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# Creating an Institutional Web of Support for Students by College Leaders: An Exploratory Case Study of Social Capital at One Ontario Community College

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## Abstract

Social Capital can have a positive impact on a student's ability to be successful in their schooling (Coleman, 1987, 1988, 1990, 1994). Coleman's research identified norms, networks, and trust as being crucial to the definition of social capital. This dissertation explores the manifestation of what social capital "looks like" and the particular outcomes of social capital within the context of a college in Ontario. Specifically, this exploratory case study (Yin, 2014) examined the perspectives of senior leadership in the ways social capital is currently evident in their college and how it contributes publically to any positive outcomes for students. Data collection included the use of semi-structured interviews (n=7), the collection of college documents, and other relevant, publically available materials such as mission, goals and program descriptions. The data were analyzed using a modified version of the constant comparative method (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) to identify key themes. In broad terms, the findings aligned with Coleman's (1987, 1988) norms, networks, and trust and suggest that college leaders can help to underpin student success through the creation of supports and networks for students; if this occurs for all students (not just for those students of privilege), there is the prospect of reducing inequality (Loury, 2003). Trust was also found in the data to be an important underpinning norm. These findings may provide important insights for use in institutional strategic planning and direction-setting to assist college leadership to consider and strengthen the college environment, so as to support students' social capital. Recommendations for future research on social capital are discussed.

**Key Words:** Social Capital, educational leadership, Ontario Colleges, college students, privilege

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I wish to acknowledge and thank my father and my mother, and the family that they created with love and kindness. You showed me about community and relationships in the family and in the church community that we were a part of. You kept our extended family on both sides of the family together, with love. To all my aunts and uncles and cousins, I acknowledge your support and the family that we are and have maintained. You have taught me to trust and taught me to uphold norms that that have helped me in life.

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## Dedications

I wish to dedicate this work to the (college) students and college community that I have and will be serving. May you grow, develop, and flourish as you learn. Go forth and do likewise.

I also wish to dedicate this work, to my family. May my husband and children see the importance of this work and also live it. May you go forth and do likewise.

To Dr. Bishop, Dr. Faubert, and Dr. Crocker, you are making a difference and you have made a difference in countless people's lives, over the years. Thank you.

*He has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, and to love kindness and mercy and to humble yourself and walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8 The Everyday Bible: Amplified Version)*

## Table of Contents

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Abstract .....   | ii  |
| Acknowledgements .....   | iii |
| Dedications .....  | iv  |
| List of Figures.....   | x   |
| List of Tables .....   | xi  |
| List of Appendices.....  | xii |
| Chapter 1 .....  | 1   |
| 1 Introduction.....  | 1   |
| 1.2 Dissertation in Practice.....  | 2   |
| 1.3 Why This Research is Necessary.....  | 3   |
| 1.4 Definition of Terms.....   | 5   |
| 1.5 Assumptions .....  | 8   |
| 1.6 Purpose of the Study .....   | 9   |
| 1.7 Significance of the Study .....  | 9   |
| 1.8 The Organization of this Dissertation.....                                   | 9   |
| 1.9 Summary.....   | 10  |
| Chapter 2 .....  | 11  |
| 2 Literature Review .....  | 11  |
| 2.1 Process for Conducting the Literature Search.....                            | 11  |
| 2.2 Framing the Study .....  | 11  |
| 2.3 Web of Support .....   | 13  |
| 2.4 Social Capital.....  | 15  |
| 2.5 Other Notable Views of Social Capital.....                                   | 22  |
| 2.6 Coleman and Social Capital .....   | 28  |
| 2.7. Networks .....  | 29  |
| 2.8 Norms .....  | 33  |
| 2.9 Trust.....   | 34  |
| 2.10 Critics of Social Capital and Coleman's Work.....                           | 36  |
| 2.11 How the Terms Inform the Research .....                                     | 39  |
| 2.12 Educational Leadership .....  | 39  |
| 2.13 Educational Leadership and Social Capital.....                              | 42  |
| 2.14 The Role of Leaders in Creating Institutional Social Capital Networks ..... | 42  |

|                |  |    |
|----------------|--|----|
| 2.15           | The Role of Leaders in Creating Institutional Norms..... | 44 |
| 2.16           | The Role of Leaders in Creating Institutional Trust..... | 45 |
| 2.17           | Privilege.....   | 46 |
| 2.18           | Student Success in the Post-Secondary Context.....       | 49 |
| 2.19           | Colleges and Social Capital.....                         | 51 |
| 2.20           | Benefits to Students.....                                | 53 |
| 2.21           | Student Success.....                                     | 56 |
| 2.22           | Summary.....   | 57 |
| Chapter 3..... |  | 58 |
| 3              | Methodology.....   | 58 |
| 3.1            | Research Questions.....                                  | 58 |
| 3.2            | Exploratory Case Study.....                              | 58 |
| 3.3            | Interpretivist Stance.....                               | 59 |
| 3.4            | Contextualizing the study.....                           | 60 |
| 3.5            | Introducing the Participants.....                        | 60 |
| 3.6            | Ensuring Verisimilitude.....                             | 62 |
| 3.7            | Validity.....  | 62 |
| 3.8            | Sensitivity.....   | 62 |
| 3.9            | Trustworthiness and Reliability of the Data.....         | 63 |
| 3.10           | Research Ethics.....                                     | 63 |
| 3.11           | Data Collection.....                                     | 64 |
| 3.12           | Data Analysis.....                                       | 64 |
| 3.13           | Limitations.....   | 65 |
| 3.14           | Summary.....   | 65 |
| Chapter 4..... |  | 66 |
| 4              | Findings.....  | 66 |
| 4.1            | Research Questions.....                                  | 66 |
| 4.2            | Recapping of Participants and Analysis.....              | 66 |
| 4.3            | Responding to Question One.....                          | 67 |
| 4.4.           | Networks.....  | 80 |
| 4.5            | Participant Interaction with the Web of Support.....     | 83 |
| 4.6            | Norms.....   | 85 |
| 4.7            | Trust.....   | 93 |
| 4.8            | Responding to Question Two.....                          | 96 |

|           |  |     |
|-----------|--|-----|
| 4.9       | Research Question Two.....   | 96  |
| 4.10      | Key Outcomes for students .....  | 106 |
| 4.11      | Key Outcomes for Leaders.....  | 108 |
| 4.12      | Key Outcomes for the College .....   | 110 |
| 4.13      | Summary of Findings .....  | 112 |
| Chapter 5 | .....  | 114 |
| 5         | Discussion .....   | 114 |
| 5.1       | Construction of Social Capital as a Choice.....  | 114 |
| 5.2       | Networks .....   | 115 |
| 5.3       | Leaders Must Know Their Environment to Construct Appropriate Networks, Norms, and Trust for their Students ..... | 117 |
| 5.4       | Construction of Social Capital as an Intentional Choice Based on Leaders Knowing the Environment .....           | 120 |
| 5.5       | Norms .....  | 120 |
| 5.6       | Mindful Construction of Trust based on Knowing the Environment .....   | 123 |
| 5.7       | Trust.....   | 124 |
| 5.8       | Students Were More Successful When Social Capital Supports Were in Place .....                                   | 125 |
| 5.9       | Supports and Opportunities for At-Risk Students .....  | 126 |
| 5.10      | Responding To Question Two.....  | 132 |
| 5.11      | Key Findings for Students .....  | 132 |
| 5.12      | Key Outcomes for the Leaders .....   | 133 |
| 5.13      | Key Outcomes for the College .....   | 133 |
| 5.14      | Summary.....   | 134 |
| Chapter 6 | .....  | 136 |
| 6         | Conclusion .....   | 136 |
| 6.1       | From a Web of Support to a Triangle of Support .....   | 136 |
| 6.2       | Characteristics of the Triangle of Support.....  | 139 |
| 6.3       | Implications .....   | 143 |
| 6.4       | Recommendations.....   | 147 |
| 6.5       | Limitations of the Study.....  | 148 |
| 6.6       | Contributions.....   | 148 |
| 6.7       | Recommendations for Further Research .....   | 149 |
| 6.8       | Summary.....   | 150 |
| 6.9       | Final Conclusions .....  | 151 |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| References.....                         | 153 |
| Appendix A: Letter of Information ..... | 164 |
| Appendix B: Consent Form .....          | 167 |
| Appendix C: Interview Protocol.....     | 168 |
| Curriculum Vitae.....                   | 169 |



## List of Figures

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Figure 1: Creating an Institutional Web of Support .....                                       | 13  |
| Figure 2: Conceptual Framing of Institutional Social Capital as a Web of Support .....         | 137 |
| Figure 3: New Conceptual Framing of Institutional Social Capital as a Triangle of Support..... | 139 |

## List of Tables

|                |     |
|----------------|-----|
| Table 1 .....  | 16  |
| Table 2 .....  | 61  |
| Table 3 .....  | 67  |
| Table 4 .....  | 69  |
| Table 5 .....  | 71  |
| Table 6 .....  | 72  |
| Table 7 .....  | 74  |
| Table 8 .....  | 75  |
| Table 9 .....  | 77  |
| Table 10 ..... | 79  |
| Table 11 ..... | 97  |
| Table 12 ..... | 100 |
| Table 13 ..... | 102 |
| Table 14 ..... | 105 |

## List of Appendices

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Appendix A: Letter of Information ..... | 165 |
| Appendix B: Consent Form .....          | 168 |
| Appendix C: Interview Protocol .....    | 169 |

# Chapter 1

## 1 Introduction

Social capital (SC) is a term that used frequently, but inconsistently in the literature. Perhaps not surprisingly, definitions differ based on differing points of view. According to Coleman (1988) SC is: difficult to measure, a resource, and hence can be defined by function, involved in the building of (humans') social structure, involved in the creation of human and economic capital, found in relationships that bring about social order, and its understanding is potentially important in terms of various aspects of equity. Further, Coleman (1988) stated that social capital is the "structure of relations between actors and among actors" (p. 98). For the purpose of this research, social capital, based on Coleman (1988), is defined as norms, networks, and trust between the "actors," be they college students, their educational leaders, or professors.

My research attempts to provide a snapshot of the ways in which social capital as networks, norms, and trust is realized in one Ontario community college. As a result of my wonderings and reflections about the use of social capital by senior leaders (i.e., those who make financial, policy, and allied decisions in the college), I examined the ways in which senior leaders at one Ontario community college created norms, networks, and trust as methods to build student social capital and to consider the outcomes of those constructions.

A highly appropriate methodology to respond to these queries was a qualitative, exploratory case study (Yin, 2014), because it afforded a broad exploration of the question as there was scant Ontario-based literature on the study's focus, and the research could be undertaken in a natural setting from the perspective of the research participants (i.e., during semi-structured interviews of the senior leaders at one Ontario College). This research is timely and important, because it contributes to the work of social capital in the post-secondary sector in Ontario. Further, it offers recommendations for senior leadership in other Ontario colleges in particular, who are seeking to create opportunities to develop social capital for students' benefit.

## 1.2 Dissertation in Practice

I am a nurse, and the idea for this research study originated while I was thinking about how to help nursing students in my program be successful in college and secure employment in the field. I looked at some of the students in the nursing programs, which I was teaching in, and I thought to myself: There must be something, some way, to productively help the students (beyond what I was already doing). I wondered what factors existed, which I could implement, to better equalize the playing field and bring equity into the classroom: To help my nursing students succeed. Thus, from the experiences gained in my doctoral program, and through my extensive research in leadership, I have discovered that, as an educational leader, there are actions I can take, attitudes I can model, and resources I can leverage to support student success.

This study is the result of my desire to help students succeed. My goal is to assist students to be or become the best they can be, as students, graduates, and ultimately highly efficacious and caring professionals. This dissertation represents my learning journey through struggles and challenges, yet it is a testimony to my educational leader colleagues, and other students or leaders, who have led, coached, or helped others succeed. I want leaders and aspiring leaders to understand some of what they can do to help students.

I recognize that the role of the senior leader at a community college is complex. Senior leaders are involved, for example, with a spectrum of portfolios, such as: addressing matters of human resources (i.e., hiring staff, supervision), finance (i.e., budget, grants), academics (i.e., program offerings), accreditations (i.e., Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing), and the provincial standings in registration/certification exams (i.e., Registered Nursing certification examinations administered by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing for North America). Bailey, Jenkins, and Leinbach (2005a) stated that there is “no question that community colleges encounter many difficulties as they serve students with serious economic, social, and academic challenges, and have less resources per student to draw on than other public postsecondary institutions” (p. 4). Yet, it is a role of academic leaders to put the success of students first (Bailey, Jenkins, & Leinbach, 2005a; Coleman, 1988; Leithwood, 2013; Trotter, 2013). My goal is that the findings and conclusions of this

current study encourage leaders in post-secondary settings—specifically in community colleges in Ontario—to seek out ways to increase student success through the creation of norms, networks, and trust (i.e., social capital) for students.

### 1.3 Why This Research is Necessary

The late James Coleman (1988), one of the preeminent sociologists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, studied students and academic success. For example, from one of his investigations, Coleman linked social capital and the (greater) educational success of students in Catholic schools. Coleman attributed the student’s success in part to the networks, norms, and trust that they received from the community and from the relationships fostered within their church and school networks. As an educator in a post-secondary setting, I have observed that those students who accessed networks, adapted to school norms, and built trust with other students and instructors within the college, often had the supports needed to complete the program of study in a timely manner. However, many students do not have this support and frequently they are amongst those who do not complete programs. Based on relevant research to this point we cannot say that all students who have strong social capital do well educationally. We know it usually helps significantly, but sometimes for many reasons it may still not be enough of a help.

Just over a decade ago, Bailey, Jenkins, and Leinbach (2005a) summarized research conducted by the Community College Research Center in the United States that determined, “graduation rate shows for the cohort starting in fall 1999 that 22.3 percent of first-time, full-time (FTFT) community college students in degree programs attained postsecondary credential in their starting institutions after three years” (p. 1). Further, from the Beginning Postsecondary Students (BPS) longitudinal study between 1996-2003 by the U.S. Department of Education, Bailey et al., (2005a) found, “results indicat[ing] that a nearly identical 22.9 percent of all FTFT degree-program community college students in the BPS sample earned a credential (certificate or associate degree) from their institution of first enrolment within three years” (p. 1). Bailey, et al., (2005a) further explained that:

From BPS...the three-year institutional rate is 22.9 percent and the individual graduation rate is 25.5 percent. But the six-year institutional graduation rate is 28.3

percent while the six-year individual graduation rate is significantly higher 45.7 percent. Therefore, while using a three-year graduation rate certainly gives a more negative picture of graduation from community college, since many students go on to graduate in subsequent years, it does minimize the distortion created by attendance at more than one institution...but despite the distortions in the SRK data, such rates still may be useful for analyzing differences in performance among institutions. Even if the rates are too low, if they are all too low by similar proportion, then searching for explanations for the differences among institutions could still yield important insights. (p. 2)

At the college where I am a professor, the college-wide graduation rate is 71% (Lima, G., personal communication March 27, 2016). In 2011-2012 the graduation rate was 69.3%, and the provincial average was 65.0% for the same year (Trotter, 2013). Globally, these types of statistics represent, on the one hand, considerable student success. On the other hand, they point to a financial, personal, and academic lost opportunity, and in a sense, a tragedy (Bailey, Jenkins, & Leinbach, 2005a). Students who do not complete their program of study represent such unrealized potential here, as they could have contributed more strongly to our workforce. The college where I undertook this research, Silver Lake College (pseudonym), increased their graduation rate five percent over the last six years, according to the monitoring board Key Performance Indicators (KPI) (2015-2016). This past academic year, the overall graduation rate increased again, by 1.3%, but is still slightly under the provincial average (XXX College, no author, 2015-2016). I wondered what the educational leaders at the institution did to influence these student success outcomes. Searching for an explanation is still important (Bailey, et al., 2005a), especially since Bailey et al. conducted their research with American Community Colleges, and this is a Canadian Community College.

Social Capital has been linked to many positive achievements for students in various tiers of education, which may sustain and promote positive academic outcomes, such as: increased retention rates, increased graduation rates, and student readiness for the workforce (Bean, 2005; Burns, 2010; Finnie, Childs, & Qiu, 2010). A 2016 funding announcement from the Ontario Ministry of Finance suggested that Ontario is contributing to the ability of all to go to school by making college and university education more accessible and

affordable for all. Therefore, more college graduates can contribute to the workforce, and in particular, many can gain higher than entry-level jobs. The media release stated:

Starting in the 2017-18 school year, Ontario is making college and university education more affordable and accessible with our plan to prepare more students for the jobs of tomorrow. We are investing in tomorrow's highly skilled workforce today by: Transforming student assistance to make average tuition free for students with financial need from families with incomes of \$50,000 or lower, and making tuition more affordable for middle-class families. (Ontario Ministry of Finance, 2016, p. 1)

The importance of a highly skilled workforce has been echoed by the organization of Colleges Ontario when it asserted that, Ontario needs a more highly qualified workforce for the years ahead: "Colleges in Ontario play an essential role in strengthening the province's economy and helping more people find rewarding careers" (Colleges Ontario, 2016a, p. 1). Social capital is necessary to help support and elevate student success at the college level in order for graduates to become skilled members of the provincial workforce, and who, in turn, are able to contribute to Ontario's economy. Halsey (2008) suggested that the investment into social capital benefits both the individual and the society in which they live. Goddard (2003) agreed that SC can be defined as networks, norms, and trust and is important, because SC supports students as they develop their knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values in post-secondary education. Goddard (2003) also believed social capital helped to prepare students to reap the rewards of improved employment prospects and remuneration. Further, the benefits of SC contributed to an increased quality of life, because of a general improvement in employment prospects and remuneration. For example, with a solid or reasonable income from work, one can have the means to buy fresh fruits and vegetables, which can potentially lead to better health.

## 1.4 Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions were operationalized to use in my research. As many readers of this document may reside outside of Ontario, allied information is provided with the definition to assist with understanding.



**1.4.1 College.** Colleges are post-secondary learning institutions that grant certificate programs of study, diplomas, apprenticeship programs and degrees (Go to College or University in Ontario, 2017), and this includes all Ontario community colleges. They are wide-ranging, affordable, and instructionally innovative, advanced and vocationally focused (Go to College or University in Ontario, 2017). The community college is an innovative late 19<sup>th</sup> century prototype of post-secondary training, which is a “complex institution with a broad range of educational, social, and economic factions. Colleges have frequently been defined by their by their commitment to open access, convenience, and affordability” (Boggs & McPhail, 2016, p. 15). Recently, colleges have been faced with issues around an “open door policy,” and “completion rates, and overall institutional effectiveness” (p. 23). Community colleges have a clear focus on workplace preparation along with traditional academic programs (Boggs & McPhail, 2016; Go to College or University in Ontario, 2017).

More specifically, in Canada, the term “college” as defined by Canada Revenue Agency Subsection 123(1) defines a "public college" to mean "an organization that operates a post-secondary college or post-secondary technical institute. One that:

1. receives from a government or a municipality funds that are paid for the purpose of assisting the organization in the ongoing provision of educational services to the general public, and
2. the primary purpose of which is to provide programs of instruction in one or more fields of vocational, technical or general education." (Canada Revenue Agency, 2016)

**1.4.2 Exploratory case study.** This methodology affords an inductive, broad, in-depth look at a distinct phenomenon of a specific research environment from an outside perspective in the natural setting from the perspective of the research participants (Yin, 2014). An exploratory case is a broad exploration of a specific phenomenon or situation under study that may further identify a research question, which could be used in subsequent research. In this research, the case under examination is that of one post-secondary institution, Silver Lake College, in Ontario in 2017.

