To Build on Hope:
Overcoming the Challenges Facing
Newcomer Youth at Risk in Ontario

by

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Submitted to
The Ontario Administration of Settlement and Integration Services
October 2001

Canada

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Note:

The views and conclusions found in this Report are those of the authors, and in no way may be taken as the opinions of the Ontario Administration of Settlement and Integration Services or of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

Executive Summary

This study examines the challenges discussed by five different types of immigrant youth (aged 16 to 29) from ten different sending countries and regions, now residing in Toronto, Hamilton, and Ottawa, who are at some risk of not succeeding in their settlement and integration. It includes an analysis of the observations made by those who work in serving them in these cities, and answers the following question:

- What do existing research and information have to tell us about newcomer youth at risk?
- How are they coping in meeting the challenges they encounter?
- What resources exist for them, to help them meet their settlement needs?
- What gaps in information could be remedied for them to link them with existing resources?
- What else is needed to help them overcome the challenges they face?

The report concludes with recommendations, principally to the federal government, as to ways to assist the youth in achieving success in Canada.

The *Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development* (OECD) views children and youth "at risk" as "those failing in school and unsuccessful in making the transition to work and adult life and as a consequence ...unlikely to be able to make a full contribution to active society" (OECD 1995, 21). Most OECD member countries have agreed that the "at-risk" label should focus on those children and youth identified as socially disadvantaged. The types of challenges facing newcomer youth are often grounded in socioeconomic disadvantage and include such stressors as poverty, discrimination, and unemployment. The "at-risk" label is therefore a relative term, resulting from environmental as well as individual factors. The positive growth and adaptation of newcomer youth are dependent on the personal, social, and economic resources available to the individual, as well as to his or her family and community. The resulting ability to lead a healthy and productive life can prevent newcomer youth from accepting social exclusion as members of a marginalized group and from succumbing to maladaptive behaviours and negative participation in society.

The five at-risk immigrant youth groups examined in this study include two whose education took place outside of Canada: the educated or professionally trained who are experiencing difficulties in finding suitable employment, and those who are uneducated by Canadian standards but who were at least 16 years of age when they arrived and had spent less than a full year in the Canadian system. As well, there were three groups who attended school in Canada: those currently in school but deemed to be at risk by their school board; those whose education has ended but are now in low-paying, unsatisfactory jobs and who would like to achieve a higher level of education or at least greater success in Canada; and those who are out of school and out of work.

Analysis of demographic data on the youth indicates that males are more at risk than females, that Iranian and Chinese youth are less at risk than other groups, and that overall there is a higher proportion of those who were at some time (but not currently) refugees. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the Iranian and Chinese youth have support in their family's commitment to academic success and higher education, and that the great disruptions that occur in the refugee process affect the family as a whole, as well as the youth in it, particularly in the areas of employability and the family tensions and stress caused by unemployment. Youth testify to the need for support to

keep families together both in the immigration process and in the settling period, through policy changes aimed at shortening periods of separation caused by delays in the refugee application process and in the periods of eligibility for sponsoring absent family members and for working in Canada. In addition, family counseling is targeted as a particularly important service, needed during settlement in Canada to assist youth and their families with the inter-generational tensions arising from different goals and aspirations related to social and cultural integration into Canadian society.

The principal differences between youth in this study and those in a study previously conducted by the authors are linked to the heightened vulnerability of these youth at risk, in their poverty, visible minority status, lack of a strong community basis, and lower levels of English. These youth are more marginalized by virtue of gaps and lack of coordination in services for children and youth, particularly for those aged 18 and over, and by the absence of good, affordable housing in large cities at the time of their arrival in Canada. Newcomer youth in Ontario confront a number of barriers in their effort to integrate themselves into a new society, one that differs in cultural values, the organization of schooling, and the general "rules of the game". These youth often lack the social and cultural capital needed for making a smooth transition, yet they are frequently forced to act as brokers for their parents, who have even less familiarity with English. The previous study found that many newcomer youth suffered significant losses in family and friends owing to migration, English language deficiencies, arbitrary school grade level placement, racist and discriminatory experiences in schools, and limited awareness of support services. In these ways, newcomer youth generally and the newcomer youth at risk in this present study share a number of common characteristics. In a sense, all newcomer youth have the potential for being at risk. It is, however, the multiplicity and intensity of adversities that some newcomer youth encounter that provide a basis for a fuller understanding of their vulnerability.

It is also important to note that youth in both studies were relatively optimistic about their futures. As immigrants, they do not expect a "free ride" or easy time. Rather, they fully anticipate that the settlement process will be exacting and provide difficulties that must be overcome. In fact, many of the "at-risk" youth in this present study do not think of themselves as being particularly at risk. Quite the contrary: though frustrated by social exclusionary forces encountered in schools and the workplace, they believe they will eventually overcome these problems and realize their goals. While this may be so, many of these at-risk youth disproportionately suffer from socioeconomic disadvantage, when contrasted with youth in the previous study, so the findings serve to sharpen our focus on what is needed for immigrant youth to succeed.

Recommendations note the absence of government offices devoted to the well-being of children and youth, and the absence of support for municipalities, which is where immigrants and refugees tend to settle in sizable numbers. This is particularly lamentable at a time when these same municipalities are being assigned increasing responsibility for assisting immigrant and refugee families with few resources for the added burden. Specific recommendations are made for policy change at the federal, provincial, and school board levels. They are based on the assumption that the optimism shown by so many immigrant youth at risk indicates a successful outcome to a concerted effort by the federal and other governments in assisting them in meeting the challenges they face.

I.   **Introduction**

II.   The research that this report summarizes was conducted in response to a Call for Proposals from the Ontario Administration of Settlement and Integration Services of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (OASIS-CIC)[1]. In an earlier report[2] to OASIS, the authors had found that six reports on varying groups of newcomer youth, including one of their own[3], had largely researched "available" youth, those who were accessible by virtue of being in school or in programs designed for them by community agencies. The study identified the issues that immigrant youth see as important in their lives, those that enable them to move with confidence from adolescence to adulthood in this new society and to integrate successfully into its institutions and organizations, particularly in the world of work. It also identified specific ways in which agencies and others serving immigrants could meet the youths' needs for assistance more skillfully.

III.   Beyond these easily "catchable" youth were those who were hard to reach because of various risk factors in their lives, which the report identified. OASIS then issued a new call for research targeting these more vulnerable youth, and this report is its outcome.

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[1] See Appendix A.

[2] *Between Two Worlds: The Experiences and Concerns of Immigrant Youth in Ontario.* Kenise Murphy Kilbride, Paul Anisef, Etta Baichman-Anisef, and Randa Kattar. (2000) Toronto: Ontario Administration of Settlement and Integration Services of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

[3]*The Needs of Newcomer Youth and Emerging "Best Practices" to Meet Those Needs.* Paul Anisef and Kenise Murphy Kilbride (2000). Toronto: Ontario Administration of Settlement and Integration Services of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

IV.

Purpose of Study

Given the mandate of OASIS to fund services to assist newcomers in settling and integrating successfully into Ontario, its stated objectives for this study were:

<   to review and summarize the existing literature on immigrant youth at risk;

<   to identify how they cope with the challenges they encounter;

<   to identify the resources that exist to assist them in meeting these challenges; and

<   to identify gaps in information that could be remedied, to link these youth at risk with the resources available.

After providing the information obtained to meet these four objectives, the researchers found that *two other major topics* emerged from the youth's and Key Informants' reports: other issues they are concerned about, and recommendations for improving services. In addition to an analysis of these four objectives, therefore, this report provides:

<   an identification of the other major concerns that this more vulnerable population states as important; and

<   specific recommendations for addressing their unmet, or inadequately met, needs for their successful integration into Canadian society as fully contributing members.

II. **Methods of Research: Whom We Studied and How**

The population OASIS requested for this research comprised youth aged 16 to 25 from seven sending countries and three sending regions (but for the more educated youth whose credentials were acquired outside of Canada, the age range was extended to 29). They were the countries of:

- Afghanistan
- China
- India
- Iran
- the Philippines
- Somalia
- Sri Lanka

and the regions of:

- the Caribbean
- Central and South America
- the Former Yugoslavia

Some populations represent considerable variety in background, and an attempt was made to take this into consideration while respecting the need of OASIS to obtain useful information on all groups. It was decided, therefore, to limit Chinese youth to those from mainland China, on the grounds that those from Hong Kong and Taiwan have experienced a more industrialized culture, somewhat less distant from that of Canada, frequently arrive with more experience in English, and, with a stronger record of sending immigrants to Canada, have more contacts in places of settlement here than would be true for mainland Chinese. In addition, because there are considerable economic differences among immigrant communities as reported in Michael Ornstein's (2000) analysis of the 1996 census data for Toronto, we attempted to reach all ten groups, but did not expect that issues of vulnerability and risk would be equally distributed among them. This proved to be the case: the differences Ornstein found were significant for the youth in this study (see Table 1): median family income for all groups in Toronto was $51,6000, but among the groups we studied, there was a range from $19,600 for Afghani families to $50,600 for Filipinos. This is related to the incidence of poverty, of course: over three quarters of Afghani families live below the poverty line (78.4%), while less than one quarter of Filipinos do (22.4%). The links of poverty to educational outcomes are borne out when we look at those aged 20 to 24 without a high school diploma: 20.4% of Afghanis but only 5.6% of Filipinos.

Table 1. Selected Characteristics of Ethno-Racial Youth in Toronto, 1996 Census

Ethno-Racial Group	Proportion of Persons Age 20-24 Not High School Graduates	Proportion of Persons Age 15-24 Unemployed	Median Family Income in 1995	Incidence of Poverty among All Families

Afghan	20.4	*	19,600	78.4
Somali	*	*	23,600	62.7
Iranian	7.1	27	25,400	53.5
Sri Lankan	18.2	29.6	30,000	51.0
Indian	14.6	24.2	47,300	28.7
Filipino	5.6	16.9	50,600	22.4
Chinese	9.4	23.5	48,700	29.4
Former Yugoslavian	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
South American/ Mexican	20.1	23.9	36,300	40.2

Caribbean:
  Jamaican
  Other West Indian
	
	14.6
	14.0
		
		38.0
		24.7
			
			28,400
			37,600
				
				47.6
				34.1

Total for All Torontonians	**12.8**	**19.6**	**51,600**	**22.7**

* No estimates are given for groups with fewer than 500 persons aged 20-24.
Source: Michael Ornstein, *Ethno-Racial Inequality in the City of Toronto: An Analysis of the 1996 Census*. Toronto: Access and Equity Unit, City of Toronto.

A.   **Plan of Research**

Three cities were required by OASIS for this study; on the basis of the numbers of foreign-born population, we selected the *cities of Toronto, Hamilton, and Ottawa*. These are regularly the three cities in Ontario that draw the largest numbers of immigrants, and based on the Landing of Immigrants Data System (LIDS), they also attract large numbers of immigrants from these ten sending countries and regions, although with disproportionate distributions. Specifically, there were relatively fewer immigrants from Afghanistan, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Sri Lanka in Ottawa and Hamilton, but attempts were made to recruit from all groups in all three cities, with mixed success.

The OASIS call for proposals had specified newcomer youth "who have dropped out of the educational system, who have never attended school in Canada, who may be at risk or who, in order to help support themselves and their families, have accepted employment in jobs that hold little future for them." Because youth in school are also identified by school officials as being "at risk", and because youth who have never attended school in Canada include two very different groups, namely those who have reached the age of 16 when they arrive so that they are not required to attend school as well as those who arrive with employment credentials ranging from completed apprenticeships to graduate degrees, the youth were conceptually divided in the proposal submitted to OASIS into *five groups of immigrant youth at risk*, and thus labeled:

- Groups 1 A and B: Those who were educated outside of Canada or have less than one year's experience with Canadian education:

    A: Youth with post-secondary education or professional credentials, between the ages of 18 and 29

    B: Youth without credentials and low levels of education, arriving in Canada after age 16

- Groups 2 A, B, and C: Those who have some experience (at least a year) in the Canadian school system:

    C: Those currently in school but deemed by the school to be "at risk" of failure or dropping out of school[4]

    D: Those out of school but in low-paying, dead-end jobs

    C: Those both out of school and out of work

A *research team* was created that included:

- the *two co-Principal Investigators* from Ryerson and York Universities, Associate Directors of the Joint Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement, who are the authors of this report;

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[4] For a list of the schools that assisted with this project, see Appendix B.

- a York research centre, the **Centre for Refugee Studies**[5], to assume responsibility for recruiting and interviewing the two foreign-educated groups of youth;
- a Ryerson research centre, the **Centre for Quality Service Research**, to assume similar responsibilities for Key Informants from the service sector;
- *four experienced researchers in this area,* academics from Ryerson to assume responsibilities for the remaining three groups of youth;
- a **Project Manager** to oversee recruitment and work in the three cities;
- research assistants for all researchers; and
- an **Advisory Committee** of representatives from:
  - OASIS
  - COSTI, one of the older service-providing organizations in Toronto, founded to help meet the needs of newcomers
  - The Toronto Board of Education
  - The Dean of Continuing Education of George Brown College
  - World Education System - Ontario (WES), an organizations created by the Province of Ontario to evaluate foreign credentials, both educational and employment-linked
  - Settlement Educational Partnerships in Toronto (SEPT), one of the Settlement Workers in Schools programs created and funded by OASIS
  - Ontario Association of Youth Employment Services (OAYEC), a network of 60 community agencies and colleges, is funded by the Province and has as its mandate the provision of services needed to link youth with training and employment
  - The Court Outreach Program of the Salvation Army, located in all three cities
  - The Executive Director of Covenant House, a youth shelter in downtown Toronto

To obtain insights specific to these five groups of youth at risk, and to answer the research objectives framed by OASIS, the following *research methods* were pursued in order to provide both depth and breadth in the response and to allow the voices of researchers, service providers, and especially the youth themselves to be heard in the analysis:

- an extensive review of English-language scholarly and government literature;
- individual interviews with 40 Key Informants across the three cities, selected for their proximity to the direct service of newcomer youth;
- six focus group interviews with the older youth with credentials but educated abroad; these were separate male and female groups in the three cities, with a total of 29 participants; and

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[5] For the complete individual reports of each of these centres and researchers, see Appendices C through G.

- 176 individual interviews with youth at risk[6] in the other four categories. Although 181 interviews were completed, 5 were rejected from the analysis when cross-checking demographic data subsequently revealed that they did not fit the criteria. These youth are not evenly divided among the ethnic groups or even between males and females; this will be further discussed both in the section on challenges to the research and in the sections presenting the findings, as the distribution is relevant to implications to be drawn for further improvement to services.

The *findings* from these methods are organized in subsequent sections under the headings of the research objectives.

B.   Challenges Encountered in the Research

Although the principal criticism the authors had leveled at their own earlier report on the needs of newcomer youth (and at their amalgamation of the findings of six such reports across Ontario) was that the youth most at risk seemed to be omitted from the research, this project discovered why it was extremely difficult to obtain interviews with such youth. Whereas in the earlier research there was a high likelihood that youth who made appointments to be interviewed would keep them, in this case they were as likely not to show up as to keep the appointment. While in the earlier study, a stroll through a university campus would provide articulate, appropriate interviewees, in this study the more appropriate place was a youth shelter or a

housing complex with high numbers of immigrant youth who were not nearly so willing to be stopped and interviewed.

Gender was a significant deterrent in accessing youth. Although all recruiting proved very difficult in this project, males were less difficult to contact than females: they were available in greater numbers in the shelters and public places where recruiters sought them out. Males, moreover, proved more willing, once contacted, to be interviewed than females; reasons of cultural propriety as well as their having less free time available seemed to limit females' ability to participate, so that we retrieved 109 male interviews and only 72 female interviews. Females, on the other hand, are more successful, as research has proven, to obtain employment; this, coupled with their higher rate of domestic duties, made them less available for recruitment even if they had been willing, or their families had seen it as appropriate. Needless to say, only female interviewers were used for female youth, but this was insufficient to allay the doubts that some females (or their families) entertained about the prospect of an

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[6] Each youth interviewed individually or in a focus group provided a signed Research Consent Form; a sample form is provided in Appendix H. Youth still in school who were under age 18 provided a consent form signed by their parents.

interview. Since previous research documents a lower frequency of females among such groups, their lower proportion here was to be expected.

