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## Newcomer Youths' Experiences of School

Lori-Ann A. Brown  
*The University of Western Ontario*

Supervisor  
Dr. Jason Brown  
*The University of Western Ontario*

Graduate Program in Education  
A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Master of Education  
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NEWCOMER YOUTHS' EXPERIENCES OF SCHOOL

By

Lori-Ann Brown

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

Graduate Program in Education

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

The University of Western Ontario

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of the study was to identify positive and negative aspects of school experience among newcomer youth. More specifically, the focus of this research was to give a voice to a group of newcomers that have been largely ignored in the literature. To accomplish this goal, participants were male and female youth, aged 15 to 18, who had migrated to Canada within the past two years and resided in London Ontario at the time of interview. To gather information from participants focus group interviews were conducted with participants from a culturally diverse community centre. The results were analyzed using a structured conceptualization procedure called Concept Mapping. Using the Concept Mapping process five favourable and five disadvantageous themes emerged. These concepts were compared and contrasted with the available literature.

Key words: newcomer youth; school; positive; stress

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

This research is an exploration of the experiences of newcomer adolescents, ages 15-18, who moved to Canada in the past 2 years, focusing on their schooling with an emphasis on both the positive and negative aspects of those experiences. We asked the youths the questions “what do you like about school?” and “what don’t you like about school?” A structured conceptualization procedure known as Concept Mapping (Trochim, 1989) was employed to perform an analysis of their responses. The data reported in this thesis is part of a larger project that was a partnership between the University of Western Ontario and a neighbourhood development agency focusing on youth engagement in school, family and community. The present study is an investigation and analytic reporting of responses to two questions regarding the school experiences of newcomer youth school experiences.

Currently, within the literature, the little information on newcomers’ perceptions of schools is sparse. What is available is based on the perceptions of adults and not newcomer youth themselves; the insights held by youth are largely ignored and therefore, crucial information that they provide is missing. Especially scarce in the literature are experiences of individuals who have relocated very recently, within 2 years, to Canada. This information is important for several reasons, which are outlined via a description of the history and benefits of the welcoming communities’ initiative, and presented following a definition of “newcomer” as followed in the present study.

The term “newcomers” refers to individuals who have migrated to a new host country from their homeland within the last 2 years. It includes youth who have settled in Canada through their own volition, including immigrants and temporary immigrants, and

as well as those who escape the negative experiences of their homeland, (i.e. refugees and refugee claimants).

## **Rationale**

This study explores factors that promote welcoming communities. The Welcoming Communities Initiative (WCI) is funded by Citizen and Immigration Canada, with the goal to maximize the potential of all newcomers by ensuring that they have all necessary supports to succeed (Citizen and Immigration Canada, 2010). This initiative is based on the notion that successful integration of all newcomers is advantageous for all.

The WCI works with three main partner groups: newcomers, receiving communities and settlement organizations to combat the racism and discrimination that many newcomers face. Although each partner group plays an important role in the lives of newcomers, this study focuses only on the role of receiving communities in the lives of newcomers, and more specifically, the role of schools in the receiving communities. Therefore, the purpose of this study is similar to the goals of WCI, that is, to examine the factors that produce welcoming communities, and more specifically, welcoming schools (Citizen and Immigration Canada, 2010).

The successful integration of newcomers is necessary to maximize their potential, economically, intellectually, socially and culturally, so that when they come to Canada their skills can be put to use (Citizen and Immigration Canada, 2010). It is also important to focus on newcomers due to the continued influx of these individuals to Canada from around the world. Of the 200,000 immigrants who come to Canada each year, it is estimated that more than half of them move settle in Ontario (Kilbride, Anisef, Baichman-Anisef & Khattar, 2001). Therefore, it is especially important, for Ontarians,

to understand and provide the newcomers with the necessary supports in order to ensure their successful integration into Canadian society.

Moreover, Canada is known around the world as a country that prides itself on adhering to principles of multiculturalism. Although the principles of multiculturalism are professed, newcomers to Canada often face many adversities in their attempt to adapt to the Canadian culture. For example, many youth face discrimination and bullying in their communities (Chang, 2010; Brenick, Titzman, Michael & Silbereisen, 2012). In order to combat such challenges, it is important that communities are informed of the issues that newcomers face. Once again, an important and effective way to obtain this information is by asking newcomer youth themselves what is working well and what is not working well for them in school.

In order to foster welcoming communities, it is imperative that policymakers are aware of the experiences of newcomer youths so that necessary services are provided to these individuals in order to meet their needs. Research may provide policy-makers with the necessary information to make well-informed decisions on the realities of newcomers.

### **Context and Background**

In the City of London there are approximately 75,000 individuals who were not born in Canada. These individuals come from all around the world including the United Kingdom, Poland, Portugal, Italy, United States, China, Columbia, India, Netherlands, and Germany (City of London Community Profile, 2006). This study focuses on London because it is the sixth largest city in Southwestern Ontario, but attracts fewer newcomers than other major cities. The immigrant population makes up 28 percent of the total population in Ontario but only makes up 22 percent of the population in London (London



and Middlesex County, 2013). There is a long history however, of immigration policy and mobility that precedes the present southwestern Ontario context which is important to highlight.

**Role of settlement workers.** Settlement Workers in Schools is a federally funded program implemented in 2008, by Citizen and Immigration Canada. Across Ontario, there are approximately 200 settlement workers in 20 school boards (Settlement At Work, 2014). The goal of the Settlement Workers in Schools Program is to ensure that the needs of all newcomer families are met in school and in the community, and as such, they are placed in both elementary and secondary schools (Settlement At Work, 2014). In order to accomplish the aforementioned goals, newcomers' families are proactively contacted to ensure a smooth settlement process, newcomers are taught about the Canadian school system and are given referrals to other necessary programs in the community (Settlement At Work, 2014). Information provided by settlement workers is available in a number of languages including, English, Arabic, Korean, Spanish, Chinese, Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi, and Pashto (Settlement At Work, 2014).

**Canadian immigration history.** Before Federation, Canada was seen as a country based on immigration with a steady influx of newcomers to its shores. For the first few hundred years, immigrants to Canada were solely comprised of those from European colonial powers such Britain and France. It is interesting to note that those persons, began to include a large contingency of poor Irish workers in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, who were socially, culturally, and religiously different from the majority of Canada. These workers were used to supplement the working class during times of seasonal work. However, because of the large differences between Irish immigrants and

the majority of Canadians, there were often Irish sections or wards within large Canadian cities (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2000).

Nonetheless, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Canada began to open its borders to populate Western provinces. However, the immigration policy of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries was problematic, given the fact that it gave preferential treatment to certain races of immigrants, regardless of their ability (Troper, 2012). Caucasian individuals who came from the British Isles were given preferential treatment and were freely given large portions of farmlands to harvest. Governmental policy mandated that all who did not emigrate from the British Isles, be given harsher treatment through social and governmental setbacks (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2000). For example, this meant that Non-British Isles immigrants were unable to bring their families with them to Canada. It was believed that they would begin to overpopulate the country and overtake the colonial powers. Non-British Isles immigrants also faced strife due to the fact that they were given small portions of land to harvest; they were expected to stay in remote regions of Canada. Because of the injustices that many Non-British Isle immigrants faced, many flocked to large cities, in harvesting off seasons, in order to generate income. This created tensions between new immigrants and Canadians. From this, it can be seen that the policies of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries covertly gave preferential treatment to selected groups of Caucasian immigrants. Consequently, not all immigrants were treated equally and a system of governmentally mandated preferentiality among immigrants was created, placing them in a hierarchy based upon perceived worth. Immigrants from 'less than ideal' countries were only permitted into Canada to provide

cheap labor in areas such as factory work and construction (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2000).

Later, during World War I, immigrants from ‘enemy’ countries, such as Italy, Germany and Poland faced increased discrimination from the Canadian government who suggested that they return to their home countries. Immigrants from ‘enemy’ countries who remained in Canada were treated as spies. Around the same time, Asian migrants were being recruited to work on the railroads in Western Canada (Troper, 2012). With increased pressure to address the humanitarian needs after World War II the immigration policy in Canada began to change. Because millions were displaced in Europe after World War II, a clear definition for the term ‘refugee’ was formulated (Troper, 2012).

In the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, immigration policies saw even further development due to the changes in the process by which individuals were permitted to enter Canada. This began in 1962 when the government created new immigration regulations to remove the racially and ethnically discriminatory practices of Canadian immigration. In 1967 there were further changes to the immigration process, whereby individuals would be permitted for entry based on their skills through a process that was termed the ‘point system’ (McIntyre, 2001 & Canadian Council for Refugees, 2000). This new process placed a greater focus on the skills of newcomers as a prerequisite for entry. Currently, there is a continued trend in accepting immigrants into Canada with specialized skills, with a large proportion of newcomers coming from non-European countries. However, there are debates about the current immigration policies with many calling for changes to the current selection criteria (Troper, 2012).

### **Conceptual Framework**

This study employs the conceptual framework of social inclusion to interpret the findings from this study. Social Inclusion is defined as a community where individuals, regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnocultural heritage and ability are given the opportunity to participate in a full ranges of experiences, including employment, education, arts and culture, recreation, elections and other key decision-making opportunities Social inclusion focuses on the effects of economic and social systems on marginalization of groups of people and offers remedies for these issues(Omidvar & Richmond, 2003; Government of Australia, 2008).

The Social Inclusion perspective posits when an individual is socially included, he or she has appropriate employment or daily activities, access to health, social and educational services as needed, good relationships with others as well as having his or her voice heard. These are basic prerequisites for a sense of contentment and fulfillment. Proponents of this framework endeavour to minimize inequity by providing necessary resources of various types in order for all to achieve success (Omidvar & Richmond, 2003). In addition, this framework emphasizes the strengths provided by the individual and the community ensuring that individuals are maximized to achieve potential (Government of Australia, 2010).

In order to create socially inclusive environments, four key strategies can be implemented. First, policies and interventions should be structured to be equitable. Second, there should be an examination of factors that create opportunities in communities as well as those that reinforce social exclusion. Third, in dealing with injustices, necessary supports are needed to be put in place to combat systemic

discrimination. Finally, policies and practices should be based on good research evidence (Omidvar & Richmond, 2003).

### **Research Questions**

Because newcomer youth spend a significant portion of their days in school, it is important to understand their experiences. In the present study youth are asked to describe the key positive and negative aspects of their schooling experience. More specifically, the research questions are “what do you like?” and “what don’t you like?” about school. Formulating the questions in this general way allows the youth to understand and more easily speak about their experiences.

### **Structure of Thesis**

With the influx of newcomers to Canadian cities there is an increasing demand to promote positive experiences and create new opportunities. The success of newcomers to Canada is advantageous for all Canadians. Throughout history, the work of immigrants has been critical to Canadian success and their contributions are essential to its future. Although there is research into completed the area of newcomer adolescent experiences of school, little of this information comes from the students themselves.