**1.4.3 Networks.** The basis of networks lies in the ability for people outside of the family/ religious institution to create a “community” with similar values, norms, and beliefs (Coleman, 1988). Further, Coleman (1990) asserted that networks, such as social capital, produce “advantage” (p. 302). According to Coleman, when networks are strong, they are tight and bound among people.

**1.4.4 Social Capital.** Social capital refers to three key elements: namely norms, networks, and trust that generally help others for the good of others. Coleman (1988) defined social capital by its function:

It is not a single entity but a variety of entities with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within the structure. Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that would not be attainable in its absence. (p. 98)

Social capital facilitates individual or collective action for the public or common good: not for the good of the people that are doing the good. Generally social capital, according to Coleman (1988), referred to the value of resources that are tangible and intangible, the relationships among and between the resources, and how those relationships impact the resources or the larger group. Social capital, according to Coleman (1988), is the “structure of relations between actors and among actors” (p. 98). Lastly, there is neither one consistent definition relied upon by all who conduct research into this realm, nor is there a specific measurement tool for SC.

**1.4.5 Student Success.** In this study, student success is viewed as graduation from an Ontario post-secondary college program (Bailey, Jenkins, & Leinbach, 2005a, b).

**1.4.6 Trust.** This is essentially between and among people embedded to a greater or lesser extent in their relationships (Coleman, 1988), and according to Bishop (1999), “trust is crucial for effective school leadership” (p. 273). Trust is multidimensional and involves constructive discussion and critical feedback. It takes time to build, and is a continual, worthwhile process (Bishop, 1999).

**1.4.7 Leadership.** Leadership is “the exercise of influence on organizational members and other stakeholders toward the identification and achievement of the organization’s vision and goals” (Ontario Leadership Framework, 2013-2014, p.7).

**1.4.8 Privilege.** This is a supportive, personal resource, which often helps people (students) to succeed. It may afford people (students) within the group position, information, and connections (Coleman, 1988). According to Bishop (1999) privilege can be, in part, related to family wealth and the intergenerational transfer of family wealth that may be an important factor in life chances and enhanced circumstances of students.

**1.4.9 At-Risk.** Those students who may not be successful and pass school.

## 1.5 Assumptions

Certain assumptions were made regarding this study. I assumed that there was a link between student success and social capital in K-12 education, and although there are not many studies of this type in college education research (there are a few significant ones, see Mulford, Silins & Leithwood, 2004), I assumed that a relationship between social capital and education could be carried forward from K-12 education into the college sector. Like Coleman (1988), I assumed that social capital was ultimately for the individual and collective “good.” As will be clear in this study, I believe that educational leaders want to help students—that educators want to do “good,” rather than have an “underbelly,” a “dark side,” or ulterior motives, such as Putnam (1993, 2000) sometimes suggested.

In terms of the study participant responses, I assumed that each participant demonstrated honesty and sincerity in their responses, although their understandings, reflections, and answers were invariably shaped by their particular perspectives and lived experiences. The interview questions were developed based on assumptions that student social capital is a “good thing” (Coleman, 1988) and that a study was needed to discover how Ontario college leaders help to build or contribute to students’ social capital.

## 1.6 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative, exploratory case study (Yin, 2014) was to examine the ways in which senior leaders at one Ontario community college created networks, norms, and trust as a method to build students' social capital and to consider the outcomes of those constructions. To uncover this phenomenon, I asked:

1. In what ways and why have leaders at one Ontario community college contributed to increased student social capital?
2. What are the key outcomes from building social capital at one Ontario community college?

Grounded in research on social capital, and specifically drawing on the work of Coleman (1988), this exploratory case study examines how college leaders create opportunities for social capital (namely as networks, norms, and trust) to be heightened amongst, and for, students.

## 1.7 Significance of the Study

This research is significant, because it may provide meaning, implications, and recommendations for practice that other higher educational institutional leaders may wish to adopt. These leaders may see value in contributing purposefully to student social capital, and they may want to contribute to increasing student social capital in their schools. Additionally, this research may provide some insight into the outcomes of building social capital at one Ontario community college, which may interest some of the leaders.

## 1.8 The Organization of this Dissertation

In Chapter Two, the Literature Review, I explore pertinent literature as it relates to social capital theories, leadership, and higher education. As well, I introduce the Conceptual Framework that underpins this study. In Chapter Three, Methodology, I describe the study design, data collection methods, and analysis that I used to interpret the data. Chapter Four presents the findings and the key themes I identified in the data. Chapter Five discusses my

key findings in light of the relevant literature and the broader meaning and context of the importance of SC to student success in Ontario post-secondary institutions. Chapter Six concludes with a brief discussion of my conceptual framework, which evolved throughout the study's process, the implications and limitations, a discussion of the potential contributions that this work offers to the field, suggestions for future studies, and some recommendations for senior leaders in post-secondary institutions.

## 1.9 Summary

This chapter introduced my research, which drew on senior leaders perceptions and included supporting documents from one Ontario college, known in this study as Silver Lake College. Particularly included in this chapter were the ways in which senior leader's constructed social capital amongst students. I described the need for this research in light of my own experiences as a professor at another community college and my desire to help more of my students to be successful in the program and find employment after graduation. I outlined the operational definitions used in this work and stated my research questions.

## Chapter 2

### 2 Literature Review

In this chapter I explain how I conducted a search of the current literature and introduce my conceptual framework, represented as a “web of support,” which supports this study. Next, I review the relevant literature on social capital, and specifically focus on Coleman (1988) and his theories of networks, norms, and trust, which underpin my conceptual framework. Finally, I connect educational leadership and its role in social capital within the college community context.

#### 2.1 Process for Conducting the Literature Search

A four-step process was implemented in this literature search. Step one included a search of research-related websites (i.e., Colleges of Ontario) on social capital. In step two, I located the relevant literature: seminal works and present-day articles from online search portals (Scholar’s Portal, Google Scholar, and the University of Western Ontario Library Catalogue). Approximately 150 articles were retrieved, with 50 determined as superfluous to the study. A detailed search log of key terms was maintained: Key terms were “education,” “educational leadership,” “social capital,” “college students,” “Coleman,” “case study,” “constant comparative,” “grounded theory,” “health care,” “business,” “student success,” and “factors for success,” and I used various Boolean permutations such as “AND” and “OR.” Step three consisted of an analysis of the resources collected. In step four, approximately 100 articles were read, analyzed, and summarized in an annotated bibliography, and then color-coded to highlight key ideas. Further, charts were created to highlight and differentiate ideas among various texts.

#### 2.2 Framing the Study

I begin this section with a review of the type of inquiry that underpins my conceptual framework. I needed to adopt a theoretical stance to my work in light of a lack of literature directly related to my study. Consequently, I have situated my thinking about this research using the analogy of a web of support that symbolically draws its filaments or strands from the key theoretical aspects of the work of Coleman (1988) on social capital.

In qualitative research, “each writer has to make sense of the underlying philosophical influences in his or her own way” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 8). This investigation was framed as a qualitative and exploratory, interpretive case study (Yin, 2014). Further, and perhaps not surprisingly given the study’s design, it is mostly inductive. Inductive reasoning is used when the researcher looks at a case, asks a question, and makes a generalization about the answer based on the researcher’s understanding (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). In this research, I gathered the data to build my understanding rather than understanding the situation based on preconceived ideas, thus bracketing my biases in my field notes. During the field work, I collected data from interviews, field notes, environmental scan (observations), public document perusal, and my own understandings to create a *thick description* (Geertz, 1973).

As noted earlier, this research is interpretive. An interpretive stance adopts the view that reality is socially fashioned and that there are no absolutes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Different people often see things differently (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007), therefore in looking at research through an interpretive lens, there is concern for the individual and an emphasis—by the researcher—in terms of how participants understand their human experience in their subjective world. I focused on the reality of the participants as they told me about their situation from their perspective. Throughout the interviews I bracketed my ideas and biases as much as possible so that I would not impose my ideas onto the ideas of my participants.

As the nature of knowledge is concerned about what knowledge is, how it can be acquired and shared, I see knowledge as multidimensional and subjective to each person. To discover individual stories, I have to listen carefully to the narratives as they are shared. In the context of this research I interviewed the participants and reflected on what knowledge they offered. Because different people see things differently, and the knowledge that I was unfolding was their knowledge, I accepted there could be multiple ways of knowing.

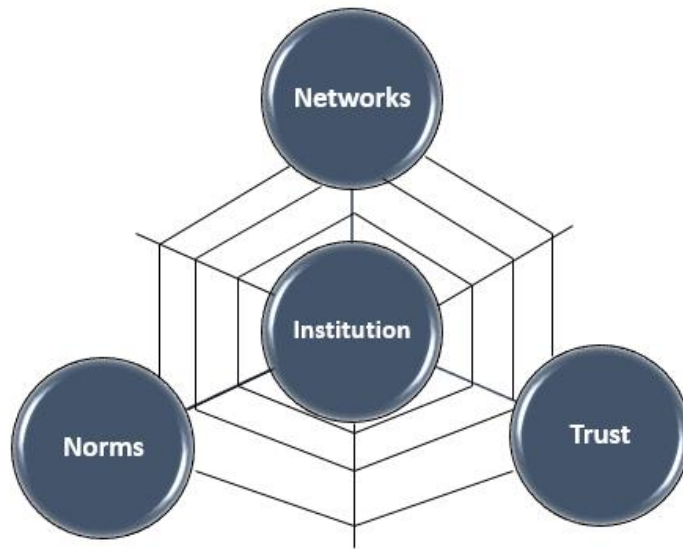
I have favored a non-positivist approach to my research: an approach that is concerned with the personal interactions of participant observation, where the subjective experience of the individual is taken into account. The emphasis with this approach is on the unique case and therefore one cannot make generalizations, though there can be

transferability. The findings cannot represent an absolute truth. Therefore, the key in any such interpretive endeavor, is understanding, as fully as possible, the individual's behaviour in a particular instance, at a particular point in time.

The choice of my research questions, and methodology (including the methods of data collection and how I treated the data), are based on these epistemological and ontological beliefs.

## 2.3 Web of Support

While a web may not be a new metaphor for considering the relationship between networks, trust, and norms in social capital, I built on similar understandings from research in social work by Garcia and McDowell (2010). For illustrative purposes, I conceptualized a version of the idea of networks, norms, and trust as a spider web with the institution at the center (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1: Creating an Institutional Web of Support (based on Coleman, 1988)**

I fleshed out this metaphor, as a web, of social capital. In Figure 3, the institutional networks and norms are, in a sense, flexible filaments, and in each filament, for example, the individual leader has the ability to add or delete these strands. Although each filament,



representing a network, trust, and/or norms takes time to develop, they can be developed and multiply over time, thereby creating a stronger web. Filaments are constructed and reconstructed in response to situations, resources, contacts, knowledge, funding, and various other opportunities or challenges.

Coleman (1988) and others (i.e., Falk, 2000) contended that one accrues resources such as contacts and/or relationships, knowledge, resources or opportunities through developed networks. Establishing solid networks and understanding and navigating social norms could be complicated for leaders who work with students who are in vulnerable circumstances. This dilemma could be compounded for those leaders in institutions who work with marginalized students: Those who may not have had the increased “inside” exposure to social capital and the accumulation of resources such as: increased contacts, knowledge, and opportunities that could help them succeed at school or college.

Garcia and McDowell (2010) asserted that in “order to gather social capital, it is necessary to become an insider to social webs that allow access to class-based resources” (p. 98). Those within the system have inside information, and privileges simply because they are within the organization, unit, system, or the network. Therefore, the web metaphor could also account for complex student circumstances and offer equity of access across the institution. For example, once a student becomes an insider, as a student in the College, she/he is in the school, within the system, and can then forms relationships with institutional leaders, counselors, and/or teachers. Further, the student may be told about resources or given other help as needed, because they are part of the “school family.”

Social capital networks, as part of an institutional web of support, is an apt metaphor that has aided my conceptual construction of this research. It helped me visualize support from around the institution, originating from the institution leaders and reaching out to the students. I envisioned the support as a web, because metaphorically it enables the student to grow and supports his/her growth. In order for the student to grow he/she has to trust the support of the web and the filaments (linking structures) within the web. To utilize the supports, a student may observe how others’ situations have evolved: Trust may grow based on those observed experiences.

A spider's web typically develops gradually, and so does the growth of trust, norms, and networks. As the norms and networks develop, trust usually results. The building of trust (i.e., in self and/or others) encourages the student to take chances based on enacting the available supports, networks, and norms. As the student takes chances and becomes more successful, the student may take more chances, growing a web of support, which facilitates the student taking more chances. Conceptualizing this research as the creation of an institutional web of support, may give new insight into the ways in which higher education views SC within its institutions and the importance of SC constructions to student success.

In the next section, I elaborate on my choice of literature and the theorists I selected to draw on for this study.

## 2.4 Social Capital

Social capital can be considered a contested term in the literature, having no universal definition that is applicable to or fits every situation. Different social scientists have explored social capital using different lenses. For example, Coleman (1988) viewed SC from the perspective of actions of individuals for the common good. Putnam (2000) saw SC as being related to a civic duty. Bourdieu (1983) framed SC using a Marxist lens and explored the access to resources coupled with disparities and inequities in power. Burt's (2000) widespread perception included concepts of SC bridging holes in society. Boeck and Fleming (2005) asserted that how SC is embodied is given meaning based upon the significance the "actors" working in the field of post-secondary education assign to it. Loury (1977) referred to SC in light of perplexing disparities in compensation for work completed by white, American citizens compared to African American citizens, and Portes (1998) framed it as having four sources, as he was concerned with relationships of the individual and the connections of these relationships with regards to upward mobility. The following table depicts a brief description.

Table 1

*Social Capital Theorists*

| <u>Theorist</u>      | <u>Main Ideas</u>   |
|----------------------|---|
| Coleman (1988, 1990) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social capital is a function of social structures producing advantage: “Social capital is defined by its function. It is not a single entity but a variety of different entities having two characteristics in common; they all consist of some aspect of a social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within the structure. Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that would not be attainable in its absence.” (Coleman, 1990, p. 302)</li> <li>• common public good for all: not self-gain</li> <li>• relationships</li> <li>• norms, networks, trust</li> <li>• resources are for actors (economic good)</li> <li>• + social capital + education + health</li> <li>• crime</li> <li>• Coleman (1988/1990) said the source of SC is dense networks</li> <li>• everyone is connected</li> </ul> |
| Putnam (1993, 1995)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• builds his work on Coleman (1988)</li> <li>• focus is on action facilitated by social structure</li> <li>• “Social capital here refers to features of social organization,</li> </ul>  |

such as trust, norms, and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated action.”  
(Putnam, 1993, p. 167)

- “features of [social organizations or] social life—networks, norms, and trust—that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives.” (Putnam, 1995, p. 664-665)
- dark side of social capital
- participation → civic engagement → social entity → bridging, linking, bonding of social groups (community bringing people together who belong to different social groups)
- mutual benefit: civic duty → volunteering
- moved SC from the individual to → organizations and communities and then to → social life as a whole applied social capital to cities/regions/nations civic duty, civic engagement
- participation = community (operationalized as)
- political scientist
- resources that come from social structure
- three types of capital: economic, cultural, and social
- higher class take SC for granted
- lower class are aware of what SC they do not have, because of a lack of power, access to jobs, or education
- lower class do not have SC

Bourdieu (1983)

- interest in how SC shapes social world especially aspects of class
- accumulated human labour
- resources and power
- social responsibility, connections and linkages, may be changeable to economic capital
- family basic source of social capital
- formed purposefully through integration into networks
- sociable, contacts, work contacts
- social capital can reproduce/produce inequality through (in)direct use of connections
- sociological perspective

Burt (2000)

- social capital of brokerage: bridging the structural holes (between networks)—people who network between groups access information earlier and have broader, diverse information and opportunities
- people vary in the quality of ideas
- Importance is: information brought by connections and positioning (i.e., one can benefit from different groups, because it introduces variance of information and opportunity); see clearly; broadly and translate information across groups; increased performance, faster promotions, higher paying jobs successful teams.

- four levels of brokerage: 1) awareness of interests/difficulties in group 2) communicate between groups 3) recognize differences 4) synthesis (new beliefs, new behaviours)
- brokers are crucial to learning organizations
- organizations collaborate, bridge structural holes learn faster and are more productive & creative
- organizations show higher performance when leaders are relationship oriented
- faster revenue growth
- more senior people have the shortest distance to the supply chain of information (direct connections)
- more senior people—more bridging—reach out of their cluster
- senior people responsible for connections bridging groups
- brokering connections across groups greater chance of promotion
- salary increase
- social capital is a metaphor about advantage (Burt, 2000, p. 1)
- weaker connections are the holes → competitive advantage
- people on each side of the hole, have access to different information, therefore there is an opportunity to share or broker the flow of information between people and control the projects that bring the people together from the opposite sides
- Cohesive contacts (strongly connected—have similar

information)

- social capital is most valuable to presidents, vice-presidents, those that hold management positions. These people have the most to gain from the information and they control the benefits of SC.
- Structurally equivalent contacts (link to same third party, same source of information → redundant information)
- one has more SC if one has more holes

Boeck and Fleming  
(2005)

- actors and meaning and significance for post-secondary education
- re-focused thinking around connections and networks formed by people based on trust and reciprocity
- social capital requires active and willing engagement of individuals
- people are the creators, not victims
- communities have problems, but the communities are not the problem
- communities are sites of skill and capability, not places of apathy and dysfunction
- social capital is dynamic and a malleable phenomenon
- helped create another way of looking at SC

Loury (1977)

- compensation for work completed by white US citizens compared to African American citizens

- where one is, is strongly correlated with one's achievements—perceived as evident in social divisions and inequalities (i.e., race, class)
  - one's social position can help or hinder the building of human capital
  - describes social capital as the impact of one's own social position (Loury, 1977, p. 175-176)
  - economist
- Portes (1998)
- differentiates between sources of SC and results → action
  - four sources: 1) value internalized 2) character 3) types of solidarity 4) negative or positive trust sanctions
  - participation
  - connections aid upward mobility
  - focuses on the relationship of the individual to the network, the benefits and resources of the network
  - Negatives: 1) exclusion of non-members 2) demands on group members (compliance, unquestioned acceptance) 3) restrictions on freedom 4) descending leveling norms

Social capital is a contested term largely due to a lack of differentiated research data, a non-consistent measurement method, a lack of common underlying indicators accepted in the literature, and diverse research paradigms being employed. It can be argued that the meanings and interpretations of the underlying concepts of social capital, constructed in the existing literature, are negotiated in light of one's own thinking and beliefs, and accorded to a specific context or setting involved. There appear to be different theoretical and practical applications giving rise to different definitions. For this research, I adopted Coleman's (1988)



framing of social capital, because his views as a leading sociologist and understandings are similar to my own with a key purpose of education being to create and to do “good,” and to help students.

As a term, social capital suggests: relationships and interactions. Falk and Kilpatrick (2000) specifically recognized SC as patterns and meanings of relationships within organizations or communities. Coleman (1988) was acutely aware of how people or agents in social units interacted. Social capital was, according to Coleman, defined by function, purpose, and meaning. Additionally, SC is a theoretical framework that can accommodate various paradigms from, for example, a social public good perspective to that of Marxism. From the field of sociology Coleman’s (1988) perspective on SC favoured rational choice for the common good: good for everyone, good for the initiator, and good for the recipients. Coleman (1994) proposed that SC is defined by actions of individuals and also as an aspect of social structure. As well, Coleman asserted that certain institutions, such as the Roman Catholic Church, the family, and educational institutions, maintain social structures that cultivated good and mutuality in relationships.

