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IMMIGRANT YOUTH LIVING IN LOW INCOME HOUSEHOLDS AND THEIR EXPERIENCE WITH SETTLEMENT AGENCIES

by

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The Major Research Paper is submitted

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Immigration and Settlement Studies

Ryerson University

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2013

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Mohammad Nabeel Rahman

Immigrant Youth Living in Low Income Households and Their Experience with Settlement Agencies

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Master of Arts, 2013
Immigration and Settlement Studies
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Abstract

This Major Research paper explores the experiences of immigrant youth who are living in low income households and their experiences with settlement agencies. Through two focus groups this research compared the attitudes of first generation immigrants between the ages of 16-24 and how effective settlement agencies were in meeting the needs of newcomer youth. The finding indicated that employment, education and social integration were key areas of concerns for newcomer youth. Newcomers who were aged 18-24 felt underserved by settlement agencies, and thought that programs they participated in did not directly address their needs. Settlement policies were also examined to observe whether the current structure hinders a client centred approach. The policy analysis found the funding structure employed by Citizenship Immigration Canada to favour larger NGOs and settlement agencies which would often alienate or subordinate smaller NGO firms. The results implied that current policy structures are performance based rather than directly addressing client needs which left certain clients feeling underserved.

Key Words: Immigrant, Youth, Settlement, Agencies, Policy, Education, Integration

Dedicated to my Parents Imtiazur and Farzana Rahman

For all your love and support for making this possible

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This research will explore immigrant youth who live in low income households and their experiences with settlement agencies. It will attempt to capture their experiences and expectations of what they want to achieve in Canada and compare it to the services that have been made available to them. In doing so, this research will examine current settlement policies to observe whether they act as catalysts or obstacles to the integration of immigration youth.

My decision to pursue this topic has a very personal reason behind it. It was July 1st, 1997; my first steps on Canadian soil. I was greeted by immigration officials giving me the Canadian Flag, and a T-Shirt that read 'welcome to Canada'. I had no idea it was Canada Day, instead the perception was that this is just how they treat immigrants that come to Canada. My first impressions were positive and I spent the next few days eating Doritos chips and drinking coca cola while watching Tennis because I thought that is what Canadians do. If only integration was that easy. My family had decided that moving downtown was the best way to get settled. We were situated at Broadview and Gerrard, right in the middle of a small Chinatown and not too far away from Little India. The diverse faces made me question what it means to be a Canadian, a question that I am still grappling with today.

It wasn't long before the burden of financial strains caught up with my family. The savings were running out and my father had to work as an Assistant Manager at Burger King, a job for which he was highly overqualified. My mother began working at a telemarketing company selling telephone directories; a job for which she was highly under qualified. She had never worked a day in her life and only had a grade 10 education, but out of necessity, she had to improvise. The dreams of a better life quickly became a reality that more resembled a nightmare. As a youth, it was a difficult transition and the stress of integration was compounded with the

strain of financial instability. This lead me to start working at the age of 15 and I have not stopped working since. A particular period of my life stands out more than the rest: I was 18 and went to Seneca College which was situated at Highway 404 and Finch while also working a part time job at a telemarketing agency downtown, near University and Dundas. Every day, I would commute two hours to Seneca from Mississauga, and then from Seneca, make my way to downtown Toronto only to get yelled at by customers for trying to change their long distance carrier. My days began at eight a.m. and ended at nine p.m. Did I mention I worked with my mother? It was not ideal but it was a way to make ends meet.

I recall the stories of my past because it is the experience from which I derived my research. I was a youth living in a low income household. The challenges of poverty and settlement were intermingled. As a youth I looked for opportunities to integrate and feel comfortable in my new environment, however, the constant hurdles of poverty and financial setbacks forced me to be put in situations that pushed my patience to the limit. Seeing my parents struggle to keep us afloat and sacrifice their happiness for the future of their children was both inspiring but also heartbreaking. My integration became one of financial survival rather than social incorporation. Feelings of isolation and depression began to resonate. I was desperate to belong in this society because I had invested so much effort into it.

As a youth worker today, I now realize the importance of settlement agencies that are supposed to aid in the integration of immigrants. However when I needed them, I did not even know that they existed. Instead I was a part of a religious youth group called MAC Youth. It was through them that I was exposed to other youth. They took youth to places that they otherwise would not have heard of or been able to afford. Activities such as soccer, camping, skiing and

weekly programs helped me feel part of a community. I looked up to the older youth and mentors and I thought maybe someday I would be like them.

Life has come full circle of sorts. I now work as a Youth Worker at the Newcomer Centre of Peel providing the youth with programs that will aid in their integration to Canada. But often I wonder if the youth who are living in low income households share similar experiences to mine. What are their challenges and are the settlement services adequately meeting their needs? As such, the objective of the paper is to explore issues of immigrant youth who are living in low income households and their experiences with settlement programming.

A focus group consisting of immigrant youth who are living in low income households was conducted. The informal setting of a focus group was useful to obtain accurate data. The theoretical framework utilized in this study is the Assimilation Theory, including Spatial Assimilation as well as the Segmented Assimilation Theory. Strain/ Bias model is also utilized to understand the experiences of immigrant youth. In order to achieve the goal of this research, a phenomenological qualitative design will aim to capture the experiences of immigrant youth who live in low income households in relation to the programs available to them. By allowing patterns to emerge rather than having predetermined categories, this will allow for the feelings and attitudes of the youth to be accurately captured (Groenewald 2004). The goal is to understand the issue of settlement and integration in light of challenges of migration as well as poverty. Furthermore, the paper will elaborate on the current settlement policies and analyze whether such structural guidelines are aiding or negating the integration of immigrant youth.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In order to understand what literature currently exists in relation to the topic; this research will review the standard of what determines a Low income household. It will also review literature that discuss theoretical framework, settlement programming such as Language Instruction for Newcomers, policies and structures for settlement funding, immigration policies. The literature review will use government documents, case studies, peer-reviewed journals and will work from the discipline of social work as well sociology to review the current literature. The themes and issues that are raised will be discussed in the following sections.

Low income Households

In order to better understand poverty, Statistics Canada has provided several benchmarks such as Low Income Cut-Offs (LICO), Low Income Measures (LIM), and Market Basket Measures (MBM) which better help to provide a context to individuals and families living in low income households. LICO are thresholds below which a family is likely to spend a significantly higher proportion of its income on food, shelter and clothing than the average family and hence have relatively little "discretionary income" left for other spending and is likely to live under strained circumstances (Low Income Measurements at Statistics Canada 2009).

Low Income Measure (LIM) considers half of the median family income where income is adjusted for family size and composition through an equivalence scale. Market Based Measure (MB) was a new initiative introduced in 1997. This version takes into account the cost of a basket of goods and services that are essential to maintain physical health and to moderately participate in community activities. The table below details low income household according to the different measuring statistics. (Low Income Measurements at Statistics Canada 2009)

City of 500,000 or more inhabitants	Low Income Cut Offs (LICO)	Low Income Measure (LIM)	Market Based Measure (MB)
Four Person Household	$43, 292 (2011)	$37, 562 (2009)	$32, 503 (2009)

It is important to note that the different methods used to define low income thresholds vary from city to city. These different poverty measurements represent the diversity of opinions regarding poverty, and the numeric fluctuations offer an insight that there are multiple factors influencing poverty that go beyond finance.

For immigrants, the financial stress of migration often is not observed when calculating low income cut offs even though it is very much part of their financial situation. Living in a community considered low income represents its own problems; the youth are more at risk of criminal activity, and the structural barriers that exist make it difficult for them to look beyond their community. When an immigrant settles in that neighbourhood, not only do they deal with issues of integration but also issues of living in a low income neighbourhood. Immigrant youth are more likely to be exposed to drug culture and experience structural racism. Their perception of Canadian society becomes distorted and they are more likely to integrate into the counterculture than become part of the normative one (Rossiter 2009). Thus an understanding of integration becomes imperative to understand the experiences of immigrant youth.

Theoretical Framework

Integration is not necessarily assimilation (Biles et al., 2008) which would require one to leave one culture behind and adopt the normative behaviours of the dominant group. While it is understood that newcomers might have to relinquish some aspects of their culture, to argue for full assimilation would be contrary to the belief in multiculturalism and diversity. Language is

perhaps the one aspect of integration that is stressed upon as it makes adjusting to a new society easier. However, this does not suggest that an individual's other social practices need to be assimilated (Biles et al., 2008). Integration is a multidimensional approach and some newcomers might be integrated economically, but not socially or vice versa (Biles et al, 2008). The onus to integrate also rests with the newcomers themselves and to what extent they are willing to relinquish their cultural practices and conventions. There are several theories of immigrant integration and it is important to discuss them.