The purpose of Chapter 1 is to identify the context of the research and highlight its importance within the literature. Chapter 2 is a review of relevant literature and includes an overview of the terminology used for newcomer Canadians, a summary of the current system of immigration for newcomers, a summary of demographic information about newcomers as well as a description of the stressors that newcomers experience upon entering Canada. Chapter 3 is a description of the methodology and procedure of concept mapping as utilized in this study. Chapter 4 presents the results of analyses of

responses from participants. Finally, Chapter 5 compares and contrasts results of the present study with the literature.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

This literature review will provide the reader with a familiarization to the breadth of information pertaining to the experiences of newcomer youth. In order to encapsulate the newcomer youth experience, the first heading will contain information regarding the terminology used in Canada to describe the avenues by which newcomers arrive to Canada. The second heading will describe the demographic characteristics of newcomers and the differences that are often presented between temporary and permanent migrants. In the third heading, 'pre-migration experiences' the variety of newcomer experiences will be described including the differentiation between immigrants and refugees. The challenges that newcomers face will be outlined under the fourth heading. While, the fifth heading will contain the specific issues that newcomer youth experience. The adolescent development heading will be used to describe the physical as well as psychosocial experiences of newcomer youth. Finally, the heading of school will highlight even more specifically some of the challenges that newcomer youth experience in school.

A thematic analysis was utilized, in gathering this information, highlighting and summarizing the portions of literature that impact the experience of newcomer youth in schools. Using the PsycInfo database, the terms 'newcomer', 'immigrant' and 'refugee' were input along with the terms 'school' and 'education'. The results used for this study only employed peer-reviewed articles after 2002 that were further narrowed by focusing on 'youth' or 'adolescence', as well as 'academic', 'challenges'.

### **Terminology**

There are differences between the terms newcomers, immigrants and refugees. The term 'newcomer' is an umbrella term that refers to all new persons who have been in

Canada for up to five years. The term ‘immigrant’ or ‘permanent resident’ refers to individuals who are permanently and legally permitted to settle into Canada and are persons who have voluntarily decided to leave their homeland. On the other hand, the term ‘refugee’ broadly refers to persons who are forced to flee their homelands as a result of some degree of persecution (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2010a).

In Canada, refugees are referred to as ‘convention refugees’ or as ‘refugee claimants’, also known as ‘asylum seekers’. Convention refugees are those individuals who meet the requirements of the Geneva Convention, mandated in 1951, and as such, have experienced persecution due to race, religion, sexual orientation, nationality, membership to a particular group or political ideology in their homeland. Refugee claimants on the other hand, are individuals who have fled their country of origin but whose claim has yet to be decided by the Canadian government (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2010a).

### **Demographics**

In Canada, one in every five persons is foreign born. Of these one in five 36 percent is under the age of 24 (Ockocka, Jazen, Westhues, & Roderick, 2006). In the last five years alone there have been approximately a quarter of a million school-aged newcomers to Canada. Within schools, newcomer children and youth make up a quarter of the population (Ockocka et al, 2006). Because there are different groups of newcomers this review will highlight salient statistical information separately for each group...

**Permanent residents.** There is diversity among permanent residents in Canada who arrive from over 90 countries. Among the nearly 250,000 permanent residents who immigrated to Canada in 2011, the top three countries of origin were the Philippines with



approximately 35,000 immigrants, China with 29,000 and India 25,000 (Citizen and Immigration Canada, 2011b). Immigrants also arrive from the Middle East, including Iran, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Israel, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia. Another frequent area of origin is Africa including Egypt, Morocco, Ethiopia, Algeria, Nigeria, South Africa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Kenya. The third most frequent areas of origin are Asia and the Pacific Islands (Citizen and Immigration Canada, 2011c).

***Where permanent residents migrate.*** Permanent residents settle mostly in Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia. In 2011, these three provinces accounted for approximately 75 percent of the places where the individuals settled. Of the approximately 250,000 newcomers in 2011, about 2/5 settle in Ontario, 1/5 Quebec and 1/7 settle into British Columbia. Despite the large number of immigrants settling in Ontario, since 2002 there has been an 18 percent decrease (Citizen and Immigration Canada, 2011e).

The Western provinces are increasingly becoming destinations for immigrants. Alberta has had an increase of approximately 6 percent from 2002 to 2011. Likewise, there has been an increase in the numbers who settle in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, from 0.7 to 3.6 percent and 2 to 6.4 percent respectively during the same time period. (Citizen and Immigration Canada, 2011e).

**Temporary residents.** Each year the number of temporary residents increases. In 2011, there were 400,000 who were permitted entry. During that year, some 15,000 – 20,000 entered as international workers, while another 90,000 workers entered Canada as workers with Canadian interests. Additionally, there were 200,000 who entered as

foreign workers for jobs such as live-in caregivers, informational technology workers and seasonal farmers. There were also approximately 100,000 foreign students given permission to enter Canada for the purposes of attending post-secondary education (Citizen and Immigration Canada, 2011a).

In 2011, there were approximately 25,000 refugee claimants within Canada. The top 10 of the 22 countries on the list of refugee claimants account for 48 percent of the claimants within Canada. Each year, the source country from which temporary migrants arrive varies due to the political climate and economic issues. In 2011, a significant number of refugees originated from Hungary and China with 4440 and 1874 respectively.

*Where temporary residents migrate.* The most popular destinations in 2011 for post-secondary students in Canada were Ontario, British Columbia and Quebec. Foreign workers were likely to move to Quebec, Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia (Citizen and Immigration Canada, 2011f). Sixty percent of refugees resided in Ontario and another thirty percent in Quebec (Citizen and Immigration Canada, 2011d).

### **Pre-Migration Experiences**

The pre-migration experiences of immigrants and refugees can vary significantly. One difference is the frequency and intensity of trauma experience, which is more often the case for refugees, in general, than immigrants. Another difference is the speed of relocation. Refugees leave under more very difficult and hurried circumstances than do immigrants.

*Immigrants.* In order to be selected into Canada, individuals and families must undergo a rigorous process. There are few ways in which an individual may be permitted into Canada as a permanent resident. Selection for permanent residency is made based on

work experience, language proficiency in French or English, and by educational attainment in the country of origin. Individuals may also be permitted into Canada through the Skilled Trades Worker Program, where those with specific skilled trades are permitted entrance (Citizen and Immigration Canada, 2013). Canadian citizens and permanent residents who apply to bring family members from abroad is another way individuals may gain entrance to Canada. Finally, individuals who currently have temporary residence in Canada are permitted to apply for permanent residence through the Canadian Experience Class Program. In order to qualify for this program, individuals must show that they have the right skills, experience and proficiency in French or English (Citizen and Immigration Canada, 2013).

According to the research published by Citizen Immigration Canada in 2005, as many as 55 percent of immigrants who come to Canada did so with a university degree. This increase has been a part of a trend that began in the 1980, where only 10 percent of immigrants had a university degree and continued up to 1990 when only 18 percent had a university degree (Citizen and Immigration Canada, 2011).

***Refugees.*** Refugees who enter Canada are fleeing environments that were physically and emotionally oppressing. After refugees have been in Canada for some time, many still report feelings of stress. The stress arises from reliving of traumatic experiences and for some, exacerbated by a constant fear of deportation. In other cases, there are adolescents who seek refugee status within Canada without the aid of a legal guardian. In these cases, these children are often put in the care of other family members in Canada which can be challenging for both the adolescent and the family (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2010b).

There are two main groups of newcomers arriving in Canada under different programs for immigration and refugee status, and for different reasons. As such, their pre-migration experiences often differ significantly. In the following section challenges for newcomers following arrival in Canada, in general, are presented. There is considerably more research on adults than children and adolescents. Additionally, typically, adolescents relocate with their families. Therefore, two sections are provided based on the family and adolescent literatures, respectively.

### **Challenges for Newcomers**

A variety of new experiences can become a major burden on the family members or the individual who has migrated to Canada. In a family setting, one or more family members must have stable employment. This income is most often used for necessities such as food, clothing and, shelter to meet basic survival needs of the family. Without these necessities, the family home can be stressful and tense.. In addition, many families and individuals experience racism and discrimination, as well as linguistic differences, which may exacerbate the stress the family or individual is already under following relocation.

**Employment.** According to the Longitudinal Survey of Immigration to Canada, the main stressor on newcomers to Canada is finding employment. While the majority of participants were able obtain employment, approximately 20 percent were not able to within two years after arriving in Canada. Additionally, 71 percent of newcomers said that they had encountered problems in gaining employment. The most common reasons were lack of Canadian experience (26 percent) and lack of foreign credential recognition (21 percent) (Statistics Canada, 2003).

**Income.** There are differences in the kind of employment obtained by newcomers versus Canadian born counterparts (Statistics Canada, 2009). Higher proportions of newcomers who had university degrees were employed in low-skilled job training than Canadian-born adults. In addition, there was a marked difference in the earnings between Canadian-born and newcomer workers despite the best efforts of newcomers.

Since records have were by Statistics Canada in 1995, there has been an increase in the disparity in income between Canadian-born individuals and newcomers with university degrees, from a 17.5 percent gap to a 29.5 percent gap in 2005 (Jedwab, 2008). Similarly, the disparity between Canadian-born individuals and newcomers who do not hold a university degree has increased from 11.5 percent in 1995 to 15 percent in 2005. Analysts suggest that the reason for this disparity arises as the result of employers' skepticism of qualifications (Banerjee, 2009). This is known as the 'entry effect'. Another, more controversial reason for the income disparity may stem from the fact that employers may be discriminatory toward newcomers and pay them less because they can get away with it (Statistics Canada, 2009; Banerjee, 2009).

The disparity between Canadian-born and newcomer average incomes differs from city to city. Although most major cities in Canada meet the average income for newcomers with degrees, in 2005, in the cities of London, Winnipeg, Vancouver, Quebec City, Montreal, and Sherbrooke did not (Jedwab, 2008). Conversely, in Greater Sudbury, St. John's, Thunderbay, and Peterborough, newcomers, on average, earned a greater income than their Canadian peers. In general, throughout Canada, it is more difficult for those newcomers without a university degree to gain employment. There are some major

exceptions in Toronto, Sherbrooke, Winnipeg, Montreal, Calgary, Hamilton, Kitchener, Moncton, St. Catherine's/ Niagara, Kingston, Guelph and London.

**Racism and discrimination.** There is no universally agreed-upon definition of race and as such it is difficult to formulate a definition of racism that suits all (Bobo & Fox, 2003). At the very least it can be said that newcomers experience discrimination in several domains including employment and interpersonal interactions. Discrimination can be defined as instances when individuals act upon their misconceptions about another group of people (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). There are instances where discrimination is overt and instances when it is more subtle (Brettle, 2011).

There are instances of discrimination at the newcomers' workplace where employers perceive and treat them according to negative stereotypes. Newcomers are less likely than their Canadian peers to be hired due to lack of Canadian experience. Such forms of discrimination tend to be more subtle but in interpersonal interactions, there are often instances of overt discrimination through derogatory speech. Interpersonal interaction may also be limited and subtly avoided through ethno-cultural enclaves in many Canadian cities (Bobo & Fox, 2003).

