similarly, from a perspective of the geography of space and education, Wainwright and Marandet (2011) note that the aspirations for belonging are fundamentally social and lead to a sense of inclusion or exclusion. Notions of inclusion and belonging have been critical concepts in human geography and broader social science literature where “the geographies of inclusion and belonging in young lives focused on how various dimensions of difference can hinder full participation in everyday social practices and spaces, and lead to a sense of exclusion” (Wainwright & Marandet, 2011, p. 98). The concepts of inclusion and belonging are critical components of the educational experiences and upward mobility that take place in

schools. In this respect, newcomer youth negotiate intersecting borderlands where youth are confronted with borders, or conversely, potential bridges to towards transition support.

This research began with a question about how current Ontario educational policies shape the transition process for newcomer youth through a critical discourse analysis. Although I could have approached this question in a variety of ways, I chose to do a documentary analysis of Ontario education policies that related to the transition of newcomer youth, in order to examine the foundational underpinnings of educational support. I utilized a critical discourse analysis in methodological framing of this research, underpinned by critical policy sociological and critical pedagogical theoretical approaches. I designed a research process that looked at Ontario education policy to understand the ways in which policies shape the transition experience encountered by newcomer students.

### **New Discoveries**

What emerged from the research was a clear picture of how policy is fractured in relation to newcomer youth, where no comprehensive or integrated policy web to support newcomer students exists in Ontario. From this problem, I found several areas in current Ontario educational policy documents that help to understand the transition process for newcomers. These included: (1) definitional assumptions related to how the terms newcomer youth and transition are defined in educational policies; (2) the inclusive nature of educational policies related to the transition of newcomer youth; (3) policy representing forms of power; and (4) implicit and explicit values found in educational policy documents. The school environment, specifically in the case of the education policy landscape in Ontario, is deficient in providing a supportive transitional framework for newcomer youth who arrive in Ontario schools each year. The notions of inclusion and belonging are critical to the transition of newcomer youth, as these components help to foster citizenship and positive social and self-identity. In this sense, I posit that a paucity of specific educational policy in Ontario to support the transition, acculturation,

and settlement of immigrant youth contributes to further marginalization from full participation in daily social, academic, and linguistic spaces and practices in schools.

Additionally, current Ontario educational policy serves to reproduce dominant norms, values, and notions of who newcomer youth are, what their needs are, and how they should adapt to Ontario schools. Rhetoric serves as a highly used device in communicating notions of multiculturalism, diversity, equity, inclusion, and social cohesion. There is a clear divide between what Ontario educational policy promotes and what the current literature says, in terms of newcomer needs, identities, and how to best meet their settlement needs. This overall finding suggests that policies and programs attempting to support newcomer youth need to build more responsive, targeted, and tailored programming so as to understand the more nuanced and diverse experiences of newcomer students. A realistic understanding of newcomer youth requires policy that encompasses diverse perspectives and incorporates researched-based findings from current literature, not just the language-acquisition framework, rhetorically-driven, and complacent policy that educators and administrators rely on to deliver to incoming students.

### **Implication for Theory, Research, and Policy**

This research considers an alternative theoretical model that values creating transition frameworks that include a diversity of voices and experiences and increasing social mobility and settlement opportunities for newcomer youth to: develop positive identity development, increase successful education attainment, and reduce social, academic, cultural, and language barriers to create inclusive social and learning environments for youth. The contribution of this research lies in its ability to situate Ontario policy related to newcomer students in the context of critical pedagogy and critical policy sociology. Through this lens, the rhetoric of multiculturalism, diversity, equity, inclusion, and social cohesion which espouses culture as an asset and an enhancement of the educational experience for all students in Ontario schools, needs to be reassessed by questioning the values and implicit cultural assumptions within the policies examined. *Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy* (2009a) states that diversity is a growing strength of

Ontario and is one of the province's assets. However, by positioning newcomer youth as 'English Language Learners', and constructing them in a deficit model, true diversity is limited in this way. By critically analyzing policy documents this research has found that many gaps exist: policy is not connected to current educational research on the topic of newcomer youth; policy lacks youth voice and participation; policy defines newcomers through a linguistic frame; and policy acts as a form of power to reproduce cultural norms imposed on newcomers. The rhetoric at the ministry (policy) level is laden with intentional and unintentional consequences, where cultural difference and values are shaped by dominant discourses determined by conscious and unconscious policies of exclusion. Newcomer youth, defined by cultural, social, economic, national, political, and educational factors, are affected by identity politics which a significant impact on their transition to school. Ontario educational policies construct and sustain unequal power relations and further promote, whether implicitly or explicitly, educational disparities.