Rossiter also puts forward four different theoretical frameworks: the importation model, cultural conflict model, strain/frustration model and bias model (Rossiter 2009). The importation model suggests that a proportion of foreigners immigrate to Canada specifically to commit crimes. These individuals may have had criminal lifestyles before coming to Canada, and they come here with the intention of perpetrating further crime, particularly through affiliation with gangs and groups involved in organised crime (e.g. the Mafia). The cultural conflict model poses that newcomers engage in various cultural or religious customs and practices that contravene the Criminal Code of Canada; in some instances, traditional perspectives may even justify criminal behaviours (Rossiter 2009). The strain frustration model suggests that immigrants' settlement experiences in Canadian society lead them to become involved in criminal activity. Because of factors such as underemployment, racism and poverty, some individuals may become involved in activities such as drug trafficking to improve their economic circumstances. The bias model is a critical perspective which holds that certain racial-ethnic groups come into disproportionate contact with the justice system because of systemic discrimination and bias on the part of criminal justice and legal representatives (Rossiter 2009).

These frameworks provide an opportunity upon which appropriate questions can be asked. For the purpose of this study, Straight Line Assimilation, Spatial Assimilation Theory Segmented Assimilation Theory and the Strain/frustration theory will be analyzed along with the data in order to evaluate immigrant youth in low income households and their experiences with settlement agencies.

The Straight Line Assimilation theory suggests that all newcomers become more like the native born population over time (Biles et al., 2008). It argues that the core culture of the dominant group is present even in the programs designed to help newcomers, and as a result of this, newcomers eventually assimilate rather than integrate. Spatial assimilation theory of Myles and Feng (2004) appears similar to the Straight Line Assimilation theory but deal more with geographic diversity. It presumes that recent immigrants initially cluster together forming ethic hubs for economic and social reasons (Myles and Feng 2004). As these become more financially secure, they eventually move out of these neighbourhoods in favour of more affluent ones which traditionally are dominated by non-immigrant populations. As Myles and Feng (2004) point out:

> *The move to better housing is usually associated with exit from the ethnic neighbourhood, a transition facilitated by linguistic and other forms of acculturation. Immigrant neighbourhoods in this standard model are transitional neighbourhoods, "starting points" for new arrivals. These immigrant enclaves (Logan, Alba and Zhang, 2002:299), however, are left behind as long-term migrants acquire the requisite financial resources and cultural and social skills to navigate the larger society.*

If all newcomers were to have a mentality to adopt dominant cultural values then perhaps this theory would be rendered accurate. They would take full advantages of the program such as HOST and LINC to learn the language and the culture and adopt it themselves. While there are many immigrant youth who share such an ideology, the demographic and ethnic enclaves in the GTA would suggest otherwise.

The second theory suggests "segmented assimilation" which refers to the barriers that immigrants face such as structural racism, complex and divided labour markets, or the presence of counter culture, such as street gangs and drug cultures (Biles et al., 2008). Immigrant youth who are exposed to these barriers might adopt such counter cultures or even resist integration because of the systemic barriers they experience. They form into ethnic enclaves which inevitably become infused with poverty and low income households (Myles and Feng, 2004). These 'transitionary' neighbourhoods become the long term dwelling places for most immigrant youth (Myles and Feng, 2004). If the Greater Toronto area is taken as an example, the existence of counter culture and structural racism becomes apparent. The Humber Summit community which stretches from Islington and Finch to Highway 400 and Finch is one such community. There exists in this community a large contingency of well settled Italian residents. In recent years however, a large number of newcomers from the Caribbean, South America and South Asia have settled there. The percentage of newcomers there is higher there than in other Toronto communities (Social profile; Humber Summit, 2). 62.5 % of the community is comprised of immigrants (Social profile; Humber Summit, 2). 43% of the population make less than $39,000 and although that does not indicate extreme poverty, the number is inflated because of the existing and well established Italian community (Social profile; Humber Summit, 2).

Settlement Programming

The existing literature such as Biles et al. (2008), Kareem (2005), and Lima et al. (2005) mention that most of the immigration policies for settlement come from a federal level and are implemented nationally. The federal government was projected to spend $732.2 million on settlement and integration programs in 2007-2008 (Biles et al 2008). This includes $224.4 million for Quebec, $97.5 for other provinces, $173.6 million for ISAP, $174.7 million for

LINC, $49.5 million for RAP, and $10 million for HOST (Biles et al 2008). However, significant reduction in settlement funding has been a continue trend and compared to the $732.2 million that was allocated in 2007; $576.9 million was allocated through 2012-2013 (Backgrounder- Government of Canada Settlement Funding Allocation, 2011). Ontario which has generally been the beneficiary of a substantial amount of funding during past years has also seen a decrease in funding. Ontario received $314.9 million in 2012-2013, compared to $346.5M in 2011-2012, reflecting the province's declining proportion of immigrant intake which has reduced from 64% in 2005 to 52% in 2010 (Government of Canada Settlement Funding Allocation, 2011).

Immigration programs are vast and their effectiveness needs to be understood in the context of the environment in which they are situated. The large influxes of newcomers settling in major cities like Toronto have made newcomers more visible. In fact, four in ten residents in the GTA are immigrants and one in ten has immigrated here within the last five years (Biles et al, 2008). In order to address the settlement needs of the newcomers, it is important to understand the issues affecting them. The Government has pointed out some of their pressing concerns which include, Advocacy, Counselling and support, Education, English language training, Emergency food Services, Health and Medical, Housing, Information, Legal, Form Filing, Interpretation, Orientation, Recreation (Lima, 2005)While many concerns identified by the government are challenges that immigrants experience, my research will attempt to demonstrate that a top down approach does not necessarily meet immigrant needs. This results in programs that might not be beneficial to immigrant youth, and rather than reforming the system, the government has simply cut funding.

There are four major programs funded by CIC, and they include, Language Instructions for Newcomers (LINC), Immigration Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP), The Host Program/ Welcoming Communities, and Refugee Programs (Biles et al 2008):

LINC is the primary investment that CIC funds in settlement and integration since 1992 (Biles et al, 2008). As language is the most common barrier for communication for newcomers, LINC is designed to aid them in learning the two official languages. The program provides funds to newcomer serving agencies for up to three years from the time they start training. Throughout the GTA, many English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) classes are funded by LINC and offered through community agencies, school boards, and community centres. Language training through LINC is offered to newcomers on a part-time or full-time basis (Lima et al, 2005). There are several stages of LINC and depending on the initial assessment, LINC students are placed in advanced or basic English. Along with language instruction, LINC also serves the purpose of educating newcomers about the traditions and cultures of Canada. For example, on Remembrance Day, Newcomer Centre of Peel educated all LINC students on its significance.

One of the criticisms with LINC is that even the advanced English classes are not up to par with the standards of potential employers and most immigrants need employment specific language training (Biles et al., 2008). Those who have professional designations from their country of origin might have the skills to perform at a high level, but if they lack in basic language skills, then finding and maintaining employment for them is almost impossible.

Immigration and Settlement Adaptation Program (ISAP)

This is the largest sector of newcomer integration programs. It serves a wide variety of purposes that include getting newcomers in touch with community resources such as banks, health, housing, educational and legal facilities (Biles et al., 2008). They also provide one-on-one

counselling by giving clients advice on how to cope with everyday life and their adjustment to a new society. This can include providing assistance on how to take public transit, filling out health forms, school registration, finding and applying for housing, and so forth. ISAP also provides translation services by either interpreting documents or attending parent teacher nights and offering language help.

Another specific program ISAP provides is the Enhanced Language Training. The concerns expressed about the lack of employment specific language training resulted in its creation. So far 253 projects have been delivered through 140 agencies with labour market needs in mind. They concentrate on English training which eventually bridges to employment (Biles et al., 2008).

HOST Program/Welcoming Communities

HOST Program which has now been changed to Welcoming Communities is an entirely social and recreational aspect of the integration process. This approach to integration is based upon the premise of the two way street. The premise is that interaction between majority and minority groups will reduce prejudice, providing it occurs under favourable circumstances (Biles et al., 2008). Canadian volunteers are matched up with newcomers in a group setting which provides one-on-one interaction as well as group communication. They are not asked to make any financial contributions, instead their prime responsibility is to interact with the newcomers and build a relationship with them to eventually have cross cultural matches. Social activities which have a distinct Canadian element to them, are initiated to give the newcomers a better understanding of Canadian culture. With Canadian volunteers there to guide and inform them of Canadian customs, it makes the transition easier for newcomers.

The HOST program is critical in alleviating the mental and emotional stresses of newcomers adjusting to a new society. While the most pressing need for newcomers is financial stability, what is often forgotten is the mental turbulence that newcomers experience. This program is designed specifically to lessen the stress and feelings of isolation. The participants also benefit from this program by improving their social and communication skills.

Refugee Program

Unlike most immigrants, refugees do not necessarily plan their migration to a new country, and they seldom have a choice in dictating which country they to claim refugee status (Biles et al., 2008). As a result, they are lacking in resources and are in need of immediate assistance. To combat this need for assistance, Privately Sponsored Refugees program was instilled in 1978 and since then more than 195,000 refugees gave come through this method (Biles et al., 2008). There is also a government assisted refugee program, one of their programs being Refugee Assistance Program (RAP). They provide immediate assistance including financial support for one year and in extreme circumstances for two years (Biles et al, 2008). As opposed to government assisted refugees, privately sponsored refugees generally are quicker to integrate into the labour market (Biles et al, 2008). The private sponsor takes the financial responsibility of the refugee to ensure integration and this appears to be to more effective in settling the refugees.