**Living accommodations.** After living in Canada for 6 months, 80 percent of newcomers were living in rental properties with rates ranging from \$500 to \$1,000 per month, depending on location. Although Citizen and Immigration Canada suggests that newcomers budget 35 to 50 percent of their income on housing, over half of newcomers spent more than half of their income on housing (Statistics Canada, 2003).

It is common for the living arrangements of newcomers to change once they have settled. Often times, initially, newcomers may use temporary housing services or stay

with friends and or family who are already in Canada. By the two-year mark, 92 percent were financially independent and were able to either buy or rent their own home. The reality is somewhat bleaker for temporary migrants such as refugees, where only 27 percent were financially independent after living in Canada for 2 years (Statistics Canada, 2003).

**Linguistic differences.** Lacking proficiency in either French or English is a major barrier to the access of services for many newcomers. After six months, approximately 70 percent of newcomers are able to communicate in English while another 4 percent are able to communicate in French, and 11 percent able to communicate using either language. However, at the six month mark, 18 percent are not able to communicate in either French or English (Statistics Canada, 2003).

Language proficiency is highly dependent upon the age. The older the newcomer, the less likely that he or she is able to communicate in either official language, if English or French is a second language. Only 41 percent 65 or older were able to communicate in French or English. On the other hand, 91 percent of newcomers aged 25 to 44 were able to communicate using English and 14 percent were able to communicate using either language. Following this trend, 68 percent of newcomers between the ages of 45 and 54 are able to communicate using English (Statistics Canada, 2003).

Every newcomer of necessity has to go through a period of adjustment in the country or area he or she settles in. Despite this, not everyone faces the same degree of challenge related to employment, income, living accommodations, linguistic differences and racism and discrimination. For an adult newcomer the primary stressors are employment, income and living accommodations. Although these stressors affect the

family unit as a whole, adolescents are less mindful of these since they have more than their fair share of challenges to deal with on a daily basis.

### **Challenges for Newcomer Youth**

Newcomer youth must face their own challenges that range from acculturation, parent youth relationship issues, language brokering, social challenges and leaving family members behind. When an adolescent attempts to form her or his own identity, conflict in the family may result because parents may find it difficult to accept these changes. The identity that the youth adopts is closely related to the social experiences that he or she encounters, whether positive or negative. In the event that newcomer youth arrive to a country by themselves they must also face additional issues that are unique to their situation.

**Acculturation.** There is research on the acculturation of newcomers and youth in particular. In general, acculturation is defined as the process of change that occurs when two cultures come into contact with each other. This often results in a personal change (Berry, Phinney, Sam, Vedder, 2006). Through a process of acceptance and exclusion in different contexts, newcomer youth formulate identities and create a sense of belonging within their new cultures (Caxaj & Berman, 2010). Additionally, the acculturation process may be affected by the legality of one's immigration. If individuals are in country illegally or are refugee claimants waiting for their documents to be processed these individuals will often have different acculturation strategies due to the uncertainty that they face (Ellis & Chen, 2013; Fay, 2012).

There are four main acculturation strategies that a youth can use including integration, ethnic, national, and diffuse. Integration occurs when youth are involved in



both the native and new cultures to form a bicultural identity that comprises of aspects of both. There are also youth who choose to focus most of their attention on their native culture and therefore often have limited participation within their new culture. Some youth choose to develop a greater sense of ethnic identity and use it a coping mechanism when confronted with the new culture (Soto, 2012; Bauer, Loomis & Akkari 2013).Some youth choose to focus on the new culture and adopt what is called a national identity. These individuals become more proficient in the language of the new culture and foster relationships with individuals in the new culture. Lastly, there are those in the diffuse acculturation profile. They have little proficiency in the new language as well as little affiliation with new identity, at the same time, they are not well affiliated with their native culture (Berry, Phinney, Sam, Vedder, 2006).

**Parent/youth relationship issues.** It is not uncommon for adolescents to have conflict with parents. Often, this conflict is heightened when a family migrates to a new country where parents adapt different acculturation strategies from their children (Fortune, 2012; Lim, Yeh, Liang, Lau, McCabe, 2008). Therefore, when presented with new situations, youth are likely to act in a way that their parents find difficult to understand. Families are more likely to remain harmonious in a new culture if they can find social groups that support their core values (Kwak, 2003).

Not every newcomer family experiences conflict. A study conducted by Choi, He and Harachi (2008) found that when there is a warm, loving environment between parents and children, there is a decreased likelihood that conflicts will occur. Additionally, despite differing acculturation strategies used by many of the parents and children in their

study, they did not report significant conflict (Pasch, Deardorff, Tschann, Flores, Penilla, and Pantoja, 2006).

***Language Brokering.*** The parent child relationship may also be affected by language brokering. Youth are more likely to be language proficient than their parents. In such cases, youth are asked to interpret important documents and assist in situations when the parent is unable to speak for him or herself. Within the family, this may place a larger burden on the youth who is asked to be the mouthpiece for the family. This changes the relationship between parent and youth due to the fact that the youth is being asked to take the role of the adult (Morales & Hanson, 2005).

Youth who are asked to be language brokers have varying opinions. Some youth language brokers feel prideful about the ability to help while others feel pressured and frustrated. Because language brokers take on the role of adults in many situations, they often possess a more refined vocabulary and cognitive abilities relative to their peers. While language brokering may affect the relationship between parents and children, some youth believe that there are both positive and negative effects (Morales & Hanson, 2005).

**Social challenges.** To fit in to the Canadian culture, many newcomers adopt attitudes that differ from those of their parents. This may result in conflict between newcomer students and their parents who believe that the new attitudes are not appropriate. In attempting to balance these conflicting identities, it can lead to the youth being confused about her or his own identity (Das Gupta & Pauchulo, 2009).

Another issue that newcomers face is aloneness. Newcomers youths are susceptible to isolation and feeling alone because of a lack of role models and social supports. This susceptibility to loneliness, coupled with other factors such as traumatic

experiences prior to migration, separation from parents, lacking self-confidence, and not fitting can lead to an increased likelihood of mental illness among newcomers. It is therefore, important that these students be given the access to necessary services, given their risk (Das Gupta & Pauchulo, 2009).

There is also evidence to support the notion that newcomer youth are more susceptible to suicidal thoughts due the traumatic and distressing issues that they experience, relative to their peers. More specifically, Cho and Haslam (2010) examined the experience of Korean students and found that among their 227 participants, temporary migrants had the greatest likelihood of negative outcomes. The research also showed that when students received support, they were less likely to have negative outcomes, such as suicidal thoughts.

**Leaving family members behind.** Often families are not able to migrate to a country together due to extenuating circumstances or in the event that an individual family member is only temporarily moving. Several studies have documented the damaging, though short-term, effects that can occur when a youth is separated from his or her mother or father due to immigration. Such separations cause despair and grief among those who have left (Suárez-Orozco & Hernández, 2012; Schen, 2005).

Adolescents who were separated from their loved ones were likely to experience anxiety and apprehension in the first few months following their separation but after a year these feelings often dissipate (Suárez-Orozco, Bang, and Kim, 2011). There are also instances of youth migrating by themselves as accompanied minors, where these individuals often take on tasks that are far beyond their suitability, such as financially

supporting themselves while attending school. This often occurs when these minors are fleeing their home seeking refugee status .

There is pressure for newcomer youth to form an identity through acculturation, which is affected by the social relationships that they have with their parents and peers. It is not uncommon that while attempting to adapt to Canadian culture that many have conflicts with their parents who may not understand their changes. As stated previously, when a youth is not able to find the supports that he or she needs through peers he or she may begin to feel isolated and alone. Not only must newcomer youth attempt to adjust to life in a new country by forming an identity that feels authentic, but these youth must also navigate simultaneously through the physical, cognitive and socioemotional changes that occur during adolescence.

### **Adolescent Development**

There are several stages of human development recognized by psychologists and other medical professionals. These stages of development include the prenatal period, infancy, early childhood, middle and late childhood, adolescence, early adulthood, middle adulthood and late adulthood. Adolescence is defined as the period starting between 10 to 12 years of age, which includes rapid changes physically, cognitively and emotionally. Adolescence is characterized by biological, cognitive and socioemotional changes (Santrock, 2007).

Early adolescents undergo a growth spurt. For girls this usually occurs between 10 – 12 and for boys, it occurs between the age of 12 – 15. A growth spurt is usually accompanied by puberty, where hormones begin to change physical appearance (Santrock, 2007).

During adolescence, the brain goes through significant changes in the frontal lobe, parietal regions, frontal cortex, and corpus callosum. These regions are crucial in the development of processing capabilities, including reasoning, decision-making, and self-control. The amygdala is also developing during this time and is crucial in the regulation of emotions among adolescents (Santrock, 2007). The development of the brain also aids in the development of the executive functioning. As such, for adolescents, this means that there is an increase in processing speeds, efficiency of working memory and perspective-taking capacity (Santrock, 2007).

As a result, youth are more likely to form relationships with people other than their parents during adolescence. More emphasis is placed on friends and romantic partners. This change coincides with improved ability to control and understand emotions. More specifically, youth are able to comprehend more complicated emotions, suppress emotions and express empathy. The stage is also marked by strong emotional highs and lows which are often related to the surge of hormones that many adolescents experience, coupled with complicated emotional experiences (Santrock, 2007).

The normal changes that an adolescent experiences have an impact on all aspects of their lives. Newcomer youth are facing additional challenges. The setting in which most of their time outside of home, is spent during adolescence is school. Schools are the primary socializer for all youth and especially newcomers who begin to observe new behaviors and customs. The experience of newcomer youth in school including challenging aspects and what can help.

## **School Challenges**

For newcomer students, transitioning to a new school in a new city and country is difficult due to distinct and significant differences between cultures. The period of adolescence also has some bearing on the ability of students to be successful due the process of identity formation. In this, it is necessary that schools be equipped with the needed programs and services to promote success for all students, but more so for newcomers in particular who have added stress. However, it is important to note that not all newcomers will experience the same situations and issues, therefore, not all programs provided will adequately meet the needs of them all (Chiu, Lam, Nsaliwa & Bernardino, 2003). Issue that newcomers face are often interrelated. For example, when newcomer students are not placed into age-appropriate classrooms they are at a disadvantage to their peers, socially excluded and are left feeling inadequate, alienated, and with greater risk of dropping out of school (Chiu et al, 2003).

**Peers.** The experiences that newcomer youth have with their peers influence how well they adapt to Canadian culture (Dryden-Peterson, 2010). Interactions with students from the dominant culture as well as those from other minority groups can be positive or negative. In some instances, the experience that newcomers have with other minority groups is positive, whereby; these newcomers choose to only socialize with students who have similar cultural experiences. On the other hand, youth may choose to avoid certain aspects of their culture and begin to form a new identity. In creating a new identity, some members of their culture may become offended and thus create tension between some groups of youth (Das Gupta & Pauchulo, 2009).