This study, in part, identifies a real starting point for research in this area, as well as a need to refurbish education policies. First, understanding who newcomer youth are is essential; current definitions in policy texts overgeneralize, underestimate, and categorize newcomer youth. Developing this understanding through youth themselves is a logical next step. Next, understanding how local boards and individual schools approach the transition of newcomer youth would provide insight into how policy is translated and interpreted at a ground level. Finally, a need for specific support to meet the needs and challenges of newcomer youth's transition is crucial in revamping Ontario policy. This includes targeted support related to mental health, community and capacity bridging, meaningful support in the acculturation process, social adaptation, early school leaving, determinants of health, fostering cultural communities and individuality in schools, academic and social barriers, and increasing the understanding of diversity of all students.

There is a lack of research that addresses the policy implications for newcomer youth. Although certainly not exhaustive, the suggestions set out in the chapter six give policymakers, administrators, schools, and teachers some concrete ways of moving forward in supporting the transition of newcomer youth. The disjointedness of current

policy leaves many gaps unfilled in Ontario's education system in supporting newcomer students and empowering all students to critique what makes knowledge, learning, and transition achievable.

### **Future Research**

There are several areas of research that can be developed from this thesis. A recurring theme was the inconsistency of what is understood about newcomer youth and how they are defined. Extending this study, research involving interviews, case studies, and focus groups, where policymakers, administrators, principals, teachers, students, and parents contribute their voice and experience, can be considered to the frame how policy is implemented and how the Ministry of Education holds accountability for policy related to newcomer youth.

Future research can consider examining a case study of one or more school boards, or individual schools, to examine policy formulation as it relates to implementation and accountability. Case studies might also examine how individual school boards have adopted and developed policies on equity and inclusion, as well as policy related to newcomer youth. This would be particularly important in looking at boards and schools with large populations of newcomer and visibly minoritized youth, particularly in larger urban centres, as compared to boards and schools in mid-sized or rural areas.

Finally, future research can consider how critical policy sociology and critical pedagogy is utilized in policy formulation, implementation, and accountability. As this research has demonstrated, critical policy sociology and critical pedagogy provide a useful and significant theoretical lens from which to view how newcomer youth transition into schools and how education policy influences the educational experiences, acculturation, and transition of immigrant youth. Given this, and since schools play a critical function in the socialization, acculturation, and conception of citizenship for newcomer youth, how do policymakers, administrators, schools, and teachers critically acknowledge the significance of setting the conditions, through policy and pedagogy, for newcomer youth to act as critical agents in their own educational experiences? Similarly,

how do newcomer youth understand and challenge notions of power, control, and equity, as such critical agents? In this way, future research can consider how newcomer youth, through their own voice and experiences, critique forms of oppression, challenge the status quo, and confront prevailing social norms to expose discourses of power and control.

## **Conclusion**

Immigration and population diversity are important issues in Canadian society. Education is of primary importance in the lives of immigrant and ethnic minority youth. Academic achievement is often a signpost to which immigrant youth hold standards of their attainment of education and employment opportunities in a new society by developing social, economic, and educational mobility. Educational institutions influence immigrant students through the values and practices of their new society and experiences at school, particularly related to transitioning, which enables students' acculturation into the Canadian culture. However, newcomer youth face unique transitional challenges. A fractured policy landscape related to the transition and support of newcomer youth exists in Ontario where language acquisition is emphasized but there remains a lack of policy initiatives to support a holistic transition is evident. A more in-depth, critical examination of how those who use, implement, and make educational policy in Ontario understand, put into practice, and craft policies to respond to increasing diversity through immigration is crucial to realizing equity, inclusion, and the holistic transition of newcomers in our pluralistic society.