From their studies, it is clear that Coleman (1988) and Putnam (1995, 2000) believed institutions were deteriorating: reasons included urbanization, mothers and fathers working outside of the home, and people’s lack of participation in social structures and groups. As well, Coleman (1988) believed that all in the group potentially benefited from efforts to live, work and socialize together—helping one another and in the process enhance the social capital of all involved. The privileged and the disadvantaged benefited from a public good. Coleman’s “do good” principle was portrayed as one where people made the choice to do good if given the opportunity, and subsequently, perpetuated this principle through social institutions. One such social institution could be considered the college. Therefore, the implication for the leaders at Silver Lake College was that institutions “do good,” and leaders can purposefully chose to do good for the students, in particular.

## 2.5 Other Notable Views of Social Capital

2.5.1 Lounsbury. Glen Lounsbury (1977, 2003) investigated the matter of social capital with regard to employment income. Often, if there was no transfer of physical/financial wealth

from family to family, the achievement of financial affluence was partially related to income. Loury investigated why African American women were paid less than White women in the United States for performing the same jobs (Coleman, 1988; Loury 1977, 2003). Loury concluded that the transferring of physical wealth, and the influences of the social environment, limited African American individuals. Ownership of resources influenced the distribution of the resources, and that, in turn, influenced the creation of a skilled workforce. Loury's (1977) research dispelled the myth that an individual in a free society will rise to their competence level:

The social context within which individual maturation occurs strongly conditions what otherwise equally competent individuals can achieve. This implies that absolute equality of opportunity, where an individual's chance to succeed depends only on his or her innate capabilities, is an ideal that cannot be achieved. It has been shown here that the limited version of equal opportunity that is attainable does not have the desirable properties of the impossible ideal. (p. 176)

Simply stated, not everyone has the same opportunities in life. Simple economic theory would suggest that people's earnings differ because of education and work experience. This is often described as "human capital," because individuals (i.e., employers, organizational leaders) invest in other humans. This logic ignores the "why" and the "how" of the rationale and the process. Only the consequences of not finishing school are looked at within this paradigm (Loury, 1977). The why of a lower graduation rate, or the why of lower quality education in some institutions, had not been widely examined when Loury's pivotal study. Unfortunately, the contribution of Loury has largely been lost to the more widely read (and built upon) work of Coleman (1988) and others related to social capital. Loury is an African American scholar and Coleman, a white American scholar. Unearthing the logic and beginning to understand the "why" was one the intent of this present Ontario-based study.

Loury (1977) cited three main points about race and inequality that may be transferable, in principle, to other settings: 1) race is a socially constructed way to organize people with no deeper biological justification (i.e., racial stereotyping) 2) the social "handicap" of African Americans is not because of human capability, but rather because of the product of oppression and socialization (i.e., history, culture, economy)—racial justice 3)

there is an irrational social hereditary stigma limiting the potential of African Americans— racial stigma (Loury, 1977).

Loury (1977) argued that race is social, not biological. Organizing populations of people according to colour, is a form of racial stereotyping, and reflects bias against some people (i.e., people of color). To illustrate racial stereotyping, people may have limited information, however, people may make judgments and then act upon those judgments. Additionally, Loury (1977) voiced that because of history, culture, and the political economy, African Americans are disadvantaged, because of racial (in)justice. Further, Loury (1977) suggested that African Americans were not unequal in the potential for capability as compared to other races, in particular, White people. Racial stigma limits individuals, because of an “imagined” persona that may not be representative of the individual’s disposition. Because of “baggage” (i.e., engrained thoughts of members of dominant groups, previous relationship happenings, and previous information) some people carry with them emotionally, they imagine others to be what their thoughts tell them. This may not be true. These types of thoughts and misconceptions are incorrect, and false conclusions may be drawn from them. The inherited stigma of their life experiences about “others” they may have encountered is rooted in their consciousness. This stigma implies stereotyping, which Loury feels is a bigger problem than that of racial inequality. He argued (racial) stigma, overrides racial discrimination in American society, combining to disadvantage the African American population.

**2.5.2 Bourdieu.** Bourdieu (1983) asserted that members of society’s elite had particular networks of power and advantage. For the elite, the social advantage of social capital was generally for profit seeking. Bourdieu (1983) essentially argued that social, cultural, and economic capital can evolve, however, it is acquired. All people have social and cultural capital, according to their own habitus, as a result of growing up in certain cultures, social settings and with certain people, hence their upbringing and environment. Bourdieu (1983) suggested that cultural capital reproduces inequity: If some forms of cultural capital are valued more than other forms of cultural capital, in certain situations, that valuing results in “groupings” producing greater inequity. Social, cultural, and economic capital allows for, and may encourage, inequity. In terms of education, social, cultural, and economic capital can

be limiting factors, especially for certain students: potentially encouraging inequity in the classroom. For example, if the classroom culture encouraged speaking at will rather than raising a hand and asking a question, the quieter student raised in a culture where one does not speak out of turn may miss opportunities to ask questions.

Yosso (2005) in his critique of Bourdieu, contended that if students do not know the culture, they are limited by cultural capital. For example, students from cultural minorities may not know how to navigate the culture of the institution. They may not know how to sign a book out of the library, and they may think that they have to read the book in the library instead. Yosso (2005) also contended that there are institutional forms of cultural capital, where for example, a student has to get along with a professor in order to pass the course especially if the course is subjective.

This view contradicts that of Bourdieu (1990) who suggested that norms of behaviour are non-transferable. In his view, the elite do not allow the marginalized into their society, therefore the norms of the elite are not learned by those outside of their group. Applying this view to my study would suggest that norms of education, or norms within the educational institution, are kept in certain groups. In this view norms cannot be learned or shared by others. Although this may occur informally in groups at the college, this view is in opposition to what I believe educational leaders need to promote.

**2.5.3 Putnam.** Putnam (2000) investigated social capital from a political science framing of a (declining) democratic society. His work was to observe social capital from an institutional performance and civic duty point-of-view, where people always make sensible decisions for themselves. This links choices people make to what is economically best for them. Though Putnam (1993, 2000) positioned social capital as having an “underbelly,” he articulated norms of reciprocity or mutual benefit (pay back), for example, “I will do something (nice) for you now, but you will owe me later.”

When educational leaders promote a norm and an environment of collaboration and participation within the school and with community partners, the leaders knit the community together (Firestone & Riehl, 2005). Putnam (1993) noted “norms of generalized reciprocity and networks of civic engagement encourage social trust and cooperation because they

reduce incentives to defect, reduce uncertainty, and provide models for future cooperation” (p. 177). Knitting the college community together internally, may help students stay in school. Knitting the college students together with the community, such as with employers and co-operative work experiences, may help students stay in school, because they may want to complete their education and work for that employer. Educational leaders, by promoting norms of cooperation within and outside of the school, can promote communities of learning.

According to Putnam (2015), there is “growing inequality” (p. 36) in American society. Putnam (2015) cited that in the 1950’s rich and poor children played, prayed, lived, and went to school together, because they lived near each other, the parents knew each other, and were friends across class lines. Nowadays fewer people cross classes, beyond their socio-economic “niche.” Putnam and Campbell (2010) noted that over the last 40 years there were three diverse distinctions of social class separation in American society, showing division among the classes. They cited the categorization of homes into distinctive neighborhoods relative to income is more pronounced now than it was 30 years ago. Putnam (2015) believed that more families live either in affluent areas or in poor areas, a type of geographic division. This has developed from highways, subways, and transportation systems where high income families have moved out of the inner city neighborhoods into the suburbs. Putnam (2015) called this class-based housing, which has been heighten by income differences, changes in housing legislation, and changes in money lending. While race-based separation has been diminishing, over time, class-based ghettoization has been on the rise (Putnam, 2015). Further, class segregation continues, where neighborhoods of rich and poor are living and learning in distinct and unequal worlds (Putnam 2010, 2015). This shows how American society truly does “bowl alone.” Schools can bring people and the community together. Putnam (2015) stated that: “American youth now have the worst of both worlds – low absolute mobility and low relative mobility” (p. 41).

With absolute relative mobility everyone can do better. The relative standing of everyone would increase. Equality of opportunity is for everyone. People from lower-class backgrounds can experience upward mobility, regardless in changes of relative mobility. The water lifts all the boats. “After WWII... absolute mobility seemed to have been unusually high because economic growth and educational expansion allowed exceptional upward

mobility. The evidence now suggests that absolute mobility has stalled since the 1970's because both economic and educational advances have stalled... Americans believe that income inequality has increased in recent years, and they are right about that" (Putnam, 2015, p. 43).

In his research, Putnam (1993) looked at society, institutions, and politics. Putnam contended that, in multiple respects, there had been a collapse of society with negative consequences. Putnam and Campbell (2010) felt that the school-aged youth and their parents seemed to be more involved in the community. Parents and youth involvement included civic organizations and duties, volunteering, and in politics: "Advantaged kids increasingly flocked to church, while working-class kids deserted the pews. Middle class kids connected more meaningfully with parents, while working class kids were increasingly left alone (Putnam & Campbell, 2010, p. 13). To illustrate further:

Among "have-not" high-school seniors, trust in other people plummeted, while seniors from the 'right side of the tracks', the privileged, showed no decline at all in social trust. On indicator after indicator—general and academic self-esteem, academic ambition, social friendships, and volunteering—the kids who could be described as the "haves" grew in confidence and engagement while their not-so-well-off contemporaries slipped farther into disengagement with every year, (Putnam & Campbell, 2010, p. 14)

Yet, the gaps seem to widen, with academic pursuits, and self-esteem for the children of the working class (Putnam & Campbell, 2010). It appears that as long as the discrepancy between the poor and the rich is a reality, the fundamental promise of the American dream, of a chance for a better life, seems lost (Putnam & Campbell, 2010). I believe that leaders of educational institutions can at least in part translate this absence and discrepancy through effective education, practice, and performance. Educational leaders and educational practices can reduce inequity. College leaders can support the "have nots," give them a chance at succeeding in education, and thereby reducing the gap between the privileged and the have nots.

Putnam (2015) stated “growing inequality in accumulated wealth is particularly marked” (p. 36). He goes on to say that:

Parental wealth is especially important for social mobility, because it can provide informal insurance that allows kids to take more risks in search of more rewards. For example, a child who can borrow living expenses from Mom and Dad can be more selective when looking for a job, whereas a child without a parent-provided life preserver has to grab the first job that comes along. Similarly, family wealth allows for big investments in college without requiring massive student debt that then cramps the choices open to a new graduate.” (p. 36)

In terms of my research, these foundational and prominent researchers: Coleman, Bourdieu, and Putnam, are three key voices in the literature on social capital. In particular, I draw on Coleman (1988) and his theorizations of social capital.

## 2.6 Coleman and Social Capital

Coleman (1988) conceptualized social capital and the understanding of norms, trust, and networks based on a belief that people must learn how to act/interact in various situations in order to substantially succeed in public or private/personal relationships. According to Coleman (1988), SC involves a public good aspect where the person(s) engendering the SC may receive little to no personal benefit from their actions. Social structures, such as strong families and strong communities, result in a strengthening of the quantity of social capital for future generations (Coleman, 1988). In other words, when social structures decline, social capital declines (Putnam, 2015). If people (actors) are not involved in social structures (i.e., organizations), they cannot form relationships as they would in a unit or organization: where people work together toward goals for the common good. In that instance, people do not learn deeply how to act and interact.

Identifying social capital that is built into a school’s structure may help sustain SC. Specifically, norms, networks, and trust, which are rooted within the college environment, may purposefully help to provide students with the widespread perception, recognition, and learning of the sought after norms of behaviour, networks, and trust. If leaders model a



purposefully respectful environment this modeling may build trusting relationships for all staff and students. A respectful environment may be one contribution toward a solution of engendering widespread trust, and this environment may help the students adopt the norms or the widespread perceptions of respect. The students may continue being respectful as they enter the workplace or with their families, influencing future generations (Coleman, 1988). A widespread perception of networks may include students going to placements, and students building networks in those placements.

## 2.7. Networks

From Coleman's (1988) research, it appears he suggested that the basis of "networks" lies in the ability for people outside of the family/religious/institution to create a "community" with similar values, norms, and beliefs. For example, Coleman (1988) observed the wholesale diamond market of members of the Jewish Community in New York City, as a community where norms of honesty, networks, and trust indicated close ties. He cited a further example where a mother and her six children moved from suburban Detroit to Jerusalem: The mother felt her children were safer playing without supervision in Jerusalem, than in Detroit. In Jerusalem, the norm was for unsupervised children to be attended to by other adults (i.e., a network). The mother felt this was not the case in Detroit.

Additionally, Coleman (1988) noted an example of a market in Cairo, where one merchant sold produce for another merchant, giving the money to the owner merchant without commission, and without taking that customer for his own business. Repayment was not expected. That network valued the relationships among people and was a resource key to social capital. The value in the relationship was found in "obligations" where people do things for each other, often informally, based on trust, beliefs (i.e., norms) of reciprocity, and value in the social situation (network). Those relationships were manifestations of social capital where, through imaginary "credit slips," one actor may trust another actor (person) to return a favor at some point in time. There is human value in that relationship. Another important aspect of social capital networks is "information channels" or information sharing. The information promotes action without obligation: just an exchange of information. Such



information channels occur in most families and are one means by which norms of expected behaviour are built and reinforced.

Coleman (1988) contended that all social structures could enable social capital, however, certain institutions are more open to network creation than others, because of norms and networks. Often tight knit groups hold similar norms of behaviour and may often not accept new members easily into that network. Closure in some institutions guides and directs behaviours (Coleman, 1988). An example of SC would be the honesty shown in Coleman's depiction of the diamond district where stones are left and exchanged without formal insurance policies. Within families, a similar form of social capital is sometimes demonstrated in childrearing where it takes "a village to raise a family." Open access colleges, are those institutions of higher learning that are open to all students, therefore, all students have the chance for an education. For example, within an open access college, there are some programs that have minimal entrance requirements, virtually accepting everyone. However, some professional designations, (i.e., Registered Nurses Association) have a code of ethics to guide and direct behaviour and ensure educational and ethical practices are followed. The Registered Nurses Association does not accept everyone and one can lose the designation if these ethics are not adhered to.

Voluntary networks and organizations are constructed for mutual benefit of the actors or members of the network (Coleman, 1988). These organizations, where there are relationships between people, can be used for other purposes, because of the relationships. Coleman (1988) used the example of a group of students who could choose each other to work together for the good as a study group, or they could choose to hurt people and cause social problems. The students within that network group choose their behaviour. The resource of the network is available, but use depends on the choice of the actors. Of course, in many colleges and communities where there is marked disadvantage, actors may not have readily available or easily discernable choices as those available for the privileged in colleges or communities.

In terms of the creation of social capital for a public good, support networks created by the educational community appeared to be the single most important influence for student success as cited in a study by Kilpatrick and Bell (2001). They conducted semi-structured

focus groups of 15 farm business manager students in Australia who were learning together how to make changes to their businesses. Their study's results suggested that when students learned together and supported each other, all the students achieved greater overall success. Specifically, the groups developed shared values for the good of others, valued a climate of openness (knowing each other's "gifts" and areas for growth), and developed a deep sense of trust. Their organizations developed and grew through egalitarian group relationships (Kilpatrick & Bell, 2001). Groups often grow and develop where social capital is entrenched in networks and norms, and where trust is embedded in the processes. The end result of this group growth is trust, self-confidence, the development of interpersonal communication skills, and an enhanced support network (Kilpatrick & Bell, 2001).

Before one can develop a support network for others, one must have self-confidence, know others, and have a commitment to the group (Kilpatrick & Bell, 2001). Developing a support network then becomes a deliberate construction process where leaders use their knowledge and skill for the good of their community—their students. It may be that through administrative processes and programs in their college that educational leaders help foster a climate that builds self-confidence for students. Additionally, students may get to know each other informally and work on a task together showing commitment to that group.

**2.7.1 Families.** According to Coleman (1987), schools are constructed institutions based on policies meant to complement the work of a family. Coleman contended that it was important for the family to be a close-knit network whose primary responsibility was for child rearing. However, as the roles of adults within the family structure have changed, requiring adults to spend more time away from the family due to work responsibilities, child-rearing increasingly fell to the school to fill in the gaps of the community. While in public school, breakfast programs and after-school care address the physical and social-emotional aspects of this lack of community, there also needs to be consideration given to what networks can do to support students at the college level. Therefore, as families change, schools must also change if they are to remain highly effective (Coleman, 1987). It appears that Coleman suggested that the basis of his networks lie in the ability for people outside of the family to create a community with similar values, norms, and beliefs. This is important in this era (since Coleman's seminal work in 1988), because of the changing nature of the

family, work intensification, loss of many social security nets, the reliance on larger societal structures to offer different kinds of support(s), and the potentially problematic aspects of students in colleges who need help to be successful.

**2.7.2 Communities.** Within a community (outside of the family), an adult may interact with another's child. Sometimes, those adults shape community norms and boundaries with other people's children (i.e., Sunday school or church communion classes). Also, many times adults lead groups of other children (i.e., Scouts or Brownies). Here, adults are not only concerned about themselves, they are willing to help instill norms within that network. This phenomena was identified by Coleman (1987) where he asserted that communities are networks that are interconnected and that share ownership for a student's safety and upbringing into the norms of society.

Coleman (1987) argued that beyond the family, social capital in a community exists for the interest of others, even others' children. Sometimes that meant parents in the larger community enforcing norms of behaviour on other people's children. Coleman (1987) concluded that the Catholic school had the least student drop outs compared to public and private schools: This was due to the involvement of the Catholic Church within the school and broader community. The Catholic school played "a great importance in reducing dropouts among students at risk of dropping out" (p. 36). Furthermore, Coleman concluded that SC outside of the home was of greatest value for children who did not have supports in the home. Often parents in large city public schools in the United States did not know each other, and rarely constituted a community. They were a network, but not a community of relationships. Though not all networks are helpful, Coleman concluded that "religious organizations are among the few remaining organizations in society, beyond the family, that cross generations. Thus they are among the few in which the SC of an adult community is available to children and youth" (p. 37). At present, in most churches in North America, it seems that people can still build community and relationships.

**2.7.3 Online communities.** Today, participation in networks is often seen in online communities especially in college graduates (Lu, Yang, & Yu, 2013). People of all ages and demographics participate in online discussions thereby forming relationships of one

sort or another. People are talking and interacting differently today, mainly due to digital technology. College leadership must take into account the changing nature of communities, and the impact of technology when viewing and defining networks that build that community.

## 2.8 Norms

The second of Coleman's (1988) three social capital attributes is *norms*. Coleman (1988) asserted that norms are "intentionally established" (p. 117) as rules of engagement or boundaries for a desired behaviour (i.e., drivers respecting a posted speed limit for cars, safety on the streets). As well, Coleman (1988) proposed that the established norms give everyone in that group a chance of success in adhering to or endorsing these norms (i.e., markets in Cairo where vendors sell for each other in another absence). Additionally, Coleman (1988) contended that people can learn the norms of certain groups that can sometimes help to level the playing field. This is relevant to this study, because educational leaders can intentionally establish the common virtues (norms) of helping students succeed through supports (i.e., computer programs with read/write tools), so that all students have a chance of success. In this way, all students have the potential to learn new norms. One such norm may be accepting that students with disabilities may have the chance for success in post-secondary institutions.