**Teachers.** Educators play a large role in the lives of newcomers, and as such need to be mindful of their perceptions of and attitudes toward newcomers. Unknowingly, educators may perpetuate stereotypical attitudes and practices towards newcomers (Brown & Chu, 2012). This occurs when the educator assumes to know the youth's experience instead of inquiring about the specific circumstances of that youth. Although two students come from the same geographical area, their experiences may be drastically different due to socioeconomic status, religious affiliation, and other important factors (Das Gupta & Pauchulo, 2009 & Chiu et al, 2003).

**Learning Challenges.** Most newcomers, regardless of English proficiency, are placed into second language learning classes. In these classes there is a range of proficiency but all students are taught the same information, forcing the more proficient students to endure classes that they may not need. Further, in areas of Canada where there are fewer newcomers, the likelihood of being placed into second language learning classes increases, regardless of need. There are also instances of teachers failing to recognize the knowledge that newcomers do have by re-teaching information that a child already knows (Das Gupta & Pauchulo, 2009).

**Friends.** Many newcomer students find it difficult to make friends because they may be different from their peers. This leaves newcomers especially vulnerable to bullying. Most of bullying that newcomers face stems from the visible differences related to their accents or culturally specific clothing. Language proficiency is another reason that newcomers are bullied. The lower the dominant language proficiency, the less likely it is that peers will accept her or him (Grunigen, Perren & Nagele, 2010; Medvedva, 2010).

Students from dominant ethnic groups are more likely to bully newcomers than those from marginalized groups. Much of the bullying that these students experience goes unreported because newcomers lack the supports and confidence necessary to share their experiences (Das Gupta & Pauchulo, 2009). Newcomer students must also be mindful of the kinds of friends that they keep. Because they are unaccustomed to the culture, there have been instances where newcomers have unknowingly selected peers who engage in delinquent behavior. Peers carry a significant amount of clout with newcomer youth (Svennson, Burk & Stattin, 2012).

**Parental Expectations.** Generally, parental involvement in the education of newcomer youth is low. Teachers and settlement workers attribute the lack of involvement to the limited language proficiency of parents and limited understanding of the educational system. Parents may be also too busy trying to provide for their children, by working more than one job, to be intimately involved in the education of their children (Das Gupta & Pauchulo, 2009; Henry, Merten, Plunkett & Sands, 2008).

**Discrimination.** Unfortunately, newcomer students may be actively ignored by students from the dominant culture. This can cause the youth to feel like outsiders, which can lead to psychological isolation and poor self-esteem (Oxman-Martinez, Rummens, Moreau, Choi, Beiser, Oglivie, Armstrong, 2012). Discrimination for newcomers may also come from the educational system that the student faces. For instance, all newcomers are placed within the same programs in schools regardless of ability. The lack of flexibility in the school programs can have damaging effects on the educational accomplishments and self-esteem of the student (Courage, 2012).



The current curriculum may also be damaging for newcomer students given that their various experiences and perspectives are often overlooked. In this, these students often forgo the cultural practices of their homeland in order to be more readily accepted within the culture. Instead, curriculum should address the cultural practices of newcomer students so that there is a decreased likelihood of bullying and so that the newcomer does not feel the need to abandon his or her culture in order to be successful (Ming Fang He, 2008)

### **How to Help**

Because newcomer families are not fully aware of all their needs once they enter Canada, it is necessary that there is advocacy on their behalf. Advocacy initiatives can help to provide funding through government agencies and community organizations, increase professional awareness through research as well as increase overall public awareness of the issues that newcomers face. There is also a need for a coordination of services among schools and other immigrant-serving organizations so that the issues of newcomers can be holistically addressed (Bernhard, Hyman & Tate 2010).

According to the Joint Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement, there are three levels of service that a newcomer uses. The first level of service includes the public and general mainstream community services, such as government agencies and community-based programs. The second level of service is delivered by ethno-racial community agencies that tailor their programs to suit the needs of specific communities. The third level of service is through independent professionals such as lawyers, physicians and therapists that provide specific services to newcomers. Newcomers need services in their communities that fulfill their needs and provide them

with a sense of purpose. The Ontario Immigration website links to community services that have resources for students in the areas of counselling, health, libraries and school. The website also has a more specific listing of services provided by each municipality. The city of London has also comprised a list of services and organizations that are helpful for newcomers at their Immigration London website.

### **Summary**

Since newcomers account for a significant percentage of the Canadian population, it is imperative that adequate policies and services are in place to ensure that newcomers are able to settle in as smoothly as possible. With newcomers coming from over 90 different countries it is also important that these policies and services are diverse enough to meet the needs of different groups. Given that newcomers tend to settle mostly in Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia and Alberta, these provinces, of necessity must wholeheartedly embrace the mandates set by the federal government. In doing so, care has to be taken to identify and eliminate stressors for newcomers. More, importantly, since youth comprise a large percentage of newcomers to Canada, special attention should be given to them as the process of acculturation further complicates the period of adolescent development.

An important step in the process of settling in for youths is the school system. School is the one major institution that newcomer youth interact with on a daily basis. Schools can provide these students with the services that they need to be successful. As such, the school system should have a broad understanding of the cultural behavior of its students so that the services offered meet their needs. In the instances where schools are lacking necessary services they should provide a gateway into the other services available

in the community. However, newcomer students are often not given the necessary supports to succeed. Although these students are given some resources, such as second language learning classes, in many instances, they are not given enough support to succeed relative to Canadian peers. Further, not all of the programs provided for newcomer youth are advantageous for all. Newcomers have varying issues that may need to be addressed differently, therefore, there needs to be a broad range of services in order to promote success for these students (Courage, 2012).

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

The purpose of this study was to identify positive and negative aspects of school experiences among newcomer youth. A group of high school students participated in small group discussions. Their responses to two open-ended questions were analyzed using Concept Mapping (Trochim, 1989). The resulting maps provided a visual representation of the findings. In this chapter the implementation of the concept mapping process is described.

#### **Concept Mapping Application**

Concept mapping is the visual representation of qualitative data through a systematic process of sorting and quantitative combining of sorts across participants. There are many versions of concept mapping within the literature; however, the version employed in the present study is Trochim's (1989a). While Trochim's concept mapping can be effectively used for analysis of group interviews, what distinguishes his application is the use qualitative calculations for the organization and representation of qualitative data. Concept mapping provides a summary of responses by participants organized by clusters (Trochim, 1989a). These clusters are formed on the basis of sorts that participants perform on all responses. The sorting data are analyzed and presented in a concept map.

There are six steps in the concept mapping procedure. These steps include preparation, generation of responses, structuring of responses, representation of responses, interpretation of maps and utilization of maps.

## **Procedure**

**Preparation.** The main goal of this first step was to make decisions about who may be included in the study, with broader and more heterogeneous samples viewed more favourably (Trochim, 1989a). A particular community centre in South London was selected because individuals from this particular community centre come from a variety of ethno-cultural communities and, therefore, increased the likelihood of a heterogeneous selection of responses. It was decided to focus on the youth population serviced by the agency and in the local community, which were individuals aged 15 to 18 who had lived in Canada for no more than 2 years.

The preparation stage also included identification of the research questions (Trochim, 1989a). The questions included both positive and negative aspects of school and were written in such a way as to be easy to understand and accessible to youth. The two questions were: “what do you like about school?” and “what don’t you like about school?”

**Generation of responses.** The second step in the concept mapping procedure was to generate responses to the questions of interest by the participants. In the present study this was done through poster advertisements placed around the community and distributed by members of the research team throughout local schools. The meeting took place on a weekend morning and those who had signed consent forms met in a large group room and split into four small groups. Each of the small groups was facilitated by a research team member and answered the same questions. Responses to each of the questions were written on large flipchart pages. The flipchart pages were posted on the walls of the room, and each small group presented its responses to the other participants.

All clarifications and additions were written down on the flipcharts. The process was ended after all flipcharts were presented and discussed and participants had no additions or clarifications to make.

There were 12 participants. They ranged in ages from 15-18 years and were in grades 9-12 in their first Canadian school in two different secondary schools. They all lived with immediate and extended family. Each was born outside of Canada in Singapore, Syria, Columbia, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, or United Arab Emirates. They had been attending school in Canada between 1 month and 2 years. English was a second language to all participants. Their first languages were Punjabi, Arabic, and Spanish.

***Interrater agreement process.*** Two members of the research team reviewed all responses to the questions to identify and remove any that were redundant or edit any that were unclear. A total of 37 and 33 unique responses remained for the analysis of the questions “what do you like about school?” and “what don’t you like about school?” respectively.

**Structuring of responses.** The next step was completed following a second session with the same participants several weeks later. A total of 8 students participated in this session. The same location was used and the meeting also took place on a weekend morning. Each participant was provided with a list of responses to each question and asked to “group the responses together in any way that makes sense to you” (Trochim, 1989a). Participants were asked to sort information individually. Each was also asked to ensure that each response was placed in one pile and items could be sorted individually, if appropriate (Trochim, 1989a).

**Representation of responses.** There were two analyses of the sorting data. This first analysis, multidimensional scaling, resulted in the placement of responses on a point map, where those more frequently sorted into the same groups by participants were closer in proximity to one another than responses that were less frequently sorted into the same groups by participants. The second analysis, cluster analysis, items were grouped together into clusters (Trochim, 1989a). All analyses were performed using the Concept System (Trochim, 1987).

***Multidimensional scaling.*** Based on the way responses were sorted by participants a proximity matrix was formulated for each. Responses in this matrix were either represented by a '0' or a '1': '1' indicated that responses were sorted into the same group and '0' indicating that they were not sorted into the same group by that participant. A summary matrix was constructed by adding all the individual matrices together and plotted on a point map where the distances between responses reflected how often participants sorted each together in the same group.

***Cluster analysis.*** The multidimensional scaling data were analyzed using cluster analysis. The goal of this was to create clusters of responses. This analysis had the potential to produce any number of clusters and therefore, it was left up to the researcher to determine which number of clusters was the most appropriate conceptualization.

***The bridging value.*** The results of the cluster combination were analyzed using a bridging value (Trochim, 1989a). This statistical tool assessed the difficulty of sorting particular responses and ranged from 0 to 1, with lower values stating that a response was easier to sort and higher values stating the response was harder to sort relative to other

responses. Each cluster's average bridging value was obtained and thus provided a good indication of how cohesive each cluster appeared.

A stress value was calculated for each of the concept maps. This value represents the degree to which the map is a good representation of the data. The stress values were 0.21 and 0.24 for the questions "What do you like about school?" and "what don't you like about school?" respectively, which is within the acceptable range.

**Interpretation of Maps.** There is no ideal way to determine appropriate the number of concepts (Trochim, 1989b). The number of concepts chosen is based on the knowledge and experience that the researcher has with the subject matter and the data from multidimensional scaling and cluster analysis. Generally, researchers analyze combinations from 20 to 3 and determine which number of concepts is appropriate. It is better to err on the side of caution and use more rather than fewer factors to summarize responses.