Ethnicity was a factor in availability for recruitment. Latin American, Caribbean, Somalian, and Afghani youth were to be found among the out-of-school, out-of-work youth, whereas there was little or no success in finding such youth among the Chinese, Indian, Filipino, or Sri Lankan youth. The Ornstein data in Table 1 offer a starting point for understanding why the more affluent Chinese, Indian, and Filipino families would be less likely to have youth out of school and out of work, but we must look elsewhere for an explanation for difficulties in finding Sri Lankans among this group.

Events beyond our control intervened. When the schools run by Toronto District School Board, which had given us permission to interview their students, endured both a strike by support staff and then a work-to-rule campaign by teaching staff, school principals were understandably unwilling to permit their schools to become involved. When we sought access to the public boards in Hamilton and Ottawa, we found them apparently similarly beleaguered: difficulties in labour relations were cited by the Hamilton Board in refusing access, and the Ottawa public board did not reply until many months into the study, by which time the Toronto board had resolved its labour problems and school principals, despite their challenges in catching up, welcomed the researchers. This, however, was very much behind the schedule we had anticipated.

C.   Modifications to Original Plan

The first modification made arose out of the difficulties already mentioned, and was based on the realization that the high number of interviewees hoped for was, within the time constraints, unattainable. Thus, the number of youth targeted became the number that could be reached within the timeframe for the project: 181 rather than 200. Recruitment strategies included (but were not limited to):

- creating and personally handing out flyers in malls, shelters, schools, and other places youth could be found;
- posting such flyers in community centres, youth employment agencies, hospitals, social service agencies, shelters, correction services, etc.;
- working with community-based and ethno-specific agencies and organizations with direct access to youth for referral or contact;
- attending adult learning centres and ESL classes;
- spending time in fast-food malls, grocery stores, restaurants, and retail stores to speak directly to youth working there;
- arranging with shelters and store-front agencies to spend time there and interview on the spot any appropriate youth who dropped in;
- contacting school principals, guidance counselors, and ESL teachers for referrals for their students at

risk;

- flying a senior research assistant to an Ottawa hotel for a week, to supervise, motivate, and assist researchers in that city, who were experiencing great difficulties in recruiting.

The second modification, in consultation with the Advisory Committee, was to accept the fact that not all ethnic groups are equally represented in all categories, any more than males and females were, and to include their relative availability as part of the analysis, instead of straining to provide an artificially balanced sample.

And the final modification was the extension of the timeline of the project. Rather than submitting a report in July, we continued recruitment and interviews into September and concluded this report at the end of October.

D.   **Demographic profile of youth in the study**

In this section we provide a demographic profile of all five at-risk youth groups[7]. The profile is based on a survey that each participant was asked to complete by the interviewer. Figures 1-5 provide graphic illustrations for each of the sections.

1.   <u>Overview</u>

The proportion of males across all at-risk groups is approximately 60 percent, a finding that is consistent with the literature review. While over 80 percent of participants range in age from 16 to 24, there are considerable differences across youth at-risk groups. By way of illustration, almost 80 percent of youth educated abroad who have foreign credentials fall into the 25-29 age category while an even larger proportion of youth currently in school but at risk are 16 to 19 (Figure 1 on next page).

Latin America (18.1%), Somalia (17.6%), the Caribbean (15.2%) and Former Yugoslavia (12.3%) comprise the majority of sending areas with respect to the youth at risk in this study (Figure 2 on next page).

Most of the at-risk youth are single (80.4%), the exception being youth educated abroad, with foreign credentials. In this latter group, 46 percent of participants are married, a finding that is consistent with their older age profile. The majority of participants report having no children (87.7%).

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[7] For a detailed examination of the demographic characteristics of the youth in the study, see Appendix I

Figure 1: Age of Participants

Percent of Participants

- 1A: Ages 20-24 = 21.4, Ages 25 and over = 78.6
- 1B: Ages 16-19 = 18.4, Ages 20-24 = 76.3, Ages 25 and over = 5.3
- 2A: Ages 16-19 = 86.4, Ages 20-24 = 13.6
- 2B: Ages 16-19 = 30.4, Ages 20-24 = 54.3, Ages 25 and over = 15.2
- 2C: Ages 16-19 = 58.3, Ages 20-24 = 33.3, Ages 25 and over = 8.3

Group

☐ Ages 16-19   ☐ Ages 20-24   ☐ Ages 25 and over
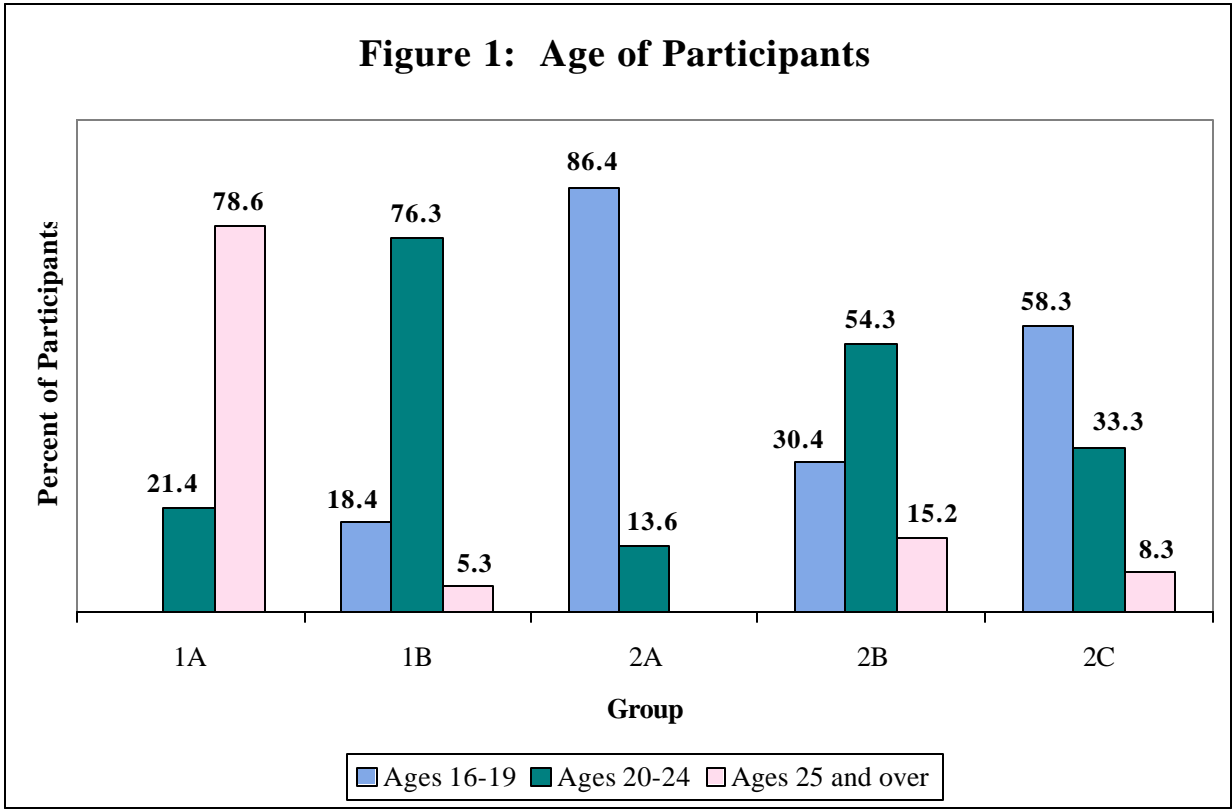
i

Figure 2: Sending County of Participants

Sending Country

- Sri Lanka: 5.4
- Somalia: 17.6
- Philippines: 4.4
- Latin America: 18.1
- Iran: 3.9
- India: 9.3
- Former Yugoslavia: 12.3
- China: 4.9
- Caribbean: 15.2
- Afghanistan: 8.8

Percent of Participants
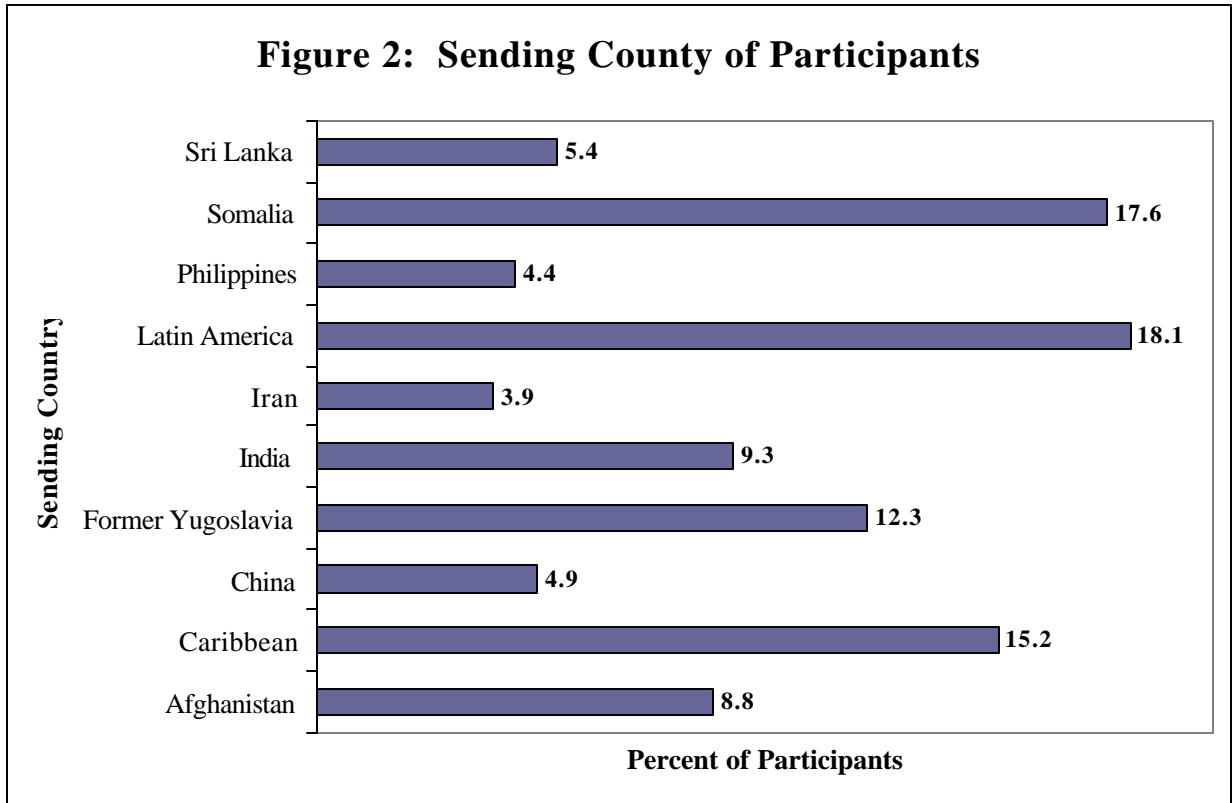
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The largest proportion of participants reported that their parents were born in Somalia, Latin America and the Caribbean. There is a considerable variation across the at-risk youth groups, however. By way of illustration,

almost 30 percent of youth currently out of school and out of work but fewer than 4 percent of youth educated abroad who have foreign educational credentials reported that their fathers were born in the Caribbean.

Participants reported that their parents spoke over 25 languages with 16 percent reporting that their parents spoke multiple languages; the languages most frequently spoken are Spanish, Somali, and English. There is considerable variation across the five at-risk groups in terms of languages spoken by parents.

Participants reported that their fathers were far more likely to have completed a post-secondary education (46.7%) than their mothers (28.8%). Moreover, their mothers were more likely to have attained either no schooling (15.2%) or only elementary schooling (12.9%) than their fathers (11.0% and 8.4% respectively).

The educational attainment levels of parents varies considerably across the five at-risk youth groups. As might be anticipated, the youth educated abroad, who have post-secondary educational credentials were the most likely group to report that their fathers (and to a lesser degree their mothers) had attained a post-secondary education.

Participants reported that a majority of their parents were employed, with mothers being more likely to be unemployed (45.9%) than fathers (34.0%) (Figures 3 and 4 on next page). There is considerable variation across youth at-risk groups with regard to parents' employment status. Thus, youth currently employed but in dead-end jobs were most likely to report that their fathers were employed (78.4%) while youth currently in school but deemed to be at risk were least likely to report that their fathers were employed (48.5%).

Figure 3: Employment Status of Father

2 C
2 B
2 A
1B
1A
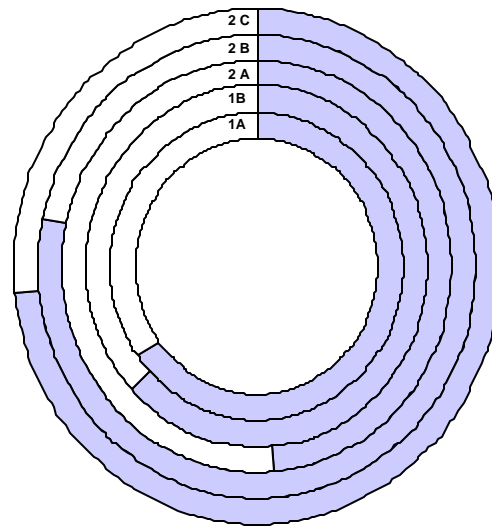
Employed
1A: 65.0%
1B: 63.0%
2A: 48.5%
2B: 78.4%
2C: 73.3%

☐ Employed ☐ Not Employed

Figure 4: Employment Status of Mother

2 C
2 B
2 A
1B
1A
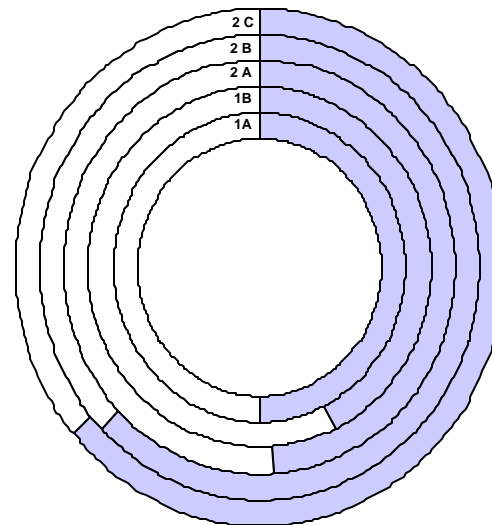
Employed
1A: 50.0%
1B: 42.9%
2A: 48.8%
2B: 62.8%
2C: 63.9%

☐ Employed ☐ Not Employed

A significant proportion of participants reported that their parents were in low-skilled jobs (37.1% of fathers and 28.4% of mothers). There is considerable variation with respect to type of employment by parents across the at-risk youth groups. For example, youth educated abroad, who have foreign credentials reported that among mothers who were employed, fully 55.6 percent were self-employed. In contrast, only 14.3 percent of youth currently out of school and unemployed reported that their mothers were self-employed.

3.   Family Relationships and Residence

Many participants come from large families where the average number of siblings is 3.6. This pattern does not hold for youth educated abroad who have foreign credentials in that over 85 percent of youth in this group have 0 to 2 siblings.

The majority of participants currently reside in Toronto (63.7%); 18.6 percent live in Hamilton and 17.6 percent of participants make their home in Ottawa (Figure 5 on next page).

Though approximately 20 percent of all participants have resided in Toronto, Hamilton or Ottawa for less than one year, over half of youth educated abroad, who have foreign credentials and 43 percent of youth educated abroad, who do not have credentials indicated that they had lived in these cities for less than a year. Almost half of all participants have resided in these cities for two or fewer years (Figure 6 on next page).