Settlement Policy

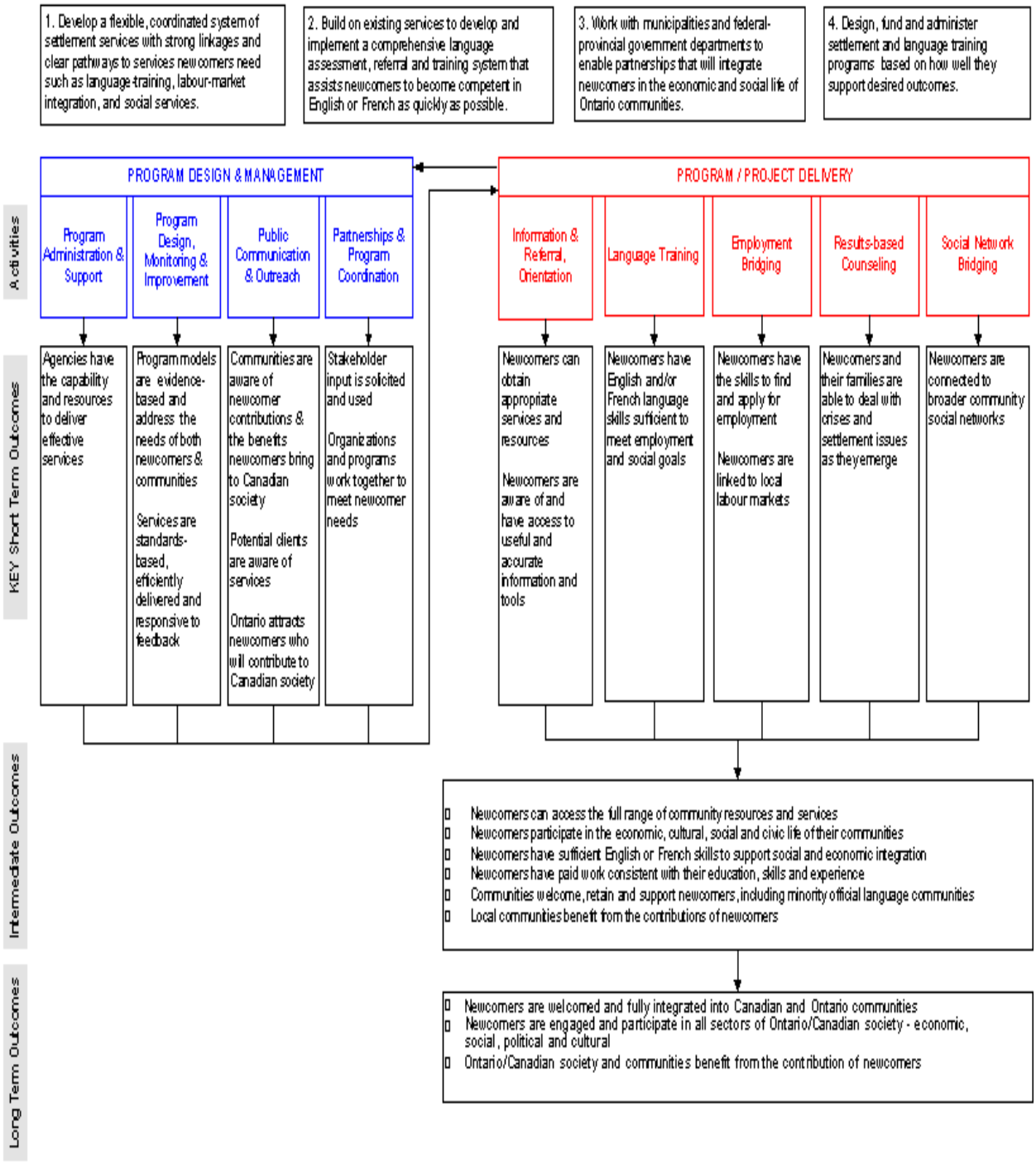
For immigrant youth living in low income households, what becomes apparent is that there is a need for settlement services due to the multiple barriers they experienced. As the Government funded Welcoming Communities Initiative Program mandate stipulates,

> *The Initiative supports on-going anti-racism activities, including awareness-raising, outreach, tools and resource development and direct services aimed at newcomers, youth and communities in CIC regions (Evaluation Welcome Community Initiative, 2010).*

Rossiter and Rossiter (2009) have mentioned the challenges of low income households for immigrant youth, and settlement agencies act as an essential resource they need to take advantage of. In order to ensure that these services are made available to them in a manner in which they will be deemed effective, it is prudent to analyze current settlement policies between newcomer serving agencies and the government bodies to understand how the changes can be implemented and whether they are in need of any remediation.

Government Reports such as, *Strategic Plan for Settlement and Language Training (2006)* along with *Evaluation of the Strategic Plan for Settlement and Language Training under the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement (2011) (COIA)* was produced to shed further light on the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement where from 2006-2011, the federal and provincial government would invest $920 million. They designed a structure that would streamline settlement programming to ensure that their mandates were being met. The diagram (Figure 1.) indicates their plan of action

Figure 1: Settlement Program Design Structure



The diagram outlines all aspects of how the settlement services should be designed, delivered and illustrates desired outcomes. In order for this diagram to be implemented successfully, a certain level of accountability must be put in place to accurately track the effectiveness of the policies. The report thus creates guidelines upon which settlement agencies will be evaluated. Some of the criteria used which are relevant to the research are:

- Monitor service delivery (including costs) and program results through ongoing or periodic review of the performance information collected by service provider organizations.
- Foster community partnerships to develop and implement local solutions to newcomer integration challenges.
- Ensure accountability for funding provided to service provider organizations
- Use the findings of research and evaluation to improve the design and delivery of the programs and services provided to newcomers.
- Conduct periodic program evaluation studies that assess implementation, service delivery, program results and cost-effectiveness.

While these criteria appear to be well thought of and reasonable, the practical implementation does not yield the desired results, as follows.

Community partnership is previously mentioned as a criterion for program evaluation. However, the notion of community partnership does not always function the way Government institutions intend them to. As Kareem (2005) mentions, majority of settlement services are provided through contract and purchase-of-service agreements between the province and NGOs. He argues that this decentralization creates a two tier settlement system. The first tier of dependency includes large settlement agencies dependent on government contracts for the bulk of their funding. He also suggests that government contracts account for anywhere from 60-100 per cent of their operating budgets (Kareem, 2005). In the second tier, a significant number of small settlement agencies depend on larger agencies for funding because they lack the resources

to compete for government contracts (Kareem, 2005). The incentive for small agencies to create community partnership can include the ability to obtain funding which might not necessarily correlate to the benefits of the clients.

The partnership itself contains many issues and challenges that arise as a result of the power imbalance. Smaller agencies can become bound by two sets of rules and regulations. At one level they are bound by the terms of reference of government contracts. At another level they are bound by the rules, regulations, and practices of their larger collaborative partners (Kareem, 2005). In fact, evidence from Geromino (2000) suggests that power and decision-making conflicts are common in collaborative relationships. The majority of the power and authority rests with the larger agencies and the smaller ones are held accountable to them (Kareem, 2005). This can potentially create situations where the accountability of settlement programming becomes compromised. It is very difficult for most small settlement agencies to meet all the mandates of their funders when they do not possess the resources required to deliver their program at a high level. If agencies located in a high density low income neighbourhoods are unable to provide services that meet the needs of their clients; it can have adverse effects in terms of Immigrant youth and their settlement experience

Children of immigrants are significantly more likely to attend post-secondary institutions than are native born Canadians (Reitz, 2005). This indicates that newcomer youth have immense potential to become productive members of society if they are provided the chance. The literature however also states that immigrant youth are likely to come into contact with the criminal justice system and be labelled as at-risk youth. Data from a 2002 Canadian Police Survey on Youth Gangs suggest that a majority of gang members (about 82%) are from visible minorities which include African, Canadian, Asian, Hispanic and East Indian (Rossiter, 2009).

One of the determining factors for the disparity and apparent contradiction between immigrant youth attending post-secondary institutions and becoming involved in criminal activity is poverty. Rossiter (2009) mentions how the lack of financial security of their parents leads to immigrant youth also having to work to support the family. Many are than lured into illegal activity such as drug trafficking to make ends meet (Rossiter 2009). The desire to fit in is also a reason as to why newcomers become involved in crime as Rossiter mentions;

> *You've got to have the outfit, you've got to have the shoes, no matter what you do; otherwise, you're going to be sitting way over there, totally isolated and alienated, which is almost impossible for these young people to face…. That means that you have to make money... prostitution… part-time work… drug dealing… other illegal activity… you have to fit in. (Rossiter 10)*

This appears to suggest that immigrant youth are involved in criminal activity in order to integrate into the society and be accepted. It then becomes a settlement issue and not just a criminal one.