A norm can be a powerful socializing influence on individuals and groups of people. Norms can promote safety in a society or servant leadership in schools, they can promote an interest in others, and, in addition, norms can be supported through internal rewards or outward actions. A norm can be a powerful form of social capital, for example, allowing one to walk safely at night on campus or educational leaders volunteering with students in "do good projects" and building relationships.

Coleman believed that what permeated society is the individual concern of the "self" as evidenced by an obsession for one's own health (i.e., jogging, health clubs, etc.), personal appearance, and career progression as opposed to a more altruistic view of wanting the best for others and helping others or spending time with others. Coleman (1987) went on to note that the "world has changed: In the individualistic present, each narcissistically attends to self-development, with little attention left over for children, certainly not for others' children"

(p. 37). The danger may be that many children will grow up without institutional access to the supports to build social capital in their home, school, or community. The opportunity lies in the development of purposefully creating a better system of networks, norms, and trust that encourages interaction with others and an attitude of doing for others.

College leaders must create norms in colleges that promote student academic achievement. This would perhaps include norms where students are free to try new things, think in new ways, and be free to make mistakes. Norms may be instilled that respect people and their ideas: where there is the ability to conduct research and solve real problems, and where professors realize that cognitive and affective learning can or should go together. Leaders should create norms where real world experiences are integrated into the learning to help students at work, because they will be more familiar with work-world expectations and skills (i.e., being on time), and where there are no borders between learning academically and learning about the “real” world, and where the community will also support students’ diverse learning (i.e., co-op placements) (Firestone & Riehl, 2005). Academic leaders can promote norms, such as these mentioned, to promote bridging between the real working world and the academic world.

## 2.9 Trust

The final aspect of Coleman’s (1988) definition of social capital is trust. Coleman’s definition of trust within relationships, norms, and networks is a view centered on people in relationships, in community, and in family. This perspective is not clearly articulated in his work, but can be extrapolated from his findings (Coleman, 1987). The relationships cited in his work involve an unquestioning confidence and belief in the best of the other person.

Coleman’s (1987) analysis of the public, Catholic, and other private school student dropout rates, concluded that the achievement of the students came, not as a result of curricular demands or school policies, but that the difference was based on relationships between the individuals in the school and the parents in community. A trusting relationship between parents and individuals in the school was shown to support students. Coleman postulated that when a community member took an interest in the activities of someone else’s child, by identifying and enforcing norms as the parents would to support the child, trust

developed. Coleman (1988) stated that, “a group within which there is extensive trustworthiness and extensive trust is able to accomplish much more than a comparable group without trustworthiness and trust” (p. 101). Therefore, at least theoretically or aspirationally, trust connects emotionally and personally within the individual.

Trust is built on person-to-person interactions. Although, these interactions may seem small at first, these interactions are based on a basic level of trust. If this trust is nurtured and supported through increasing complex interactions, relationships are sustained and constructed through new levels of vulnerability and trust (Falk, 2000). These trust exchanges or processes may produce or build social capital if they progress. If they do not progress, these processes may dissolve as the relationship dissolves. Developing trust involves an expectation of consistent, authentic, cooperative behaviour (Coleman, 1990; Falk, 2000; Fukuyama, 1995). According to Falk (2001), the “how” dimensions of these phenomena are missing in the educational literature. It is precisely this “how” that my research wishes to address. Falk (2001) also addressed the need for a deeper understanding of what transpires and influences social capital. If SC is the growth of small social interactions, which are engulfed into a larger macro social order, then these developments and links should be able to be observed (Falk, 2001). Articulating the how, and what links, help to provide an understanding of SC and leaders contribution to student SC in a college setting.

Putnam (1993) and Coleman (1988) both believed that social capital involved trust based on individuals’ norms of behaviour, and networking. DeFilippis (2001) argued that, according to Coleman, trust is cultivated as people interact and mutually cooperate by developing relationships for the greater good. But, according to Putnam (1993), trust is cultivated within an organization, what it represents, and its policies (i.e., institutional trust). Here, trust is not based on the trust of an individual (i.e., interpersonal trust) (DeFilippis, 2001). Interpersonal trust varies between people. Some people are more trusting than others based on their past experiences. Ultimately Coleman (1988) postulated that trust is between individuals, whereas in Putnam’s (1993) view, social capital is a framework for local and community economic development wherein people trust the institutions, not each other. In terms of education leaders, I believe that ultimately both are important. People need to trust

the educational leaders, however I also believe that the systems are put in place in the institutions by people to help people.

## 2.10 Critics of Social Capital and Coleman's Work

In the following section, I will elaborate on a few criticisms of Coleman's (1988) theory of social capital, in particular with reference to the notion of social capital according to Coleman as being too "vague," not articulating the "dark side" of social capital, and the idea of there being "holes" in social capital, and networks and hierarchies.

**2.10.1 Too vague.** Portes (1998) argued that Coleman's (1988) definition of social capital was too vague, because he did not necessarily look at the implications of conflict, social exclusion, and power. He argued that Coleman (1988) did not look at the weak ties in many networks, only the close ties. Another argument concerning a potential design weakness was that Coleman looked specifically at social networks and the impact and attitudes of schools on students as opposed to influences on adults (Schuller, Baron, & Field 2000).

**2.10.2 A dark side.** According to Schuller, Baron, and Field (2000), Coleman (1988) did not look at the "dark" or the "nasty" side of social capital, as social capital may have an "under belly." Some networks excluded people, such as the poor, and thereby promoted the exclusion of the poor and privilege of the rich. It is this dark side that people may claim that mass murders of the past have gotten ideas from the social connections (networks), and influences (norms) such as television, about the murders that they should commit, however these influences are not negated by medical realities of illness. While anything good can be used for evil, and while positive relationships can be replaced by more nefarious acquaintances, it is the intention of my research to recognize social capital networks as being used as good resources and for good networks trying to promote equity.

Also, I believe that Coleman's arguments were based on traditional patriarchal notions of the family and examined models where the structure of the family was in decline, thereby already being in a state of having decreased social capital. Coleman did not account



for other family models, or alternative views within the family, nor did he account for other contextual factors (i.e., Western socio-cultural view).

**2.10.3 Holes.** Burt (1997) argued that social capital contains “holes:” holes that contain information and control, and (dis)advantages for some and not for others (i.e., information and control disconnects some college leaders from other college leaders). Leaders who have few contacts or limited experiences (holes) benefit from information and “tips,” gained from many people, bridging their gaps—their holes of limited experience. Here social capital networks are very important for the college leader who has learned how to access networks. These networks can help him or her learn how to act in certain situations. His or her success will depend on how many people are involved in their network and how those people’s networks are connected. Some people are aware that others can help them and are reliant on others that are well situated or well connected to others and trust others. Other people are not aware of connections. Those who are aware of connections and help and depends on these exchanges with other people, have social capital as an asset. Social capital becomes an asset, because of those relationships and networks that bridge the “holes” with the resources of other people and with the resources within those relationships. The person who does not have this understanding, or the network, has holes. He or she does not have this resources to draw upon for success. This aspect is missing in Coleman’s theorizations of social capital.

Burt (1997) referred to human capital as an explanation of the “hole network” in terms of differences based on individual ability. Social capital would explain this hole network as the quality between (people) networks and relationships, not the quality of the individual or the individual’s ability. Therefore, investing in human capital is different than investing in social capital. Investing in human capital invests in the person’s ability/or not, based on their (perceived) ability. In other words, if you do not have the perceived ability, others will not invest in you. Educators who believe in human capital would invest in the “better” individual (i.e., the better students with higher grade point average upon entrance), but educators who do not believe in social capital, would invest in the quality and opportunity of the relationships for all students (even students with a lower grade point average on entrance).



Social capital complements human capital in that human capital refers to ability and social capital refers to opportunity. Coleman (1988, 1990) believed opportunity and support networks were the key predictors of educational success, especially with regards to the children in the Catholic school system. Additionally, Coleman (1988, 1990) viewed “black” children from the under privileged areas as having potential. That is why he arranged for them, through policy, to be bused to the other schools in the other neighborhoods. Educational college leaders, have to ask themselves, how they view students? Do college leaders convey to the staff student potential? Do leaders believe that all students can attain their (student) goals given the opportunity, supports, and bridges? Will the leaders develop opportunity, coordinate people, and get the right people together to cultivate the opportunities/bridges for the students? The structural “hole” thinking, asserts with Coleman (1988, 1990) that students are full of potential, that leaders provide opportunity, or broker relationships for people who would not be connected, so that there is a bridge over the hole (Burt, 1997). College leaders in this instance could encourage the flow of information, and control the project for success, bringing people (students, leaders, faculty) together from opposite yet complementary sides of the hole, providing a bridge (networks) amidst the hole (weak or no ties; deficit). People rich in opportunities, networks, and ties are anticipated to be more prosperous than their peers because of the bridging over the holes (Burt, 1998).

**2.10.4 Networks and hierarchies.** According to Burt (1998), Coleman revealed that women were connected in smaller networks to senior levels in the hierarchy. Burt concluded it was not the density of the network, but the hierarchic location of the network: meaning that it was not how many people one knew, but how important and influential they were within the network. This is different than associations from horizontal networks where everyone is essentially equal. The difference is the opportunity for promotion. Promotion is associated with impressing the senior people—people higher than themselves (Burt, 1998). These are the people with power and influence, who can help or hinder you. Burt emphasized the linear hierarchy approach to social capital. Although Burt’s (1998, 2000) research was thinking and questioning social capital’s focus on the individual’s benefits, it does raise a broader question about gender within social capital. He argued, that social capital is for a man’s advantage, not a woman’s.

As noted above, even though many of the criticisms of Coleman’s (1988) social capital may be valid, it does not negate potential strengths that social capital can bring to communities or specific groups or the importance of the topic. Burt’s (1998) criticism of the “holes” in social capital and the hierarchy of the networks are very valid for my study, because this is where I feel education and social capital can help the students, as represented by holes and with limited hierarchy networks. The criticisms add to the importance of social capital by asserting that more research needs to be done on the topic (Schuller, et al., 2000).

## 2.11 How the Terms Inform the Research

In this section, I connect the terms I have defined earlier and explain how they inform my research. These terms include: educational leadership, followed by educational leadership and social capital, the role of leaders in creating institutional social capital networks, the role of leaders in creating institutional norms, the role of leaders in creating institutional trust, privilege, student success in a post-secondary context, and colleges and social capital.

## 2.12 Educational Leadership

Defining educational leadership required a synthesis of several sources in the existing school and higher education leadership literature. There are strong parallels between the responsibilities of K-12 leaders and educators in higher education. For example, K-12 and college leaders adhere to provincial guidelines and certifications, standardized testing for specific grades (i.e., Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) testing in grade 3, the Registered Canadian Nursing Exam), and professional designations, which adhere to provincial guidelines on content and local policy. College leaders need to partner with K-12 school systems so there is a seamless entrance into post-secondary education (Boggs & McPhail, 2016; Government of Ontario, 2016). Therefore, I feel there is strong support, in my study, to extrapolate research from the K-12 setting’s key concepts and show them as being applicable to college leadership.

Leithwood and Riel’s (2003) comprehensive review of successful public school leadership was based on single and multiple case studies. They argued that leaders in schools “promote school quality, equity and social justice” (p. 145), and that successful school

leadership has at its heart “two functions: providing direction and exercising influence.” (p. 2). Along a similar vein, Mulford (2005) added that school leaders, “set direction, develop people, and redesign the organization” (p. 145). Although this may be viewed as a functionalist/traditionalist perspective of the role of leaders, personal communication with educational leaders, whom I have worked for, would suggest that he “is the best educational leader I have ever worked for...he could walk the talk and was more inclusive and progressive than a ground functionalist and many times professors and principles who experienced his leadership would argue the same” (personal communication, Dr. Bishop, Dec 1, 2017). I feel that an educational leader can indeed set the tone, develop people and redesign the organization through relationship with the people, and by building a community.

College leaders must meet escalating demands from government agencies and meet provincial guidelines and competencies for various accreditation bodies’ standards (Morris, 2016). Morris specifically stated that “new managerialism in higher education is really not so new” (p. 1). The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) first published a list of competencies for community college leaders in 2005 and a revised list in 2013 (Boswell & Imroz, 2013). The competencies noted in the 2013 included: organizational strategy, finance, research, fundraising, resource management, communication, collaboration, and advocacy (Boswell & Imroz, 2013). I believe that while leaders today still provide strategic direction, influence, and control over issues, systems, and networks with expectations of trust, they are also responsible for the judicious and appropriate distribution of resources. They are also responsible for the creation of policies that contribute to student academic success and their “on-time” graduation rates (Burns, 2010; Colleges Ontario, 2014; Leithwood & Riel, 2003; Morris, 2016; Mulford, et al., 2007). Further, Mulford et al., (2007) suggested that there should be a “multifaceted approach to leadership with a set of relationships of influence built through trust, respect, empowerment between students and teachers” (p. 243) all contributing to successful student outcomes. Although colleges are in a different sector from K-12 education within the public sector, the nature of leadership seems to be similar. However, there is a paucity of research on college leadership in Ontario.

Leaders have been viewed as having traits of intelligence, responsibility, and creativity, along with strengths in strategic planning, governance, finance, curriculum, human

resources, technology, resource development, and public relations. These traits were dependent on situations and how leaders could motivate others (Boggs & McPhail, 2016). Haden and Jenkins (2015) list nine virtues of great and exceptional leaders as being: humility, honesty, courage, perseverance, hope, charity, balance, wisdom, and justice. Greenleaf (1997) applied the concept of servant leadership and argued that educational leadership is service to others and that institutions serve others. This correlates nicely with Coleman (1988) and the aspect of helping others. The Robert E. Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership (RGCSL) posts on their website that:

The servant-leader is servant first...it begins with a natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions.” (Greenleaf, n.d.)

The website notes the difference of the servant leader is that they purposefully put others as their priority (Greenleaf, n.d.): People serve each other. Servant leaders focus on the growth and well-being of others and the communities to which they belong. This is so the people served grow and develop and the least privileged benefit and are not further deprived. Senge (2006) also articulated that leaders chose service over self-interest—leaders see a vision as something larger of what organizations need to do to evolve. This gives meaning and commitment to a leader’s work, where leaders are stewards of the vision and manage the vision for the benefit of others (Senge, 2006). Leaders have to learn to listen to others, allowing others to tell the story (Senge, 2006). Kanter (2006) contended a leader should “straight talk about problems and expectations” (p. 190).

Peter Senge (2006) asserted his vision of a learning organization where leaders can help others achieve success. Senge (2006) articulated that leaders in learning organizations impacted others in four main ways through: events, patterns of behaviour, systemic structures, and purpose. He believed that leaders in learning organizations should focus on purpose and structure, while modeling and teaching those in the organization (Senge, 2006). Kanter (2006) likewise said “teams cannot look merely inward for the confidence to win, they must also seek external confidence from all of their audiences, especially from their grizzly bear-sized stakeholder’s protective of the sacred cows” (p. 281).

## 2.13 Educational Leadership and Social Capital

To this point in the literature, I have examined social capital as a phenomenon as it was explored by several theorists, but draw heavily on the work of Coleman (1988). Now I turn my attention to the role of Ontario college leaders in recognizing the need for networks, norms, and trust in their institutions.

## 2.14 The Role of Leaders in Creating Institutional Social Capital Networks

In higher education social capital can be viewed as a “good” or goodwill that will be available to groups or individuals (Bolden, Petrov, Gosling, 2008). For some academics, the professional practice element is constructed and continued through networks and contacts inside and outside of the home-based institution for colleagues and for the students. This is advantageous for the home academic institution and for the groups the academic leaders belong to, especially if there is cooperation by, for example, the student population. Information is passed from the educational institution to the groups and vice versa. Here, professional norms, goals, and trust are shared giving opportunity for the educational leaders to bridge information and contacts and bond, cooperating with the community partners and ultimately contributing to the public good (Bolden, Petrov, Gosling, 2008; Putnam, 2000).

It can be argued that leaders set the tone for the educational institution, and that skillful leadership is a significant positive influence in school and student success (Leithwood, Patten, & Jantzi, 2010). However, leaders in large post-secondary institutions cannot act alone. It is important to increase the network of social capital-minded leaders for an organization through succession planning and training (Nappi, 2014). With colleagues who believe in student success and social capital, leaders in college are better positioned to have the faculty and aspiring leaders, who are being trained, to enact social capital. Palmer and Gasman (2008) suggested that college students who experienced more contact with faculty, “experience greater satisfaction with their academic lives, and exhibit higher career aspirations” (p. 54). If leaders were not limited by structure and finances, if they could hire professors based on student ratios, and could hire professors who made the students their

priority work obligation (as opposed to research and committee meetings), then it would appear that a leader's role in supporting institutional social capital lies in (internal) recruitment and job design. Then teachers or professors may be given the structure to create trusting relationships with students even more than they already do.

Kirschling (2004) postulated that college leaders must build strong social capital relationships and partnerships within and outside of the college by engaging in college work with stakeholders, such as the student union and (co-op) partner industries. According to Kirschling (2004) this is an expectation of their professional duties. This may be done by: skimming the local and national newspaper to broaden personal views, and thereby shaping the emergent views of college leadership, serving on committees, attending meetings, advocating for evolving issues, creating solid broad based strategies for student success, influencing legislative agendas, or serving to raise agendas of student issues (Kirschling, 2004). Outside of the university making connections with other institutions, and learning with and from those leaders, helps to build connections as a basis for sharing ideas (networks). This helps leaders stay connected in terms of networks, with students and broad issues both within and outside of the college.

Castells (1996) referred to networks as being like interconnecting nodes or relational data giving individual's information. Castells (1996) noted that networks are new information technologies, and open systems capable of expanding and sharing communication systems. This aligns with the idea that social capital is based on relationships or characteristics. People can have relationships with many people that may not share the same attributes. So how does one measure a relationship? Marsden (1990) asked whether one addressed the social relations or if one addressed the perceptions of the individuals so far as social capital research is concerned. How does one begin to comprehend the dynamics of relationships? Does one measure resolved conflicts? Or does one measure indicators such as the number of acquaintances? These are all valid points for social capital networks (Schuller, Baron, & Field, 2000). Bott (1957) studied networks in terms of families and roles in terms of economic ties between the members of similar neighborhoods and opportunities. Here the personal and structural aspects of networks were characterized as connections. Granovetter (1985) built on this work in terms of strong and weak ties that can bind people, and Putnam

(1996) added thoughts about bridging and bonding ties. By the terms bridging and bonding, Putnam referred to associations with one another through links: Bonding is more of an emotional connection and bridging is more of a situational relation. If one studies social capital and social resources, connections and ties are rooted in social networks that benefit both the individual within the group and the group. In terms of my research, the resources, ties, and connections that are within the social networks, should then benefit the individual student, and the students within the group. It would seem logical that college leaders at the least have a role in creating the networks.

In a sense Ferren, Dolinsky, and McCambly (2015) summed it up aptly that the role of leaders in creating social capital networks involved leaders to “establish collaborative participatory relationships” (p. 30). This collaborative relationship allowed ideas to be tested and norms of group trust to be established. For example, if an idea does not work, the students should feel free enough to voice their opinion to the college leader. The general premise is that social capital (norms, networks, and trust) exist in the group network and within individual relationships in the group, and that social capital can be created by the educational leaders jointly with others (i.e., such as with students in colleges and with college leaders) (Ferren et al., 2015).