Approximately 70 percent of participants report that they have moved two or fewer times since coming to Canada; this ranges from a high of 92.9 percent for youth educated abroad, who have credentials to a low of 40.4 percent for youth currently out of school and unemployed.

Over 60 percent of participants report that they have lived in Canada for five or fewer years.

4.   Immigrant Status, Ethnicity and Citizenship

A large proportion of participants report that they came to Canada as refugees (37.7%). This ranges from a low of 25 percent for youth educated abroad, who have credentials to a high of 45.7 percent for youth who are currently employed but at risk. The figures indicate that a disproportionate number of youth across all five at-risk categories came to Canada as refugees.

Figure 5: Participant City of Residence

Legend: ■ Toronto □ Hamilton □ Ottawa

Group	Toronto	Hamilton	Ottawa
2C	68.8%	16.7%	14.6%
2B	65.2%	19.6%	15.2%
2A	90.9%	2.3%	6.8%
1B	39.5%	34.2%	26.3%
1A	42.9%	25.0%	32.1%
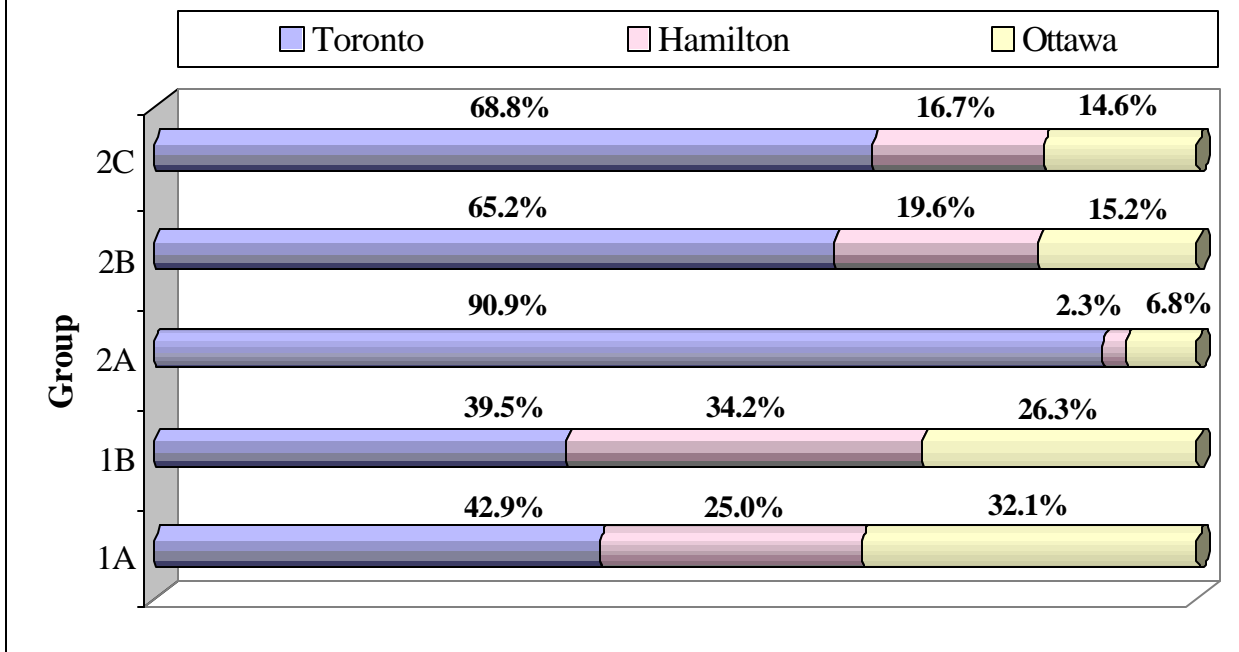
Figure 6: Years Living in Current City of Residence

Legend: ■ Less than a year □ 1-2 years □ 3-5 years ■ 6-10 years ■ 10+ years

Group	Less than a year	1-2 years	3-5 years	6-10 years	10+ years
2C	6.5%	15.2%	30.4%	28.3%	19.6%
2B	2.2%	20.0	28.9%	40.0%	8.9%
2A	11.9%	35.7%	26.2%	21.4%	4.8%
1B	42.9%	31.4%	14.3%	11.4%	
1A	51.9%	44.4%	3.7%		
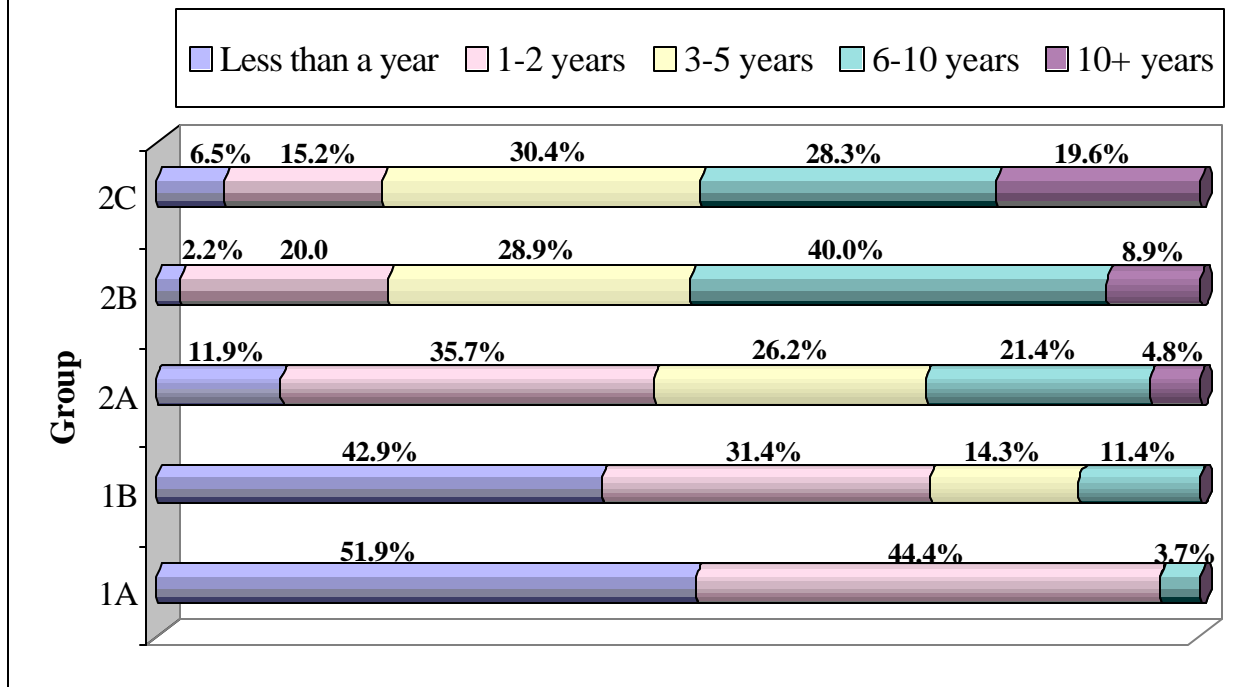
Many (43.8 %) of participants identified themselves as becoming landed immigrants within the last three years. This pattern varies widely from nearly 92 percent of youth educated abroad who have credentials to less than

13 percent of youth out of school and unemployed reporting that they have obtained landed immigrant status within the last three years.

Over 70 percent of participants indicated that they are not Canadian citizens. Again, there are substantial variations across at-risk groups from almost 93 percent of youth educated abroad who do not have credentials to 51.1 percent of youth currently employed reporting no Canadian citizenship (Figure 7). This corresponds to the recency of arrival of those educated abroad.

Participants were asked to select an ethnic or cultural group they most identified with and responses varied widely, cutting across a diverse range of religious and racial categories and resulting in 47 classifications. The most frequent responses are Latin American (13.1), Somali (12.1%), and Afghani (7.6%).

Figure 7: Participant Citizenship
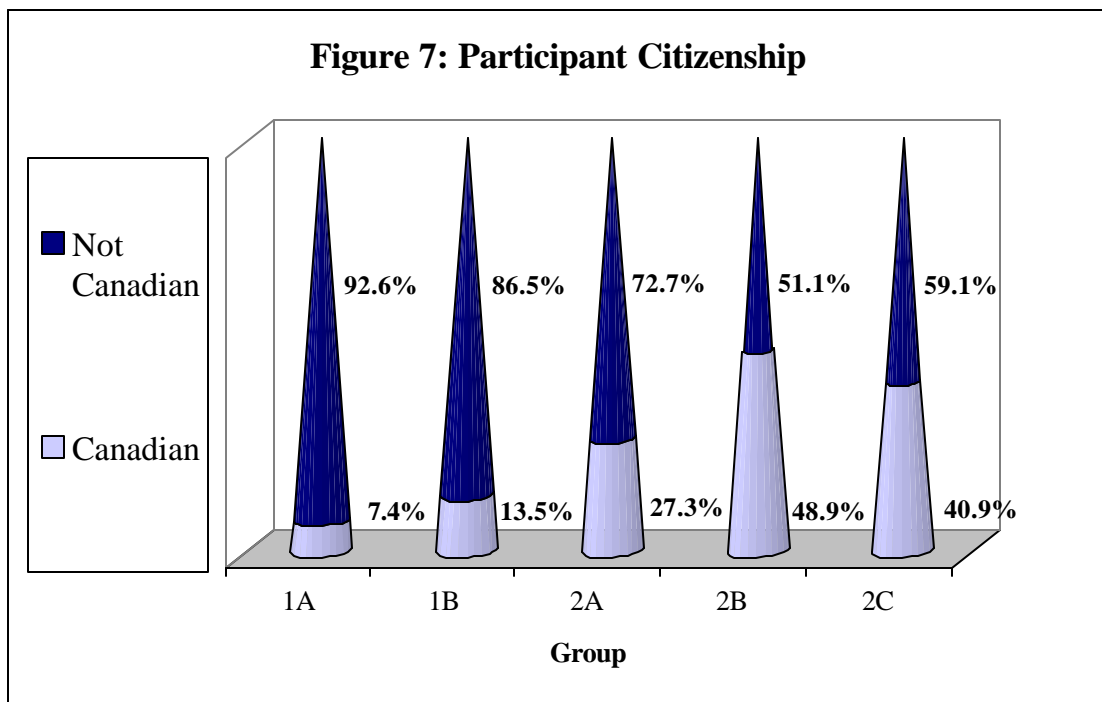
5.   <u>Education, Sources and Adequacy of Financial Support</u>

The majority or 60.9 percent of participants are currently not enrolled in school; 27.2 percent are full-time enrolled; 3.5 percent are part-time enrolled and 8.4 percent are enrolled but did not specify their registration status (Figure 8 on next page).

Over half of those youth educated abroad, who have foreign credentials are currently engaged in some type of schooling with the majority in ESL programs. Similarly, approximately 40 percent of youth educated abroad, who do not have credentials are in school, with most participants enrolled in ESL programs.

Participants were asked to supply main sources of financial support and often indicated multiple sources in replying to this question (Figure 9 on next page). Participants are most likely to indicate paid employment (54.7%) as their predominant source of support, with family members and government support as close secondary sources (48%). Youth educated abroad, who do not have foreign credentials (61.8%) and youth out of school and unemployed (42.9%) are most inclined to cite the government as their main source of financial support while youth currently employed but at risk are least likely to use this source.

The majority of participants believed that their main sources of support are inadequate (57.5%). This varies by group. By way of illustration, 80.9 percent of participants who are out of school and unemployed and 47.6 percent of youth currently in school but at risk of dropping out reported that their main sources of financial support were inadequate.

Figure 8: Participant School Status

Group	Full-time	Yes (Status N/A)	Part-time	Not in School
2C				100.0%
2B	2.2%	4.3%		93.5%
2A	100.0%			
1B	16.2%	5.4%	27.0%	51.4%
1A	18.5%	14.8%		48.1%

Legend: Full-time, Yes (Status N/A), Part-time, Not in School
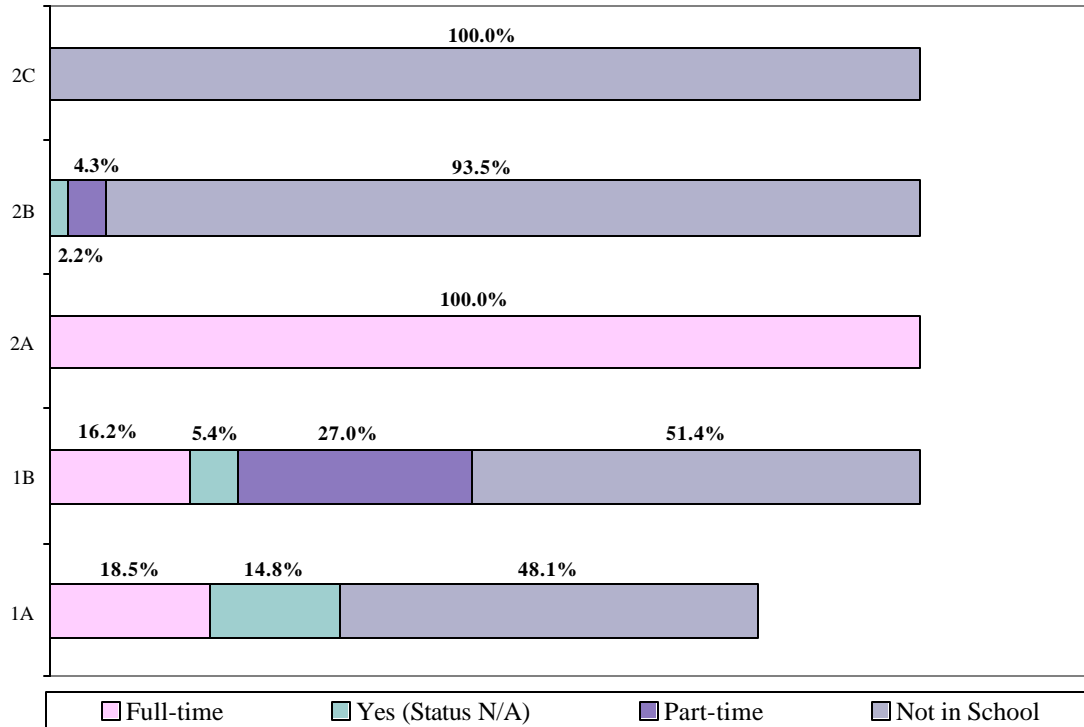
Figure 9: Sources of Financial Support

Group	Family Members	Paid Employment	Government	Other
2C	42.9%	8.6%	42.9%	11.4%
2B	22.5%	95.0%	2.5%	10.0%
2A	65.7%	25.7%	25.7%	
1B	20.6%	29.4%	61.8%	8.8%
1A	23.3%	30.0%	26.7%	20.0%

Legend: Family Members, Paid Employment, Government, Other

III.   What Research and Other Studies Have to Offer on Newcomer Youth at Risk

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Overview of Research On Youth At Risk

Theoretical frameworks offer important insights:

Human Ecology — Youth live in families, located in communities, which exist in a larger society and act collectively through and with institutions, both their own and those of the larger society.

Social Capital — Youth have access to resources accordingly as their families and communities have such resources to offer them. These resources are critical to their success, but not all families and immigrant communities are supported by networks of resources.

Marginalization or Exclusion — This occurs when youth have no access through their family and community to the resources to integrate into larger networks — or only have access to networks of other marginalized or deviant youth on whom to rely for support. Their likelihood of achieving ***social inclusion*** in a healthy community is therefore low.

Risk — This is the resulting status of such youth, as the resources or social capital that would have built ***resilience*** in them and their families are missing from their lives, so their vulnerability to risk is therefore high.

Findings emphasize education as critical to employment and well-being

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< Schools are the most important site for the successful integration of immigrant youth, both those already enrolled, and those who are not in school, but are either in poor employment or out of work, largely because they are inadequately educated.

< The needs of newcomer youth are as diverse as their circumstances and experiences.