Immigration Policy

When discussing immigration policy, it is inevitably linked to the recognition of foreign credentials, and the experiences of youth are always linked to that of their parents or guardians. Canada has been a land of immigrants as soon as the settlers decided to make their way over here. The literature such as Reitz (2005), Miu et al. (2006), Lauer et al. (2012) and Glazier et al. (2006) mentions that Canada has dedicated itself to mass migration as a way to increase the productivity of the labour market. However, the underemployment of immigrants is the result of current policies. The emphasis of the Canadian government policy based on the points system of immigration selection, and their preference of higher educational standards is not having its desired effects (Reitz, 2005). According to Reitz, there are two estimates of the impact of immigrant skills and their underutilization which both provide a figure of around $2 billion lost

annually (Reitz, 2005). What this represents is that compared to native born Canadians, immigrants earned about $2 billion less even when they had similar credentials. Reitz concludes that at least two-thirds of the foreign credentials of skilled immigrants are transferable to Canada in the sense that these skills could have been productive in the Canadian labour market. However, the lack of recognition of foreign credentials makes it difficult for newcomers to qualify for jobs which they are more than capable of doing. This trend is of a much serious concern for immigration policy. In 1980, newcomer males earned about 80 percent in comparison to native born Canadians. However, by 1996, that figure dropped to 60 percent (Reitz, 2005). This regression in the labour market for newcomers has resulted in more exposure to poverty. Reitz shows that in Toronto, according to 1996 census data, the poverty rate for all families of non-European origin was 34.3 percent, or more than doubles the rate for families of European origin (Reitz, 2005). Poverty rates for some categories of non-European families approached 50 percent or more (Reitz, 2005).

As the poverty rate for immigrant's increases, they are more likely to move into low income neighbourhoods where immigrant youth have to integrate. The challenges of integrating in a low income neighbourhood are quite different than integrating in an affluent one. The literature suggests health concerns as obvious consequences that immigrant youth are facing. Glazier et al. (2006) mention that factors such as getting time off work, language barriers, cultural beliefs, childcare, financial burdens and low health literacy all affect the success of programs aimed at reducing the risk of health concerns. This suggests that socially disadvantaged groups require a different type of intervention model due to many different issues, yet it fails to explain if settlement agencies have taken steps to address such concerns and whether government policies reflect or acknowledge the need for a different approach. The lack of

effectiveness of health programs is an indication that immigrant youth experiences a wide range of issues socially, economically, racially in their process of integration. The programs offered to them in low income neighbourhoods thus must take all the issues into consideration. As such, one of the gaps in the literature is the lack of academic evaluation of settlement policies and the effectiveness of agencies that carry out mandates of those policies.

The cultural conflict model also suggests that immigrant youth negotiate their identity so that they can maintain their cultural heritage while also acquiring Canadian characteristics. Scott in her article discusses how adolescence can be a challenging time for youth and their family. Immigrating to a new country adds a whole new set of challenges and issues that are compounded by the natural process of transitioning from adolescence to adulthood (Scott, 2000). The process may force the youth to negotiate and renegotiate not only their individual identity, but also their cultural identity as part of adjusting to the new society. The literature mentions that the integration of immigrant youth is difficult when they are caught between two conflicting cultural value systems, and their parents may not know how to respond or relate to them (Rossiter, 2009).

Adolescents' settlement issues are also further compounded by discrimination based on race and cultural differences. Lack of English proficiency can also lead to alienation of immigrant youth which results in not doing well in school and feeling frustrated due to the cultural disconnect. McAndrew (2009) discusses how the education systems in Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver are not aware of the needs of immigrant youth. The education system must take into consideration that different youth from different ethnicities learn differently and if they are not properly equipped to assist the youth in their pathway to academic success, they will further marginalize them. A theory that supports this claim in the literature is the mainstream

absorption and underclass absorption model (Wilkinson, 2009). Wilkinson attempts to explain how immigrant and refugee youth can be successful in the labour market, and the mainstream absorption model emphasizes patterns of inclusion, of orderly integration and assimilation of particular racial and ethnic groups into a the dominant society and suggests that the integration experiences of newcomer youth are largely unproblematic. Youth are likely to experience success in integrating into various social institutions given their lack of cultural experience when compared with their parents. As a result, in order to become integrated in everyday life, immigrant youth must at least superficially adopt the dominant culture. Failure to do so results in marginalization with the accompanying repercussions of high unemployment, low waged work and other consequences including depression, school dropout, and delinquency (Wilkinson 2009). In this model, individuals attempt to maximize their success by doing everything possible to fit in and assimilate. This includes educational attainment, learning a new language, and adapting to the Canadian culture. This implies that immigrant youth must adapt and mould themselves to the current education systems, and places no onus on the education system as well as immigration policy to take into account the various cultural modes of learning. What the literature fails to mention is that if the education system is not adequate to assist newcomers, then more importance must be placed on the settlement agencies that are more geared towards aiding immigrant youth with language and social integration. The literature points to the obvious but has not successfully provided an in-depth analysis of the effectiveness of settlement agencies in relation to immigrant youth and their integration.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This study is a phenomenological qualitative research design which aimed to capture the experiences of immigrant youth who live in low income households in relation to the programs and services offered to them by settlement agency. It was conducted in the form of a focus group. The goal is to understand the issues of settlement and integration in light of challenges of migration as well as poverty. The main purpose of this study is to explore respondents' attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences and reactions. Attitudes, feelings and beliefs may be partially independent of a group or its social setting, but are more likely to be revealed via the social gathering and the interaction which being in a focus group entails. As such, the focus group will allow the participants to discuss their experiences with settlement agencies in low income households and provide more accurate information that otherwise might not have been possible (Neuman 2006).

The theoretical frameworks utilized in this study are the Assimilated Theory, Spatial Assimilation as well as the Segmented Assimilation Theory. Strain/ Bias model is also utilized to understand the experiences of immigrant youth. The primary questions the research was designed to answer is whether there exists a disconnect between the settlement experience of immigrant youth living in low income household and the mandates of government policies.

Data Collection

Focus groups appear to be the best form of research due to their informal nature. When the surrounding is not as formal or threatening, it allows the experiences of Immigrant youth living in low income households to be taken into consideration when gathering data. A focus group can be situated in a natural setting which would allow youth to express their opinions freely (Neuman, 2006). This would give them a sense of empowerment over their struggles which

would make them more prone to discuss them. The most important aspect of a focus group research for my topic is that it facilitates discussion, primarily amongst the youth themselves and through this venue the issues and struggles of immigrant youth can be potentially brought to light. Another additional benefit of focus groups is the open- ended nature of it.

Two focus groups were conducted with a total of eight participants. The questions presented during the focus groups were directed to the entire group and not just a single participant. This allowed the participants a better opportunity to share their experiences with settlement agencies in low income households. It was approximately one hour long. The focus group was audio-taped and a consent form was provided for participation in the focus group.

Method of Recruiting

The youth were recruited from the pool of clients at the Newcomer Centre of Peel which is a settlement agency that is funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada. The researcher is currently employed by the agency. The participants were recruited through advertising the focus group at the Newcomer Centre of Peel. No one was coerced to join the focus group and it strictly relied on the client's decision to voluntarily sign up to the focus group. The details of the focus group were provided to the participants who prior to their participation to the event. Their participation or refusal of participation would not in any way affect their relationship with the researcher. The youth self- identified themselves as meeting the criteria of the research which was to be a first generation immigrant living in a low income household. The first focus group consisted of three males and one female while the second focus group included four females. The question guidelines were the same however, it was interesting to notice the conversations being steered in different directions based on current events that were taking place. The question guide is listed below.

The Question guide is as follows:

1. What are some of your goals that you want to accomplish in Canada?
2. How do you want to go about achieving your goals?
3. Have you experienced any challenges achieving those goals?
4. If yes, what are some of the measures you have taken to overcome those challenges?
5. What are some of the activities you like to do in your spare time?
6. What are some of your experiences living in your current neighbourhood?
7. If given the option would you move? Why or why not?
8. Have you attended any Settlement Programming?
9. What were some of your experiences in going to settlement agencies?
10. What are some of the programs that you would like settlement agencies to offer?

Participant Profile

The research attempted to establish an understanding of the objectives and goals that Immigrant youth had envisioned for themselves. The questions that were asked are listed below.
This would allow to measure the success of settlement agencies in either assisting them achieve their goals or providing a venue by which they could pursue it. Additionally, by asking them what their goals were when they came to Canada, it was also possible to observe whether settlement agencies had any direct roles or relationship in assisting them to meet it. These questions which were very open ended would direct the participants to discuss anything of relevance to them and thus extract key themes and issues they would raise. This included their neighbourhood, education, social settings, and settlement services.

The focus groups comprised of eight youth; five females and three males. They were identified as being first generation immigrants (they were in Canada for less than five years) who

had either obtained their citizenship or were permanent residents. They were between the ages of 16-24. Also, ethnically, there were five South Asians, Two Arabs, and one Latino participant which indicate that not all of the experiences of Immigrant youth from different backgrounds could be captured.