Collaborative partnerships and networks are important aspects of organizational resilience that college leaders can influence. Networks and partnerships help higher educational institutions to adapt and have the capacity to transform. Senge (2006) contended that learning organizations adapt and change. Ultimately, transformation of an organization requires leader influence, solid connections, partnerships, and commitments within and outside of the institution (Ferren et al., 2015).

## 2.15 The Role of Leaders in Creating Institutional Norms

Kantabutra and Saratun (2013) identified 23 practices that highlighted leadership practices related to leadership norms, which could be modeled. Their multi-data research collection used archival data, observations, as well as eight semi-structured case study interviews. They identified foundational practices, higher level practices, and key performance drivers for leaders. The key strategies were: training programs for staff (to promote networks between



staff members), the modeling of amicable relationships between staff (to promote trust), and voicing staff retention strategies (to promote trust). These key leadership strategies were found to contribute to: a positive environment (promoting networks), ethical behaviour (promoting norms of ethical behaviour), and trust (Kantabutra & Saratun, 2013).

Kirschling (2004) believed that leadership norms of behaviour are created to develop partnerships, both within and outside of the institution, and to participate in (collaborative) priority strategic planning, visioning, and goal setting. The intended change should be for the improvement of the institution. This correlates with Coleman's (1988) thinking, where there would be a leadership influenced norm, of an intended good, that is transparent throughout the institution, as noted in the strategic plan, vision, and goals for the enhancement of the college.

## 2.16 The Role of Leaders in Creating Institutional Trust

In a case study based in a college in South West England, Bolden and Bagnall (2009) completed an auto-ethnographic with the aim to provide a breadth of insight into different aspects of social capital initiatives (Bolden & Bagnall, 2009). They found that investing in people by creating network webs, finding trusted partners, building on success, being adaptive and challenging the status quo, embedding learning, and planning for succession purposes were key insights from a higher education leadership point of view on the importance of creating institutional trust. College administrators were to: build connections, dialogue, nurture network, deliver programs and projects, allow for ideas (to stand, fail, or change shape), and plan for sustainability. This framework was initially critiqued as being too academic and not specific enough. Further critiques wanted straightforward solutions to issues, not generalities. But this is to misunderstand the research design. This speaks to the gap in the research literature, from a Canadian context, concerned with social capital in higher education. This research also speaks to the parallels of social capital and the functions of college administrators as they see it, namely the building of connections, dialoguing and nurturing networks, norms of the delivery of programs and projects (college work), and the idea of trust where others ideas can be voiced and tried.



Less than four decades ago, Fox (1974a, b), Fukuyama (1995), and Luhman (1972) voiced that trust in institutions was an issue worth understanding. Fukuyama (1995) more recently asserted that successful communities do not form around rules, but rather around trust, as evidenced by ethical habits and obligations, internalized by the group's members, contributing to successful communities. These expectations of behaviour are built on shared norms within the community. However, the distinction between high and low trust in economic issues is relatively unanalyzed, as it is assumed to be inherent in human behaviour and in societies.

Fox (1974a, b) talked about trust and employment in terms of institutionalized trust, trust arousing trust, and vertical/lateral trust. Institutionalized trust, according to Fox (1974 a, b), was encoded in rules and relationships: Trusting a person as a colleague often leads that person to trusting the other colleagues. Yet vertical and lateral trust is hampered by worker and management opposition and competition between people and ideologies. Fox cited power and inequity as influences affecting trust where unequal individuals bonded around common economic purposes. At the college, the economic purpose is the education of students. Inequity may result from the power differentials between the college leadership and the teaching staff or the college leadership/teaching staff and the students.

Ferren, Dolinsky, and McCambly (2015) contended that higher education institutions, such as colleges, benefited from collaborative and participatory relationships and inclusive processes where group trust is recognized and mutuality and attachment are extended. Leaders can contribute to these participatory relationships and inclusive processes through policies and various strategies, such as equal access to groups/clubs and resources. College students would seem to benefit from collaborative partnerships that are strong in terms of support and trust.

## 2.17 Privilege

Social capital can be a supportive resource to help students succeed. It may give people within a group a right or a benefit that has been gained through opportunity, membership position, and/or information. I see these concepts of social capital applied to students in college who have the opportunity to attend school—the privilege to go to school—and the

opportunity to be trained for a job. As a result of this opportunity afforded to college students that other adults may not have, there may be various other educational opportunities that administrators may structure for students, such as work terms. Students may not otherwise get these experiences through their families or in their social circles. Coleman (1988) believed in providing opportunity (privilege) for the academically disadvantaged. As evidence of that belief, Coleman (1988) advocated for the busing of black children into white school districts in the United States so that black children could have the same educational access as white children. He was attempting to provide equal opportunities by helping black children learn, not only academically, but also socially through norms, trust, and networks, which were garnered through interactions between and across races.

Belonging to certain networks affords opportunity. Bourdieu (1986) conceptualized social capital as the way in which some individuals are given certain opportunity (privilege), because of their membership in social networks. Membership in these (elite) groups is often through the advantages (or luck) at birth and through money provisions within families. Members of elite families often receive a selective and costly education, because they can afford it, or they have the opportunity to go to school (Putnam, 2015). Even within Canada, there are private elementary schools, colleges and universities, and programs within certain colleges (private and public colleges) that are more costly than other programs. For example, in Canada, a Personal Support Worker (PSW) program is a nine month duration and costs considerably less money than a four-year Bachelor of Nursing degree at a community college, but the PSW students can begin working after nine months in the health care field, albeit in a lower paying job.

Membership in privileged groups is typically not shared or extended to others. In some situations the opportunities (privileged position) within a family may not be shared beyond family members. Putnam (2015) and Coleman (1994) asserted that the days are gone when aunts and uncles and grandparents would help support (financially, emotionally, socially) nieces, nephews, and grandchildren, in order to gain an education (Putnam, 2015). Clearly not all people have the same opportunities for an equal education based on opportunity in family or in the family circle of relationships (privilege). Often, privileged groups stay to themselves, promoting or supporting themselves (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman,

1988; Loury, 1977; Putnam, 2015). This idea has potentially important lessons for college students. In particular, some college students may not be able to afford college or the program of their choice because of a lack of financial means, privilege, and/or opportunity.

Privilege, with regard to college education, college leaders, and students, may mean to feel “valued or cared for.” In a qualitative study by Palmer and Gasman (2008) it was found that successful administrators and faculty in good, effective, and materially privileged schools formed caring relationships with students. Successful administrators mentored and modeled for students, and the administrators encouraged student participation in support services, campus organizations, internships, and scholarship programs. In addition, those administrators motivated students for academic and social networking purposes. They influenced the institutions community and social capital, and the students felt valued, supported, challenged, and nourished (Palmer & Gasman, 2008). A key theme centered on empathetic and supportive faculty relationships (norms, trust), where administrators went above and beyond to support students (Palmer & Gasman, 2008). Administrators, who created spaces and opportunities for students to speak together, created a *culture of support* for individuals helping them to be persistent and motivated to work hard towards their educational goals. Administrators utilized student role models and mentors to support student academic success and created a supportive campus community through mentorship groups for students in more senior years that promoted a family-like environment. It can be argued in that respect, that it takes an entire team (family) to grow graduates. While “the team” may consist of college administrators, faculty, staff, community placement partners, groups, friends, church groups, and family, Astin (1999) argued that the greatest source of influence on student success was the student’s peer group. Nonetheless, college leaders are in the position to put supportive mechanisms into place for students that family or friends (or their position in society) may not give them. Therefore, it is of significant academic importance that administrators look at creating and sustaining supportive communities for students from all backgrounds, where they feel valued and cared for (e.g., privileged to belong to that college or be in a particular program) in order to help nurture their success.

## 2.18 Student Success in the Post-Secondary Context

In 2014, more than 82, 000 students graduated from post-secondary programs in Ontario (Colleges Ontario, 2016b, p. 2). This statistic, though factually correct, does not represent the whole story. In this next section I will comment on what could be described as a murkiness of data.

Graduation statistics for Ontario colleges are not clear for a myriad of complex reasons, which occur at both the program and the student levels. At the program level there are many types of courses and programs including part time programs, apprenticeship programs, day courses, workshops, literacy, and basic skills programs and university programs, to name a few common constructions (Colleges Ontario, 2016b). Further, the years to program completion rates vary within apprenticeships. So although the students have graduated, there is no indicator of how many students graduated within the allocated program time set out in the academic calendars. Additionally, there is no indicator of how many students switched to part time status.

To add to an already complex landscape, many students transfer programs within and across academic institutions and programs. Further, their out of school responsibilities or life challenges, like sudden health concerns, can potentially impact the accurate reporting of both enrollment and graduation data. Moreover, some community colleges are “open access” colleges, where virtually all students are accepted. This often presents a challenge, because students with higher academic abilities, as seen in higher grade point averages (GPA), have higher retention and graduation rates (Bean, 1980; Burns, 2010). From the murkiness of these data a key concept emerges: When the critical element of educational success is attainment of the diploma or certificate, it has been advantageous to examine how and why educational leadership has contributed to improving students’ social capital (Burns, 2010; Finnie, et al., 2010, Jones-White, Radcliffe, Huesman, & Kellogg, 2010; Leithwood, 2013; Stephan, 2013). Governments across the world and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) are ever keen to identify leadership capacities and practices that, either directly or indirectly, improve student outcomes.

Community colleges often offer “second chance” prospects for education beyond high school for those with academic troubles, financial constrictions, delayed entry, or other at-risk factors. Bailey, Jenkins, and Leinbach (2005a) articulated that:

There is no question that community colleges encounter many difficulties as they serve students with serious economic, social, and academic challenges, and have less resource per student to draw on than other public postsecondary institutions. Among the policies that could promote higher graduation rates are increased financial aid, funding for non-credit and remediation courses, flexible employment, job search assistance, affordable daycare, and flexible regulations regarding, work and schooling for welfare recipients. Certainly, improved K-12 systems would permit student’s to arrive at community colleges prepared for college level work. (p. 4)

Increasing the equitable access to education for all students through an open-door, non-selective policy, and expanded opportunities may have contributed to such success issues. Because students are not academically screened, some students may have more difficulty completing a program of study. Bailey, et al. (2006) stated, “an analysis suggests that even among only students who state that their goal is a degree, certificate, or transfer, fewer than 50 percent achieve that goal within six years” (p. 1). Bailey, et al. also suggested that community colleges serve many students who have various reasons for enrolment and expectations. They go on to surmise that students are considered successful statistically by college leaders if their enrolment results in a timely graduation or a transfer to a four-year institution (Bailey, et al., 2006). When students defined what success meant to them, only half labeled themselves successful after six years if still enrolled (Bailey, et al., 2006). It would seem reasonable to assume that timely graduation is considered successful by both college leaders and students.

Additionally, as of a decade ago, the non-completion rate processes were 52% for “remedial students” (of all races), 50% for African American students, and 34% for Hispanic students (Attewell, Lavin, Domina, & Levey, 2006). Therefore, student success has to be clearly defined, and it is more than enrollment alone: Student success also includes timely degree completion and an increase of student ambitions for future education (Goldrick-Rab, 2010). Student success may also be considered developing strong ties, professional networks,

trust with professional norms of behaviour (all to develop timely degree completion), and ambition for future education (National Survey Student Engagement, 2007; Pascarella, Salisbury, & Blaich, 2011).

In a 25 year review (between 1985-2010) of 2, 200 published studies in social science, education, and policy, and in addition to many books, articles, countless conference reports, and numerous theses researched by Goldrick-Rab (2010), more than 3, 000 documents were retrieved, culled and reduced to approximately 750 notable published readings. These works acknowledged contributors to students' college success. The review revealed that policies affecting services for students were important (Goldrick-Rab, 2010), because policies provided a protocol. Additional student college (success) factors included: social inequities, economic challenges, academic challenges, access to resources, social and information issues, college educated parents, attendance patterns, enrolment status, and the age at which students entered college (Dika & Singh, 2002; Finnie, et al., 2010; Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Jones-White et al., 2010).

Goldrick-Rab's (2010) study also demonstrated that lack of student monetary aid was the primary factor for dropping out of school: Tuition assistance was the single largest venture that governments could create to support student success. However, often guidelines for distribution of funds made it difficult for students to access these monies, and student success without financial aid is difficult (Goldrick-Rab, 2010). Additional factors to promote student success included students being able to easily transfer programs, and administrators being able to track student progress.

## 2.19 Colleges and Social Capital

For Canada to succeed, all Canadians should have the opportunity to contribute to society and develop and use their knowledge and skills to their fullest potential (Colleges Ontario, 2016b; Dika & Singh, 2002; Finnie, et al., 2010; Jones-White et al., 2010). The literature on post-secondary education has been replete with empirical studies, which propose that the "returns" of higher education are considerable (i.e., economic, social, political, and spiritual) (Bowman & Small, 2012; Burns, 2010; Finnie, et al., 2010; Jones-White, et al., 2010; Puranam & Vanneste, 2009). Politicians often agree that it makes good financial sense to invest in

education for the development of our workforce. For example, various Colleges Ontario papers and reports (Colleges Ontario, 2016a; Colleges Ontario, 2016b; Colleges Ontario, 2014) contended that it is not enough to examine access or entering post-secondary education: Researchers should look at “attainment” as defined by the successful completion of a post-secondary education diploma or degree. Turner (2004) stated that “many education analysts (including economists) focus on the enrollment measure, which are an indicator of potential investment, rather than on degree or credits, which measure additions to human capital stock” (p. 14).

Other researchers have looked far beyond enrollment or even degree granting to measure stock, which I understand to be knowledge and skills. For example, the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies is a large international study conducted by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which included 24 countries, to assess “the proficiency of adults from age 16 onwards in literacy, numeracy and problem solving in technology-rich environments” (OECD, n.d.). It was conducted with the goal assess and compare basic skills of adults around the world (Goodman, et al., 2013). The report’s findings suggested that Canada’s average score for literacy was the same as the PIAAC international average (Goodman, et al., 2013, p. 7); this being significantly higher than the U.S. average (Goodman, et al., 2013, p. 7). Canada’s average score in numeracy was just below the PIAAC international average and is still above the United States’ average (Goodman, et al., 2013, p. 8). The Canadian average score on the PIAAC problem solving in technology-rich environments was also just below the international average and above the average of the U.S. (Goodman, et al., 2013, p. 9). While, some would argue that Canada scored well overall, Canada is not in the top 10 (Goodman, et al., 2013), being 11<sup>th</sup> on the literacy scales, 15<sup>th</sup> on the numeracy scales, and 13<sup>th</sup> in the technology-rich environment scale (Goodman, et al., 2013).

Adults proficient in these three areas: literacy, numeracy, and technology, tend to be more employable and employed at higher paying jobs. Poor skills limit people’s access to better paying and more rewarding jobs, but literacy skills affect more than learning: Higher literacy skills also affect better health, better perceived images of self, and sometimes possessing more trust in self and or others. Those people with lower literacy skills are more



likely to suffer from ill health, poorer images of self as objects, and have less trust in others. College leaders, who recognize this, can influence and help adults become more skilled and more employable through education.

In the education sector specifically, a recommendation has come forward, this time from the United Kingdom for a resurgence of strong leadership and management as a force for change in education. The range of factors that would improve education, as cited by Bolden, Petrov, and Gosling (2008), included *participation* and *engagement*, which could be taken as a reflection of Coleman's (1988) definition of social capital as networks, norms and trust, used in my study. This perspective could include a *building* and *bridging* relationship perspective at various levels within the post-secondary education environment. Bolden, Petrov, Gosling (2008) found that in the 152 semi-structured, face-to-face interviews they conducted with 12 participants from U.K. universities, educational leaders did not have the same influence at all organizational levels within the universities. For individuals, it appears that networks and relationships both inside and outside the organization affect their professional distinctiveness and experience (Bolden, Petrov, Gosling, 2008). Educational leaders would be wise to promote these experiences, which create opportunity for the creation of networks, norms and trust as key aspects of social capital.

## 2.20 Benefits to Students

It could be argued that social capital is most important at the level of the individual student. Personal benefits or outcomes of building students' social capital to help them succeed may include: increased self-esteem, trust, co-operation and teamwork, and networking skills coupled with congruent praxis norms of behaviour (Goldrick-Rab, 2010; National Survey Student Engagement, 2007; Pascarella et al., 2011). These personal benefits may benefit society as well, because students will learn to work together—a skill valued in the work place. Students may further build networks and praxis standards (i.e., team work, communication, good will) that are consistent with the standards of (work) practice (Goldrick-Rab, 2010; National Survey Student Engagement, 2007; Pascarella et al., 2011)

Oftentimes, when students work within an organization for a field practicum, students encourage the workforce, with new ideas and enthusiasm, and act as a resource. Employers



will often say that they enjoy having students come to the institution. Not only does this enrich the student's educational experience, but students learn how to talk, how to act, and how to start developing trust with others established in the field (Coleman, 1987, 1988; Finnie et al., 2010; Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Mulford, et al., 2007). Although the opposite may happen and a work experience/clinical practicum may be a bad experience, most students want to secure a job and advance their career, thereby giving the work term their best and learn how to network and act within professional norms. By and large, educational leaders try their best to secure the best work terms and educational experiences for their students.

There is economic benefit for students to complete an education. Although unemployment rates vary significantly from province to province in Canada, the unemployed are typically among the least educated (Thematic Review on Adult Learning Canada Background Report, 2002). Completing their education also contributes to the public good, because of the students' increased readiness to contribute to the workforce (National Survey Student Engagement, 2007; Pascarella et al., 2011). Whereas unemployment has many associated health and safety risks (i.e., poor self-esteem, poor food because of decreased funds) (National Survey Student Engagement, 2007; Pascarella et al., 2011).

Leaders who support the building of social capital for students through positive initiatives may reduce some of the barriers associated with under employment such as: financial support, family support, first generation student issues, marginalized and minority students, and limited student engagement and interaction (Burns, 2010; Finnie, 2010, Jones-White et al, 2010). The institutional provision of social capital, by the leaders, created by the leaders, can reduce barriers and help students.

Putnam (1993) asserted that networks are enforced within institutions for political purposes. Bourdieu (1990) suggested that networks are beneficial for the elite, but they are oppressive for most of the underprivileged. However, social capital may be able to benefit the underprivileged and smooth out or provide equity. To illustrate, for example, some private universities (education networks), or golf clubs, are often closed to oppressed or marginalized individuals, because the elite members of society maintain their positions through connections with other privileged people. The underprivileged have little chance of entering into the elite network. In effect, elite networks can propagate oppression through a circular

mechanism where one (elite) member helps another (elite) member, feeding into continued perpetual oppression (Smith, 2007). In education, this can keep the oppressed person out of certain educational institutions and out of certain educational study programs. Oppressed group members then can rarely, or at best only sometimes, have the opportunity afforded to the elite. Social capital can smooth out social class differentiations by giving equitable opportunity benefiting the student.

According to Warren, Thompson, and Saegert (2001), social capital in financial or public institutions operated “within communities, across communities, and through ties” (p. 8). They go on to say that “local communities can also provide the primary arena for the kind of face to-face interactions critical to building trust and common understanding” (p. 9). Putnam’s (1993) research also demonstrated that connections and relationships are important. The desire to belong encouraged growth and adoption of norms of behaviour. College leaders can promote relationships among staff and students, among students and community members. College leaders can encourage ethical norms of behaviour on campus.