The researcher reviewed maps with 10, 8, 6 and 4 concepts before determining that the 5 concept maps fit the data best. The decision was based on conceptual similarity between responses in the concepts and conceptual distinctiveness between the contents of the concepts. In addition, average bridging indexes were used to evidence how consistently participants grouped the responses within each together.

**Utilization of Maps.** This final step is described in Chapter 4, where the maps are used for their intended purpose: a visual representation of the structured conceptualization process.



## **Chapter 4: Results**

The purpose of this study was to identify positive and negative aspects of school experiences among newcomer youth. In order to gather this information in one session, youth from a local community centre who were also local high school students participated in a group interview with several questions including two that were the focus for the present study, about what they liked and did not like about school. In another session, the youth independently organized all responses to the questions into groups. Based on the way they grouped the responses, known as sorting, two statistical analyses were performed on the data to combine independent sorts. The result was a concept map for each question.

### **What Do You Like About School?**

There were 37 unique responses that were sorted and analyzed. A similarity matrix summarized how all participants sorted responses. Following multidimensional scaling, the similarity matrix was then plotted on an 'x' and 'y' axis. The distance between points in this map represented the relatedness of responses, meaning, that points that were close to each other were more likely sorted together by participants and share conceptual similarity with one another. Based on the multidimensional scaling results, cluster analysis was performed and grouped responses, represented by points on the map, into concepts.

Figure 1: Concept Map for Question 1

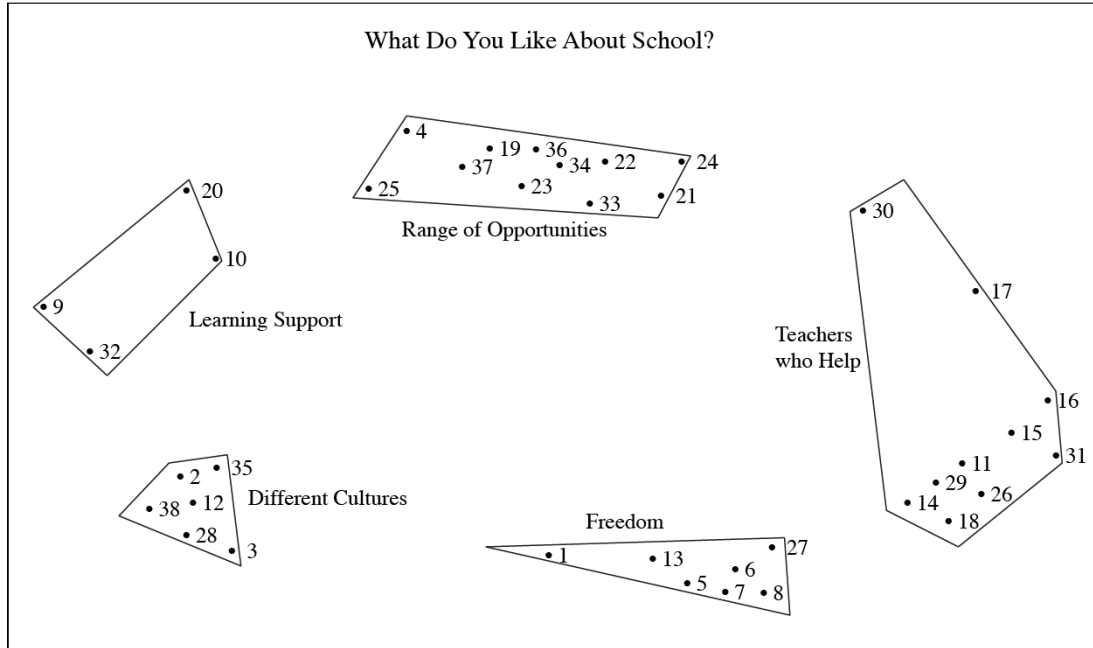


Table 1: Concept Items and Bridging Values for Concept Map

Concept and Response	Bridging Index
Concept #1 – Freedom	0.25
1. friends	0.60
13. safe school - less violence	0.39
5. respect	0.16
7. no punishment or retaliation for freedom / respect	0.14
6. freedom	0.18
8. freedom to be themselves	0.08
27. feeling included	0.22
Concept #2 – Teachers Who Help	0.53
11. vice principal who helps when you have problems	0.45
31. friends and teachers both help	0.56
15. parent-student meetings	0.63
16. guidance when needed	0.65

14. teachers don't hit students	0.26
18. relationships between students and teachers	0.26
26. people are kind and understanding and supportive	0.31
29. teachers are understanding and supportive	0.44
17. SWSS workers	0.99
30. homework help received	0.74

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Concept #3 – Different Cultures	0.62
2. others who speak the same language	0.51
12. mixed classes - Arabic and Spanish	0.51
38. multicultural	0.67
35. only barrier is language	0.59
3. sports like in home country	0.71
28. cultural diversity	0.74

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Concept #4 – Range of Opportunities	0.18
4. arts programs	0.11
25. volunteer opportunities	0.44
19. more technology	0.01
36. picking right courses is stressful	0.00
37. many programs or courses	0.06
23. less homework	0.18
34. subjects are easier here	0.06
21. easy access to education	0.34
24. can choose what they want to study	0.34
22. variety in the curriculum	0.18
33. college or university preparation	0.31

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Concept #5 – Learning Support	0.81
9. ESL classes / programs	0.89
32. hope to see integration of schools	1.00

10. no problem with English programs	0.62
20. lunchtime breaks	0.73

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**Concept #1: Freedom.** This concept referred to the overall atmosphere that newcomer youth experienced at school, as it related to the possibilities and opportunities that newcomers were given. The bridging index for this concept was 0.25, a low score indicating that responses within this concept were often sorted together by participants.

The participants felt it was necessary for newcomer youth to be able to be themselves and express themselves in way that they felt appropriate without punishment. This was highlighted in responses of “freedom to be themselves”, “freedom”, and “no punishment or retaliation for freedom/ respect”. These responses had low bridging index values of 0.08, 0.18, and 0.14 respectively.

Youth also appreciated the lack of violence and level of respect that they experienced in school exemplified in the response “safe school- less violence”. Lastly, “friends” and “feeling included” were responses that reflected the atmosphere of the school system, although “friends” had a relatively high bridging index of 0.60 and “feeling included” had a lower index of 0.22. The high bridging index of “friends” suggests a response that is not as related as some others.

**Concept # 2: Teachers Who Help.** The focus of this concept was on how newcomer youth experienced support through the help of adults in their school, including teachers, vice principals and settlement workers. Newcomers felt it was helpful when they were able to build relationships between themselves and their teachers. This was evidenced by the response “relationships between students and teachers”. This response

had one of the lowest bridging indexes at 0.26, suggesting that it was central to the concept.

Related to this, there was a lower bridging index of 0.31 for “people are kind, understanding and supportive” suggesting that newcomers encountered support from a variety of sources while at school. For instance, participants responded, “teachers are understanding and supportive”. Teachers who were understanding and supportive had a moderate bridging index of 0.44. There was also mention of the support given to newcomer student by settlement workers with the response “SWSS workers”. SWSS workers were professionals in schools that supported newcomers in their adaptation. According to participants, these professionals were an important component for newcomer youth, however, the bridging index for this response was 0.99, suggesting that it was somewhat unrelated to the responses with in this concept.

“Vice principal who helps when you have problems’ was further evidence of other staff members who helped newcomers in school. This suggests that the relationships between newcomers and others can be most effective when newcomers feel that they are understood and cared for by peers, faculty, and auxiliary staff within school.

There were also moderate bridging indexes for, “friends and teachers both help”, “parent-student meetings”, “guidance when needed”, “teachers don’t hit students”, and “homework help” suggesting that newcomers require supports both academically and socially in order to feel as though they are able to succeed.

**Concept #3: Different Cultures.** This concept described the multiculturalism that newcomer youth experience in school which often differs from the experiences that students have in their home countries, with a moderate bridging index of 0.62 overall.

Participants had a favorable perception of multiculturalism which was “cultural diversity” and “multicultural”, “mixed classes- Arabic and Spanish”. “Others who speak the same language” and “sports like home country”, suggested that although newcomer students enjoy the new culture they experience, many still hold onto the familiarity of their native culture. These responses had bridging indices ranging from 0.51 to 0.74 indicating a moderate to low relatedness between them. Participants also mentioned that “the only barrier is language”, suggesting that after the youth were able to acquire the language, they were able to create bonds and relationships with peers and faculty members, especially those from different ethnocultural heritages.

**Concept #4: Range of Programs.** The bridging index for this concept was 0.18 which suggested strong cohesion. The responses in this concept discussed the school system itself and the opportunities for newcomers that were available. This included responses such as “variety in curriculum”, “subjects are easier here”, “many programs or courses” and “easy access to education”, implying that the school curriculum had a large impact on the way the newcomer youth experienced school.

“Less homework”, “more technology”, “volunteer opportunities”, “can choose what they want to study” and “arts programs” highlighted the differences between the school curriculum that students were familiar with in their country of origin and the new opportunities that were available in Canada.

“College or university preparation”, was another response included within this concept and highlighted the differences in postsecondary education within the Canadian educational system. However, “picking the right courses is stressful” showed that the postsecondary educational system for newcomers was potentially confusing.

**Concept #5: Learning Support.** Based on the responses in this concept, students appreciated the combination of ESL classes and programs in tandem with English programs as included in the response, “ESL classes/ programs”. “No problems with English programs”, suggested that newcomers felt capable of using English and that the programs at school were effective. Students also enjoyed lunchtime breaks as included in response, “lunchtime breaks” because it presumably gave them the opportunity to interact with other students and create more bonds. “Hope to see integration of schools” was also included in this concept. However, it had a high bridging index of 1.00, which indicated that it could just as easily have been placed within another concept to the other responses within this concept. The overall bridging index for this concept was relatively high at 0.81.

### **What Don't You Like About School?**

There were 33 unique responses to this question that were sorted by participants and statistically analyzed. To determine the most appropriate number of concepts, a map of 10 was initially examined. Reductions in the number of concepts continued until only 5 remained. Five concepts were deemed appropriate because they encapsulated the key concepts. The bridging index was an effective way to determine the cohesiveness of concepts. The bridging index ranges from 0 to 1, with a lower bridging index (0.00-0.25) suggesting conceptual cohesion while a higher bridging index (0.75-1.00) suggesting that responses within the concept were often grouped by participants with responses in other concepts.