First Focus Group

Participant 1 was of Latin decent and currently attending LINC school at Sheridan College. He was working full time and looking for opportunities to further his studies**.** Participant 2 was of Iraqi descent and was living with his brother and mother at home. His father was living overseas and his mother was raising him and his brother alone which he identified as a challenge. He was currently in high school and was involved in many volunteer opportunities in his neighbourhood. He recently became a Canadian citizen.

Participant 3 was the brother of Participant 2 and was also attending the same high school as his brother. He was also a recent Canadian Citizen and of Iraqi descent. Participant 4 was of Pakistani descent and was currently attending Ryerson University for Social Work. She had expressed her challenges in attending post-secondary institutions and was looking for opportunities to make her academic life less challenging than it currently was.

Second Focus Group

Participant 5 was of South Asian descent and was currently attending high school. She had been a part of the Newcomer Centre of Peel for three plus years and wanted to share her experiences as an immigrant.

Participant 6 up was the sister of Participant 5 and was also attending high school. She was involved in dance clubs at her school and was looking for opportunities to get more involved within the community to obtain her volunteer hours. She was also of South Asian descent.

Participant 7 was of South Asian descent and had recently moved from her previous home which was close to Newcomer Centre of Peel. She had moved to a more affluent neighbourhood in Mississauga and wanted to share her experience with newcomers about integration.

Participant 8 was of South Asian descent and was currently taking a year off after finishing high school. She was looking for part time employment to help fund her college tuition as she was trying to get into the Early Childhood Education that is offered in several colleges across the Greater Toronto Area.

Data Analysis

Phenomenological data analysis was utilized. Rather than having predetermined categories to sort the data, emergent categories allow the researcher to observe the categories and issues that arise during the focus group itself (Groenewald, 2004). It allows the researcher to describe as accurately as possible the phenomenon or the experience, while refraining from any pre-given framework, but remaining true to the facts (Groenewald, 2004). This type of analysis allows for any patterns and themes that develop during the focus group to become apparent. The interpretation of the data will rely on the categories but will also go beyond the issues and patterns that were discovered and will explain the significance in relation to settlement policies (Groenewald ,2004).

Additionally, the researcher's own reflection is also part of the data. This approach to research will seek to describe and systematically analyze personal experiences in order to understand cultural experience. My experiences as an immigrant, researcher, and youth settlement worker can be utilized as an important source of data that along with the narrative

analysis; will assist in understanding the experiences of low-income immigrant youth, with settlement agencies.

To also supplement the information gathered during the focus groups, a content analysis of the funding structure and policy of settlement programming was utilized when discussing how changes can occur with the current system to accommodate to the needs of the clients. The policies will be accessed through funding agreement mandates which are provided to settlement agencies and list the required objectives which are to be met with the funding they provide. Additional publically accessible policy mandates were also analyzed.

Limits to Research

One of the challenges in the research was to ensure that immigrant youth were not coerced into participation in the focus group. As such, the researcher who currently works at the Newcomer Centre of Peel where the youth were recruited from, had to take a minimal role in promoting the research to ensure no youth would feel compelled to participate. This made it difficult to attract participants but through emails from the Program Assistant and flyers distributed in the agency, along with the interest of the youth who wanted to share their experience, a total of eight participants were able to be recruited for the research. However, such a small pool of participants might not necessarily be able to project the experiences of Immigrant youth in general. This small research study was able to identify some crucial elements of immigrant youths' experience in relation to settlement agencies that will be discussed below.

Chapter 4: Findings

The objective was to inquire as to the aspirations of immigrant youth and ways in which they would conform and mould their lifestyles in Canada in order to achieve it. Rather than asking direct personal questions which might have left some participants in the focus group feeling uncomfortable, a general conversation was preferred. The choice of questions asked was general in the beginning and through the discussion pieces, the themes that emerged were explored further which allowed the participants to voluntarily disclose information that was pertinent to this research. Their experiences with settlement agencies were discussed and compared to whether their experiences in settlement agencies were in line with the goals they had set for themselves and the barriers they experienced. This would indicate a good measure of the degree of success since the mandate of settlement agencies is to help newcomers integrate, and meeting the goals of youth would be a reasonable way to assist in their integration. The patterns and themes that emerged were both surprising and intriguing and the data collected seemed to be communicating quite an interesting story.

Obtaining enrolment into post-secondary education

All of the youth that participated in the focus groups, stated that one of their goals was to enrol into a post-secondary institution. They perceived that acquiring a university or college education was the pathway to success that would eventually lead to their successful integration. Participants who were currently attending high school expressed a desire to attend a post-secondary institution as a natural transition, and the youth who were out of high school also confirmed its importance to success. As Participant 1 stated, *"I think its right way to achieve this*

is through education. If you want to be affective in this life, you have to be sure you know a good education."

Language Barriers

The focus on education identified by the participants also created discussions for the challenges and barriers to it. Language was a barrier recognized by five of the eight participants. When asked how language was a barrier, Participant 1 responded:

> *I have been in Canada a year and 8-9 months. Language is you is a huge huge wall for me but overcome that I been in working very very hard right now. Ok I feel all the time I already spent too much time you know speak like fluently all the time I spent I have to think about I had to spend to get a degree from a university. I know I not young like 18 -20, I already am 24. You know time very important for me now I think feel I have to do something right now quickly because I going to spend all my life doing this. I just want to achieve my goal as fast as I can.*

Working on language was one of the key measures of success: Participant 8 had issues with it in the beginning which had prevented her from attending post-secondary education because she failed to meet the minimum language standards. Participant 5 also had issues with understanding phrases and idioms which made it more difficult for her to comprehend. Participant 7 stated challenges of not being able to understand her teachers during class several times and if the trend continued then this would result in a lack of success at the university level. She stated:

> *Everyone has different accents, even though I know they are white, they are from different countries they have different accents, some teachers they speak fast, I can't catch up to it and like when I go to university, it's like I have to have a habit it is going to be harder and its going to be a huge auditorium and you are going to study with 500 or a thousand people and now you have like 20 people in your class and you get more help from your teachers but in university you have to keep up with everyone.*

Tuition

Another barrier to post-secondary education which was unanimously agreed upon by the participants was tuition and the economic consequences of attending college or university. While the desire to attend college and university was there, the participants stated that tuition required them to work part time or take a year of high school to save up for university. Participant 1 stated that: "*You need money to get into university, tuition is too expensive for students, really expensive, even people like me, now I want to go to university or college but I don't even have a job, so how can I pay for my course fees, and tuition stuff."* She expressed a concern that there are many newcomer youth who are more than capable of attending post-secondary institutions; however the financial challenges might cause many to look for jobs and forgo higher education. This outlook was also shared by Participant 4 as she stated:

> *My brothers could not continue their education when they came to Canada, they had to start working because my dad is not able to work and my mom is a house wife right now, so my brother had to start working and I did it too and that's why there was a gap I had a year off from school, to support my family and go back to school, even though I am in school right now, I have to be checking to be sure everything is ok, but right now as myself taking OSAP , I am worried about that because I am responsible for it, I cannot look at them to pay.*

Tuition was looked upon by four of the participants as a financial cost that they would have to incur through their own personal earning or loans such as OSAP. The responsibility was something they appeared to already come to terms with and accepted this as a reality.

Obtaining Employment in Professional Fields

Through the use of obtaining post-secondary education, seven out of the eight youth stated that employment was a goal that they wanted to ensure they achieved. Two of the youth already had a career path in mind as Participant 5 wanted to become a nurse and Participant 7 wanted to

become an early childhood educator. Even though the rest of the youth were not sure as to what field they wanted to work in, they emphasized that getting a well paying job was essential to their success. Participant 2 put them in simple and profound words*: "One thing is achieving a great education like university and having a good job."* Participant 4 mentioned that it was not enough to just obtain a diploma or degree anymore, time also becomes a factor:

> *I just want to add with jobs and everything, competition level is so high now, someone has a diploma and some have a degree, they might not get a job because the other person has a degree, so a person is old they cannot go for a degree and spend so much time getting a degree, a young person will get the degree but they will not get the same pay.*

Her statement echoed how it was difficult for some of the parents of the youth to obtain employment in fields they had foreign experience and education in.