Social capital refers to “the set of resources that inhere in relationships of trust and *cooperation between and among people*” (Warren, 2005, p. 136). As Putnam and Leonardi (1993) stated “the features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and social trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (p. 173). This implies that social capital can exist, within a school community and between the school and the community. Where they are situated should be for a mutual benefit.

Putnam and Leonardi (1993) contended that networks were opportunities for community engagement, where the *webs* of social relationships overlap. These networks helped to enable norms for mutual benefit, communication, and trust. For example, networks of “civic engagement” may be joint learning opportunities between the community and the educational institution. These educational opportunities, where linkages of community engagement occur, would overlap and involve norms of support for each other, building trust, building understanding, building bonds, sharing information, and the norm of forming contacts (Putnam & Feldstein, 2003). Civic capacity according to Putnam emphasized the cooperative role of community and the school. His point, I believe, is well taken, in that

college, leaders could go beyond the institution and into the community creating ties and networks.

## 2.21 Student Success

Although students change schools and may not graduate from their original post-secondary institution, change programs, or take longer to complete their programs, for the purposes of this study I define one key marker of student success as *on time* graduation from an Ontario post-secondary college program. In 2014, more than 82, 000 students graduated on time from post-secondary programs in Ontario (Colleges Ontario, 2014, p. 2). This statistic can be used as a benchmark for student success in post-secondary education in Ontario.

Hodgson (2004) wrote about a manufactured civil society where social capital is undermined and destroying some people, while promoting others within that society. This may be similar to how privilege works. To undermine within a relationship, and within a society/organization, may support (unfair) competition and opportunities that prevent sharing and equalization of resources. A manufactured civil society may look good on the outside, for example, policies may be in place that speaks of equality, but there may be an undermining of informal networks that are more influential than the policies. These informal networks may proliferate and may propagate privilege for some, while others are disadvantaged whilst things may appear good on the surface.

For colleges this has implications, because colleges in essence are a manufactured society. By that I mean that colleges are a hamlet, or more precisely, a community within a community. Therefore, leaders must be mindful that there may be (informal) undermining, competition, and lack of opportunity inhibiting some students from success, while promoting other students who have more social capital. Informal networks, such as study groups and preferred partners for projects, may undermine the success of others while promoting success of some, propagating privilege and success for the ones in the group. This illustration is similar to Coleman's (1987) depiction of the tradesmen in New York City who hire each other, promoting people within their group, whilst other tradesmen do not get the jobs.

## 2.22 Summary

A variety of literature exists that considers social capital from various perspectives. In this chapter I discussed the current literature related to norms, networks, trust, as well as the role of academic leadership in advancing students' social capital. Further, I explained the literature relating to leadership, student success, and the concept of privilege.

Taken in its entirety, the literature showed the variety of definitions that exist for social capital, showing there are no concise definitions of social capital. While the literature provided examples of the positive aspects of social capital, there appears to be a paucity of research describing the ways in which college leaders contribute to student social capital in Ontario colleges, and why leaders would want to engage in constructions of networks, norms, and trust.

In the next chapter, I outline my selected methodology and study design in response to my research questions.

## Chapter 3

### 3 Methodology

In this Chapter, I outline my choice to use an exploratory case study methodology (Yin, 2014) and the study's design as the best fit to respond to my research questions, including sources of data and data collection, and the process I used for analysis.

In this study, I selected a case study, because it affords an in depth look at phenomena (Yin, 2014). My case is bounded within a college located in Southwestern Ontario. In particular, I conducted an exploratory case study of the institution, designed, in part, to unearth the institutional culture supporting social capital, specifically the institution's leaders' contributions towards its creation. Drawing on the work of Yin (2014), my exploratory case study design was advantageous for this research, because I used multiple sources of data (i.e., interviews, field notes, observations, and artifacts). My understanding was to construct a *thick description* (Geertz, 1973) of the case and identify themes that emerged from the data. Although the findings from this exploratory case study are not generalizable, they may be helpful and potentially informative (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) to other Ontario college situations, especially those working within similar contexts and student demographics.

#### 3.1 Research Questions

This exploratory case study was guided by the subsequent research questions. My interview protocol (Appendix C) targeted data collection to respond to these expansive questions:

1. In what ways and why have leaders at one Ontario Community College contributed to increased student social capital?
2. What are the key outcomes from building social capital at the Ontario Community College?

#### 3.2 Exploratory Case Study

I chose to use an exploratory case study, because it allows for a deep and meaningful look at my questions. The case in this research is bounded by location to one Southwestern Ontario college at a particular time. An exploratory case study is often designed to unearth the institutional culture (Yin, 2014). In the case of this work, I was specifically exploring how

college leaders created opportunities for social capital to be heightened amongst and for students.

Using an exploratory case study as a method of research permitted me to pull together and consider the data in a more true-to-life way. According to Yin (2014), my exploratory case study research strategy endorsed me to be able to use numerous forms of data (i.e., interviews, field notes, artifacts from an environmental scan) in order to answer to my research questions. This enabled me to create a thick picture (Geertz, 1973) of the case. Although the discoveries from this exploratory case study are not generalizable to every college, they may be helpful and transferable to other college situations, as determined by the reader, to broadly inform their work (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

### 3.3 Interpretivist Stance

An interpretive stance emphasizes action and intentional behaviour, beginning with an individual seeking to understand that individual's interpretation of the world (Creswell, 2013). I took into account the surroundings of the college and clarified words and thoughts that I did not understand from their point-of-view. I interviewed the participants (n=7), at the college where they worked. Here I was trying to gather knowledge, based on my interview protocol, and the nature of the participants' interpretation of that knowledge. I worked directly with the experiences of the participants' understandings and built meaning from what the participants shared. The theory that emerged was insight, which helped me understand the participating educational leaders' behaviours, hopes, and wishes. The perspectives of the participants were varied as were the situations and the context within that organization within that period of time (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). The participants had multiple perspectives and diverse views on the questions and on the topics (Creswell, 2013).

I introduced myself to the participants through an introductory letter, so as to position myself in the study (Creswell, 2013). For example, I mentioned that I was a student, an educator, and a nurse, because this would inform the participants of my perspective and that I would interpret the information that they were to share with me as a student, and as a nursing educator (Creswell, 2013). Here I shared that I wanted to understand the issue under study from a complex detailed account, which I could only get if they shared their insight with me

directly. I wanted their stories to help me co-construct (inform) and further develop my theory—a web of support metaphor; to become a detailed story (Creswell, 2013).

An interpretivist stance was the best fit for me as both a nurse and an educator (someone who is working in post-secondary education exploring this question), and given how I view the world. The qualitative case study methodology fits well in a study grounded in interpretive assumptions. It was my goal to contribute to post-secondary education by making information practical and user friendly, whilst maintaining rigor within the research, so that a nursing professor in the college system could reliably use the information to similarly strengthen student success.

### 3.4 Contextualizing the study

The proposed community college where the research occurred has multiple campuses located in a diverse suburban community in Southwestern Ontario, called Silver Lake College (pseudonym). At the time the field work was conducted, the student body was composed of 11, 500 full-time students, which included 600 international students and 4, 000 students in apprenticeship programs. There were about 20, 000 continuing education students (Silver Lake College, personal communication, March 12, 2017). The Board of Governors was comprised of approximately a 20-member Board with approximately three quarters of those being external members. The Executive Group consisted of three Vice Presidents, a Director, and a Special Advisor. The Senior Leadership Group consisted of a 29-member core of personnel with various responsibilities under their portfolios. There were approximately 200 fulltime professors, and the site was diversified in terms of campuses and campus sizes and course offerings. The students were enrolled in academic and vocational programs, and offered both full- and part-time courses. Students came from a diverse socio-economic status. Several leaders in the college suggested that the student population is similar to other student populations in a mid to large urban center.

### 3.5 Introducing the Participants

I used the Internet to assist with collecting names and contact information of potential participants: senior school leaders in post-secondary college education. The participants were contacted after the approval from the University of Western Ontario's Research Ethics Board,

and then I reached out to potential participants through email and requested their voluntary participation by sharing my Letter of Information (Appendix A). I then followed up with a phone call and an email. In the end, I interviewed seven senior leaders at the community college presented in this study. For the purposes of my research, I defined senior leaders as the president, or relevant vice presidents of the institution, and anyone in a formal leadership role who had a stake and influence on institutional decision-making, including how money was spent, capital planning, and program design. I believed that these individuals also helped shape the mission, values, and goals of the institution, which supported the creation of social capital for students. Additionally, I approached up to 12 deans and chairs of different programs that had direct influence on program delivery and the “mechanics” of their particular program, including out-of-class opportunities for students.

The process of inviting and interviewing senior educational leaders continued until the data became saturated, for example: when there were no new patterns that arose in the data. The seven participants are introduced in the following table.

Table 2

*Basic Participant Data*

| <u>Name (Pseudonyms)</u> | <u>Role</u>                                 | <u>Years at the Institution</u> |
|--------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| Sam                      | Director: Student Success                   | 5 years                         |
| Tom                      | Vice President: Student and Alumni services | 5 years                         |
| Lydia                    | Associate Vice President: Student Success   | 36                              |
| Paul                     | Associate Dean                              | 35                              |
| Mitchel                  | Dean  | 5                               |



|     |  |    |
|-----|--|----|
| Eve | Director: Counselling Health<br>and Accessibility Services | 6  |
| Vic | Vice President Academic                                    | 35 |

### 3.6 Ensuring Verisimilitude

I write persuasively so that the readers of the research experience *being there* (Creswell, 2013). In order to do this I engaged and opened myself up to new research-related ideas. I refrained from jumping to conclusions about meaning or allowing my own understandings to overshadow their words. Instead I bracketed my personal biases as much as possible and understood that data must unfold, and that I had to be patient when identifying themes and making connections among the data sets (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). The ideas uncovered in the data were realistic, clear, and believable, so that the data reflected the complexities of real life at the college. This made the research usable and engaged my fellow participants, making the research come alive (Creswell, 2013).

### 3.7 Validity

During and following my fieldwork I ensured, to the highest degree possible, honesty, depth, and a richness and scope of the data. As it happened, I interviewed all levels of leaders, at Silver Lake College; I asked for their honest responses, clarified any assumptions that I may have inadvertently had, acquired rich data, and hand delivered the transcripts back to each participant for *member checks* (Cohen, Manion, Morrison, 2007; Geertz, 1973). This research was not controlled as participants were free to answer the questions as they saw fit. The interviews took place at the college. The transcription data present the participants' own words.

### 3.8 Sensitivity

Qualitative research involves the researcher having sensitivity. Sensitivity here means "having insight as well as being tuned in to and being able to pick up on relevant issues, events, and happenings during collection and analysis of data" (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p.

78). Here the researcher, in keeping with an interpretive stance, will take the participant's point of view to try to understand the participant's meaning, while having an empathetic understanding of the participants' experiences, rooted in my own professional knowledge and experience as a registered nurse and educator. This can help the research process, because I am familiar and comfortable with various aspects of education within the college environment (Yin, 2014). Another aim was to have qualitative sensitivity based on careful listening and respect for the participants, their cultures, and the data that they chose to share (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, Yin, 2014).

### 3.9 Trustworthiness and Reliability of the Data

As mentioned earlier, member checks were done with the participants upon transcription completion to ensure that the transcripts actually captured what each of the participants wanted to convey. Member checking also occurred during various points of the interview. Detailed research notes were made during and after the interview, to ensure a fit between what was recorded and what actually occurred in the research field-site setting. These notes were referred to during analysis to help ensure the reliability and validity of the data (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Yin, 2014).

### 3.10 Research Ethics

As this research involved human subjects, the interview protocol and intention of the research were reviewed and approved by the University of Western Ontario Research Ethics Board. To my knowledge there was little or no risk, stress, or potential discomfort for the participants. Pseudonyms were used to address anonymity of the participants and the college institution. At no time during the research or dissemination of findings was the site or participants identified.

Data were securely stored and no transfer of individual data was made electronically. I stored jump drives, field notes, and interview transcripts separately from the main computer where no data were stored on the hard drive. As well, I collected and used names that were identified during the research and dissemination using a pseudonym. For security reasons, I had the only copies of the master list that was stored in a locked cabinet in my office. All of

the identifiable information is kept in the locked cabinet in my home and will be there for five years. After the retention period, all identifiable information will be erased completely from any electronic source and paper sources will be shredded.

Informed consent was obtained at the time of the interview by asking each participant to sign a consent form (Appendix B). At this point, I reiterated that their participation was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw at any time without penalty. I also offered background information about my work, the purpose of the research, and definitions of social capital to each participant at the start of each interview.

### 3.11 Data Collection

Triangulation was achieved through the use of multiple sources of data. These data were used alongside the transcripts of the interviews to create thick description of the case. Data used were: semi-structured interviews (Appendix C), member checks, field notes and observations (environmental scan, i.e., refreshments, dress, cars in parking lots, bright spaces, configuration of seating), on-site artifacts (i.e., pamphlets and brochures gathered at the site), and institution policies and other documents sent to me. The semi-structured interviews on a one-to-one basis enabled follow-up questions pertinent to a specific participant's earlier comment(s). Interviews were conducted for up to one hour and enabled participants to discuss areas they wanted to explore related to the questions. Additionally, to gain information from their point of view, each participant was given the web of support articulated in the conceptual framework of the study (see Figure 1 in chapter two). This web was for the participants to use so they could discuss institutional supports for social capital during the interview. I used this tool as a method of focusing their perspectives of institutional social capital as it pertained to their role and understanding of social capital as norms, networks, and trust.

### 3.12 Data Analysis

I used a modified constant comparative method of analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). This method is apt for case study methodology, because of the amount data collected: I listened to the interview recordings multiple times before I transcribed the interviews to immerse myself

in the data. As well, I asked myself reflective and reflexive questions to make myself aware of and check my biases on issues, make note of them, bracket them, and account for them if need be in the interpretation of the data. Further, I hand-coded the data based on my understanding of what was said by participants. The hand-coded transcriptions given to each participant for their approval.

When reviewing transcripts, I employed an open mind to explore the data, line by line, in order to create a thick description of the case. I created codes for categories until the coding was complete. By inductively creating larger themes from the coded data, my findings began to emerge.

My field notes were used to illuminate patterns in the interview transcript data. I created memos about themes and ideas as they occurred in the interviews as a way of making my data more meaningful during the analysis and by giving it context. The interpretation of the data (to reach an understanding about the institutional supports for student social capital) was deliberate, thick, and careful (Geertz, 1973). Ethically, while engaged in a modified format of constant data comparison, I refrained from jumping to conclusions about meanings. Instead I understood that the data had to emerge, and I was patient when identifying themes and making connections among the data sets while I explored the ideas of the participants (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

### 3.13 Limitations

The limitations of the research design included the small sample and “one-shot” interviews. Further, to ensure the usefulness of the interviews as a data source, I had to structure the questions to capture the reflections of my research question, prepare probing follow-up questions as necessary during the interviews. This study was bounded and situated in the particular context of one college at one time.

### 3.14 Summary

I have highlighted the exploratory case study methodology and the study design. In the next chapter, I share the findings related to my research questions.

## Chapter 4

### 4 Findings

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of my research study. The data were obtained from participant semi-structured interviews, field notes and observations, artifacts (pamphlets, articles), and institutional documents. My findings will be illustrated in tables, using direct quotes from participant interview data in response to my research questions.

#### 4.1 Research Questions

This exploratory case study was guided by the subsequent research questions. Interview protocol (Appendix C) targeting data collection and responding to these questions:

1. In what ways, and why, have leaders at one Ontario Community College contributed to increased student social capital?
2. What are the key outcomes from building social capital at one Ontario Community College?

I have organized the findings from more than one participant, to respond to each research question. In each case, the data are first presented as a table to present information succinctly, and then each theme is explored narratively.

#### 4.2 Recapping of Participants and Analysis

As noted earlier, I employed a modified version of the constant comparative method (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) and identified themes, within the data, as they emerged. The themes to my study's first question were identified as: networks, hardscape including the physical building, the grounds, and the surroundings that foster networks, building people, the challenge of creating networks, participant interaction with the web of support, norms, collective vision, response to at-risk students, celebrating/recognizing student success, recognizing students at-risk, defining student success from a social capital perspective, and trust. Themes related to question two were also identified and included: key outcomes for students, key outcomes for leaders, key outcomes for the college, and strategic planning.

### 4.3 Responding to Question One

The following tables illustrate the themes I identified to respond to my question: In what ways, and why, have leaders at Silver Lake Community College contributed to increased student social capital? The tables follow this placement: Table 3 starts with the networks; Table 4 houses networks and participant interaction with the web of support; Table 5 starts with norms and collective vision; Table 6 includes a response to at-risk students; Table 7 includes celebrating/recognizing student success; Table 8 includes recognizing students at-risk; Table 9 defines student success from the social capital perspective; Lastly, Table 10 identifies participant perspectives on trust.

Table 3

#### *Networks*

| <u>Data Source</u>   | <u>Relevant findings connected to theme</u>  |
|--|--|
| Described by school leader during semi-structured interview in their own words | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• students work in groups on projects and during competitions</li> <li>• enable students to meet and build relationships</li> <li>• information session for new students</li> <li>• opportunities to meet community partners</li> <li>• inclusive</li> <li>• hardscape (hard bricks and mortar that landscape the soft grass)</li> <li>• develop people → why (my thought bracketed)</li> <li>• engaged → why (my thought bracketed)</li> </ul> |
| Described by researcher's  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many opportunities to network: research, projects, music,</li> </ul>  |

field notes during semi-structured interview

gym

- develop people → why (bracketed my thought?)
- engaged relationships, bonds, success → why?