Figure 2: Concept Map for Question 2

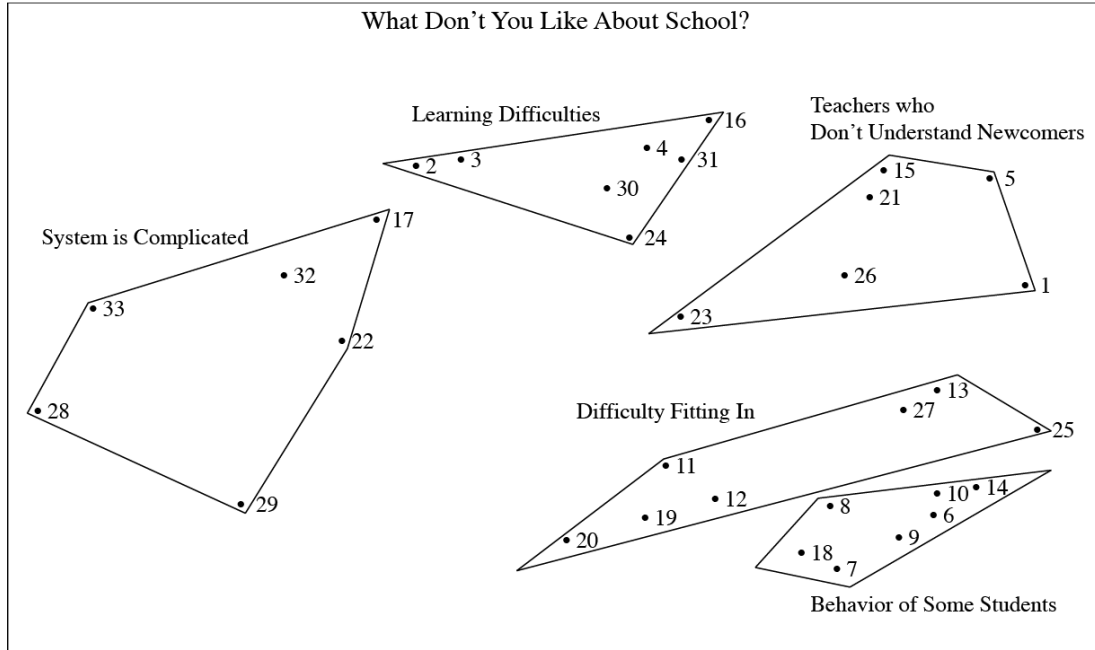


Table 2: Concept Items and Bridging Values for Concept Map

Concept and Response	Bridging Index
Concept #1 – Teachers who Understand Newcomers	0.40
1. teachers putting down children because of their English skills	0.49
26. split of academic learning levels (academic, applied, essential)	0.42
23. courses like history because I don't have the background	0.37
5. strict teachers	0.45
15. some teachers not qualified	0.30
21. be lectured by teachers about topics their parents lecture them about	0.37
Concept #2 – Learning Difficulties	0.20
2. homework	0.36
3. surprise quizzes	0.22
4. too much studying	0.13
31. no help with homework difficulties	0.08
16. no follow up from teachers around homework	0.14



24. being bumped back 3 grades	0.30
30. not enough time to complete work	0.19

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Concept #3 – System is Complicated	0.71
17. not having guidance on what courses to take	0.17
32. more guidance needed	0.58
22. phone calls about missing classes when at school in different activity	0.74
33. need positive help	0.77
28. school buses	0.71
29. waking up early	1.00

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Concept #4 – Behavior of Some Students	0.04
6. bullying	0.01
10. smoking	0.04
14. racial discrimination	0.12
7. drugs	0.00
18. no limits when talking about sexual topics/issues (jokes)	0.00
9. sexual relationships	0.03
8. peer pressure	0.09

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Concept #5 – Difficulty Fitting In	0.26
11. clothing	0.29
12. concept of a relationship	0.11
19. not all youth like to talk about relationships	0.11
20. too much freedom	0.41
13. difficulty fitting in at school in the beginning	0.30
27. feeling uncomfortable with a group you don't know	0.29
25. some students are just thrown in	0.33

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**Concept #1: Teachers Who Don't Understand Newcomers.** This concept had an overall bridging index of 0.40 and encompassed some of the instructional and social

issues that newcomer youth experienced with some teachers. Instructionally, newcomer youth had issues with “split of academic learning levels (academic, applied, essential)” and “courses like history because I don’t have the background”. These issues arose from the unfamiliarity with the academic system and some of the academic content. In relationships with teachers, some newcomers experienced “teachers putting down children because of their English skills”, “strict teachers”, “some teachers not qualified” and “be lectured by teachers about topics their parents lecture them about”. This suggested that some teachers failed to recognize the skills and experience of newcomer youth. Additionally, some teachers were not connecting with students in order to help them become successful.

**Concept #2: Learning Difficulties.** The main focus of this concept was on homework, studying, and learning difficulties that newcomer youth have had in schools, with an overall bridging with a bridging index of 0.20. More specifically, newcomers have faced issues with “homework”, “surprise quizzes”, “too much studying”, “no help with homework difficulties”, “no follow up from teachers around homework” and “not enough time to complete work”. Newcomers were forced to adapt to a new way of education they were unfamiliar with, causing them confusion and distress. The teaching styles of some of the educators may come at a stark contrast to what newcomers were been used to. These differences were exemplified in the students’ difficulty with not receiving the support when struggling and time constraints that may be found in some Canadian classrooms. “Being bumped back 3 grades” was also in this concept and described the experience of some students who despite educational training in their native

country were placed at lower educational levels. This response had a bridging index of 0.30.

**Concept # 3: System Is Complicated.** This concept revealed some systemic issues that newcomer youth have experienced in school. “Not having guidance on what courses to take”, “more guidance needed” and “need positive help” highlighted the need for support in order to deal with the educational system. “School buses” and “phone calls about missing classes when at school in a different activity” uncovered some of the miscommunication and confusion that newcomer youth experienced in schools. Overall, the bridging index for this concept was quite high at 0.71 suggesting that some of the responses were, in addition to being grouped with responses in this concept, grouped with responses in other concepts by participants. Some of the highest individual indexes were “waking up early” with an index of 1.00 and “school buses” with an index of 0.71.

**Concept #4: Behavior of Some Students.** This concept had the lowest overall bridging index on the map at 0.04 and elucidated some of the behaviors and attitudes of Canadian students that newcomers have found unfavorable and displeasing. Some of these negative behaviors included, “smoking”, “drugs”, “no limits when talking about sexual topics/issues (jokes)” and “sexual relationships”. These negative behaviors highlighted the value differences that were present between newcomers and Canadian students. There was also evidence of negative behaviors and attitudes towards newcomers where there was the presence of “bullying”, “racial discrimination” and “peer pressure”. This highlighted the notion that despite the influx of newcomers to Canadian schools, newcomers experienced discrimination from their Canadian counterparts.

**Concept #5: Difficulty Fitting In.** There were some cultural differences between newcomers and Canadian students that caused participants to feel uncomfortable and ostracized. There were often differences in “clothing” and “feeling uncomfortable with a group you don’t know”. It was also hard for newcomers to form relationships with other students because “some students are just thrown in”, “not all youth like to talk about relationships”, and there can be “difficulty in fitting in at school in the beginning”. Lastly, there were differences in perception among newcomers and Canadian youth that were exemplified through the responses “concept of a relationship” and “too much freedom”.

### **Results Summary**

A total of 37 unique responses were provided and sorted by participants to first question “What do you like about school?” These were organized into five concepts including: 1) Freedom, 2) Teachers who Help, 3) Different Cultures, 4) Range of Programs and 5) Learning Support. The first concept included responses such as “freedom to be themselves”, “freedom”, “friends” and “feeling included” and encompassed positive the overall atmosphere some newcomers experience in school. Concept two described how newcomer youth experienced school when they were given support by teachers and other staff in school. This concept included responses such as “teachers are understanding and supportive”, “guidance when needed”, and “relationship between teachers and students”. Concept three contained responses such as “multicultural” and “cultural diversity” which spoke to the multiculturalism that newcomers experienced in schools. Concept four described the school system and the opportunities that were made available to newcomer youth. Some of the responses

included in this concept were “variety in curriculum”, “many programs or courses” and “easy access to education”. Finally, the fifth concept included responses, “no problems with English programs” and “lunchtime breaks” and described favorable views of ESL classes.

The second question that newcomer youth responded to was, “What don’t you like about school?” There were 33 unique responses that were organized into five concepts including: 1) Teachers Who Don’t Understand Newcomers 2) Learning Difficulties 3) System is Complicated 4) Behavior of Some Students and 5) Difficulty Fitting In. The first concept was exemplified by the responses, “teachers putting down students because of their English skills”, and “strict teachers” and encompassed some of the instructional and social issues that newcomer youth experienced in relation to teachers. Concept two described the homework, studying and learning difficulties that newcomer youth experienced. Concept three included, responses such as “more guidance needed”, “need positive help” and “not having guidance on which course to take” and elucidated some of the systemic issues that newcomer students faced. Concept four described some of the behaviors that newcomer youth found displeasing, including “drugs”, “smoking” and “sexual relationships”. Lastly, the fifth concept included responses, “difficulty fitting in at school in the beginning” and “feeling uncomfortable with a group you don’t know” and described some of the cultural differences between newcomers and Canadian students.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to identify positive and negative aspects of school experiences among newcomer youth. In order to gather this information, newcomer youth who were attending local high schools participated in a group interview at a community centre. Information obtained from these interviews was summarized using multidimensional scaling and cluster analysis through the utilization of the method of concept mapping. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight similarities and differences between participants' responses and what has been reported in literature. This chapter contains a brief summary of concepts and the available literature for each concept presented. Next, a summary of similarities and differences follows along with the implications for research and practice. The chapter concludes with a description of the study's limitations.

There were two questions posed to the participants: "What do you like about school?" and "What don't you like about school?" The responses to "What do you like about school?" were organized into 5 concepts including: "Freedom"; "Teachers who Help"; "Different Cultures"; "Range of Programs"; and "Learning Support". "Freedom" discussed to the overall atmosphere that newcomer youth experienced in school, including the opportunities and possibilities that they were given to succeed. The second concept of "Teachers who Help" referred to the support that newcomer youth were given by adults in the school. Attitudes towards cultural diversity and multiculturalism were the main focus of the third concept of "Different Cultures". The fourth concept "Range of Programs" referred to the school systems and opportunities that were available therein.

The students' perceptions of ESL and programs were the main focus of the cluster of "Learning Support"

Responses to the second question "What don't you like about school?" were also organized into 5 concepts including: "Teachers who don't Understand Newcomers"; "Learning Difficulties"; "System is Complicated"; "Behavior of Some Students"; and "Difficulty Fitting In". The first concept, "Teachers who don't Understand Newcomers", referred to the instructional and social issues that newcomer youth experienced with some teachers. Homework, studying and instructional difficulties were included in the concept of learning difficulties. The third concept "System is Complicated", discussed the systemic issues about grades and credits, as well as, issues with future educational planning that newcomer youth experienced in school. The perceived differences in the areas of substance abuse and aggressive behaviors between newcomers and Canadian youth were areas of concern for newcomer participants. These concerns were contained in the first concept "Difficulty Fitting In". The fifth concept, "Difficulty Fitting In", summarized cultural differences between newcomers and Canadian peers that fostered feeling of ostracism among newcomer youth.

### **What Do You Like About School?**

**Freedom.** The concept of freedom was addressed in in the literature. More specifically, mention was made that the period of adolescent development was fundamental in the formulation of identities for newcomer youth (Brough, Gorman, Ramirez, Westoby, 2003). According to the Samrock (2007), through the freedom to explore, adolescent newcomers are able to create an identity that is authentic to them.