Foreign Accreditation Process

The need to acquire a prominent job title or position seemed to derive from the experiences of their parents. For the youth who were part of the focus groups, their parents' experiences, along with many immigrants who came here with children, seemed to endow them with a sense of a futile struggle. Participant 1 mentioned how his father had struggled to find a good job even though he was qualified to work in the field:

> *Another thing that I have challenging is and but its more experience that my father had ...my father is a PhD and found it really hard for people that have high degrees from different countries and when they come to Canada they cannot find jobs ...they can't use them, the process of getting the equal degree here is long and very hard, I don't think there is a need of that, there has to be a better and simpler way because these people for example a doctor he lived all of his life a doctor, a successful doctor, he helped a lot of people and when he comes here, he becomes a nurse, or a pharmacist becomes a helper of a pharmacist, it effects a person not only because they were getting they were on top and now they are on the bottom and that is one thing that I find harsh in Canada that has to be changed and should be changed.*

Participant 2 shared a similar experience of a friend of his who had moved to Canada from England but his parents also had a difficult time finding a job in their field and they were working in survival jobs in order to keep financial troubles at bay. The experiences of their parents had an indirect impact on them as well. Participant 2 shared his negative experience by stating:

> *It feels frustrating, I am feeling some of the emotions my father is feeling, not only that, my father he actually never had a solid job in Canada. First of all because of his age, he wasn't that old but he couldn't work a solid job. There were a lot of things I felt were really hard for him and for us yes like now I feel like it's more important even though it doesn't have to be like that. I feel like it is more important to get a degree from Canada because than I can go to different countries and get a job by this degree from here or get a job here but I can't get a degree from a different country and get a job here so right now I feel like I am forced to get an education from Canada and not from somewhere else.*

It was a fascinating correlation that the trickledown effect on the youth whether inadvertently or by design reinforced the need for an education in order to become successful and avoid the challenges of their parents. The findings appear to suggest that the youth become very much involved and aware of the financial woes of the family and it has an impact on their integration and education. Participant 3 expressed these feelings. He stated that *"they had to change their entire way of life and the children don't get like it's even harder for them, now they have to work, they might miss out on their education, and it's harder for them to get into university because of them working."*

This statement was made by Participant No 2 and demonstrated the potential negative outcomes that might occur if parents struggle to obtain employment. He also suggested a way to make it easier for newcomers to obtain employment in their fields:

> *A solution I think will be when people come with their degree and they have been working in their field for many years, they should just have to do a practical test to test and they will give the degree much easier that is the same as the Canadian*

> *degree, instead of going back to university and wasting time and wasting their all their hard on something they already did.*

The need for a more streamlined foreign accreditation process was a major topic of conversation as four participants voiced their concern to make it easier for foreign professionals to work in Canada. This aspect of the research will be further elaborated upon during the analysis of the focus groups.

Living in a Secure Neighbourhood

When discussing their goals, living in a safe neighbourhood was identified by five of the eight participants and it was interesting to note that all of them were female. They identified that by living in a safe neighbourhood, they could exhibit the freedom that Canada had entitled them to. As Participant 4 stated: *"Also having freedom and security, coming from a country where you don't feel secure and don't have the freedom of speech, Canada is place that is where you can benefit from it."* Participant 4 had come to Canada from Pakistan where current political and social turmoil is creating increasingly unsafe regions. These sentiments of security and freedom echoed further during the second focus group where it was identified that through living in what the youth described as a 'good' neighbourhood, it increased the chances of harbouring positive relationships within the community. This they concluded, would also tie into creating a more welcoming atmosphere for immigrants. They identified a 'good neighbourhood' as one in which one owns their own property and house. Participant 5 had stated that owning her own house was very important to her as this would get her financial security in Canada. Participant 7 also discussed the relationship between a safe neighbourhood and education as she stated:

> *Right now I want to have a good education to get to my goals, have a good surrounding and know people who will encourage me to get to that point... like people and friends and like I can have a good neighbourhood like mixing with*

> *other people... so that I know that I am safe here I don't have feel like you know scared.*

It was interesting to note that even the female participants who indicated that living in a safe neighbourhood was imperative; they identified their current neighbourhood as safe, as Participant 5 stated:

> *Right now it is so comfortable in Paisley I am afraid if we move, its last year for me in high school and I am afraid if we move like really far, I don't want to move, but like it's good to move and get to know other area. For us we are so comfortable in the area because we have been in here for long, so but like I don't want to move if I do I will know no one there. Who knows what kind of people live there? In Toronto you see everything...*

This further emphasized the importance of education as perhaps the most critical of the goals of the participants as many would feel uncomfortable moving during the school year even to a more affluent neighbourhood. The same sentiments was echoed by Participant 7 who had recently moved to a more affluent part of Mississauga yet due to the challenges it presented to her for education, she had certain issues as a result of it:

> *In a way it's obviously good, I own the house now, it's my house right, but before, it was kind of easy for me, right now I have to take three busses to go to school, it takes me an hour and ten minutes to get to school, everything is changed. For me I have been in the same school for three years since grade nine. It's not easy to start again for me, get to know friends, teachers, like I already know my teacher .even from like teachers from grade nine I still talk to them. Like we have really good connections but like in a new school which I think I have to go starting in the second semester. I have to start fresh, everything; make friends, get to know the teachers and that might take away from my studies; I might be depressed.*

The findings also indicated that the parents had a significantly more say when it came to the neighbourhoods they chose to move, compared to the children. Participant 5 mentioned how moving for parents was not seen as an obstacle to their integration or even feeling a sense of community. She mentioned, "*for parents there is like no pressure to move...they can move*

wherever, for like kids, it's hard to find ways to make friends again." A common theme that emerged was that the parents' decisions and experiences affect the youth significantly.

Sense of Belonging - Integration

Some of the Settlement Agencies the youth attended included Welcome and Information for Newcomers (WIN) at various Peel board schools, YMCA, Newcomer Centre of Peel, Sheridan College, Churches, Mosques and Centre for Education and Training (CET). In terms of their experiences with settlement agencies, all of the youth mentioned that they were helpful in their integration to some capacity. Five out of the eight participants also included settlement agencies' youth programs as being part of their social fabric and one that they enjoyed immensely. Participant 2 stated:

> *One of the things probably on top of the list is coming to the NCP and meeting new people or the same people you are used to. Coming to the program feels like I own this place, not like that but I feel really comfortable and every time someone new comes I can show them around its comfort zone and I really enjoy it here and it seems like we always have something to do and even when we don't have something to do we can always sit back and relax a little. I also like to play video games and spend time on the internet and I love to play soccer.*

He also mentioned that the isolation that comes as a result of moving to a new country is offset by the youth programs he attends at settlement agencies. The programs offer him a place where he can build on his social network and continue to feel part of a community that he is still getting used to. Participant 7 also echoed these sentiments stating that:

> *[I]t has helped me. NCP (Newcomer Centre of Peel) has helped me a lot. From NCP I have got to know a lot. Other places as well. NCP takes us to a lot of trips and stuff. Getting to know new places because otherwise I probably wouldn't be able to go there. I have been to other places in Toronto. Even from NCP I have learned to become more social.*

The costs of living in a low income household made it difficult for many of the participants to be able to explore Mississauga and Toronto and settlement agencies provided

them with options to get to know the community with minimal or no cost. It also made Participant No 7 more aware of additional services and resources to take advantage of:

> *I have volunteered at a lot of places, I have volunteered port credit, busker fest, the south side shuffle, there is this volunteering, forget the place but it was last year, it was lobster fest, I volunteered there. We were waiters, we actually got to dress up, got to wear white shirts and black pants and got to have name tags and we had to serve people and take orders and it was pretty fun. In NCP, I do come here even when I am not volunteering just to check out daily activities.*

Participant 5 also mentioned the diversity in settlement youth programming creates an environment of inclusion that makes newcomers feel more comfortable. She mentioned that she volunteered at a church where the ethnicity was more homogenous but at settlement agencies such as the Newcomer Centre of Peel, she experienced more multiculturalism and that was actually positive for her. The multicultural aspect of settlement agencies where distinct cultures and ethnicities were participating made her more likely to continue attending the agency.

Participant 1, however, stated that although the diversity was great, the age group that most youth programming targeted appeared to be an issue for him. He mentioned: *"It's good, you can go to play soccer, cricket, basketball, but you know you want to spend time with your age people and who think like you because of the age."* His reservation was not with the programming offered at youth programs but rather with the demographics in terms of age groups. He had already completed University in Mexico, and was currently studying English and had disclosed during the focus group that he was 24. While he felt comfortable with participants in the youth program, they were not in the same age group and thus did not share some of the same things in common. This challenge was compounded due to him working full time as well as attending LINC full time at Sheridan. His foreign credentials were not accredited and thus he had to start over again. This meant that he would have to repeat many of the things already

completed in school and naturally, he would be quite a bit older than the rest of the participants there. As he also had to support himself and his wife financially, this made it very difficult for him to find time to build on his social networks. As he stated:

> *Really I don't know because time. I do not have time, I go to school in the morning full time, and after I have to go work, at least 6 hours a day and when I come home I am tired, I don't want to go anywhere, I just want to go to sleep, it makes me feel very bad, I feel like I living you know. I am not enjoying my life.*

Participant 1 presented two challenges with settlement agency programming which included age demographics as well as time constraints. These challenges made it difficult for him to really take advantage of the resources that other youth in the focus group had advised as being advantageous to them in their integration and a sense of belonging.