Described by researcher through reflection on field notes/interview not during interview

- chairs in circles (may) mean working together and networking is encouraged here

Described by researcher through observation of cultural artifacts

- chairs in circles
- computers at tables in main hallways
- bright windows—lots of light
- environmental photos
- neighborhood hubs
- social ink
- clubs, activities

Table 4

*Network: Participant interaction with web of support*

| <u>Data Source</u>  | <u>Relevant findings connected to theme</u>  |
|---|--|
| Described by school leader during semi-structured interviews in their own words | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• we have resources here for every type of issue</li> <li>• failure in a course is not necessarily about the course</li> <li>• showcase good students</li> <li>• celebrate and recognize student success</li> <li>• students in formal networks</li> <li>• feedback</li> <li>• resources, services, apprentice programs</li> </ul>                  |
| Described in researcher's field notes during semi-structured interview          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• students have opportunity to meet and work together → why?</li> <li>• bonding, relationships, build community</li> <li>• there is literally every resource here to help a student → why?</li> <li>• help students</li> <li>• wow...amazing what they do...Great for the web of support...I can see how this can actually help students</li> </ul> |
| Described by researcher through reflection of field                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• students working together → bonding</li> <li>• leaders helping students succeed</li> </ul>  |



notes/interview not during  
interview

- lunch room
- areas in hallways for staff to sit and chat
- → showcase good students → why?
- encouragement

Described by researcher  
through observation of cultural  
artifacts

- gym
- computer rooms
- common gathering rooms
- faculty engaged in research with students
- speak of upcoming publications
- publications on display
- some faculty are doctoral prepared (degrees on walls)

Table 5

*Norm: Collective Vision*

| <u>Data Source</u>   | <u>Relevant findings connected to theme</u>  |
|--|--|
| Described by school leader during semi-structured interview                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• encourage students to work together</li> <li>• family like</li> <li>• collective vision from student success plan</li> <li>• successful curriculum with experts from the field</li> <li>• success advisor</li> <li>• workshops for struggler</li> <li>• flexed delivery of courses → why?</li> <li>• student success</li> <li>• graduation</li> </ul> |
| Described by researcher's field notes during semi-structured interview         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students sit and talk in hallways.</li> <li>• students work together on the computer in hallways → why?</li> <li>• community</li> <li>• smiles</li> <li>• free coffee/cookies in reception</li> </ul>   |
| Described by researcher through reflection of field notes/interview not during | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is this then a norm here where students work together?</li> </ul>   |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| interview   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• warm feeling</li> <li>• a comfortable feeling → why?</li> <li>• bonding</li> <li>• student success</li> </ul>  |
| Described by researcher through observation of cultural artifacts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• chairs everywhere</li> <li>• signs about expected behaviour (e.g., no smoking, quiet, gender neutral bathrooms, affirmation of LGBT, honor roll, TV with excellence photos, students, projects)</li> </ul> |

Table 6

*Norm: Response to At-Risk Students*

| <u>Data Source</u>  | <u>Relevant findings connected to theme</u>  |
|---|--|
| Described by school leader during semi-structured interview | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Soft hands off approach”</li> <li>• counselor</li> <li>• city in a school</li> <li>• we bring potential students to our institution</li> <li>• we give them courses to help them get ready for college</li> <li>• co-authored code red report</li> <li>• board of directors approved tuition arrangements</li> <li>• volunteer teachers</li> </ul> |

Described by researcher's field notes during semi-structured interview

Described by researcher through reflection of field notes/interview not during interview

- searching for new responses
- ability to manage at risk students
- have resources
- bursary money for at risk areas/streets
- town hall meetings
- mentoring
- counselors on site/collaborate with hospital
- do one course (prep, upgrading)
- ah, ah...they are doing something...
- very progressive
- I have not heard of this before
- smiles
- students with various labels/no labels of clothing → all students can attend; open access
- various models and makes of cars in parking lot → all can attend
- bus area crowded → why?
- accessible for all
- → why? soft hand off
- help student → success, follow through, they don't

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Described by researcher through observation of cultural artifacts | <p>drop them</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• dinners (picture of a table) with a leader and a community partner spring</li> <li>• competitions (picture of leader with a university partner) spring</li> <li>• tuition earning programs</li> <li>• scholarship for the students from “at-risk areas” (street-specific)</li> </ul> |
|---|--|

Table 7

*Norm: Celebrating and Recognizing Student Success*

| <u>Data Source</u>   | <u>Relevant findings connected to theme</u>  |
|--|--|
| Described by school leader during semi-structured interview            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Letters from the Dean”</li> <li>• “we recognize small steps”</li> <li>• graduates</li> <li>• recognize small steps</li> <li>• media</li> <li>• publications</li> </ul> |
| Described by researcher’s field notes during semi-structured interview | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “honor roll”</li> <li>• why? → encourage students—success</li> <li>• model that others have achieved</li> </ul>   |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Described by researcher through reflection of field notes/interview not during interview | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “honor roll in hallways”</li> <li>• → Success strategy, why? student success believe they too can do it</li> </ul> |
| Described by researcher through observation of cultural artifacts                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “honor roll in hallway”</li> <li>• trophies</li> </ul>   |

Table 8

*Norm: Recognizing Students At-Risk*

| <u>Data Source</u>  | <u>Relevant findings connected to theme</u>  |
|---|--|
| Described by school leader during semi-structured interview | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “students at-risk”</li> <li>• poverty, trauma, culture (“Aboriginal”)</li> <li>• WSIB students</li> <li>• mature (older) students</li> <li>• newcomers</li> <li>• “complex” student population</li> <li>• “not succeeding in program”</li> <li>• “mistrust of institutions”</li> <li>• “personal (negative) opinions of post-secondary”</li> <li>• language issues (English is not the first language)</li> <li>• we have many mature students who have multiple</li> </ul> |

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | demands   |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• typical students</li> <li>• typical risk factors</li> <li>• complex</li> </ul>   |
| Described by researcher's field notes during semi-structured interview                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "students that do not fit"</li> <li>• "majority of students are 25 years or older"</li> <li>• ah...let's see what they are doing</li> <li>• why? → (help students succeed and stay in school)</li> </ul> |
| Described by researcher through reflection of field notes/interview not during interview | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• food banks</li> <li>• health centers</li> <li>• lounges to eat in, make food</li> <li>• buses to bring in students from at risk areas</li> <li>• free bus passes</li> </ul>                              |
| Described by researcher through observation of cultural artifacts                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• health centers</li> <li>• clothes lending closet</li> <li>• sign for "no bullying"</li> <li>• first in family to attend post-secondary</li> <li>• address is at-risk</li> </ul>                          |

Table 9

*Norm: Defining Student Success from the Social Capital Perspective*

| <u>Data Source</u>                                      | <u>Relevant findings connected to theme</u>  |
|---|--|
| Described by school leader<br>semi-structured interview | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “others relate social capital as a mismatch”</li> <li>• “common approach to support students”</li> <li>• “college in motion program”</li> <li>• “pathways for every student”</li> <li>• re-define programs</li> <li>• access</li> <li>• flexibility for every student</li> <li>• accessing helping networks</li> <li>• student/faculty interaction</li> <li>• mature students</li> <li>• job ready</li> <li>• team player</li> <li>• collaborator</li> <li>• technical skills</li> <li>• strategically developed outcomes</li> <li>• outside classroom experiences (co-curricular record)</li> <li>• they will learn the technical skill but we want them to</li> </ul> |



learn how to work with people

Described by researcher's field notes during semi-structured interview

- getting a job → why?
- “nurturing programs”
- “counseling services”
- trust the system
- ah...why? their definition of success is “job ready”
- → find a job, build success, build community

Described by researcher through reflection of field notes/interview not during interview

- counseling services offices and discussion with Director
- alumni mentoring

Described by researcher through observation of cultural artifacts

- offices
- on site services
- peer tutoring
- forming professional relationships with each other i.e., in hallways
- working together
- able to get and keep a job

Table 10

*Trust*

| <u>Data Source</u>  | <u>Relevant findings connected to theme</u>   |
|---|---|
| Described by school leader semi-structured interview                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• if students know that they can find a job, they trust what we are teaching them → why? builds trust</li> <li>• diverse</li> <li>• increased completion rate</li> <li>• 90% complaint resolution</li> <li>• students on appeals committee</li> <li>• private provider health service on site</li> </ul> |
| Described by researcher's field notes during semi-structured interview                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• oh students are working together? Trust manifestation/example</li> <li>• senior leadership trusts them to work together</li> <li>• → why useful for their lively hood, trust that they will be able to succeed and then find a job</li> <li>• trust employers want this skill</li> </ul>               |
| Described by researcher: through reflection of field notes/interview not during interview | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• admin trusts them to work together and not cheat</li> </ul>  |
| Described by researcher through observation of cultural artifacts                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• computer stations where students work together</li> </ul>  |

## 4.4. Networks

In this section I elaborate on the information from Table 3. I describe networking from the participant's perspective as "building skills," "building relationships," and building a space to meet" or "to engage." Community college leadership team members described themselves as being "individuals who keep their commitment to others" and "fulfill their assignments associated with the success of students through maintaining relationships that benefit the students."

The interview data suggest that the senior administrators viewed their influence as contributing to enabling students to meet, and build relationships. Lydia, associate VP, stated, "[that we have] built neighborhood hubs for them [students] to meet." Sam, director, echoed Lydia's when he described the importance of relationship building. He referred to the social Ink (a space for students to meet) as, "a physical space designed for students to get together." Another example of the senior leaders recognition of the opportunities available for students was offered by Paul, when he said, "we have a lot of clubs and activities, opportunities for students to get involved and then all of our programs have some sort of work integrated learning." This affords opportunity for students to build relationships and to build bonds.

In another example of network building, school leaders put together an information session for prospective and new students that included descriptors of the various programs (i.e., diploma, degree), activities, competitions, and opportunities to meet other graduates and community partners. This link illustrates the extent to which senior administration attempted to create opportunities for students to meet and join with others, with the hope of forming relationships, even before they enter the college. Attempts to have students meet each other early on in the school life process demonstrates that leaders want students to network and bond.

Additionally, Sam described the importance of developing people and relationships. He said that during student orientation, "we have four or five outcomes we are trying to achieve. The first is to make a meaningful connection to your peers; the second is to make a meaningful connection to your program." The importance or why of networking is to "develop" students.

On my environmental scan, I noted the extent to which the school community strived to be inclusive. Those students deemed to be at-risk were able to visit the school during information times and earn “tuition monies” by attending sessions on potential courses. These virtual monies were then used toward tuition. The monies accumulated with visits and interaction (networking) involvement with the school before the start of the academic year. Two participants in the study similarly stated that students “like to know that what they are learning is useful,” that they can “have a role in society.” Similarly, the school leaders observed that when a prospective student met an alumnus it indicated to the students that “learning has a purpose.” Mitchel, a key leader within his department said that, “recruiters recruit out of clubs, not by [the level of student] marks. What clubs tell recruiters are that “you can work together and accomplish a goal.” The opportunity to participate in a club and meet employment recruiters is open to all students.

Networking appears to be crucial to connect those students deemed at-risk with the opportunities at the College. One senior leader, Tom, stated that if a student was “not engaged with his/her network, and if he/she is not fitting into the norms of the institution, they will not be engaging, then he/she is at-risk of leaving the institution is greater.” Therefore, a student who is not connected is a student at-risk according to this college. Leaders help the at-risk students connect to networks, to other leaders (Deans, Associate Deans), to academic pathways, to clubs and sports teams, to projects, and to health services, among others.

**4.4.1 Hardscape (bricks and mortar) to foster networks.** The data suggest that senior administrators view their leadership and influence as extending to deliberate construction choices on their part to facilitate meeting spaces for the students. The college was redesigned recently to create spaces where students could come together to make connections. Tom said that the construction of these places, such as the study group tables in the hallways was a “deliberate choice.” Lydia also referred to the recent redesign of the college and noted that “there was a very deliberate attempt to redesign the space to make it a space for them to stay, a place for them to study, [and] recreational activities for them. The space is called the ‘Leaf’.” I also observed spaces in front of the coffee shop with lounging chairs put in circles to enable formal and informal meetings and opportunities for students to

socialize. It was obvious that networking, building bonds, and community could take place here.

**4.4.2 Building people.** In building people, to help them learn and grow, there is a strengthening of school culture and a building of collaboration through leaders and student interaction. Members of the Silver Lake College senior administration, including several of the study participants, along with the student leadership team, attend leadership training together three times a year. This event was noted in several interviews as a way of strengthening school culture and building networking, based on collaboration and leadership at the student level. It is through networking that students are developed and “built.” Students and professors work together on research projects, policies, and appeals. According to Paul, administrative leadership tends to believe that the students are to be actively engaged in research projects as he stated, “engineering technology encourages students. We have a project with electric cars. The students are put into heats, and they code things. The students work with the faculty on this research on the electric cars.” The Vice President of academics, Tom said, “students’ sit on the appeals meetings.” He articulated why students are on the appeals committee, as these actions help build an understanding of the school processes and decision-making, which ultimately builds trust.

From Paul’s description of the importance of relationship building, Lydia offered yet another perspective on the importance of the student association space and asserted that in these spaces the students can interact with others to learn to develop communication skills and team leadership skills, thereby allowing and enabling people to build people through the interactions. Lydia connected the importance of this building up of people as student leaders, “run most of the clubs for students.” Here students learn leadership skills. In another example, Lydia recalled, “there is an advocate office for students, car rental [on campus] and there are social events for students.” Car rentals can build up students, by helping students get to job interviews if they do not own a car. Car rentals on campus make it convenient for students to car pool to placements for clinical experiences and/or to sessions that are off campus. Lydia’s comments are yet another example of a senior administrator’s passionate commitment to building and developing people. It was visible, on my self-guided tour, that the campus had a performing arts center, a bank, and other stores on campus run by students.

The bulletin boards have information about student clubs, peer-to-peer tutoring, games rooms activities, health services, an international office, and a clothing cupboard. These are activities and skill building opportunities that develop networks.

In the preceding section, the various modalities that the administration has purposefully invested in opportunities for students to build networks were discussed. The discussion below continues with considering the challenges and the participant interaction with the web of support.

**4.4.3 The challenge of creating networks.** In addition to being committed to students, leaders in this study claimed that they were devoted to student success. I took this to mean that the faculty took pride in their association with the students and their successes. Tom made the assertion that “we pride ourselves as having one of the best relationships with the student.” Members on the leadership team recognized that at-risk students do not connect, because they have time commitments, family commitments, illness, pain, and often they are supporting a family and/or working multiple jobs. Networking is challenging for these students, because they go from school to work, with no time to make connections. Sam stated that if a student was “not engaged with [their] network, and if [they] are not fitting into the norms of the institution, [they] will not be engaging, and then [the] risk [of] leaving the institution is greater.” He went on to say that “for us [in the college] to achieve student success, the conditions of student success have not been met if the student does not graduate.”

Lydia noted the connection between teaching and student success. She is an experienced administrator with 36 years of experience at the institution and similarly believed that “extraordinary teachers” connect with the at-risk students. She suggested that these teachers have a different mindset: one that wants to look for opportunities to work with the vulnerable students. Lydia acknowledged that reaching at-risk students is done “one student at a time,” and that “it takes a special teacher” to work with these students at the college.

## 4.5 Participant Interaction with the Web of Support

In this section, I elaborate on the information from Table 4. During my interviews I offered each participant a copy of my conceptual framework represented as a web of support. I

invited each participant to reframe, add in, or reconfigure the web as they saw fit to represent how they envisioned social capital at the College. One participant, Tim, noted that: “One could argue motivation. One could also argue work ethic” as being parts of the web. He went on to say that people come to “the conclusion that people do well in programs, because of the program.” In his explanation he recognized that failure to do well is not necessarily about the course. Tim suggested:

I would love to say that. But that is probably likely not true. Maybe the program, contributed to that but it could be that the students who used those services, perhaps, I am using your imagery of social capital maybe they have higher levels of social capital already. They knew how to access and contact the services, to solve their own problems. So that is where the social capital piece comes in.

Tom VP student services, summarized what the other executive had said through his example of “student research projects, dinners, and clubs.” Another cited the example of golf tournaments.

Other additions to the web through networking by the participants included the ability of faculty “to *showcase* good students.” This was an example of the college’s commitment to the norm of celebrating exemplary student achievement. Tom, VP student and alumni services, went on to state that he would add “student leaders into formal networks, because students are hired or have been hired into fulltime employment.” Again, this is an illustration of networking and can be aligned with other more formal networks, like apprentice programs or clinical work related to experiences.

Also, an addition to the Web of Support is “feedback.” Sam, director of student success suggested that “feedback has the advantage of building trust,” both for college leaders and for students. Finally, “student resources” and “services” were identified by every participant as an integral addition to the web and could be related to each of Coleman’s key thematic ideas of norms, networks, and trust.

## 4.6 Norms

A number of leaders alluded to the fact that they are very family-like and/or friendly-like with each other in that they “work together well,” and “we are very close,” said another member, who was asked to come out of retirement to help based on her experience. We have “close professional relationships” with each other, said yet another member of the leadership team.

While waiting for an interview, I observed that people greeted each other with smiles and kind words in the office suite of Senior Administration. There were complimentary coffees, cookies, and water that were offered to those waiting. This gesture felt warm and comforting to me as an outsider and prompted me to engage in conversation with the clerical administrative staff. All of these indicators point to the explicit creation of an environment where people are respected and honored and engagement is welcome.

When interviewed, Linda said that “they [students] know there will be closeness and an extensive group there for them.” Further, there was counseling for the students and “there really is a sense of community where there are so many resources available for them.” I also observed that most groups on campus were open to everyone. There were no visible “cliques” or sub-groups. Further, most services and groups were free for students to join and attend, thus attempting to build community.

**4.6.1 Collective vision.** In this section I elaborate on Table 5. I follow this with a discussion about a response to at-risk students and celebrating/recognizing student success. Wayne noted that his role was to “state that our goals are in our student success plan, so our president has called “a call to action.” He felt that it was then up to him to establish the “vision.” The vision, as found in the Silver Lake College’s Student Success Plan, mandated that, “the College as a whole and each of its schools and programs is developing retention plans to ensure that more students graduate than ever before, with attention paid to achieving learning outcomes both within and outside the classroom.” The strategic plan described the vision of the College in terms of student success (graduation) as an expected learning outcome; this is why the leaders in this study said that they are building student social capital. The leaders were mindful of the collective vision—everyone shared the vision.



Also, one routine was to run workshops for “strugglers,” (i.e., those students who do not pass the courses). The leaders who mentioned this opportunity understood that students had “outside” conflict. There was intensive focus on the continuous tracking of students. There was also a constant assessment of students, and educators were expected to show an improvement of student grades and an improvement from failure rates. At this college, there was a compulsory withdrawal re-direct program where students were offered the opportunity to enter into preparatory courses if they were contemplating leaving the college system. This was noted, as outlined in the college’s booklet on their five-point Student Success plan. The close tracking of students implied a desire by teachers for the students to be successful. Also, I noted in the published document on Student Success that the administration recognized that Silver Lake College needed to offer the “right fit for the right student” in order to ensure success. This idea correlates with the data about applied knowledge as a focus for this community college and its various programs for students with different learning strengths and styles.

The college appealed to a kinetic, hands on, learning style. Paul Associate Dean, suggested that under his portfolio “about 50% of the students are mature students,” (i.e., a mature student would be a student who is not from high school, generally has worked prior to attending college, or has taken other courses). A mature student may also have a family and job commitments, as well as commitments to school. Additionally, Sam director of student success, noted that more and more of the students have degrees. Mitchel, a Dean, voiced that “all of our technology programs are co-op. Here they figure out real working work.” The norm that seems to be expressed by these leaders is that the curriculum is comprised of worthwhile applied knowledge.

Another important, inferred norm, was the belief in “student success.” Faculty members were trained to support students by noticing signs of student stress and distress, understanding what they could do, and whom they could make a referral to. Further, SLC staff are trained in how they can help students become leaders. College teachers and leaders monitor student progress and re-route students into other programs if necessary. College leaders support faculty with research opportunities and professional development that aligns within their programs. Students learn how to: lead other students, use resources for

communication, and communicate and cooperate with others in a group. In this way college leaders helped encourage and train the faculty to support students to work together towards success. As the data suggest, “employers want people who can work together and be successful.”

**4.6.2 Response to at-risk students.** The data reveal (Table 6) that the institutional leaders were searching for new responses to “what works” and what did not work for at-risk students. This was demonstrated by Paul when he said, “every Associate Dean puts together a retention plan, which I help them do annually, and then I have four funded research projects that I am currently coordinating right now.” The five-point Student Success Plan stated that the new student services model is “grounded in research about what nurtures and supports post-secondary success.” Sam, Director Student success stated that:

Each year in January when we get the first semester grades, we have a re-direct campaign, where we meet with and speak with all students who are on probationary status, and that is either a plan to get back on track, or where students have decided that it is not the right path for them, to put them in a new program.

Additionally, one of the leaders also mentioned that they have a “soft hand off, where we actually make the connection from a recruiter to a support person on campus.” They helps the student transition. Additionally they stated: “We make a soft hand off so we say, here you go I want to introduce you to so and so and they are going to help you. Along the journey we have coaches, advisors, and counselors.” Tom, vice president mentioned that “we are starting to get into the territory of helping folks sort what path makes sense.” The response to at-risk students is individual and retentive.