< To meet these needs successfully youth require:

• strong academic support at individual and group levels;
• broad support for family and community involvement in their education; and

- cross-cultural understanding and respect for their ethno-racial identity in all the institutions and agencies with which they deal in their daily lives.

Studies on children and youth at risk of failing in school, and of failing in the transition from school to work, have taken a number of different theoretical approaches in their attempts to understand the problems involved, each of which is useful in some way. Several of these frameworks have been used for this study, the most central of which is a human ecological model of understanding how children develop successfully or otherwise. Using Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model, we shall be able to apply the concepts of "risk" *versus* "resilience" and of "inclusion" *versus* "exclusion" or "marginalization" to help us organize the insights of youth, key informants, and researchers toward concrete suggestions for remediation of the plight of newcomer youth at risk.

In brief, Bronfenbrenner (1979) reminds us that children and youth must be seen in the context of their human environment: each child exists in a family of some kind; each family is part of a community; and each community is part of a larger society complete with many institutions and ideologies shaping the public policies that define and then address the needs and concerns of immigrant youth. The youth interact face to face with some of the players in this human ecology, like parents, peers, and teachers, but no less important are those beyond their reach, like school boards and ministries, governmental departments and non-governmental agencies, whose policies are no less important in shaping their access to opportunities and rewards.

With this conceptual framework, we shall examine and define what research has found as the salient characteristics and circumstances of newcomer youth.

A.   **Definitions of Key Terms in Research That Studies Newcomer Youth**

1.   At Risk: The *Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development* (OECD) views children and youth "at risk" as "those failing in school and unsuccessful in making the transition to work and adult life and, as a consequence... unlikely to be able to make a full contribution to active society" (OECD 1995, 21). The last two decades have witnessed the proliferation of the use of the term "at risk" in a variety of disciplines. It had existed for centuries as a way to describe poor children, often from minority cultural groups, perceived to be "at risk" of failing financially, and hence of posing the threat of a future economic drain on society. The term was used interchangeably with poverty and the source of the risk was primarily located within the individual or family, not within society (Shonert-Reichl 2000, 4), but it has since developed multiple meanings and applications. It is now important to have a well-grounded working definition of the term, as well as a culturally sensitive and insightful understanding of the multiple sources of risk to newcomer youth, and of the ensuing needs, behaviours, and characteristics of these "at-risk" youth. The delivery of effective preventative and intervention programs can only occur if they are based on a solid understanding of the issues and include a design appropriate to each "at-risk" group in their application. Most OECD member countries have agreed that the "at-risk" label should focus on those children and youth identified as socially disadvantaged. The types of challenges facing newcomer youth are often

grounded in socioeconomic disadvantage and include such stressors as poverty, discrimination, and unemployment.

Compas, Hinden and Gerhardt (1995) argue that while risk factors may help to identify individuals with a high propensity for developing problems, they do not explain why such problems develop; rather it is also necessary to understand the processes and mechanisms by which children and youth deal with adversity. Researchers have begun to examine why some youth, despite the presence of risk factors, remain resilient and develop into healthy adults (Blum 1998; Garmezy 1991). It is believed that placing the focus on resiliency will assist in the design and delivery of intervention efforts aimed at offsetting risk factors among youth, or, in some cases, even preventing their development. Beiser, Shik and Curyk (1999) maintain that family stability may help foster personal resilience. Portes (1994) similarly notes that "immigrant families and communities commonly possess material and moral resources that confer advantages on their young as they seek avenues for successful adaptation" (p. 636). Zhou (1996) indicates the significance of cohesive immigrant communities. The ability to cope with the stresses associated with integration and achieve success in the larger society is dependent on the resources that families and ethnic communities can bring to bear on that effort.

The "at-risk" label is therefore a relative term. It is a result of environmental as well as individual factors. The positive growth and adaptation of newcomer youth are dependent on the personal, social and economic resources available to the individual, as well as to his or her family and community. The resulting ability to lead a healthy and productive life can prevent newcomer youth from accepting social exclusion as a marginalized group and succumbing to maladaptive behaviours and negative participation in society.

2.   Resilience: Using the work of the National Council on Crime Prevention (1997), we define it as "a young person's ability to cope in the presence of major stress or risk factors." The Council links this to a strength that has been developed in them by the care and access to resources provided by those in their environment at various levels: family, educators, and members and groups in their community. This Canadian definition avoids the limitations identified in some previous studies that focused exclusively on characteristics of individual youth without examining the processes that provide the strength to those youth. (For an excellent review of the literature on resilience of at-risk youth in school settings, see Padron, Waxman, & Huang, 1999, who have conducted several important studies on resilient and non-resilient students.) In particular, it provides a framework for examining the processes within classrooms and schools that may empower or undermine student success. If one of the key predictors of that success is teachers' expectations, then the interactions between teachers and youth is critical to the academic outcomes of students. "Teachers' expectations" relate to a phenomenon called "the Pygmalion effect" (Rosenthal 1987) in educational literature: teachers' expectations of students are fulfilled as they project those expectations for the students to live up (or down) to; this perception of the importance of their teachers' expectations is echoed in the testimony of the youth we interviewed.

3.   The *Social Capital* of Families: This is a term that has been increasingly linked to the reasons for the success of "resilient" children and youth in education in various countries (*c.f.* Kilbride 2000 for a review). In Canada the National Council on Crime Prevention refers to it as "the protective network of supportive and positive relationships among children, parents, and families, social institutions, and all community members." The Council

highlights its importance in finding:

> When these relationships are strong and working effectively, they improve the ability of a
> community to meet the material, emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual needs of all its
> members. They also help people create opportunities for themselves. When these
> relationships are weak or ineffective, they limit the ability of communities and social
> institutions to reduce risk factors, isolation, and vulnerability in families and youth.

4.   Social Exclusion and Inclusion: The origin of social exclusion terminology can be traced back to France in
the early 1970's as a response to the problem of sustaining adequate living conditions for those left behind by
economic growth (Ebersold 1998). The European Economic Community (EEC) began to link social exclusion with
the inadequate realization of social rights in 1989. In 1990, the European Observatory on National Policies for
Combating Social Exclusion was established to examine "the social rights of citizenship to a basic standard of living
and to participation in major social and economic opportunities in society" (Cousins 1999 as cited in Barata 2000,
1).

       The process of social exclusion leads to various forms of economic, social, and cultural disadvantage. It is
believed that children and youth who experience social exclusion pose a threat to society because they grow up with
little stake in the existing social order (Klasen 1998 as cited in Barata 2000, 5). Those most likely to be excluded
include children and youth subjected to multiple risk factors. Byrne (1999) defines social exclusion as a dynamic
process that serves to impede healthy participation in society's social, economic, political, and cultural institutions.
Freiler (2000) describes social inclusion as a process encouraging the development of talents, skills, and capacities
necessary for children and youth to participate in the social and economic mainstream of community life.

       A.   **An Overview of Youth at Risk in Research**

       It has been estimated that approximately 20 per cent of children and youth in Canada are at risk for
developing problems that may threaten their transition into a healthy and productive adulthood (Shonert-Reichl
2000, 2). But social and economic indicators of risk, such as poor housing, poverty, and peer group or gang
difficulties, are particularly high among newcomer youth. With the number of immigrant youth in Canada
increasing to 26 per cent in just five years (Canadian Council on Social Development 1998a), a concern for the risk
that these newcomers may face deserves serious attention.

       The factors contributing to the development of "at-risk" youth are multidimensional, interrelated, and
dynamic. Specifically, existing research finds challenges confronting "at-risk" youth in three broad areas:
education, employment, and *well-being*, and much of it then also examines the *social services an programs that
address youth at risk*. Specifically, it investigates ways to respond to their needs and concerns as the basis for
youth's socioeconomic adaptation or maladaptation to a new environment.

1.   Education and Risk: The school system has been criticized in recent years for failing to provide its
students with equitable opportunities for social, economic, and political participation. Up to 30 to 40 per cent of

youth are deemed to be "at risk" of not completing high school and facing personal developmental problems as a consequence of their educational, home, and community environments (Wotherspoon & Schissel 2000, 3). These risks are seen to be most concentrated among visible and ethno-cultural minorities, as well as the socioeconomically disadvantaged.

Anisef and Bunch (1994) report that visible minority youth encounter significant challenges coping with the school system. They perform poorly in class, suffer from behavioural problems, or drop out of school altogether. Some of the principal factors underlying these problems include school policies, the discriminatory attitudes of teachers, and the organizational structure of schools where achievement or success among minority youth is not encouraged (pp. 8-10). This environment has proven to be a negative one for newcomer students. It has led to poor attendance, fostered feelings of hostility towards school, and produced an increase in delinquent behaviour. Although many schools now recognize ethno-cultural diversity and make efforts to prevent discrimination, Anisef and Bunch assert that visible minority youth "will continue to be at risk unless the system as a whole is actively working to accommodate their differences and needs" (p. 9). They also note the high correlation between socioeconomic status and academic performance. Low-income households often cannot provide an environment conducive to learning since many of these children consume less nutritional foods, have less access to private space for homework, are less likely to own computers, and have parents with lower educational levels. Students from low-income backgrounds also face discriminatory treatment and lower teacher expectations. These elements work together to produce low self-esteem and poor motivation to learn among minority students (Anisef & Bunch 1994, 10).

Lam (1994) maintains that education can be a liberating force towards the equalization of opportunities; however, equal educational opportunities in Canada are limited for some individuals because of their ethnic background and socioeconomic status. Teacher bias, economic inequality, and institutional or systemic discrimination act as barriers to academic success. He (1994) believes that the negative employment experiences of parents may have an adverse effect on their children's decision to leave the school system (p. 124). The marginalized economic position of parents may pressure youth to drop out of school in order to work and help support their families. These individuals feel it is more important to enter the labour market and contribute to the family income than to continue studying. They may also learn from their parents' experience that educational attainment does not necessarily translate into a heightened socioeconomic status. Newcomer youth in particular face difficulty obtaining employment and often find themselves in jobs that hold little future (p. 125).

Carola and Marcelo Suarez-Orozco (1995) focus on the process of ethnic identification and achievement motivation among Latino adolescents. They conclude that Latino youth and other immigrant groups are highly motivated and place great importance on academic achievement; their expectations for success, however, are tainted by experiences with discrimination and social hostility. Though they cling to the belief that education provides status mobility, risk for them arises from the fact that many are forced to leave school early in order to work and support the family. This is often a result of a strong sense of family obligation that holds greater weight than education (p. 188).

Johnson and Peters (1994) agree with Lam and others that ESL programs do not provide sufficient resources to help newcomer youth cope with the problem of alienation, causing some immigrant or visible minority

students to perform poorly or to leave the education system prematurely. They see the problems facing marginalized youth as being rooted in institutional and systemic discrimination.

The school system must accommodate the growing diversity of the student population and offer curricula and programs that are relevant to their experiences, learning needs, and aspirations (Anisef & Bunch 1994, 7). It is essential that an effort be made to understand the traditions, learning approaches, family structures, and values of immigrant and refugee youth in order to develop programs designed to meet their educational needs (Lam 1994, 127). Such an approach could provide much needed support to "at-risk" newcomer youth as they adjust to the norms and expectations of the host society.

A significant minority of "at-risk" youth in Canada choose to drop out of school. They often feel pushed into this decision because of their school environments, structural factors (social class, cultural background and racism), and/or for personal reasons. Anisef (1998) stresses that dropping out of school is not a single act or an event that happens independently of any other factors. It is a process of gradual disengagement from school in which different but interrelated factors, ranging from those of the individual and family to those of school, community, the job market and government policy, are involved (pp. 289-303). Higher dropout rates among disadvantaged immigrant groups can lead to social inequality across generations, making the issue of *who* is at risk of this and *why* one of the most important challenges facing a nation of immigrants today.

2.   Employment and Risk : The Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) (1998a) reports that there are about two million youth between the ages of 15 and 19 living in Canada. The high unemployment rate is something that affects all youth living in Canada, but an analysis of statistical data reveals that newcomer youth face greater obstacles to employment and are far less likely than Canadian-born youth to have had any kind of work experience. In 1996, there were twice as many immigrant as Canadian-born youth between the ages of 17 and 19 who had no previous work-related experience. Youth from low-income families face greater challenges in acquiring job experience than do those living in high- or middle-income families. The same pattern holds true for immigrant youth compared to Canadian-born youth. "Immigrant youth may be at a disadvantage in finding work due to their lack of family contacts in business, their efforts to learn one of Canada's official languages, their responsibilities at home, or their families' expectations that they focus solely on school work" (CCSD 1998b, 8).

In its investigation of youth unemployment, the Canadian Youth Foundation (CYF) (1995) provides some useful information on immigrant youth through comparisons with other cohorts. The CYF notes that both immigrant and street youth lack the personal networks and support systems to assist them in their search for employment. Middle-class youth have devised individual coping strategies through self-employment and contract work, while immigrant and street youth are found to be completely reliant on government agencies to prepare them for the job market. Participants cited the need for more apprenticeships and practicums and claimed that schools do not provide youth with enough information and counseling at ages early enough to move them to the labour market effectively.

The study identifies a set of factors underlying the joblessness of immigrant youth, which include "the lack of socioeconomic opportunities, social and cultural barriers, or an unwillingness to accept low paying work". In a study of 525 adult refugees who were initially resettled in Alberta between 1992 and 1997 and were predominantly

from the former Yugoslavia, it was found that despite generally high educational credentials, these refugees experienced higher rates of unemployment, part-time employment, and temporary employment than Canadian-born individuals (Krahn *et al.*, 2000:59). As Reitz (1998:18) notes, the non-recognition of foreign credentials can be viewed as a form of institutional discrimination when the foreign credentials actually provide a valid measure of comparable professional knowledge and ability. Often, however, employers have no way of evaluating credentials that are obtained in far-off and unfamiliar countries (Reitz, 1998:240).[8] These and other researchers, like those cited above in the section on education, clearly point to the need for more flexibility in order to respond to the needs, concerns and experiences specific to "at-risk" newcomer youth.

3.   Well Being and Risk : The healthy development and integration of newcomer youth into all spheres of Canadian society is dependent on numerous and often interrelated factors. The social and economic environment in which children grow is the most important predictor of overall well-being. It is important for children and adolescents to be part of a strong and loving family with a secure income. This can improve the likelihood of living in safe neighbourhoods and attending good schools. The absence of some or all of these elements in newcomer households often puts children "at risk" for maladjustment in society. The socioeconomic circumstances surrounding the periods of childhood and adolescence can have a serious impact on the physical, social and emotional development of youth.

        A recent analysis of data obtained from a longitudinal study of youth indicates that "30 percent of all immigrant children live in families whose total income fall below the official poverty line" (Beiser *et al.* 1999). The researchers note that immigrant youth with unstable families are "less likely to prosper scholastically and are more likely to become delinquent" (Ibid.). Data obtained from community-based samples suggests that newcomer children and youth experience greater risk for alcohol abuse, drug addiction, delinquency, depression, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

        James (1997) reports that newcomer adolescents in the United States experience a variety of cognitive and emotional changes because of the absence of their familiar language, culture, and community. The subsequent adjustments to life in a new country often result in the increased risk of trauma or psychosocial problems, school failure and drug abuse, as well as other delinquent behaviour. James suggests that "the early identification of immigrant children at risk for these problems can help school personnel and health care providers plan culturally appropriate and effective interventions" (p. 98). It is believed that many newcomers suffer from anxiety over the loss of all things familiar and experience a "culture shock" that can cause emotional maladjustment (p. 99). Difficulties with language acquisition and the lack of acceptance by peers can impede the academic performance of a newcomer and be a source of stress.

        The socioeconomic environment of newcomer children and adolescents is a determinant of their health and well being. Beiser (1999) evaluates the existence of a link between employment and mental health in his comparative survey of refugees and Canadian residents in Vancouver. Beiser found that newcomer youth were twice as likely to suffer from depression than individuals aged thirty-five and older, adding that "statistics on suicide

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[8] In Ontario, this situation may alter with the introduction of World Education Services Ontario, a non-profit

are also consistent in portraying the young as highly distressed and vulnerable" (pp. 81-82). It is essential that job discrimination and economic disparity be alleviated in order to curb increasing rates of depression among newcomer youth and facilitate their healthy adaptation and progression in Canadian society (p. 162).