Another challenge that three participants mentioned was the lack of field trips that prevented them from exploring more areas and landmarks within the Greater Toronto Area. As Participant 5 mentioned:

> *Right now for Newcomer Centre of Peel (NCP), before when I started, in 2009-2010 we use to go to a lot of places, now it's stopped, we still go but not as often. Like we went to CN tower, it was the first time for me and my friend. We came to NCP, and after two weeks, we went to CN Tower, we knew nothing about CN tower. But now it is kind of different.*

When asked how going to field trips and exploring different locations within the Greater Toronto Area assisted in her integration she replied:

> *First it makes you comfortable in the place you live like here I don't know anything except Mississauga and in the last two years we went to Toronto, and now I know a lot about Toronto. Like trips you get comfortable and you get to know other places and you have more experience. Field trips is better because then you can make friends , because indoors you can make friends but outdoor its more comfortable you know they are new and we are new and it's a new place and you can connect and talk about and explore together and then you have more connections than indoors.*

The camaraderie and getting to know the area around them appeared to provide the youth with positive experiences that assisted them better in terms of integration. This finding appeared to suggest that familiarity with and positive experiences in the city were a factor in evaluating the success of settlement programming from the youth's perspective. For two of the youth, they also wanted more family programming offered that would allow the parents to get involved in social programming. The focus group revealed that there exist a strong relationship between experiences of parents and their children. Participant 2 stated that while he was benefitting from this program, his mother was not really getting anything out of it:

> *It's like yes, it's helping the youth exclusively, but the youth can't help the parents so it's just like making it easy on the youth somewhat, but it's not really helping the family as a whole and that what I feel that its helping me and helping my brother. My mom she didn't get anything out of it, and she is the one is who sustaining and providing for the family.*

Settlement Agency – Resource

Participant 1 also stated that he used the settlement agency to enrol into the Language Instruction for Newcomers Program (LINC) in order to increase his language proficiency. Learning and practicing English was one of the key reasons that Participant 5, 7 and 8 also came to settlement programming. This correlated with the challenges they experienced as many of them found language as a barrier and they went to settlement agencies to utilize the resources available to them in order to compensate for their language deficiencies. Three participants indicated that the resources available to them through settlement agencies were a feature that many countries did not have, and their successful integration required that they take advantage of the resources available. As participant 2 stated:

> *Utilizing the things that are offered from this country you have a lot of different here and this country that can help you that like for example, this place (NCP) is a place that offers so many things that you can utilize for education and for different activities and you do not find in different places and different countries*

which I think Canada is a country that gives you a lot of opportunity to do these things.

The findings suggested that the youth observed settlement agencies as offering potential solutions and alternatives to the challenges they experienced. Resources they mentioned are utilized in order to compensate for any deficiencies that might exist as a result of migration. This was interesting because their experiences with settlement agencies were compared to the challenges they experienced as living in a low income household which will be addressed in the discussion section.

Employment Programming

The most serious challenge the youth unanimously agreed upon was finding employment. As previously mentioned, finding employment was a top priority for many of the youth and they would look to settlement agencies for support. However, they experienced mixed results as four of the eight participants offered improvements to employment programs which they viewed as being less than satisfactory. Participant No 8 wanted more resume and job related programming from settlement agencies as they did not occur frequently enough for her to take advantage of. Participants 5 and 7 stated that it was not enough to simply offer resume, interview and job search assistance; rather providing paid opportunities was something they expected settlement agencies to offer. They expressed how finding employment is becoming increasingly difficult for immigrant youth.

Participant 1 also suggested that instead of having programs that strictly concentrate on resume and job searching workshops that only prepare young immigrant professional to work in survival jobs; they should instead offer job development training for jobs that are more skilled and offer more financial compensation. He mentioned:

> *I think that something that can open door for people you know create a program you know an institution that can teach people, like a carpenter, you know help people so they don't have to go through factory jobs, because it is so hard for a person who is doctor who might have to go to a factory because he doesn't need to know English. It's a horrible feeling. I am a lawyer back home and when I came to Canada, I had to go to a factory and work very hard (Manual) It is very hard to be in this situation. You should use the skills that people have and instead of having to work factory job you can work a job like carpenter.*

The experiences of the participants suggested that they were somewhat dissatisfied with the programming that was offered in relation to employment. This is interesting when employment was considered one of their primary goals they wanted to achieve in Canada. Even though they said that resume workshops and job search training were important, it was not sufficient enough to provide them an edge into the labour market. They would rather have employment workshops that would yield more tangible results such as opportunities for employment than potential for employment.

These were the major themes and patterns that were identified by the data that were collected during the focus groups. The findings in general did not yield surprising results as they identified themes and patterns that already were mentioned in the literature review. One of the key aspects of the focus group results is how many youth perceived settlement programming to be very relevant in their lives and resource that assists in their integration. Perhaps an unanticipated pattern that emerged was just how much the experiences of parents affected the decisions of immigrant youth to pursue education as well as employment. One of key elements that the research wants to shed light on are the policies and structural barriers to ensure that settlement programming are implemented efficiently and effectively.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions

As an immigrant, researcher, advocate, and youth worker; wearing different hats can present challenges and a struggle to stay objective. However, it can also represent passion, dedication and an ambition to seek out optimal procedures and solutions for the issues of immigrant youth. My experience as a community worker presents me with real life scenarios that require practical solutions, some of which are critically discussed in the class room of my academic life as a researcher. My own personal experiences provide me with an intimate personal experience and an insight into the issues of immigrant youth. The combination of these three hats, rather than negating my ability to be objective have further propelled my desire to relay the stories of immigrant youth objectively as possible.

One of the interesting factors the youth mentioned was the inclusion of their parents to programming they are currently taking advantage of. A program that is exclusive for youth might appear to make sense, but what is forgotten is that many immigrants come to Canada knowing very few people here; as a settlement worker I can attest to that fact. The isolation experienced by their parents while the youth are becoming socially integrated is something that Participant 2 stated was counterproductive since the parents are the ones that are providing for the family and they too must experience some aspect of social programming. Quite often, settlement programming for adults offers them only language and employment training and while that is certainly a resource that they can take advantage of, it is not the holistic experience that aids in integration. As the study suggests, the youth are aware that their parents are not getting the same support they are receiving and this is an avenue where settlement agencies could improve.

As mentioned earlier, several theories mentioned how immigrants integrate into Canadian society. In terms of applicability to this research, the strain frustration model was relatively in line with the data that was gathered followed by Segmented Assimilation. Straight Line Assimilation Theory which anticipates all immigrants over time becoming more like the native born population (Biles et al., 2008) was not supported by the data and along with Spatial Assimilation was the least applicable. Many of the youth expressed their positive experiences in a multicultural and diverse environment. They preferred an environment where many different cultures were present rather than that of their own and showed no indication of a desire to be like the dominant group. The experiences of these youth also suggested that social integration was a key factor for their participation in settlement programming and one in which they had a positive experience. Field Trips, language support, sports and building social networks where all elements that made youth program a success. As all settlement policies have adopted an environment of inclusion and diversity, the research indicates that they are in accordance to the needs of the youth; wanting to be like the dominant group is not a factor in the integration of immigrant youth in low income households. While the amenities and resources that many members of the dominant possess are also desired by immigrant youth, it is not the determining factor for their integration as the research indicated.

Similarly, the results do not conform to the Segmented Assimilation theory which suggested barriers that immigrants experience such as structural racism, complex and divided labour market, or the presence of counter culture, such as street gangs and drug cultures that cause them to become part of the counter culture and become more involved in illegal and criminal activity (Biles et al., 2008). Although the data did support many of the youth experiencing difficulties in obtaining employment, they did not express any personal experiences

or even a desire to become involved in illegal activities to pursue their goals. However when understood in the context of the strain frustration model, structural racism begins to play a more significant role in the experiences of immigrant youth.

The strain frustration model which suggests that immigrants' settlement experiences in Canadian society lead them to experience challenges within society that did not exist for the dominant group. Factors such as underemployment, racism and poverty, some individuals have legitimate opportunities blocked and experience discrimination based on stereotypes and biases. While all of the participants had positive views about Canadian multiculturalism and diversity and none of the participants specifically stated they experienced challenges of discrimination and racism, Ali (2008) states that when youth look beyond their multicultural spaces such as ones in which the participants live now, they begin to get exposed to and experience systemic discrimination. Presumably, if the youth move out of a diverse and multicultural neighbourhood, they might experiences discriminatory practices, that might leave them with a negative view of Canadian society.

Employment

The findings in my study as well as the literature such as Reitz (2006), Miu et al. (2008), and Lauer et al. (2012) mentioned the difficulties of immigrant youth obtaining employment. Canadian researchers have already expressed their concern that immigrants with visible minority backgrounds may often experience disadvantages in the Canadian labour market (Miu et al., 2008). This appears even more daunting when the findings of this research suggested that one of the primary goals of immigrant youth was to find professional jobs. First-generation immigrant youth, like their parents, have also faced numerous challenges in the job market including language, recognition of foreign credentials and education, Canadian work experience, access to

information, and culture shock (Miu et al., 2008). This challenge is compounded when the experiences of immigrant youth in the focus group suggested that they were not completely satisfied with settlement agencies' employment programming.