Participants acknowledged that they were attempting to develop an identity with the “freedom to be themselves” while at school. Additionally, the literature and participants also mentioned the importance of atmosphere at school for newcomer youth (Stone & Han, 2005; Bang, 2011; Johansson & Hammaren, 2011) as well as the importance for newcomers, especially refugees, to feel safe at school and not experience violence (Habib, 2012; Bisson, 2013).

The concept of freedom was generally well-researched. Much of what the participants discussed was found in the literature. The only area that the literature did not capture was the youths need to feel respected enough to have the freedom to participate in activities. For participants, this was an area of emphasis as they responded “no punishment or retaliation for freedom/ respect”.

A possible reason for this omission may be that much of the research about newcomer youth has come from other sources and not from their personal experiences. Another reason for the omission of “respect” in the learning experience of adolescent newcomers could be that researchers may not have given enough thought on the impact that this issue has on their learning experience. Since the participants were from a culturally diverse population, this may be an area worthy of future research.

**Teachers who help.** Both the literature and participants addressed the need for teachers to be supportive and understanding of newcomer students (Das, Gupta & Pauchulo, 2009). The information obtained from newcomer youth in the present study closely resembles the information within the literature. According to youths’ responses, they appreciate when “friends and teachers both help”; a positive “relationship between students and teachers”; and when “people are kind and understanding and supportive”.



Similarly, according to the literature, compassionate and understanding teachers were seen as a way to bolster against negative social experiences for newcomer by decreasing the student's overall psychological distress (Chui, Pong, Mori, & Chow, 2012). Further, support from teachers has shown to greatly impact the way in which newcomers are able to adjust to a new environment (Gutierrez, 2011). Additionally, Suarez-Orozco, Pimentel and Martin (2009), have suggested that school-based relationships foster engagement and academic success among newcomer youth.

Much of the information in the "teachers who help" concept is consistent with the literature. This means that research supports the use of compassionate and understanding teachers as a way to help newcomer students adapt. In this, teachers can be an important component of the adaptation process for newcomer youth.

**Different cultures.** There were few similarities between the literature and information provided by participants in relation to different cultures. Participants mentioned the positive aspects that they experienced with others from different cultures with the responses "multicultural", "cultural diversity", and the "only barrier is language".

Although the literature did mention cultural contact between groups of newcomers (Colvin, Volet, Fozdar, 2013), this information was largely not as positive as the aspects mentioned by participants. This literature suggests that despite opportunities to form bonds with others from other cultures, there is often limited interaction between cultural groups (Summers & Volet, 2008).

Further, there were some aspects in the literature that were not mentioned by participants. For example, some authors discussed interaction between immigrants from

different cultures and the existence of ethnocultural enclaves in many regions of North America, and the impact that these interactions have on youth. (Alba, 2009;Vo-Jutabha, 2006). Ethnocultural enclaves are defined as geographical areas populated by one ethnocultural group. The participants did not mention this.

In addition, there is some evidence of the effectiveness of cross-cultural relationships among newcomers, where separate cultural groups benefit and there is greater acceptance of cultural differences (Matsumoto, 2013). Participants did not discuss the impact and the prevalence of ethnocultural enclaves nor did they mention the outcomes of forming relationships with individuals outside of their ethnic or cultural background.

There were many differences between what the participants and the literature mentioned in the “different cultures” concept. A reason for this may stem from the fact that the literature took a broader and more general approach than the participants did. These differences may suggest that more work needs to be done to address multiculturalism from the perspectives and experiences of newcomer youths in diverse communities.

**Range of opportunities.** For newcomer youth, the way the curriculum affected their lives influenced how they viewed school as a whole. Perception of the curriculum was evidenced through remarks: “less homework”; “variety in curriculum”; and “more technology” in classrooms. Overall, there was little information of newcomer youths’ perceptions of school in the literature. According to Watkins and Melde (2010), newcomer youth generally had favorable views toward their educational programs despite the difficulties they faced with the curriculum. Peguero (2011) also noted that

newcomers had favorable views of the educational curriculum because they were given more opportunities to participate in arts and extracurricular activities that they experienced in their countries of origin. Participants responded consistently with responses that they enjoyed “arts programs” and “volunteer opportunities”.

There was some information in the literature that was not mentioned by participants. According to Song (2008), there is no general consensus about the curriculum due to the varying background and opinions of newcomers. And thus it is her view that no overarching judgments may be made about curriculum experience of newcomers. There were few differences between the literature presented and the information provided by participants. This suggests, despite being an under-researched area, the benefits that newcomer participants were in line with what researchers have described.

**Learning support.** Newcomer youth participants found that they enjoyed ESL classes and programs. Participants responded that “ESL classes/programs” were aspects of school they liked and they had “no problems with English classes”.

However, the literature painted a much bleaker picture from that of the experience of participants. According to Das Gupta and Pauchulo (2009), newcomers have been often placed into ESL classes, regardless of their English proficiency, forcing more capable students to be held behind. As such, in these instances, ESL has been used to segregate newcomers from their peers and thus have created a divide. The literature also stated there was a need for newcomers to be supported both linguistically and socially through their transition and beyond, due to the fact that some newcomers, despite their

ESL education, fail to flourish. Some literature calls for additional support in these areas (von Grünigen, Kochenderfer-Ladd, Perren, & Alsaker, 2012).

The differences between information presented by the participants and the literature may follow from local school experiences that are more effective with newcomer populations. As well, differences may stem from different population sampling methods used in the literature, compared to those in the present study. In order to determine a more complete picture of ESL education for newcomers, further research should be conducted.

### **What Don't You Like About School?**

**Teachers who don't understand newcomers.** Participants mentioned the problem of strict teachers. The perceptions of newcomer youth on the fairness of non-corporal punishment by teachers for student misbehavior have been studied. Peguero (2012) found that perception about the fairness of punishment was heavily dependent upon ethnicity and not the duration of time that the individual has left his or her homeland. Regardless of time in Canada, it is experience prior to relocation and those sanctioned at home that appears to be most related to strict rule adherence and sanctions for student transgressions.

The participants mentioned areas of concern that were not present within the literature. Specifically, participants had concerns with the effectiveness of teachers as evidenced by the response "some teachers not qualified" and their placement in different classes for academic and general studies, as evidenced by the response "split of academic learning levels".

Both the literature and participants explored the role of teachers in the lives of newcomer youth. However, there were some differences in the emphasis. The participants focused on teachers who used discriminatory actions, for example, by putting the participants down because of the poor English skills. The literature focused on the discriminatory attitudes of some teachers, in general. There have been instances when teachers have perpetuated inequities and prejudices and subsequently students have had negative experiences with these teachers. This has caused some students to dislike and mistrust some educators (Peguero & Bondy, 2011; Prino, Quaglia, & Sclavo, 2008).

The similarities between the literature and participants may be attributable to perceptions of punishment cross-culturally have been well documented. The differences may arise from the fact that newcomers themselves are discussing their issues in this thesis and therefore the information has come directly from them and not inferred from other sources. The presence of both similarities and differences in this concept suggests that further research is worth pursuing.

**Learning difficulties.** Information pertaining to the homework and academic difficulties that newcomers face was identified by both participants and the literature. Participants stated that there was “no help with homework difficulties”, “not enough time to complete work” and “no follow up from teachers around homework”. The literature on the homework experiences of newcomer youth suggested that some do not complete their homework because of varying levels of homework involvement by parents, school-based homework support, and learning styles of youth (Bang, 2011; Bang, Hee, Suarez-Orozco, & O’Connor, 2011) .

Generally, the academic difficulties that some newcomers face were a central focus in the literature review presented. The participants did not identify this. The literature noted that not all students have the same prior school experience and therefore may find it difficult in adapting to the teaching in Canadian schools (Chiu et al, 2003). This lack of prior experience may be a crucial factor that causes newcomer students to struggle with school.

Much of the research on newcomers focuses on their ability to function academically. This information is found in both the literature and in a more indirect way, in the responses of participants. However, there were some differences between what the literature and the participants stated in this concept. As in other concepts, the differences may arise from the fact that the participants speak from their own experiences in a particular community where there appears to be better support for newcomer youth than in some other contexts.

**System is complicated.** A complicated educational system was a major issue identified by newcomers who participated. Participants found it difficult because there was, “[no] guidance on what courses to take”, and many felt that, “more guidance was needed”. Participants also found it difficult to adapt to the new system and found difficulty “waking up early” and taking “school buses”. These issues would be very challenging for newcomer youth and highlight the differences in experience for newcomer youth versus a youth who has grown up in the local community and understands the system.

There was information in literature pertaining to the systematic issues that newcomers faced. The literature addressed the displeasure and confusion that some

youths had with the educational system and its content because of vastly different experiences of youths' in their own countries of origin (Lauture, 2008; Tohme, 2008; Ferreira, 2011). The general information in this concept was present in the literature but not the extent to which the participants described it. This is attributable to the fact that much of the literature did not have a small-scale local approach but rather, larger samples from different geographical areas. In order to get a better understanding of the experiences of newcomers in this respect, further small-scale, locally conducted research may be helpful.

**Behavior of some students.** Bullying and discrimination were featured heavily within the literature. Newcomers felt that they experienced “racial discrimination” and “bullying” from some of their peers. Similarly, according to the literature, some newcomers experienced bullying due to their differences in language and appearance (Das Gupta & Pauchulo, 2009; Grunigen, et al, 2010; Medvedva, 2010).

Some of the behavior differences that participants described were mentioned within the literature. Newcomers had issues with the “peer pressure” that they experienced including the push to partake in “smoking”, “drugs”, and sexual relationships. There was also discomfort for newcomers when it came to discussing topics of a sexual nature. Most of the information in the literature focused on the bullying and discriminatory behaviors of some students as well as the attitudes that may be present in newcomers in areas such as drinking, smoking and sexual activity.

**Difficulty fitting in.** Fitting in was another focus of the literature. Forming bonds with peers and understanding customs is often a complicated process. This process is complicated by newcomers attempting to establish a genuine identity based upon

cultures and traditions from their home countries (Das Gupta & Pauchulo, 2009).

Participants in this study also found it difficult to establish an identity and fit in with their peers and remarked that there was “difficulty fitting in at school in the beginning” and “not all youth like to talk about relationships”.

If newcomer youth experience discrimination, it inhibits their ability to fit in. Participants remarked that it was difficult to fit in because of the clothing that they wore. This decreases their self-esteem and likelihood of forming social bonds (Oxman-Martinez, Rummens, Moreau, Choi, & Beiser, 2012). Newcomer youth experienced discrimination and oppression from a variety of sources and therefore it is important to attempt to remedy these instances, where possible, in order to promote success (Caxaj & Berman, 2010)

Fitting in and the ramifications of discrimination are well researched areas within the newcomer literature. Discrimination and fitting in are heavily researched because they are seen as symptoms of societal attitudes towards newcomers (Oxman-Martinez, Rummens, Moreau, Choi, Beiser, Oglivie & Armstrong, 2012; Closson, Darwich, Hymel, & Waterhouse, 2013; Yoon, Hacker, Hewitt, Abrams & Cleary, 2012). If bullying and discrimination of newcomers can be diminished in schools, new generations adults will be tolerant and understanding of these peoples. Therefore, it suggests that despite the best efforts of schools and teachers, some newcomers are still experiencing negative emotions in school and that research in this area should continue to be conducted to address these issues.