Fralick and Hyndman (1998) examine the relationship between substance abuse and socioeconomic status among young people. An investigation into peer group forces, self-esteem, household relationships, and educational achievement reveal that social patterns are key determinants of health (p. 311). Membership in gangs can be one approach to obtaining both peer group membership and self-esteem; thus its appeal poses a threat to many immigrant and/or newcomer youth. The likelihood of joining gangs corresponds to low socioeconomic status, urban poverty, ethnic minority status, lack of education and a breakdown in the social institutions of school and family (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco 1995, 67).

Even so, first_generation immigrants generally have lower propensities for crime than their native_born counterparts, though the same cannot always be said for second and third generation children of immigrants. This latter group often experienced severe cultural marginality in their adopted country and, according to a meta survey conducted by Yeager (1996), one of the universal findings was that the children of immigrants (native_ born but whose parents are immigrants) have much more serious crime problems than their parents.

Dryfoos (1998) examines the distinction between youth who are vulnerable and those who are resilient. He identifies several predictors of high risk youth, including the absence of nurturing parents, evidence of child abuse, bad peer influence, economic disadvantage, and poor exposure to professional training. He identifies several predictors of resilient youth, which include attachment to a caring adult, independence and competence, high aspirations, and effective schools (pp. 137-140).

The problems facing newcomer children and youth are numerous and threatening to both their physical and social development. The risk associated with maladaptive experiences is high among children from disadvantaged populations. Most researchers consider the socioeconomic disparity between mainstream and newcomer groups as the primary determinant of negative development (Beiser *et al.* 1999; Bertrand 1998; Fralick & Hyndman 1998). Newcomer youth must adjust to a new culture and language as well as to new surroundings and peer expectations. This is difficult to achieve without family stability and economic security. The inability to adapt successfully to the norms of society often result in problems at school and create a greater risk for substance abuse, delinquency, and depression.

4.   Social Services and Programs for Newcomer Youth at Risk **:** In its report on best settlement practices, the Canadian Council for Refugees (1998) presents a number of programs designed to facilitate the integration process and protect newcomer youth from risk. The CCR identifies several practices for offering services to newcomer youth. The researchers stress that accessibility must be assured by offering culturally appropriate services and undertaking outreach in the community. It is evident that collaboration and flexibility in program development is needed in order to facilitate best the healthy development of newcomer youth. They advocate a holistic approach that would recognise the diverse needs of "at-risk" youth and build linkages between the community, family, youth,

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international organization that will be opening an Academic Credentials Assessment Service in Toronto.

and mainstream institutions (CCR 1998, 45).

Burt, Resnick and Novick (1998) explore some of the challenges involved in creating and sustaining supportive communities for "at-risk" youth. They see service integration as a key element of program and service delivery. This concept encourages a co-ordination of efforts between agencies in order to offer a range of services that will meet the complex needs of newcomer adolescents (p. 208). The McWhirters (1998) also consider the need for an integrated approach to service delivery and stress the development of programs aimed at teaching life skills and learning how to cope with stress (p. 50).

This consistent emphasis on the holistic approach, achievable by an integrated service delivery, echos the analysis of those who take the human ecological approach developed by Bronfenbrenner to situate youth in their larger context of families, cultural communities, school, work, and social services. Such analysis also supports a focus on the strengthening of youth and their families through the development of their social capital.

C.   Summary of Findings from Existing Research and Other Studies

Research indicates that central to an examination of immigrant youth at risk is the issue of support for them in the context of supporting their families and ethnic communities. That is, youth seen as part of a larger whole will be youth who are more likely to be significantly helped toward successful social and economic integration into the larger society. Specifically, the development of their social capital, with its reduction of the likelihood of their being excluded or marginalized, will simultaneously enhance the likelihood of their developing resilience and avoiding vulnerability to risk.

The principal research on youth at risk, found largely outside of Canada, is linked to their education.[9] Except for youth in trouble with the law, youth who are both out of school and out of work are virtually untreated in the literature, and youth who are in dead-end jobs are even less examined. Canadian studies (*e.g.*., Steinhauer 1995; National Council on Crime Prevention 1997; Beiser *et al.* 1999) have contributed to understanding youth at risk by analyzing the interconnectedness of families, peers, community, and schools, and by demonstrating the need to build and support the social capital of youth and their families if youth are to become resilient in the face of risk, and achieve inclusion rather than marginalization.

Overall, the research shows that low levels of educational achievement remain the greatest barrier to employment and socioeconomic advancement, and thus also to well-being. Schools in their entirety, not just in isolated departments or programs, are an integral component of intervention programs. They can act as agents of academic and social growth if they adopt appropriate practices designed to help children and youth at risk. Moreover, outreach to youth who are either unemployed or working in dead-end jobs is essentially an educational outreach, requiring special insights, strategies, and skills. The needs of newcomer youth are as diverse as their circumstances and experiences, but researchers stress total academic support, parental and community involvement, and cross-cultural understanding and respect as essential elements for beginning to address these needs.

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[9] In the U.S. the *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR)* has been published quarterly since

III. How Immigrant Youth Are Coping with the Challenges They Encounter

Overview of Youth and Their Coping Strategies

1.   Youth use a variety of strategies and resources in settling successfully in Canada.

- They turn to schooling (secondary and post-secondary) as a source of potential success.
- They rely greatly on friends and family.
- They count on ESL instructors for information about their principal concern: employment
- Those who are working long hours rely on television for learning English.
- These groups have difficulty in building networks of support, as the usual education-linked activities and resources are not accessible to them.

2.   Some strategies of immigrant youth for meeting challenges are counterproductive to settling successfully.

- Some youth turn to gangs as a means of building networks and becoming included.
- Some turn to drugs, alcohol, and similar less healthy means of coping with the stress of settlement; they offer little to build the youth's resiliency and much to increase their risk.

3.   **Religious organizations and settlement agencies are good sources of support.**

- Female youth are much likelier to take advantage of both sources of support than are male youth, but both males and females cite them as having helped.
- Youth outside of school are more likely to mention religious organizations and settlement agencies as helping them, while youth still in school are more likely to mention teachers and counselors.

4.   Despite efforts by all such organizations and agencies, there is insufficient support for youth both as individuals and as members of their families.

- This leaves some youth with a degree of hope, but with inadequate access to resources from sources they find available to them for fulfilling that hope.

1995.

A.   **What Key Informants have to say**

The question of how immigrant youth cope with the challenges they encounter was not addressed by the survey of Key Informants, where the focus was on the adults' perceptions of the needs and services of youth. In their comments, what emerged as relevant is their perception that it is the youth who are not personally connected, and who do not have family members knowledgeable about how to access employment and other resources in Canadian society, who are the ones most at risk. By inference, then, those with good family support, and particularly with employed parents, are those who are coping, and who do not enter the "at risk" stream. In addition, when youth are not involved in gangs but are instead involved in leading youth programs, they seem not only to cope very well but to be a source of support for those with fewer resources.

B.   **Experience of immigrant youth whose education took place outside Canada**

Coping mechanisms include reliance on family and friends to link them to ESL classes, where they can obtain information on "what they should do" in Canada. The well-educated among them seem to have more and better resources among family and friends, but they are no less frustrated than their less-educated compatriots at the reluctance of employers to consider hiring them.

C.   **Experience of immigrant youth still in school**

Youth in school find individual teachers and guidance counselors who care about them, go out of their way to help them and explain things to them, and in general try to make them feel at home. They are good sources of support for coping with the changes that follow immigration. Friends from their own ethnic group who know what they are going through are good partners in coping, when they have sufficient access to them in school.

Their families can be of enormous support, obviously, and are; many students, including most of the Muslims, singled out their parents as understanding, supportive, and flexible. For a few youth in this group, however, the varying family reactions to cultural change and adjustment can turn their home into the source of much stress and pain, rather than support for coping. These youth said they rely on friends to get through, and some cited social service agencies, government assistance, Youth for Futures, COSTI, and the YMCA as partners in their efforts to succeed.

D.   **Experience of immigrant youth in low-paying or dead-end jobs**

These youth rely on family, friends, and the TV to help them cope with adjusting to Canada. The TV is particularly useful for them in learning English, as ESL classes, while helpful when they can access them, are the

least available to this group, which is composed of youth who are working full time. Some also are candid about seeking refuge in drugs, alcohol, and gang membership and activities. Their religious organizations (churches, mosques, synagogues, and temples) and the YMCA, with its programs and access to facilities for sports and other forms of recreation, is valuable for helping them cope and relieve stress in healthier ways, but these are youth without access to the time necessary for tracking down resources, and without the flexibility of schedule that would allow them access to resources once they are found.

E.   **Experience of immigrant youth who are out of school and unemployed**

Coping mechanisms of those in the group who were out of school and out of work were not pronounced. For females, their willingness to seek help from agencies is an asset, even if it has not resulted in permanent employment or a return to school. For both males and females, the conclusion that it is necessary to return to school to upgrade themselves and thus get a decent job is surely a step forward. Unfortunately, they do not see themselves in a position to do so at this time, and instead are seeking work.

C.   **Summary of findings on youth's coping strategies**

Newcomer youth assist themselves in accessing support and information to deal with their initial settlement issues in a variety of ways. When they are not in school, there is considerable reliance on friends and family and on the advice they obtain in the places where they are taking English instruction. (This does not obtain, of course, for those who do not seek out language instruction, like those from the Caribbean or those whose English is advanced when they come here, despite the fact that their level of language proficiency may contribute to their difficulties in obtaining work.) Those who are working, some in several ill-paying jobs at once, may rely solely on television for growth in language skills. This will do little to enhance their store of social capital, and thus lead to any greater social inclusion for this group. Some of them, and some in other groups, may also turn to gangs as a means of building networks and becoming included in them. Drugs, alcohol, and similar less healthy means of coping with the stress of settlement are choices of others, but they offer little to build the youth's resiliency and much to increase their risk.

Religious organizations and settlement agencies are also sources of support in coping; female rather than male youth are more likely to turn to them for assistance, however, although these are proven means of building foundations for including youth in both ethno-specific and mainstream activities. Again, it is those outside of school who mention them, while youth in school find support from family, friends, and those teachers and counselors who are caring individuals.

An overall impression, however, is that there is not enough support for youth and their families to assist each other to pull through the strains of adjustment and integration in a healthy way: there is too much left unaddressed at a number of levels --individual, family, peers, institutions-- and they are left with higher levels of risk and alienation than is acceptable or necessary.

V. What Resources Are Available to Immigrant Youth

Overview of Resources for Youth At Risk

Many resources are available to these youth, but problems exist with regard to matching the youth who need them with the services.

<   Youth who are working are not able to access them during normal working hours..

<   Male youth have in many cases a culture which precludes their considering taking advantage of such resources.

<   Many youth, particularly those in hostels as well as those who are working, are not aware of these resources.

Resources cited by youth as helpful.

ESL classes for newcomers, as these provide not only language, but at their best also provide access to other resources for further education and work.

Teachers and Counselors who care are distinguished by respondents, who also benefitted from the SEPT\SWIS program.

Agencies, including the YMCA, WES, and the Youth for Futures program.

Ethno-specific Agencies providing the following services:

•   career counseling;

•   educational counseling and assistance;

•   personal counseling and group programs for interpersonal challenges;

•   translation services;

•   placement assistance; and

•   other types of counseling and referrals.

Resource challenges are two-fold.

<   Extending the excellent services that some youth have found to all youth who need them, while improving the service delivery of those that seem to youth to be insensitive or unhelpful.

<   Providing such services to youth in a context that includes their families and peers, to maximize their inclusion and the building of their social capital.

A.   What Key Informants have to say

The respondents in the Key Informants survey were asked to comment for each specific group at risk on the resources available to the youth.

For *Group 1A: Youth educated abroad with post-secondary foreign credentials*, referrals are made to other agencies for credential evaluation, and to multicultural liaison officers (MLOs) who provide translation and interpretation between the schools and the newcomer. A few agencies do academic credential assessments (such as World Education Services, Ontario) or provide English as a Second Language (ESL) training in-house. Some agencies provide cross-cultural orientation in an attempt to prevent racism.

For *Group 1B: Youth educated abroad with low education*, agencies provide job placements (both on-line and off-line), connect them with job matching programs, translators, high school placements, and referrals, and offer various training workshops (*e.g*.., anti-racism human rights, non-adversarial conflict resolution, leadership skills, and communication skills). Some also provide modified curricula (making accommodation for people with learning disabilities) or refer members of this group to schools where they can earn Grade 9 equivalency.   Services related to well-being include assistance with filing a provincial human rights complaint, peer advocacy training, and mentoring. A few agencies have support groups linked to violence against women, men's anger management problems, and addictions.

For *Group 2A: Youth currently in school in Canada but at risk*, most help appears to come from the schools, although referrals are sometimes made to agencies, who offer "Homework Clubs" and correspondence courses for young people who have been suspended from school. A few agencies help students with program changes at school or look for an alternative school that is a better fit. Other agencies provide programs for enhancing problem-solving, anti-bullying, self-responsibility, and literacy skills.

For *Group 2B: Youth currently not in school, employed in low-paying dead-end jobs*, there is generally help with job searches; employment training; credential evaluation referrals; and job connections. Some agencies provide facilities (computers and on-line access); some provide programs to develop work skills so the barriers to employment can be reduced or eliminated. Educational services include language instruction (such as Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada or LINC); referrals for evaluating credentials; outreach employment counseling which focuses on going to school; and in-house school programs. Employment services include writing letters of reference; providing the facilities for self-directed job searches; and offering pre-employment and skills training that focus on current market demands. Services relating to well-being include programs for youth with criminal sexual offences; walk-in or drop-in programs that provide counseling services to youth and their families, referrals to social service or legal assistance agencies, and the provision of health services, day care and counseling services for youth and their families.

For youth in *Group 2C: Youth currently out of school and unemployed,* there is a strong focus on linking youth to the education they lack. Agencies help them to get high school equivalency or offer training programs in partnership with other organizations. Some also make referrals to employment agencies or to pre-employment programs designed to facilitate the transition to sustainable independence. A few agencies provide advocacy or

financial assistance, and/or provide programs for addiction or anger management. Educational services include academic assessment, *e.g.*, the Canadian Adult Achievement Test (CAAT), information about training and educational options, and planning for General Education Development (computer-based GED material). Other agencies help at-risk youth return to school for employment training and to get high school equivalency or outreach employment counseling (which focuses on employment training and job connection). Some educational programming provides opportunities for homeless youth to regain confidence and a sense of identity. The Immigrant Settlement Adaptation Program (ISAP) provide information, orientation, guidance, translation, and referrals (some agencies have a network with other townships, organizations, associations and clubs, some of which have youth initiatives). Services related to well-being include a program on preventing homelessness among youth; anger management programs; outreach programs; advocacy; counseling; referrals; contacting legal aid and hospitals on their behalf; helping to arrange financial assistance (*e.g.*, for medical needs); and housing assistance (where to look, how to rent) and purchases (*e.g.*, cars, insurance).

B.   Experience of immigrant youth whose education took place outside Canada

The principal resource tapped by youth whose education took place outside Canada is ESL classes offered by immigrant serving agencies and colleges, and additional college courses that they believe will lead to accreditation. At the advice of ESL and other counselors, they try volunteering in community agencies to gain "Canadian experience", although their view of this is mixed, since they believe they are qualified to work for pay. They actively search for relevant information from friends, personal networks, and, in quite a few cases, the internet.

For those who are less qualified, they find that immigrant-serving agencies, which are where they take ESL classes, are also helpful in connecting them to temporary jobs, albeit very low-paying ones.