This study sought out to explore how current Ontario educational policies shape the transition for newcomer youth. Dominant discourses emerge from education documents and policy, where certain concepts and issues are either emphasized, downplayed, or absent. Representations of newcomer youth in these discourses operate to symbolically define their place in schools solely as English language learners. Newcomer youth, subsequently, act as passive recipients in their own experiences of education, acculturation, and transition – not as critical agents. This is particularly true, as institutional and organizational structures seek to reproduce and uphold these notions

of newcomer youth. Ontario educational policies act as a form of power and consequently target students from immigrant origins, particularly those that are racialized and visibly minoritized, as they are dependent on institutional and organizational power of schools. Dominant policy discourses serve to construct newcomer youth, through the Ontario Ministry of Education's definition of newcomer youth, goals for their educational success, and specific sets of knowledge they should acquire.

Educational policy discourses include widespread acknowledgement over the value of immigration to Canada, multiculturalism and notions of diversity, equity, and respect, the structure of the English language learner program, and the impact of immigration on the success and vitality of Canada's future and economic well-being. On the surface, notions of pluralism speak of multiculturalism, equity, excellence, social cohesion, and diversity; however, they are marred by undertones of economic strategy. In Ontario schools, diversity is welcomed, but issues of acculturation still persist, dominant discourses define and limit understandings of newcomer youth, and fractured policy serves to enable the status quo.



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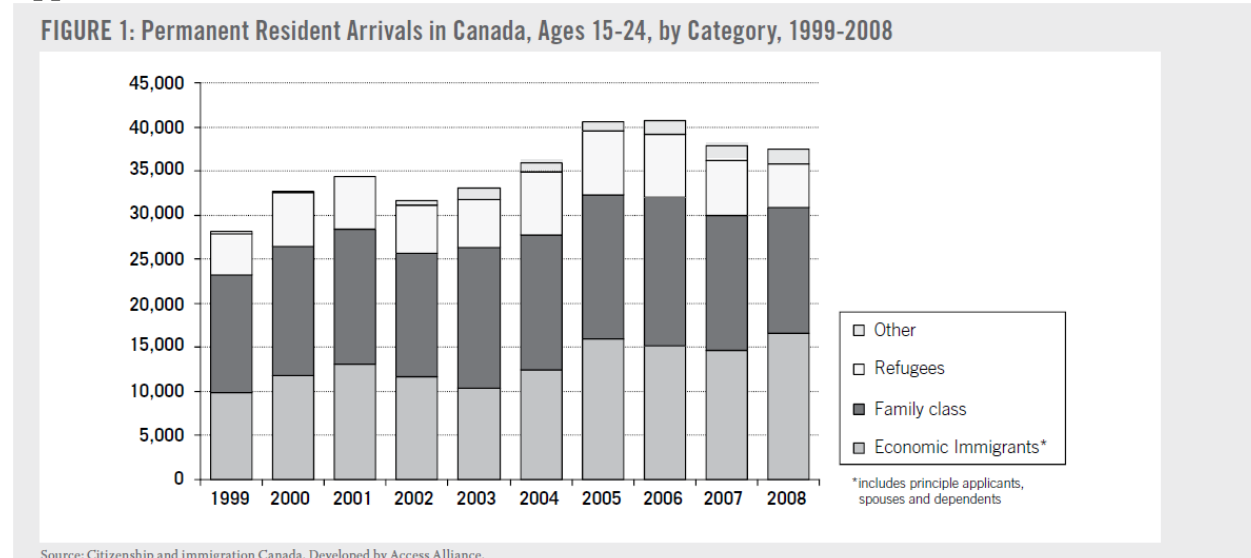
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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Permanent Resident Arrivals in Canada



Note: Source: Shakya, Khanlou, and Gonsalves (2010, p. 99)



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EDUCATION: University of Ottawa  
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2012 - Present

University of Western Ontario  
Master of Education, Educational Policy Studies  
2009 - 2013

Lakehead University  
Bachelor of Education, Intermediate/Senior (Geography/History)  
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University of Waterloo  
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2003 – 2007

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY: Faculty  
Appleby College  
2010 – 2011

Academic Coordinator  
Pathways to Education  
2008 – 2011

AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIPS: Western Graduate Research Scholarship (WGRS), University of Western Ontario  
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PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES AND SERVICE: Steering Committee, Capacity Waterloo Region  
2011 – Present

Chair, Waterloo Catholic District School Board, SEAC  
2008 – 2011

Board of Directors, Steckle Heritage Farm  
2009 – 2010