## **Discussion Summary**

There were some similarities between the literature and what participants identified in response to the first question, “What do you like about school?” Of the concepts, “Freedom”; “Teachers who Help”; “Different Cultures”; “Range of Opportunities”; and “Learning Support”, the similarities were strongest within three of the five. In the “Freedom” concept, both the literature and the participants emphasized the need for a welcoming atmosphere for newcomer youth. Also, both the literature and the participants mentioned the process of developing an identity through trial and error. In the “Teachers who Help”, there was a need expressed by both participants and evident in the literature, for teachers to be supportive and understanding of the needs of newcomers so that they can be better able to adjust to their new environment. In, “range of opportunities”, participants and research suggested that newcomer youth experience the range of activities and opportunities in their new schools as exciting, and interesting, but also, as evident in response to the second question, confusing and overwhelming.

Despite the similarities in the “What do you like about school?” question, four of the five concepts had differences. The literature generally lined up well to the “Freedom” concept. However, the participants identified their need to feel respected enough to explore their identities and this connection was not apparent in the literature. The “Different Cultures” concept was largely different from the literature. In the literature, cross-cultural contact was viewed as unlikely, there was evidence of ethnocultural enclaves and there was mention of the benefits that occur when individuals make contacts outside of their cultural background. In the “Range of Opportunities” the main difference between participants and literature was that some researchers suggested

that newcomer experiences of curriculum may vary from person to person and no general consensus can be made. The final concept with differences was “Learning Support”. The literature on newcomer experiences with ESL was generally negative, while participants in the present study found it to be quite positive.

In response to “What don’t you like about school?” there were similarities evident between the participants’ experiences and the literature in all five concepts. Strictness of teachers experienced negatively by newcomers was identified both in the literature and by participants in “Teachers who Understand Newcomers”. Mention was also made of the challenges of learning the content and language that newcomers have in school by both participants and in the literature in relation to “Learning Difficulties”. In the “System is Complicated” concept, there was consistency between participants and the literature about the difficulties navigating through the system in terms of course progression and future directions post-graduation. Information in the “Behavior of Some Students” shows congruence between literature about bullying and discrimination. Finally, there was consistency between participants’ experiences and the literature concerning difficulty in forming bonds between students and teachers as well as the peer pressures that newcomer youth face when attempting to adapt to a new culture.

There were also differences in response to “What don’t you like about school?” between participants and the literature. In four of the five concepts, these differences were present. In “Teachers who Understand Newcomers”, participants discussed the negative actions that they experienced with teachers while the literature explored the negative attitudes that some teachers have towards newcomers. While largely consistent with the literature, in relation to “Learning Difficulties”, the literature mentioned that not

all newcomers have the same school experiences, which can result in students having difficulty in adapting to Canadian teaching styles. In “System is Complicated”, the day-to-day concerns of newcomers such as adjusting to a new schedule, were not evident in the literature.

### **Implications**

Newcomer youth have regular contact with teachers and settlement workers in schools. Teachers interact with students on a daily basis. It is the responsibility of teachers to ensure that students have the knowledge base to accomplish goals that are governmentally mandated. Teachers need to be cognizant of responsibility that they have towards all students, especially newcomers. Based on the information provided by newcomer participants, it is important for teachers to understand the uniqueness of each newcomer and recognize each individual’s strengths and weaknesses. With this in mind, each newcomer may view the school system and curriculum differently and therefore each may require individualized supports. Teachers should also be cognizant of this fact and attempt to embody compassion and understanding to facilitate success. Conversely, when teachers are discriminatory and punitive, it diminishes the likelihood of success for newcomer students.

Settlement workers assist newcomers and their families by orienting them to the school and the school system. Settlement workers also refer students to specific services, when necessary. Information from settlement workers can be disseminated through information sessions as well as one on one. A settlement worker not only works with the school to ensure that the student is capable and well-adjusted but also advocates on behalf of the student when necessary. Based on the responses of participants, settlement workers

should be cognizant of the fact that some newcomers remain confused about the school system. It may be useful to continue to assist newcomers over a longer term to help navigate new choices and opportunities as well as challenges when they occur.

Researchers work to examine issues, and by doing so, broaden the understanding of the factors surrounding these issues. There are some points that participants discussed that researchers should be aware of. Researchers can begin by examining issues from the perspectives of newcomers to get a fuller picture of the issues that newcomers face. More specifically, researchers can begin to examine the curriculum opportunities available for newcomers, newcomers' views of other cultures and newcomers' views of ESL classes; as well as how newcomers accommodate peer pressure and attitudes differences.

The author of this study contends that policymakers should know that despite initiatives to help newcomers to Canada, many are still having negative experiences upon arrival. Because these challenges still occur, it is necessary for the education system to continue to assist newcomers in meaningful ways in order to promote their success and subsequently the success of the nation as a whole. It is also necessary for Canadians to be informed of the issues that newcomers face so added pressure may be given to elected officials to ensure that equity is promoted and policies that attend to the educational needs of newcomers be reflected.

### **Limitations**

There are several limitations to this research that should be taken into consideration. First, participants were only sampled from a single community centre in one city. This sampling procedure may have unintentionally created some bias or overrepresented some issues. Further, some of the information presented may be unique

experiences of some participants and therefore may not represent the overall experience of the population. Finally, some of the concepts were not clearly distinguished from one another resulting in some overlap between ideas.

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**YOU are  
INVITED to a  
Meeting to participate in a  
Research Study  
About**

**NEWCOMER YOUTH, their FAMILIES and COMMUNITY**

**We want to know what makes a healthy welcoming community for newcomer youth  
in south London**

**We would like to talk about:**

**what is working well and,  
what improvements could be made**

**for newcomer youth:  
at home  
in school  
within the neighbourhood**

**there will be separate meetings for**

- 1) Newcomer Youth**
- 2) Parents of Newcomer Youth**
- 3) Service Providers to Newcomer Youth**

**These meetings will be held at South London Neighborhood Resource Centre**

**on**

**TBA**

**TBA**

**TBA**

**please contact your school Settlement Worker to register**

**if you have any questions about the study please call or email Jason Brown at  
Western University.**

## Healthy Welcoming Communities Created by Newcomer Youth

### LETTER OF INFORMATION

\_\_\_ Youth

\_\_\_ Parents

\_\_\_ Service Providers

#### Introduction

My name is Jason Brown and I am an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Education at Western University. Dr. Mohamed Al-Adeimi, Settlement Coordinator, South London Neighborhood Resource Centre, and Dr. Paul Tarc, Assistant Professor at Western University and I are currently conducting research into what makes a healthy welcoming community for newcomer youth and would like to invite you and your son/daughter to participate in this study.

#### Purpose of the study

The aims of this study are to learn from newcomer youth about what will help them survive and thrive in school, with their families and in their neighbourhoods.

#### If you agree to participate

If you (parent) **agree that your son/daughter can participate** in this study she or he will be asked to meet with at the South London Neighborhood Resource Centre on June 2, in a small group with about 8 other youth to talk about these issues. The meeting will take approximately 3 hours including a break when lunch will be provided. She or he will also be invited back another time to return to talk about what all of the youth said. Even if you agree that your son/daughter may participate in the first group he/she does not have to participate in the second meeting. In the second group meeting, participants will be asked to group together all of the responses from the first youth focus group. There will be no identifying information on the responses. This meeting will take approximately one hour.

If **you (parent) agree to participate in this study** you will be asked to meet with South London Neighborhood Resource Centre on June 2, in a small group with about 8 other parents to talk about these issues. The meeting will take approximately 2 hours. You will also be invited back another time to talk about what all of the parents said. Even if you agree to participate in the first group you do not have to participate in the second meeting. In the second group meeting, participants will be asked to group together all of the responses from the first parent focus group. There will be no identifying information on the responses. This meeting will take approximately one hour.

If you (**service provider**) agree to participate in this study you will be asked to meet with South London Neighborhood Resource Centre on (date, TBD), in a small group with about 8 other service providers to talk about these issues. The meeting will take approximately 2 hours. You will also be invited back another time to talk about what all of the service providers said. Even if you agree to participate in the first group you do not have to participate in the second meeting. In the second group meeting, participants will be asked to group together all of the responses from the first service provider focus group. There will be no identifying information on the responses. This meeting will take approximately one hour.

### **Confidentiality**

The information collected will be confidential and used for research purposes only, and neither yours or your son's or daughter's name (nor information which could identify you or them) will be used in any publication or presentation of the study results, unless you give consent. We would like to take pictures and/or videos of the events and use them in publications/ presentations of the study results but only for those who agree. You will be asked to indicate your choice on the consent form.

### **Risks & Benefits**

There are no known risks to participating in this study.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Participation in this study is voluntary. You or your youth can refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on their school or involvement with the South London Neighborhood Resource Centre.

### **Questions**

If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant you may contact the Office of Research Ethics, Western University. If you have any questions about this study, please contact Dr. Jason Brown, Faculty of Education. This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

*Healthy Welcoming Communities Created by Newcomer Youth*

*Jason Brown, Western University*

*Mohamed Al-Adeimi, South London Neighborhood Resource Centre*

*Paul Tarc, Western University*

CONSENT FORM

Parent Focus Group

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in photos associated with this research which will be used in publications/ presentations of the research results. Please initial your response.

YES \_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_

I agree to participate in videos associated with this research which will be used in publications/ presentations of the research results. Please initial your response.

YES \_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_

Name (please print):

Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent:

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent:

Date:

---

I agree to be contacted by the researchers to invite me to participate in the second phase of the study which will take 30-45 minutes in the same location (South London Neighborhood Resource Centre) to group together responses from this focus group at a date to be determined.

YES

NO

telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_



*Healthy Welcoming Communities Created by Newcomer Youth*

*Jason Brown, Western University*

*Mohamed Al-Adeimi, South London Neighborhood Resource Centre*

*Paul Tarc, Western University*

CONSENT FORM

Youth Focus Group

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree that my youth may participate in the study. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to allow my son/daughter to participate in photos associated with this research which will be used in publications/ presentations of the research results. Please initial your response.

YES \_\_\_\_

NO \_\_\_\_

I agree to allow my son/daughter to participate in videos associated with this research which will be used publications/ presentations of the research results. Please initial your response.

YES \_\_\_\_

NO \_\_\_\_

Name of Parent/Guardian (please print):

Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent:

Date:

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I agree to allow my son or daughter to be contacted by the researchers to invite him/her to participate in the second phase of the study which will take 30-45 minutes in the same location (South London Neighborhood Resource Centre) to group together responses from this focus group at a date to be determined.

YES

NO

telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