As a result, many immigrant youth can be left with very few options in terms of ensuring their financial security. The option of not working for many of the youth is not viable as many have to work in order to contribute financially for their families. Reitz (2005), in keeping with the data from my study, also suggests that the lack of employment is putting immigrants in poverty and inflicting social service costs to the host society. This might result in the public demanding cuts in social programming as immigrants might be perceived to be taking advantage of the generosity that Canada has offered them. This trend is already evident through the funding cuts in Ontario

Youth Aged 18-24

What is also of concern is that certain demographic of immigrant youth (18-24) are overlooked when it comes to academic research (Lauer et al., 2012). According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2010), 44.5% of migrants arriving in 2009 are under age 24 (Lauer et al., 2012). They are thought of as not participating in the labour market and are rather attending school. However, the data of my study suggest otherwise. If the experiences of Participant 1, 4, and 8 are any indication, it is evident that they found it difficult to get a job, and two of the three were not currently in school. This suggests that a vast majority of immigrant youth in general may be left out of the academic research being conducted. They are neither part of the education system, nor are they able to integrate into the labour market. The age group of between 18-24 appear to be highly underserviced. In a report by Citizenship and Immigration Canada in 2006 titled *Strategic Plan for Settlement and Language Training*, they identified programming that

targets the ages 13-19, as being in need of remediation. There was no mention of programming for youth who fall between the ages of 18 to 24. They fall through the cracks and as Participant 1 mentioned, social programming is less effective, as they are not the target group. Since many cannot obtain employment due their lack of language proficiency, education, or Canadian experience, feelings of helplessness might begin to resonate with the youth and alternatives to finding legitimate means to employment can appear as the only viable solution (Rossiter, 2008). This provides an opportunity to rethink how employment programming is constructed and thus adjust it accordingly to the demands of both the labour market and the youth.

It becomes obvious through the data collected in this research that traditional employment workshops are not the most effective means to finding employment for immigrant youth. Many youth programs offer employment workshops that specifically concentrate on writing resumes and conducting mock interviews. Although this teaches youth the conventions and etiquettes of the labour market, they very seldom offer an advantage for immigrants over their Canadian counterparts. Due to the discriminatory practices that currently exist in the labour market, the employment programs settlement agencies offer, fall short of youth expectations. This presents a very unique challenge for settlement agencies.

A solution suggested by Participant 1 was the creation of trades or skilled jobs for immigrant youth as this would serve well those youth who are neither in the education system nor in the labour market. Citizenship and Immigration Minister Jason Kenney announced not too long ago the desire to attract more skilled trade workers through immigration. While that is a step in the right direction, the idea is flawed. Canada already has a vast majority of immigrant youth looking for employment. Therefore, rather than filling skilled trade worker position through migration, programs can be created and implemented to train immigrant youth to fill the

existing job criteria. Once again, the policies are overlooking a key segment of the immigrant population and youth continue to be at a disadvantage.

Settlement Agencies

The findings in this study support the idea that settlement agencies are of grave importance to immigrant youth and their integration. The challenges the youth presented with settlement agencies and the recommendations they made are also within the current policy structure to be taken into consideration. However, due to the nature of funding requirements, those agencies that deliver the changes in an optimal manner ensure funding and thus continuity. What becomes forgotten is that the smaller agencies lack the resources to compete for funding. As Kareem mentioned, some agencies are operated entirely by volunteer staff. These volunteers devote a large amount of time to unpaid work and incur many out of pocket expenses. Since many volunteers work at paid 'nine-to-five' jobs, they are unable to participate in formal training and community outreach (Kareem, 2005).

Because agencies have to answer to their partnering agency as well as Government agencies, their ability to be successful often falls short. The funding structure which rewards a newcomer serving agency for meeting their mandates, also punishes those that cannot expend similar resources, is where the flaw begins to get exposed. The lack of success of a newcomer serving agency does not indicate that there is no need for the services they are providing. The immigrants situated in close proximity to smaller settlement agencies are often left without many options to access settlement services as a result of the competitive funding structure.

As my own personal experiences in working with settlement agencies can attest to, there exist multiple challenges within this framework of settlement policies and programming. I worked at Delta Family Resource Centre from September 2009 to September 2010 as a youth

worker. It was a fairly small settlement agency comprised of about 20 staff members. Citizenship and Immigration Canada had funded 43% of the overall monetary resources available to the agency through their LINC and ISAP programs. However, due to the nature of the community, attendance was poor for LINC classes. Most immigrants had used LINC as a way to continue to get subsidies from the government. They were not as interested in learning the language because more pressing issues took priority. For CIC however, their requirements for funding were not met and as a result, a lengthy negotiation between the agency and CIC took place after which point CIC decided to offer limited funding. The process took three weeks and the newcomers did not have the opportunity to attend classes for LINC or get assistance from ISAP workers. Not only was CIC not satisfied, but Delta Family Resource Centre had to reduce the resources available to the newcomers who were already dissatisfied with the programs. The youth program was completely put on hold which eventually led to my resignation. The youth in my program were left without any assistance in social networking after having invested a significant amount of their time in the program. The challenges they experienced did not disappear as soon as the funding stopped, rather they became even more prominent since the resource they benefited from was no longer available. This steamroll effect presents a significant problem: the bureaucratic nature of government and the newcomer serving agencies in situation like these hinder the integration of newcomers. Whether Delta effectively operated their program or not, does not imply that newcomers do not want to take advantage of the resources available to them, rather it implies that the programs need to be altered to suit the needs of the newcomers in the specific community to better accomplish the task.

My experience with Delta Family Resource Centre is not to say that there are not successful agencies that are providing services that more often than not satisfy their clients.

While it is unsettling to have knowledge of the issues between CIC and newcomer serving agencies, success stories do exist. Some agencies take the initiative to ensure their programs are more catered towards the community in which they exist. Agencies such as COSTI which has been around since the 1950's have been able to offer programs which the newcomers can relate to. They were primarily established to help Italian newcomers obtain the professional qualifications required to practice their trades in Canada (COSTI). From their humble beginning, they now offer programs to multiple immigrant groups in Children and Youth, Mental Health, Employment, Settlement, Housing, Skills training, Language and even offer programs for gambling addictions.

Newcomer Centre of Peel (NCP) is another agency that has implemented successful programs. They currently operate LINC, ISAP and HOST programs which offer services in labour market access, language training, employment, youth services, and Settlement Workers in Schools (Newcomer Centre of Peel). Their approach to helping newcomers integrate has been holistic in nature. The objective is to have newcomers who primarily come for LINC classes to also participate in their HOST programs, and take advantage of the resources available to them through one-on-one counselling with their ISAP workers. This makes the newcomers feel that the agency is addressing most of their concerns and it results in them feeling more satisfied with the programs offered. They feel a sense of belonging in the agency while simultaneously referring more newcomers from their ethnic backgrounds to the agency. This ensures the longevity of government funding because the newcomers are taking advantage of all of the resources that NCP offers.

Ironically enough, the success stories of such agencies also demonstrates an inherent flaw in the government funding process. Due to the success of agencies such as NCP and COSTI, they

have the resources necessary to apply for and receive the funding required to initiate efficient programs. Smaller agencies, such as Delta Family Resource Centre and many of the culturally based agencies cannot compete with them and as a result, the resources available to them are significantly limited causing a two tier settlement structure (Kareem, 2005). It is the top down approach that often impedes new information from being utilized and positive changes from taking place.

From my own personal experience, as an immigrant and now a youth worker, it is quite a challenge to optimize the experiences of immigrant youth. Those who live in low income households are presented with challenges of poverty and financial insecurity along with their settlement process. Financial challenges of clients make certain programming more appealing to them than others. As the data mentioned, field trips and exploring different areas of the GTA were programs that the youth thoroughly enjoyed. Participant 5 was able to go to CN Tower, something she might not have been able to afford otherwise. Subsidizing services to meet the expectations of immigrant youth is critical to their integration. Effective educational and employment programs present them with opportunities for success. However, if the resources available are insufficient to effectively meet their needs, than funding is likely to diminish. Those that need services the most are often left without much to rely on. A solution proposed by CIC is to create partnerships to ensure resources are equally distributed. However as it has been discovered, the power relations dictate who shares the resources, which more often than not are the larger agencies.

Due to the structure of programs which have strict requirements that need to be met in order to assure funding, the flexibility does not exist for the agencies to alter their services to better suit the needs of newcomers. This results in the newcomers being inadequately serviced.

At the same time, the competitive funding structure creates an environment where unequal distribution of resources occurs. These acts as a catalyst to failed settlement programming, and agencies continue to apply for funding and expect unrealistic success (Kareem, 2005). A disconnect between CIC and newcomer serving agencies becomes apparent as the funding for the government programs does not quite resonate with the newcomers. The end result is that funding shifts from year to year to different agencies within the community and it becomes increasingly difficult for any one agency to establish their programs. This is also a cause for structural imbalance and a lack of resources for those newcomer serving agencies.

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