C.   Experience of immigrant youth still in school

Specific resources that the school had to offer, besides some sympathetic teachers and counselors, included good orientation sessions (but these are too few and sometimes well intentioned but inadequate) and the SWIS program, which those who experienced (although they described its work rather than knew its name) found very useful. Organizations that offer programs for youth, such as social service agencies, government assistance, Youth for Futures, COSTI, and the YMCA, were singled out as particularly helpful; some had been accessed after the youth had been made aware of them through the school. This was not always the case: there was a sense that resources are not well integrated, with people associated with specific programs, agencies, organizations, etc., not very sure of what others were doing. Some youth had a sense that *outside* of the school there was much less for youth to go to for information on available programs, but *within* the schools, also, they very often didn't know the structures set up to help them. Specifically, they seemed unable to distinguish, in many cases, between SEPT counselors and guidance counselors, and most did not know who their guidance counselor was.

D.   Experience of immigrant youth in low-paying or dead-end jobs

As noted above, the nature of the long hours at multiple low-paying jobs precludes the possibility of these youth having adequate time to discover and access the resources available to others, and even prevents their having

the time to find what programs might possibly be available at the times when they are free. Hence their mention of the YMCA for recreation, and the TV for learning English. Hence also their mention of less healthy resources for their stress, such as gangs.

E. **Experience of immigrant youth who are out of school and unemployed**

Teachers, school counselors, and employment/skills counseling centres have been tried with mixed results. With regard to school-based staff, as many participants cited their caring, helpful assistance as criticized them. Employment counseling programs were typically more negatively regarded, partly because youth operated from the erroneous expectation that such programs would have immediate job assignments for them, but instead they found these agencies or programs often had only notices of low-paying jobs that had attracted many applicants.

A. **Summary of Findings on Available Resources**

There is a striking disparity between what Key Informants say is available to youth at risk and what each group of youth has found accessible. Most obvious is that between the services offered by informants for the employed youth and availability of the youth themselves, who are simply not free to use them during working hours. A question to reflect on is whether the resources that are available would have a higher degree of take-up if they were offered not just to individuals as such but to families and youth groups as such, so that youth who are seeking inclusion, who need very much to have the social capital of their families enhanced and their own relationships with them strengthened rather than disrupted, would find both more incentive and more satisfaction from such programs.

Specifically, ESL classes are the first resource for many youth, and through them, access to other resources for education and employment. Identified as supportive resources are helpful teachers and counselors, the SWIS program, COSTI, the YMCA, WES, and the Youth for Futures program. Ethno-specific agencies as well as mainstream agencies offer a great variety of programs to assist youth in career determination, educational goals, and interpersonal challenges, as well as translation services, placement assistance, counseling, and referrals.

It is clear that many kinds of programs exist and get good reviews from at least some respondents. The challenge seems twofold, therefore: to improve the service delivery of those about whom youth complain about as insensitive or unhelpful, and to extend good services to the entire range of types of youth at risk, preferably in the context of their families and peers.

VI.   What Gaps in Information Could Be Remedied to Link Immigrant Youth to Existing Resources

Overview of Gaps in Information

There is a sizable gap between the families of youth and those serving youth.

< Religious organizations and institutions that address the family as a whole and youth as members of their families often seem successful in reaching youth.

> < This success in reaching youth is followed by further success in "plugging them in" to other groups and organizations, thus building their social capital and resilience.
>
> < The more individualistic approach of most North American agencies, which reach out to youth as individual youth, seems in many cases less successful in reaching youth.
>
> < Exceptions seem to be ethno-specific agencies that also have a more holistic approach to youth and use an approach that involves an outreach to the whole family.

Gaps in information occur in four categories:

Education — information about the Canadian educational systems

- prerequisites
- equivalencies
- systems of assessment and grade placement
- different types and uses of ESL
- different levels of ESL and links to individual careers

Employment — information on credential evaluation across Canada

- certification
- evaluation of education, training, and work experience

Finances — information on support for attending school and obtaining good child care

Well-being — information on access to:

- family and other counseling
- child care to make work and school possible
- programs for stress and anger management regarding experiences of racism and discrimination, and difficult cultural adjustments.

A.   What Key Informants have to say

If Key Informants knew of other types of information that they should be providing, they probably would be attempting to provide it; hence this is not an issue that arose much in their discussions, with a few notable exceptions.

The current programs for credential assessment of foreign-trained people need to be more widely advertised, especially to potential Canadian employers. Others report that, in order to be useful, services need to advertise in different languages in order to be effective and be more widely available. "There is information out there but it's hard to find. It is in English or it is only available in government offices, which are difficult for immigrant youth to access", said one Key Informant cited in the report.   There is also little focus on youth employment issues even

though this age group has been identified as having a high unemployment rate. Youth seem to be forgotten, especially immigrant youth. According to one Key Informant, "The first type of information immigrants seek is about employment. They have to have a job first and then they think about education or their well-being." Other Key Informants added that at-risk youth need outreach workers to go to them where they gather and that services need to be offered in the client's language. Immigrant youth need to learn how to network; they just don't have the connections. "If they don't have a relative who has worked here, they are in big trouble".

Lack of knowledge of cultural norms and values by service providers may result in undervaluing the importance of these issues to a young immigrant. As one Key Informant reported, "When I was working at the Board of Education, I had a Somalian girl who was 17 years old and she was facing problems with female circumcision that was done back home but the [responding] agency had no experience/expertise in relating to her trauma of female circumcision". One Key Informant stated, "The major gap in mainstream organizations is the lack of education among a lot of the service providers in knowing the ethnic community they are dealing with and the attitudes that affect what and how services are delivered".

The Key Informants also reported that youth are not aware of many services. "We need to reach them and give them immediate access." Many newcomer youth have low self-esteem so they are less likely to engage in any social activities and remain oblivious to the skills required to survive in their new environment.

A.   Experience of immigrant youth whose education took place outside Canada

There needs to be much more information provided, both before and after immigration, on the requirement for recertification for many groups, not just doctors, and other professionals. Information is also missing on how to have credentials assessed, on how to obtain assistance in paying for assessment, on how to gain relevant volunteer experience, and most importantly, on how to access employers who don't insist on Canadian experience –especially, that is, employers who are willing to hire new Canadians in their own fields of training as well as the usual employers looking for people to work at minimum wages.

Immigrant youth with inadequate levels of education need information on how to access post-secondary education, and even more importantly, how to obtain financial support for schooling.

Both educated and less well educated youth in this category also need information very early in their residence on how to access childcare (to make both school and work possible), and how to access family support (counseling) to keep their family together under the multiples stresses of cultural adjustment, employment seeking, discrimination, and the combination of work, learning, and family demands on their time. This is the group with the highest percentage of married and parenting immigrants in their ranks.

Overwhelmingly, however, the gap cited is information in connecting to the job market, and this is true for both groups. All agencies, colleges, and other organizations offering ESL classes should be formally and adequately linked to HRDC and other employment counseling programs, so that all those taking ESL courses would also be receiving adequate information, and especially informed strategies, to prepare themselves for entering the labour force successfully.

B.   Experience of immigrant youth still in school

Most painful for many of these youth was their sense that they had no real information on the expectations of Canadian schools and how to meet those expectations. This is not to say that all youth found the expectations high: some stated they had completed in Grade 9 in their own countries the math they were being asked to learn in Grade 11 in Canada. But they did not understand the skills that were being developed in various exercises and assignments, or what students are permitted or not permitted to do in Canadian schools.

They also felt they did not have adequate information about the basis on which grade placements are made; their own impression is that assessing newcomers is something that the school does poorly. They also sense that they have inadequate information about the services of guidance counselors and others in the schools, and that there is no one particularly well equipped to plug them into the world of work, either by helping them get part-time jobs that will enable them to stay in school without consuming all their time and thus guaranteeing their failure, or by guiding them for appropriate careers in the future.

C.   Experience of immigrant youth in low-paying or dead-end jobs

This is the group of youth who work full time, often in multiple jobs, in order to support themselves, help support their families here in Canada, and send money back to family members left behind in other countries. Yet their yearning for an education and good employment is as strong as that of members of other groups. What they badly need, therefore, is information on how to access the financial assistance that will enable them to stay in school, and information on what better-paying jobs they may be eligible for, as well as how to access them. Again, the issue of finding employers who will hire them despite their lack of Canadian experience in work for which they may be qualified is an important one.

D.   Experience of immigrant youth who are out of school and unemployed

Respondents' experiences varied principally by gender. Females in this group experienced fewer gaps in information, probably because they were much more likely to reach out for help than males, and therefore learned of resources from family, friends, church, government or community agencies, resource centres, or social workers. A quarter of this group stated they were receiving no assistance, advice, or support from any source, and the report states that male youth linked this to their own discomfort in reaching out for support. Male cultural norms of maintaining control, being reluctant to share disappointments or emotions, and a tendency toward individualism were all clearly expressed. What seemed to be somewhat successful in being promulgated (and was much appreciated when found) was access to free photocopying, faxing, and phones. Clearly a gap in information about youth employment and support programs exists, especially in information targeted to males.

In addition, there is a gap in the information and personal counseling provided by some shelters, where many of these youth resided, that could be remedied by broad on-site information and individual attention.

A.   Summary of Findings

A principal gap is that between agencies that want to reach youth and the families of those youth. Where agencies target the youth only as individuals rather than as members of families or peer groups, the message may or may not get through. When it does, it is more likely to reach female youth, thus enhancing their resilience and leaving them less at risk. Religious organizations seem to be successful in outreach to youth in their membership, eliminating gaps suffered by other groups, which enhances the sense that the social capital of youth who are "plugged in" to such organizations is important in lessening their risk, and their inclusion in this group will lead to inclusion elsewhere.

In terms of the content of gaps, it falls into distinct categories: *Education* –lack of information about the Canadian system, its prerequisites, equivalencies, and systems of evaluation and placement; insufficient information on different types of ESL classes and how to find ones appropriate for the level of proficiency and career goals of the youth; *Employment* –lack of information on certification, evaluation of experience and other credentials, and access to employers who are willing to hire new Canadians in positions appropriate to their training and experience; *Finances* -lack of information on financial support for attending school, and obtaining subsidies for quality child care; and *Well-being* –inadequate information on obtaining family and other counseling, on child care to make work and school possible, and on programs for stress and anger management in situations of discrimination, and difficult cultural adjustments.

VII.   Other Major Concerns and Issues for Immigrant Youth

Overview of Major Issues for the Youth Themselves

Education is a source of frustration when it does not fulfill its potential for integrating youth successfully into Canada.

< ESL classes need to be:

- better linked to employment and the rest of the academic curriculum;
- more readily available in the community at times when people can take them;
- offer a progressive level of proficiency that will serve English speakers as well as speakers of other languages;
- more multicultural (inclusive, anti-racist and pro-diversity) in course content and teachers' and counselors' professional practices, insights, and skills; and
- able to provide child care.

< Extracurricular activities must be strengthened for building social inclusion.

< Good tutoring and similar academic support programs must be widely available.

Employment is the biggest need among newcomer youth.

< Work can make it possible for youth to attend school and achieve satisfaction with their life in Canada; if employment were linked to work, they would be more employable upon graduation.

< Employers who won't discriminate against immigrants and their youth are extremely difficult to find, and they need help with this.

< Access to information about jobs even before they come to Canada, as well as access to information about the way their credentials will be assessed are critical

< Family unemployment and underemployment is one of their biggest sources of stress.

< Fathers' lack of employment or underemployment undermines their own motivation, is a source of tension for the whole family, and exacerbates the very relations that should enhance their resilience.

Youth's mental and emotional well-being needs support.

< Combating racism in social institutions (police, education, employment) is critical.

< Programs are needed to help them to deal better with their own anger, frustration, and stress in cultural adjustment.

Both Key Informants and the youth themselves did not limit their discussion to the questions relating to the four main objectives of this report. They also wanted to talk about additional services and assistance that would help in the settlement process. For this reason, this section is considered important in its fidelity to what respondents believed the researchers should hear and pass on to the government funders of the study.

A.   **What Key Informants have to say**

Key informants' information was provided by area of need: ***education, employment,*** and ***well-being.***

1.   Education: All newcomers need speedy access to an evaluation of their credentials, both those youth still in school and those who have completed their education. Perhaps the most important educational need is for more and better language training classes. These need improvement in content (linked to the academic work of the school or occupational work of older youth) and level of course offering (more sophistical language training). More courses quickly available to newcomers in the community are needed, not just those tied in to schools.

Beyond more and better (free) language training, the educational system of cities where immigrants reside needs to be upgraded in two ways: both the content of the curriculum must be expanded to include the newcomers, and the skills of the teachers must be enhanced to provide more culturally sensitive teaching and counseling.

Finally, the issues of racism and discrimination in education on the part of staff and students must be addressed; the experience of racism has proven to be one of the most debilitating that newcomers undergo, and specialized training for both staff and students is needed.

2.   Employment: One major employment need that emerged surrounds the non-recognition of academic credentials. This limits the young immigrant's capacity to obtain relevant Canadian work experience. Also, employers have little experience in evaluating foreign credentials so they may be reluctant to hire a foreign educated person.

3.   Well-being: In services related to well-being, several needs were identified. In general, isolation, lack of communication, and lack of support groups are major problems for newcomer youth and need to be addressed. It is hard however, for small agencies to sustain services and programs. They do not have enough staff and, in some agencies, there are not enough ethnic mentors ("Somali parents typically do not allow their children to be mentored by a member of another ethnic group"). Others noted that there aren't enough services for young people who are having problems with violence. Even when services are available, one Key Informant doesn't think that social services agencies are knowledgeable about the risks that exist for immigrant youth. He believes the rush to conform is so great that little thought is given to the consequences of choosing a particular group to conform to. Acknowledging that conformity is important to young people seems to have been forgotten.

It was also noted that housing needs are immense. "Our agency has not been able to access any housing for

immigrant youth that is not part of the shelter system for homeless." The concern expressed is that these youth immediately become part of the homeless system and that influences their concept of their new country. There is also a tendency to see youth as an individual unit, which sometimes provides a narrow and incomplete view of youth problems. There are not many programs to deal with the whole family as the unit of concern. But, at the same time, there is inadequate financial assistance and not enough supportive housing for youth who leave their families and are not yet developmentally ready to live on their own. There is also a lack of guidance when sponsorship breaks down.

B.   Experience of immigrant youth whose education took place outside Canada

These youth, both those who are well educated and those who are not, state their concern about the lack of standardization in evaluating all three types of credentials: educational, professional, and employment history. They may be aware (or not) that the recognition of professional credentials is vested in independent professional bodies, or in provincial governments, the requirements of which include recertification even for Canadians moving from one province to another, but what they see as missing in all of this is both clear information on all forms of evaluation and a logical, coherent set of national standards that would make it not only much easier for them but also for Canadians as well.

In addition, the less well educated youth stress that there are far too few resources, educational but especially financial, available to them, and they identify racism and police harassment as particularly oppressive.

Both groups need assistance in accommodating their conflicting work, family, and learning responsibilities. They need to find that schedules for ESL programs and classes are flexible enough to accommodate those with family responsibilities, and they also need
to find that child care is built into the provision of programs to serve them during their period of adjustment and integration.

C.   Experience of immigrant youth still in school

Youth still in school focus on their academic needs to a large extent, citing the inadequacy of available tutoring, their particular need for extracurricular activities as a means of becoming integrated into good groups of youth both from their own background and from mainstream Canadian groups and as a means of showing what they can do, even while they are struggling with academics. They cite also the need for more and better ESL classes that will focus both on elevating their English skills while giving them the academic language and content for their courses. They also experience a lack of understanding, support, and respect on the part of some teachers, and believe that this can and should be addressed by the schools.

Since their educational experiences, languages, and levels of academic attainment vary so widely, they see as highly significant the presence, or more usually the absence, of individualized attention and support. Whether this is through a "buddy system" or a teacher who speaks their first language is not so important as that some form of individual assistance be provided. When youth have approached a social service agency for help, it has frequently been through a recommendation from a concerned individual.

Other issues they raise are similar to those of the other groups: they see no support for family reunification

with members still abroad, and no support for preserving the harmony among family members here in Canada, who adjust to the new culture in varying ways, some with fear and repression, others embracing what they see as good, but with predictably conflictual results within the family unit.

The experiences of a few of the youth (particularly those in Hamilton) of racism and police harassment lead them to express a need for more and better training for all those who deal with shaping public perceptions of minority groups, and especially for those who deal with newcomers, and they point out that many coming to Canada have not had experience with police institutions they could respect, so it is particularly important that police in Canada get to know the newcomers and establish a relationship with them and their youth. One particular suggestion made was for the creation of an African Community Centre to assist with this problem.

D.   Experience of immigrant youth in low-paying or dead-end jobs

This group of youth has the highest percentage of those who have been refugees at some time, with a concomitant experience of loneliness from their separation from family and friends. When this is combined with their working the longest hours and being most excluded from access to existing resources, it will be understandable that their needs are considerable yet not readily addressed by traditional programs, offered during the course of the working day. They experience language challenges that need to be addressed by programs offered more flexibly, both in time and support. For example, if they are working, their family responsibilities may be high, so they may require child care to be provided along with language instruction. They also complain the most about racism and conflict with the police, yet they do not always have family support to enable them to contend with these stressful circumstances, so they need the kinds of programs (again, available after working hours) that will enable them to learn stress management, anger management, and interpersonal skills for dealing with oppressive situations.

When they do have their families with them, there are, they say, family conflicts regarding cultural differences, the stresses of family reunification after what are sometimes long periods of separation, homelessness resulting from family conflict, and the very low morale that ensues from conflict within the family. Their needs for support to keep their families together in peace are great.

One of the factors that tips the balance toward dropping out of school is that when students are choosing between staying in school and being very poor on the one hand *versus* leaving school and having a full-time (albeit low) income on the other, they are in reality rejecting an inappropriate grade placement. In other words, because the school has assessed them as having lower levels of learning than they believe they have, they find themselves in younger classes where they feel they don't belong and won't be learning enough to make the sacrifice of wages worth while. They therefore leave school and hope that at a later date they will be able to afford to enter a community college as a mature student or enter another adult learning institution where they will be more properly assessed and they will not be wasting years in an inappropriate level. For them, therefore, the need for appropriate educational assessment and grade placement, not merely placement by degree of language proficiency, is critical.

E.   Experience of immigrant youth who are out of school and unemployed

This group of youth had many ideas for what would help them. High on their lists (similarly organized to those of the Key Informants) were financial support to stay in school and job creation programs or similar assistance

with finding appropriate employment. They also expressed a strong need to be free of the oppressive –and depressing-- experience of racism.

1.   Education: As indicated above, youth want concrete programs to curb racism and promote and genuinely implement multiculturalism. The second most common need stated was for financial support to assist students in completing high school and post-secondary studies. Their needs for new and better programs to assess their prior learning and then to place them in appropriate grades also ranked high on their list of needs here, and they believed that they needed more teachers who were prepared to listen to them, to relate sympathetically to them, and to intervene with insight and skill into disputes among youth, especially those based on race and ethnicity, so that school would be a more peaceful place, and one without gangs.

Structurally, they wanted more evening high school classes, allowing youth to work by day and study at night, and well-designed communication between home and school, especially that aimed at relaying difficulties students were encountering –apparently socially as well as academically, since they mention the need for appropriate clothing for "fitting in".

English language classes were singled out by this as by every group: more and better ESL classes, appropriate to their academic needs and level of skill, and support for the job-linked parts of high school curriculum, especially vocational training.

2.   Employment: "Youth job creation" was their term for their most frequent request. It was linked to a need for employment training, especially on the job, and linked to individual employment counseling and coaching for newcomer youth to find work. They also wanted mechanisms for communicating information about jobs that were appropriate for them, and for which they would receive serious consideration.

3.   Well-Being: Again the issue of their need for safety arose; the youth need good programs to address violence among youth who need to learn to manage their anger and develop better coping mechanisms. They emphasize a need for programs to promote more multicultural and multiracial tolerance and respect. They need programs to provide healthy housing, and programs and counseling to assist them to give up drugs and alcohol.

F.   Summary of Findings

Two of the lead researchers again organized their findings by the common headings of the education, employment, and well-being of youth, and we shall follow those here.

Education: with regard to language, classes need to be more sophisticated in their links to employment and the rest of the academic curriculum as well as in their level of instruction; they need to be more readily available in the community at times when people can take them, and offer a progressive level of proficiency that will serve English speakers as well as speakers of other languages, for a truly literate society. As has been mentioned elsewhere, assessment and placement are critical issues. Education must become more multicultural (inclusive, anti-racist and pro-diversity) both in course content and the professional practices, insights, and skills of the teaching and counseling staff. Flexibility in scheduling courses across the day and week will enhance access, as will providing child care. Extracurricular activities are important for many reasons, especially for building social inclusion, and good tutoring and similar academic support programs are invaluable.

Employment: The biggest need among newcomer youth is employment, in that it can add enormously to their ability to attend school and achieve satisfaction with their life in Canada, if it is appropriate and free of discrimination. Youth want better links between school and work, but particularly want links to employers who will not discriminate against immigrants. Access to information about jobs even before they come to Canada, as well as access to information about the way their credentials will be assessed, are seen as very important. Youth identify family unemployment and underemployment as one of the biggest stressors for families; the lack of employment or the underemp loyment of their fathers is debilitating for their own motivation to stay in school; it is a source of tension for the whole family and exacerbates the very relations that should otherwise be enhancing the resilience of the youth.

Well-being: Combating racism in social institutions (police, education, employment were mentioned) will do much to support youth's mental and emotional well-being. Similarly, offering them programs to help them to deal better with their own anger, frustration, and stress in cultural adjustment will be helpful.

The loneliness and isolation they mention, which results both from exclusion from peer groups and conflict within families, is central to being at risk, so offering programs to integrate youth into groups of their peers, both those of their own background and those from the mainstream community, as they suggest, will be helpful, as will programs that support family conflict resolution and family integration through shared activities. But youth with heavy responsibilities from a combination of work and family duties will need further help to be able to avail themselves of all such programs, which is where financial subsidies for education and access to child care are again invaluable.

VIII. Discussion and Recommendations

Viewing youth in the context of their families, communities, and cities enables us to see how to minimize their state of risk and marginalization by supporting their inclusion in their family, their peer group, their ethnic community, and simultaneously, a welcoming society. This clear focus on youth in their families will do much to build the social capital they need, which young people have a right to expect from their families and adult institutions, and will enable them and their families to deal from strength in positioning themselves in their new country.

A.   **Differences in Data by Gender, Ethnicity, and City**

While the research presumed that data would differ markedly across the three cities, the ethnicities of the youth, and their gender, there was much less difference than anticipated.

1.   Differences by Gender: The Key Informants commented on gender differences, although they were not specifically asked to. Several identified the high pressure placed on males by their family and by their peers: they are often expected to have a job, help financially support their family, and do well in school. Yet they also experience a lot of pressure from their peers to fit in. Such expectations from family and friends are not so high for females. According to one respondent, there is also a greater likelihood for male newcomer youth to engage in delinquent or criminal behaviour. Another concern specific to some newcomer males is related to being brought up in a male-dominated culture: they may need education on the way women are treated in Canada. Some concerns that are more of an issue for females are prostitution, female genital mutilation, and teen pregnancy. "In Somalia, if a woman gets pregnant, her family is shunned." A few noted that it is difficult to obtain funds for women's programs and the ones that do exist are often the first to be affected by cutbacks.

An additional gender difference was reported among those both out of school and unemployed: the females were more likely to be included in networks of services provided to youth, although neither males nor females seemed very positive about such support, according to their interviews.

2.   Differences by Ethnicity

The principal differences that emerged were those among youth still in school and those both out of school and out of work. In both groups Somali youth were over-represented, as were Afghanis among the youth in school, and the Caribbean youth among those out of school and out of work. Researchers in the schools had virtually no referrals for Chinese youth, and very few for those from the former Yugoslavia or Latin America. Sri Lankan youth were slightly easier to find.

Among those out of school and unemployed, the researchers commented that similarities far outweighed differences. Family poverty and instability, experiences of racism, and difficulties with the schools were common themes.

3.   Differences by City

Some minor differences emerged in this group. About a third of the youth who were out of work and out of school who were interviewed in Hamilton mentioned having moved there from Toronto with their families because the rents were so much lower. Several of this group interviewed in Ottawa mentioned that they would be moving because their lack of French was just one more hindrance they didn't need. This instability in residence may doubtless be contributing to their being out of both school and work.

B.   **Sources of Recommendations**

The recommendations emerging from the findings of this project have several sources. First, those interviewed, both youth and key informants, made explicit recommendations themselves. Some of these overlapped among the various groups of youth, and some overlapped between youth and key informants, while others, of course, were unique to individuals. Some, however, arose in the analysis of the data, in the clear emergence of previously unmentioned gaps that could best be remedied in specific ways or that could only be fully remedied in new and creative measures.

C.   **Promise and Limitations of Recommendations**

In reviewing the findings of the research, therefore, it became clear that there are specific steps that can be taken to improve the life chances of immigrant and refugee youth who are most at risk, and that these will indeed improve the life chances of any youth accessing such opportunities. Even excellent programs, however, that receive praise from youth and key informants like the Settlement Workers in the Schools (SWIS) program undertaken by CIC-OASIS should not be seen as promising that all the answers lie potentially within the grasp of CIC-OASIS funding. There is no intent here to insinuate that if they were merely to offer new or better programs, *all* the problems of newcomer youth would be solved. While excellent programs will go a long way toward helping youth, there is too great a variety in both the needs of these youth and their locus. So while the recommendations will target various levels of government and school boards, they will also go beyond this to identify the larger coordination and support that is needed, particularly as we examine youth and their needs in the context in which they live, their family, their community, their city.

D.   **Recommendations: Their Organization and Content**

Some lead researchers organized the recommendations they made to the principal investigators by the target of those recommendations: federal, provincial, municipal governments, and other service providers. Others organized their recommendations by the level of change required: systemic, policy-oriented, or programmatic. In this section, a synthesis of all recommendations emerging from whatever sources will be structured in three dimensions. *First*, we divide the recommendations according to the most important divisions to youth: employment, education,

and family support. *Second*, within these groupings, we copy the excellent example of our colleagues and divide these in order of the group to effect the changes: specific levels of government and school boards. And *finally*, where appropriate, we further list the recommendations by order of ease of implementation: those that require no really heavy investment on the part of government or service providers; those that require some significant effort or funding; and then in a separate section, those that are serious enough to require a re-thinking of divisions of constitutionally allocated responsibilities.

Employment

Federal Government

1.   **For immigrants, youth and others, who have completed training abroad and migrate expecting to enter the workforce, HRDC and CIC should jointly establish a *website* aimed at employers and linked to the websites of WES, OASIS, and other similar and appropriate sites.**

> Here foreign-trained workers, not only young people, should, *before* they arrive in Canada, (a) discover the qualifications expected here for entry into various occupations, (b) find a source that explains how credentials are defined by the various accrediting bodies in different Canadian Provinces, and the extent of transferability of licensing from one Province to another, (c) see examples and explanations of equivalencies between foreign and Canadian educational and professional credentials (d) discover the rate of job vacancies posted for such occupations in each geographic area in Canada, (e) see models of resumes according to common Canadian templates for various occupations and professions, and, most importantly, (f) post their resumes. While, for example, the excellent *settlement.org* website is an invaluable source of information for immigrants and agencies serving them, this new website should be clearly designed for and promoted to employers, who would use it for positions for which they are willing to hire foreign-trained workers, as well as for the immigrants themselves. Since employers and immigrants will be viewing the same information, there should be a greater likelihood of a common understanding between them, and a reduced incidence of immigrants experiencing employment-related discrimination. The website should offer links to those of appropriate accrediting bodies as well as to those that are designed to assist immigrants in assessing their education and work credentials, like WES.

2.   **Employers should be given tax incentives to provide initial employment in Canada for workers trained abroad.**

> Employers will be the ones to introduce these workers to the Canadian workplace and provide them with the on-site training and experience necessary for them to begin to contribute to the Canadian economy and

society as soon as possible, and to continue to progress in their careers here. These tax incentives are intended to go beyond subsidy programs such as Job Connect; they should be graduated according to the wages of the employees they hire, and enable employers to hire workers at appropriate wages above the minimum for at least year-long employment.

3.   **CIC should establish a partnership with the provincial assessment services like the World Education Services of Ontario and the relevant professional regulatory bodies in each province, and provide their materials to each consulate for use by foreign-trained workers.**
This will enable workers to have their credentials assessed prior to immigration, if they wish, so that they know what they have to do to obtain comparable employment in Canada. (Some may find it easier and more affordable to acquire any necessary upgrading in their countries of origin before migrating.) Assessment costs can be covered by existing employment programs when the applicant is already in Canada, and reimbursed where possible and appropriate when an applicant arrives after assessment. Previous exposure to such information on the website should enable them to make submissions realistically.

4.   **HRDC should assist occupational regulatory bodies to make a critical assessment of their accreditation process and criteria, to expedite the process and eliminate such criteria as may be artificial, arbitrary, or unnecessary.**
To facilitate this, input from immigrant-serving agencies and foreign-trained professionals should be sought.

5.   **For immigrant youth who have not completed their education at their time of arrival, Human Resources Development Canada should undertake pilot projects within the schools to assist newcomer youth to improve their short-term employment prospects.**
One such important project would be to develop co-op placements for youth in order to better prepare them for a successful entry into the labour market. HRDC youth employment staff and employment-oriented staff in service agencies should work closely with local high schools on a continuing basis, linking them with programs to assist newcomer youth in finding work; specifically, more apprenticeship programs should be provided in the crucial high school years, before youth feel pressured to leave school in order to help support their families. In partnership with the schools, the government should mount a major multilingual campaign aimed at youth to promote knowledge of their rights in the workplace: health and safety, unionization, and employment standards.

6.   **HRDC should ensure that there is full access for these foreign-trained immigrants to adequate, occupation-specific upgrading in their education, training, and language acquisition; in addition, the minimum wage should be increased in partnership with the Provinces, and the payments from Employment Insurance and its coverage should be expanded to enable families and individuals to**

support themselves in their new communities.

Given that poverty was one of the chief hallmarks of youth at risk, and their clustering in minimum-wage and unstable jobs so prevalent, this financial support for them and their families is critical.

<div align="center">

Provincial Ministry of Labour and the

Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities

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7. **In partnership with the federal government, the province should raise the minimum wage, and exercise leadership in partnering with employers, trade unions, and community colleges in sponsoring apprenticeship programs that take into account the specific needs of immigrant youth, through good orientation and job-specific language programs.**

    This will continue the work of reducing the poverty that emerged as such a significant predictor of at-risk status.

Education

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Federal Government

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(In general, since education is a provincial responsibility, there was a conscious attempt in shaping recommendations to discover in what way the federal government can assist boards of education and schools in the large urban areas that are the magnet for newcomers to have the resources specific to serving immigrants well.)

8. **The Federal Government, through Citizenship and Immigration Canada, should fund a counseling service that is directly targeted at immigrant youth who have at some time in the past been refugees.**

    Its hours should be flexible enough to accommodate youth in the school system, those in employment, and those in the community but not at school or at work, as all are likely to have had experiences that require insight, sensitivity, and training beyond that normally provided in the training of most counselors. A number of immigrant-serving agencies would be appropriate venues for such services; other could be encouraged to expand their services to meet this need.

9. **The Federal Government should investigate with the Provinces the possibility of creative funding partnerships with school boards in areas receiving immigrants, to enable them to provide upgrading for potential teachers from the new communities**.

    By the employment of teachers from new communities, the capacities of the schools receiving newcomer children will be enhanced, to provide a culturally rich and sensitive environment, with adequate language support for their learning over the first seven years of their education.

<div align="center">

Provincial Ministry of Education

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10. **The Ministry of Education should set province-wide standards and procedures for the assessment**

and placement of newcomer youth, to determine their most appropriate course and level of studies.
Care should be taken that students have the opportunity to be placed in courses at various levels, rather than be placed at either the level of their English or that of their lowest level of achievement.

11. **The recognition of teaching credentials for teachers from new communities should become a smoother, more quickly expedited process, with assistance provided by the Province to Faculties of Education for the upgrading of qualifications to match those of Ontario certified teachers.**
Teachers of languages other than English and French should be assisted to acquire the expertise needed to expand the number of their teachable subjects, so that they may be more fully integrated into the ranks of teachers and the broader educational system.

12. **With school boards, the Ministry should consider the development of an "early warning checklist" to allow students and their families to know exactly how the school views their progress or lack thereof, since discrepancies often appear between the perceptions of students and the school.**
Boards should also create workshops for parents around "early warning checklists", to introduce families to their intent and use. This, however, while a useful preventive measure to make parents aware of the difficulties the school perceives their child to be having, is not to be interpreted as the first or even the best step. Boards should also have active outreach programs to involve in a meaningful way the parents of their students, so as to empower them to support their children through their knowledge of the school system and through their participation in it in a way that states clearly to their children that their families and communities enjoy a respected status within this important social system.

13. **The Ministry of Education should design and implement a "transition semester" that would be a recommended option for newcomer youth.**
During this semester, newcomer youth would be allowed to audit courses of various levels, and attempt the work, without penalty, for their own benefit and that of the guidance counselors who advise them. Included would be English upgrading specific to academic work, and an introductory seminar explaining the Canadian educational system. The Ministry should assist Boards in designing and implementing orientation sessions for newcomers, with follow-up sessions on a regular basis. University staff with good programs for the foreign students whom they recruit may be requested to serve in an advisory capacity in the design and implementation of such orientation and ongoing sessions, as many of these university programs are highly rated by the students they serve. This semester should introduce newcomer youth to the SWIS program, as well as to the teachers and counselors who will be assigned to them throughout their high school careers.

14. **The Ministry of Education should regard extracurricular activities as fundamental to the well-being of students and fund schools at a level which will allow these activities to remain and expand. Municipalities should establish recreational programs in areas where there are high concentrations**

of immigrant youth.

In particular, since males were more at risk than females and the males were most focused on the need for more, and more appropriate, sports as a means of integration, funding for extracurricular sports activities should be enhanced through both the schools and community organizations that can provide access to gymnasia and playing fields. This will call for creative partnerships with municipalities and Boards of Education, but is an important area for provincial leadership.

15. **The Ministry of Education should increase both the scope and depth of English language training in the schools, and make these graduated courses in speaking and writing available to all students who are interested in them, not merely newcomers. With support from the federal government, the Ministry of Education should also offer community-based language training, making it available in every city.**

A literate citizenry, whether native or foreign born, is one capable of an integrated, full civic participation, as well as of greater economic contributions. (The Government of Israel offers one model of life-long learning for language that has much to offer nations of immigrants.)

16. **The Ministry of Education should ensure that Boards of Education are funded at levels adequate for a teaching complement of a size that permits good pupil-teacher ratios, with each student assigned a *teacher-advisor* who will know him or her as an individual as well as in a student role, and a *guidance counselor* who will similarly follow the student's progress through each year of school.**

To counter the isolation, anonymity, and marginalization experienced by immigrant youth in increasingly large secondary schools (although this is not exclusive to newcomers), the appointed teacher-advisors and guidance counselors should meet as frequently as possible with newcomers until they are successfully integrated into their peer groups and studies.

17. **Funding should also be provided to ensure that teachers and guidance counselors are provided the seminars or courses necessary for the professional development that will enable them to be knowledgeable about and supportive of the needs of immigrants and refugees.**

Schools can and should rely on SWIS counselors for assisting youth in their early stages of settlement, but a permanent structure that provides insightful individual academic and personal counseling is the right of every student.

Boards of Education

18. **Boards should create and fund leadership training to support buddy systems in which new students are paired with experienced students who serve as mentors and friends, and training for peer-tutoring programs in which academically successful students assist those who are new to or challenged by the curriculum, and for which the peer-tutors receive credit toward their community**

service, should they wish.

In many cases, local service providers and community centres can provide, when funded appropriately, the training and venue for some of these programs.

19. **Boards should commit themselves to the flexible scheduling of courses that will provide ample evening and week-end high school completion programs for working youth, among whom are many immigrants who must support themselves and their families, both here and abroad.**

While there are courses offered during the evening in large cities, there seems not to be a well-known, coherent program of part-time high-school diploma programs designed for working people, to the extent that the best of such programs in universities are coherent and designed to assist youth through to completion. This approach is crucial for newcomers.

20. **Boards should develop and nurture after-school programs for newcomer youth as a means of offering them continuing and manifest support in integration into the community**

Such programs include good sports programs designed to let them perform well in the sports of their countries of origin, the tutoring programs mentioned above, and other programs designed to allow youth of all backgrounds to form abiding friendships and genuine acceptance of each other.

21. **Boards should continually develop and improve the dissemination and implementation of anti-racism and anti-harassment policies in schools, including their curricula, to support multiculturalism, diversity and tolerance**

To support staff development in this area, as well as to provide role models for students, Boards should actively recruit teachers from among the newer communities, beginning with teachers of international languages but also with teachers for all courses in the curriculum where they are available. This time of a shortage of teachers should be taken advantage of by Boards to recruit replacement teachers from among these new communities. They should attempt always to have first language speakers in each school for the populations it serves.

22. **Boards should provide a supportive first language culture for newcomer youth in order to facilitate their continuing to learn, and boost their confidence levels while they learn a new language and adapt to a new culture.**

Where there are many students speaking languages other than English, extra funding should be provided to those schools for smaller classes and enriched language instruction, as well as some first-language instruction, to make them superb sites of instruction for newcomers.

Support for Families

Federal Government

23.   **As CIC-OASIS has established an excellent program for settlement counseling in the schools, so it should provide similar counseling for immigrants at youth shelters, particularly in partnership with other agencies serving youth.**

It should offer, in partnership with OCASI, for example, training for social services staff to enable them to serve newcomer youth with more awareness of the challenges of migration and seeking refuge, and more sensitivity to the racism and other hardships they experience. In particular, OASIS, in partnership with local school boards, should assist such shelters and agencies with back-to-school programs designed specifically for their clients who are immigrant youth.

24.   **CIC must recognize that a critical form of assistance for families and individuals is the speedy provision of their eligibility for work, as the family disruption that occurs with parental unemployment, following the disruption caused by staged migration, has proven devastating for youth.**

Further, quicker processing on refugee claims and a dedicated effort at family reunification will do much to prevent the increasing risk confronting immigrant and refugee youth caused by family separation and unemployment.

25.   **CIC-OASIS in cooperation with Ministry of Community & Social Services must expand funding to agencies so that they may undertake multilingual family counseling, which is critical to prevent the intergenerational conflict so often linked with cultural adaptation, which conflict in turn renders the youth more vulnerable without family support, and more likely to be at risk of leaving home and dropping out of school.**

If there is one program that is vitally important according to immigrant youth at risk, it is one that empowers families to remain a united group, supported in their communities, as they together confront their challenges in settlement and integration. *This is where youth find the resilience to avoid being at risk.* What is therefore dysfunctional in the provision of services to families is any distinction drawn on the basis of eligibility linked to length of stay in Canada or precise status of residency here. The longer families go without the assistance that counselors can offer, the more harm is done to their children and youth, and the greater the likelihood of the youth being labeled "at risk" when they finally become eligible for any assistance. This is an area where the service-providing agencies and ethno-specific community centres are most important, as when they are funded at adequate levels, they design and offer culturally appropriate family programs that keep families together by healthy recreational programs, both athletic and cultural, and offer counseling services as needed.

26.   **Non-employment income support is important for newcomer families, if their children are to be able to attend school; the federal government can take several measures to support these families. Most important among them is the restoration of previous levels of employment insurance eligibility and benefits.**

Similar efforts include working with the Provinces and municipalities to fund and build non-profit housing and good, affordable, and accessible public transit systems, providing language and job training for mothers who came as sponsored immigrants, and establishing a universal and affordable program for childcare.

27. **Provincial GovernmentThe Province should enable young immigrants to go to school as soon as possible, with the assistance of OSAP.**

If the Province is eager to have young immigrants succeed, one of the important changes it can make is to permit them to enter school with OSAP, rather than making them wait a year (often on social assistance) for its eligibility, thus prolonging their time of dependence and delaying their period of higher earning capacity. Youth who are able to go to school and get part-time work (or work full time, if they choose not to go to school at this time) are unlikely to become discouraged or turn to crime or delinquency; youth who have access to good youth programs designed for them at community centres and ethno-specific agencies are similarly more likely to become contributing members of society more quickly than those who do not, but the programs existing are largely for those under 18, and few of them target immigrant youth, much less youth at risk. The biggest gap is in programs for youth aged 18 to 25, who badly need individual (and family) counseling and other programs designed to integrate them into communities.

28. **The Police Services Boards in local communities should be funded by the Province to study the relationship between each new community and the police, to establish good training programs for police to enhance their knowledge of the immigration and refugee experience for each group of families, to gain insight into the experiences of visible minorities, and to establish newcomer youth-police liaison committees.**

Because the youth of several backgrounds and in various types of risk have mentioned that they believe the police to be hostile to and suspicious of them, there is an urgent need to build bridges of greater understanding and respect between the police and the immigrant communities from which the youth come.

29. **The Provincial Government should provide increased financial assistance for newcomer families and for the social services assisting them, as the challenges for such families with children and youth are considerable, especially in the cities in which they settle, with their attendant higher costs.**

Such assistance should take the form of higher social assistance payments to families that are not yet employed in recognition of the costs involved in establishing a family in a new country, extra funding to agencies for multilingual family counseling, and assistance to community organizations not traditionally funded by the Province to enable them to reach out to new immigrants to help to integrate them into the community; such organizations as Big Brothers and Big Sisters, the Girl Guides and Boy Scouts, and others could, after training for working with immigrant and refugee youth, prove invaluable assistance in this area. The restoration of the funds removed from the Millenium Scholarships, the Early Years

Challenge Fund, and the budget of the Ministry of Community and Social Services that is to target child poverty would obviously benefit new Canadian families struggling to get a firmer financial footing in Ontario.

The Key Recommendations:

Two key recommendations for the federal government have emerged in an analysis of the findings and requests of young people and service providers. They arise from the fact that overwhelmingly the research points to the ***need for coordination in planning*** for the well-being of all children and youth, but also to the fact that this coordination is particularly needed (and is almost completely lacking) in meeting the needs of the most vulnerable among our youth, those who are immigrants, and especially those who have been refugees. Their own voices have iterated in the reports the ways in which they see themselves as marginalized, and without a strong healthy identity in their new homeland. At the very time they are seeking to establish this identity both as normal adolescents and as newcomers, most of them enter our urban high schools where they are unknown, the language is a challenge, their own background is seen as foreign and even, at times, suspect, the workings of the school system itself are a mystery, and their parents, normally the source of guidance and insight into the adult world, are similarly at the margins, and, as far as the school system is concerned, particularly distanced, having neither the language nor experience to integrate themselves into the usual parent-school interactions.

Compounding the fact of these obstacles are two salient characteristics of very many of these youth: they are visible minorities and many, a surprising percentage, have been refugees at some point in their lives, thus seriously rendering them out of step with the others in their classes and age cohorts. The economic insecurity that ensues from marginalization and rejection is destructive of the families of these youth and of the youth themselves. A prompt and coordinated approach to their many and varied needs is therefore absolutely essential.

In addition, these youth and their families choose to settle in large cities, where they may find themselves less isolated from others of their background, and where they have higher hopes of finding employment. Although they have entered Canada in response to our stated need for immigrants, when they get here they find that the education that fills so much of their time without always meeting their needs, and the cities where so many of them live and seek fruitlessly to be integrated into healthy communities and meaningful employment, are both within the jurisdiction of the provinces, and that both are seriously under-funded for meeting these needs of newcomer youth.

The two key recommendations for these most challenging findings are therefore the ones that require a significant structural change, and, in the latter case, even change in the distribution of responsibilities apportioned by the constitution:

- **That the federal government establish a Branch of Children and Youth, with a clear mandate to work in partnership with Provincial Ministries of Education, the Federal Department of Citizenship and Immigration and such similar Provincial Ministries as exist, the Federal Department of Human Resources Development, and the Federal Department of Health and similar Provincial Ministries to promote the well-being of children and youth through regular liaison and coordination, and in**

particular, to facilitate the successful settlement of immigrant children and youth and their families;

and

• **That the federal government establish mechanisms to provide municipalities with enhanced support for their increasing responsibilities in assisting immigrants to settle within their communities through strong, well-funded public housing, transit, and cultural and recreational programs, on which immigrants depend for a successful integration into our society.**

Whether this is a Department of Urban Relations and Development with a strong partnership with CMHC and a broad mandate to address the effects of the increasing urbanization of Canada within the context of an urbanizing as well as globalizing world, or, at the very least, a more focused department within another department like Industry, its mandate must include helping the municipalities where immigrants settle to bear the financial burdens of such settlement. Greater responsibilities here are unfortunately accompanied by inferior fiscal powers for meeting those responsibilities. While there is a greater likelihood of finding both employment and a community of compatriots who will understand and support them in the common struggle to adapt and succeed, municipalities will continue to be the locus of immigrants' adaptation and success or their failure, depending on the support cities receive for the work involved.

IX. CONCLUSION

Five teams of researchers interviewing newcomer youth at risk and one team of researchers interviewing experienced service providers found so many similarities with the findings in the earlier report by the authors on the needs of ordinary newcomer youth in Ontario that these recommendations and conclusions, drawn from the material in their reports, echo those of the earlier study in number and kind.

Yet there are differences: these are the youth at risk, and they are the ones most likely to slip through the cracks in service, most likely to be doubly misunderstood by virtue of their higher rate of refugee experience, most likely by virtue of their race and newness to Canada to be in the least favourable economic position, the least salubrious housing in the largest cities, and the most fragmented and unstable of the ethnic communities. Here it is that the lack of coordination in efforts to reach youth and minorities and newcomers is the most telling; here the voices of the youth have the most poignant stories as they explain to themselves and to us the marginalization their families and they have experienced –and the rupture of those families by the experience. Yet their optimism remains, at least for some years; they came to this country with high hopes, for the most part, and this hope is still there, still a foundation on which to build energetic, productive citizens for Canada's future.

So the difference between the two groups of youth, those in the earlier study recruited from agencies and universities where they were already successfully "plugged in" to the Canadian scene *versus* those who are "at risk", makes the point more forcefully: families ought not be separated by government inertia or red tape or too rigidly applied regulations. Families and their children and youth need prompt and adequate economic support, and immediate and well-designed language instruction, for as speedy as possible an integration into the institutions and organizations of their municipalities. And municipalities and urban agencies need urgent support for housing,

training, educating, recreating, counseling, apprenticing, and employing the members of these families and their youth to prevent their exclusion from a productive society.

Coordination of planning and resources, and time itself, are therefore critical --as well as the expertise already possessed in abundance in government and NGO organizations like OASIS, OCASI, COSTI, WES, OAYEC, the Centre for Refugee Studies, and the Joint Centre for Research on Immigration and Settlement. The alternatives seem very clear in their desirability or lack thereof: these youth and their families may be empowered to enter the community of English speakers, of the tax-paying employed, of the educated participants in civil society, and to reside in neighbourhoods of their choosing where they and their children are welcomed and supported in the tasks of human development as they grow to productive and healthy adulthood; or they may continue to experience exclusion, marginalization, dependency, and the frustration and destruction of family, self, and eventually others that comes from un- or under-employment and isolation. Canada has first chosen the best of the applicants from both the immigrant and refugee streams, as the rest of the world is quick to point out. Now Canada has the opportunity to build on their hope: to design by new policies the structures not only to integrate newcomers and their children successfully, but also to improve thereby the life chances of all children and youth affected by such structural support.

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