When the leaders were asked about at-risk students, I was told that “we have the ability to manage at-risk students.” All of the participants mentioned the full complement of resources that the college had for its students. Lydia, associate VP explained the student matching program prior to admission where the students are assessed for math and literacy competency. They are then placed into appropriate areas or remedial courses to help ensure success. As Vic Vice President academic noted:

Every student application is matched to an engagement survey with different risk factors. They are assessed for math and literacy communication ability. Then they are placed in the appropriate level of the communications course. There are different levels [of courses]. [If] the student is exempt, which many of our nursing students are, and then [if they are not exempt] there is an online course, a face to face course, and a remedial communication course. Students are not forced into this, they are assessed. The uptake is 75-80%. Then there is a math course. We have a math learning center and an individual learning center.

He went on to say that persistence is the key and that staff match bursary money with geographic areas within the city to help students who persist:

Further for the at-risk students we have 3.5 million in bursary and financial assistance. It generally goes on financial need. Some monies are based on merit. And then there is OSAP [Ontario Student Assistance Program]. [Silver Lake College] staff matches the student with the appropriate monies. The monies did not get used up before. Now, staff matches you. If there is a bursary for a [xxx] Street student, staff matches you if you live on [xxx] Street. We map out the monies. In this way the monies get used. [Silver Lake College] matches the money to the student. Many students do not know about all the money available.

Several of the leadership team referred to a formal mentorship program, which included student-to-student mentorship, and student leadership mentorship. Within the formal leadership student mentorship program there are 75 to 100 students enrolled every year. In the program, students plan activities, and connect to groups with the advisement of the college leadership. As one VP in charge of academics noted:

We have also implemented a student to student mentorship program on campus. This is a formal student leadership program. We take in 75-100 students each year. These students are given opportunity to do things, plan activities, and to connect to groups of students to mentor and to act as a resource for students.

Furthermore, members of the executive and mentored students attend town hall meetings, organize “gold events,” dinners for students who are gold achievers, and hold community dinners. In the experience of Vic, mentoring was provided in many ways:

Our executive attends student events such as the golf tournament. I never turn down an opportunity to meet with and speak to students especially the student leaders. We have town hall meetings. We have a dragons den that is sustained through student ideas and student funding. We talk to students about any issue.

Additionally, students are mentored to lead by the senior leadership. Students work through policies, organize fund raising events, and sit on various committees where they get an opportunity to network within the college and with partners outside of the college system.

One senior leader observed:

Another way that leadership has supported student social capital is through mentoring students. The Silver Lake College presidential group, of which there are four, has a formal relationship with student leaders. We problem solve issues together; develop opportunities together. There is also a formal mentorship with the four to five senior administrators and the student executive. The Deans are also asked to connect with and the Silver Lake College Student Association and to engage with the student executive through a mentorship program.

Another Vice President leader, Tom strongly stated:

Our social capital is embedded in our philosophy. We are an open access college. This was an intentional move four to five years ago. We worked within the barriers of education. We have reduced or eliminated the barriers as seen in our successes of students. We have a culture here at [Silver Lake College] of student success. This does not mean that we lower our standards, but that we help the students succeed. We have a model to expose the student to make them aware and to empower the student. We want to break the cycle of poverty.

4.6.3 Celebrating and recognizing student success. My field-based investigations (Table 7) discovered that the students “get letters from the Deans” when the

school celebrated and recognized student success. Also, the school does things like “honor rolls.” One leader said that “it is like a celebration of learning where we recognize involvement, and we just try to work with students and recognize the small steps.”

Tim summed up the efforts via a comment about an initiative that he engendered, namely a formal breakfast with great students, examples of their work, and the community, including the media and publications. Tim claimed that:

In my role I create opportunity for students. I model for students. I showcase great students [their work]. For example we just had the Ontario skills competition for skilled trades. We showcase this here through a formal breakfast with leaders and students. This student success is featured on the [Silver Lake College] news. The successful students also get featured in the general media. We have board of governor meetings each year. Students are invited to present at the board of governors. Students would present capstone projects and/or journal articles that they may have published. This encourages a type of healthy competition between students and between student groups. This perpetuates the positive accomplishments and reinforces positive behaviours.

**4.6.4 Recognizing students at-risk.** In terms of the data I gathered and reviewed (see Table 8), although these issues were not explored in great depth, it was clear that there are home “issues” of many students who are at-risk. Additionally, at-risk students have complex life situations resulting in a decrease in their socio-economic status and increased poverty. Workplace injuries may also put a student at- risk, as well as being of Aboriginal descent (due to historical issues).

A decrease in socio-economic status may be related to a language issue, and/or from being a single parent, or having a family and trying to afford school. At the field site, I recalled examples given, around students, who have to rush off to work after school, and, as a result, the college made “odd hour” classes and computer-assisted classes available at times for those students.

As indicated by a leader, workplace injury students may not be familiar with academic rigor. They may, for example, be more of a kinetic learner, familiar with a trade, but because of physical disability, or pain, they have to retrain academically.

Also, leaders acknowledged that at-risk students may include Aboriginal families. Aboriginal families (at the college) may sometimes distrust the educational system, because of their family's previous educational experience and the history between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Peoples in Canada. As well, the backgrounds of some Aboriginal students may be such that they have issues with trust of non-Aboriginal people and norms due to for example the legacy of residential schools.

**4.6.5 Defining student success from a social capital perspective.** This section begins with an exploration of the theme of the definition of student success from a social capital perspective (Table 9). Tom shared that student success is a “strategy.” When there is no leadership strategy there is a “miss-match” to student success. He said, “when you put strategy in place and you are going in one direction you can impact results.” Tom went on to say that “you can make a big impact when you align efforts, with a consistent and common approach to how you want to support students.” He again alluded to the fact that “so with us, what we have seen is, we all use a concept a vision a model; we put the same strategy in place.”

I highlight from the data collected that there should be “access” and flexible “pathways” for every student at every turn. In order to encourage student success, various pathways should be available as student lives and career goals may change for them as they develop and advance their student success. Another executive, Paul, associate Dean, in his area of responsibility also echoed the words access and pathways stating that “I think that is the beautiful part about community college.”

Another participant Sam, director of student success, stated, in response to a question about student social capital, that:

Well here is what I know. I know that across the board, when I look at [student success] from a very rudimentary way, those nurturing programs and services,

counseling, advising, accessible learning, providing nurturing, peer tutoring, those that participate versus those that do not, there is a 10-15% difference in their retention rates and student success.

Here the data suggest that the student who utilizes the helping, nurturing networks will likely benefit in terms of student success.

Paul, associate Dean, had a slightly different perspective on his contributions to student social capital. He said that “I encourage student/faculty interaction.” He went on to say that “a college education is more than just passing, we want students to mature. This is all an investment in social capital.” He went on to say that “social capital pays dividends for the college and for students. It is a business, and we have to sell. It is a win/win.” The data indicate that the interaction between staff and student is of critical importance. With regard to my observations at the college, around campus there are various opportunities for students to talk to each other. For example, a dog on campus in an office seems to comfort some students and promote interaction between students. Mitchel, a Dean, commented that “this encourages students to talk to other older students and then they start to think about a special academic plan and exemptions.” Faculty and the executive attend leadership retreats, golf tournaments, and stakeholder community dinners.

When asked about student social capital, I illuminated threads of the theme on student maturity where the student is “job ready.” These themes were echoed by a college executive, Lydia, who stated that “it has been a wonderful partnership, because we can help students transition into the community.” Prior to that she said, “students are leaders of the future.” She expanded the two thoughts by saying, “if we can give students the tools and the tool box to be successful, they are future leaders, future alumni, so they are going to do some really great things.” As previously noted, job ready, well-rounded students, were viewed as an outcome according to these educators: “Social capital is what is necessary to help them mature, so that we send out a mature well rounded student. The factories and industries want mature adults. The students have the opportunity to grow up.” This sentiment is coupled by comments from Tom and Paul, two senior leaders of the college. Paul a Dean said that “individuals need to be seen as ready for the work force.” Tom, a VP, expanded this claim to include students being able to be team players, leaders and collaborators. He said:

Employers trust us that students will generally graduate with technical skills. We are responsible for teaching them the technical skills, but that is not all that employers want. Employers trust us to do this. However, employers also want us to develop the students as team players, as leaders, as collaborators, as functional units. Employers are more interested in how the student *will integrate with* the team. They are interested in the leadership skills that the students have. They are interested that we have done all of that.

Here trust is positioned as being part of the relationship within the community employer networks in preparing the students to be job ready. Trust goes deeper than the academic expectations as employers trust the educational institution to develop team players, leaders, collaborators.

To further develop the team skills, I organized the data to suggest that the academic leaders have strategically developed institutional learning outcomes helping students become “job ready.” Towards this end, students can receive recognition for work-based experiences, and gain a “co-curricular record.” Students have a space and resources to create an “e-portfolio” housing a curriculum vitae (CV), which can be transferred to *LinkedIn*, which is a web-based professional networking social media site. It was said by Paul, that: “We as senior leaders encourage outside of class room experiences. This has a very positive outcome for the students in terms of building team building skills and leadership skills.”

I further organized the data and highlighted, when asked, what student success outcomes are apparent. The response from leaders was mostly, “students get jobs. Most students are successful.”

## 4.7 Trust

I begin this section with an exploration of the theme of trust (Table 10). Trust was challenging to code, because, for example, trust usually builds over time, and for the fieldwork component, I was only at the college periodically. I had to rely on the participants’ narratives and perceptions of trust, and the changes in the environment I noted, to illustrate trust.



The student body was described by the leadership who participated in interviews as being diverse and representative of a “typical” college, with “twenty-five percent of the student body being over 25—students from various backgrounds and education levels.” In this diverse group of students, trust meant different things to different people. Coleman (1988) asserted that trust is based within relationships and networks between people, within community and the family, trust may be interpreted differently by different students based on their various relationships, networks, and backgrounds. A trusting relationship between the parents and the children was deemed to support student success (Coleman, 1988). This stands to reason then, that those students who come from various backgrounds, families, family education levels, and various support systems, that trust would mean different things to different people.

Lydia, Associate Vice President Student Success, called back from retirement after a long tenure with the same college at various levels of leadership, stated “that trust results from engaging in interactions [with students].” And for the students, she went on to say that they “look at the number of students, what is their completion rate? What is the semester pass rate? What is the semester to semester attrition rate?...The subtle message here [according to Linda] is that we worked with your friends and family who passed. Trust us. You can too.” Linda also stated that “if students engage with faculty they get to know each other on a personal basis, trust develops, social capital develops. Likewise, Tom said that “trust is a product of relationship.” To help develop these relationships, he went on to say that “we do some peer mentoring to build trust” fostering trust, and “We match and exceed student’s expectations in what we say and do.” And “we do what we say.”

Vic VP Academic observed that trust developed when students and the Associate Dean resolved a complaint and stated that “about 90% of the issues are resolved.” Another VP student and Alumni services, participant said:

If I look at measures, one is how many complaints are you able to resolve, informally. Because in order to resolve a complaint informally and for it not to proceed on, or all the way to the human rights commission you are showing trust. Students have options. They can go all the way to the formal route. So for example, for us, ours are and far

between and the vast majority of the cases are resolved between the faculty and the student. So I think trust is a big one.

Another senior leader Sam, Director student success, elaborated further when he illustrated, “that student’s sit on the appeals process committee,” and he believed that this increased trust among students that decisions would be fair. As members of the appeals process committee, students learned to understand and see how issues are resolved through communication and collaborative work. Having few or no college-related secrets can help build trust.

Eve, one of the senior administrators, Director counselling health and accessibility, felt that “measuring student satisfaction is a good indicator of trust.” They measured student satisfaction through questionnaires, through the number of appeals and complaints that they get, and through the number of complaints that get processed on to higher levels.

Most of the participants felt that trust was better measured by the way in which faculty supported at-risk students. Participants indicated that supporting students built trust, because the intentions of the supporters are brought forward. The intentions were to help and to do well for the students. The students can see this, and then this brings trust.

Mitchel, a dean, similarly noted during an interview that “there is a culture within a culture, and then there is trust. Does faculty trust you? Do you trust the messaging that you are getting from the College?” He observed that the college health services had “gone from an institution run with a private provider, so I think the trust piece is built in there.” Having an outside private provider, provide health services for the students builds trust, because there seems to be more confidentially, no ties to the institution and there would be any opportunity for information to get back to the educational institution. It is more discrete, promoting trust, as evidenced by the utilization of the service. I noted a particular building in the parking lot in a portable that was quite telling in terms of privacy and confidentiality. I asked Eve about this, and I was informed that, students can go for confidential help there, for health issues, and any personal, family, relationship problems that they have. This service is not run by the college staff. It is run by the local hospital in the area. It is there to support students, to help them get better. There is no judgment and no reporting back to their teachers. Also, this off

site/on site building had “a kind of normalizing behaviour, that is so critical here,” according to Eve, Director of counselling health and accessibility.

Another illustration of normalizing behaviour, was given Lydia who said:

We have brought in “xxx,” social inclusion it is called. So students who maybe cannot find a place to network, or maybe cannot find a place that is safe for themselves, or present with a quirky kind of behaviour or just want a place to defrag, they have social “xxx” [inclusion]...It is a place where everyone is treated as equal there.

In my tour of the college, I walked by a room that could be described in the following way: the door was open, and the space appeared inviting, brightly lit with plenty of couches and comfortable furniture. This upbeat yet relaxed environment welcomes students to stop, stay and connect.

In these sections, I have introduced the data that support my first question in both table and narrative form. I highlighted ways in which networks, norms, and trust were found (or not) in my research site through my environmental scan, and in the words of my participants. I now turn to that part of my second question that considers the outcomes for building student social capital.

## 4.8 Responding to Question Two

Again, in looking at the data to respond to my second research question, I first show the data in table form (Table 11-16) and go on to elaborate on the themes of research question two.

## 4.9 Research Question Two

2. What are the key outcomes from building social capital at the one Ontario Community College?

In the following sections, I outline the key outcomes for students, key outcomes for the leaders, and the key outcomes for the college. In this next section I elaborate on the key outcomes for students, found in Table 11.

Table 11

*Key Outcomes for Students*

| <u>Data Source</u>   | <u>Relevant findings</u>   |
|--|--|
| Quote described by a leader during semi-structured interview | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “The greater your social capital, the better equipped you are to address today’s problems and today’s challenges that you may face out in the real world.”</li><li>• able to handle real life problems</li><li>• “empowering a student to build their independence”</li><li>• empowerment &amp; independence</li><li>• “They suddenly realize that what they have been learning is related to a career.”</li><li>• increased understanding linked to a better learning/employment</li><li>• increased persistence/retention/graduation</li><li>• “Successful in their education increased persistence, increased retention and persistence.”</li><li>• engagement, (trust)</li><li>• “I don’t know if we focus on trust, or measure trust, but what we measure is engagement and participation and I think that trust results from engaging in those interactions.</li><li>• trust</li></ul> |

- Completers can see the value in an education
- Realize that what they learn is career (job skills) oriented
- collaboration
- “They suddenly realize that what they have been learning is related to a career. It is related to something on the job, and they say to themselves, oh that’s how to try to do it. That grows trust. That grows trust with the teacher. That grows trust with the program. That grows trust with the networks, and the norms for doing things. They see more value in the teaching. I think a college kid comes here for a career more than for an education.”
- “Recruiters recruit out of the clubs not by marks. They say that they will recruit from the clubs/projects, like our xxx project...What clubs/projects tell me and what clubs/projects tell recruiters are that you can work together and accomplish a goal?”
- “This helps students get the skills. There is then a level of support that the college and these projects/or clubs brings to those students lives. This support, those skills help students succeed.”
- “We give them time to grow up, to grow up to adults, to help them be employable. Social capital is what is necessary to help them mature, so that we send out a mature well rounded student. The

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | factories, the industries want mature adults.”  |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “xxx ranks the xxx in the [Key Performance Indicators] KPI for the xxx as #xxx in college success.”</li> </ul>   |
| Described by researcher’s field notes during semi-structured interview                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They have really improved their standing success → why → trust ? relationship</li> <li>• glad I am finding out</li> </ul>  |
| Described by researcher through reflection of field notes/interview not during interview | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• such improvement → is it because of the caring community I see? Is it because of the plan for success and everyone’s buy in?</li> </ul>  |
| Described by researcher: through observation of cultural artifacts                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• many student successes</li> <li>• nice cars in the parking lot</li> <li>• Staff dress nice</li> <li>• good example and motivation for the students to see → get an education and get nice clothes and nice cars</li> </ul> |

In the section I show the key outcomes for leaders as nominated by three participants. The relevant findings column identifies the themes that have come out of the data.

Table 12

*Key Outcomes for Leaders*

| <u>Data Source</u>   | <u>Relevant findings</u>   |
|--|--|
| Quote described by a leader during semi-structured interview | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• resources and deployment of resources</li> <li>• faculty support</li> <li>• faculty involvement and support</li> <li>• engaged staff and students</li> <li>• collaboration, team work—building of people</li> <li>• engaged staff—know their purpose</li> <li>• “I would say we don’t have enough resources to support all faculties.”</li> <li>• “I can’t resource it yet.”</li> <li>• “It is not only to look at students, but to look at staff to make sure we are taking care of staff.”</li> <li>• “There is faculty involvement/support especially for academic issues. There is a culture of access for all faculties for professional development.”</li> <li>• “Leaders develop policies with faculty and students.”</li> <li>• “leadership training”</li> <li>• “I think it starts to be involved in the leadership</li> </ul> |

of the institution and the faculty and the staff.  
We have to be engaged first before we can engage the students we have to understand what is at stake. What's the value to ourselves or students or community of doing this?"

- fulfillment (social capital)
- good working environment
- "they are being successful in their education"
- "student learning environment is our work environment"

Described by researcher's field notes during semi-structured interview

- Many opportunities to network: research, projects, music, gym
- develop people → why
- engaged relationships—bonds
- success→why
- resources...

Described by researcher through reflection of field notes/interview not during interview

- no one has money → it is good that he spends double the budget for staff development...

Described by researcher through observation of cultural artifacts

- nice work environment
- pictures/frames of leaders training/certificates



In this section I elaborate on the key outcomes for the college (found in Table 13 and 14). The relevant findings column identifies the themes that came from the data.

Table 13

*Outcomes for Colleges*

| <u>Data Source</u>   | <u>Relevant findings</u>  |
|--|---|
| Quote described by a leader during semi-structured interview | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increased retention</li> <li>• decrease student departure rates</li> <li>• “They are being successful in their education increased persistence, increased retention and persistence from the student side, which is success.”</li> <li>• “But the fact is there’s a 10% greater retention for those that access resources or any other variables.”</li> <li>• “If you don’t have a sense of bonding, your student departure rates will be higher.”</li> <li>• “Requiring that academic departments have a retention plan. They are focusing on telling us how it is that they will help students have a successful outcome. Developing more opportunities for students to engage on campus.”</li> <li>• increased completion rate</li> <li>• increased pass (graduation) rate</li> <li>• increase college standing ratings</li> <li>• “And if you look at the data that shows that it</li> </ul> |

makes a difference to look at the students who do participate in those things and again the numbers are continually increasing if you look at that, look at the numbers of those students what is the completion rate, what is the semester to semester pass rate, what is the semester to semester attrition rate, right? It's, it's definitely higher, and attrition is lower.”

- “We met our first of the three goals. From 2012/2013-2016 we went from xxx% graduation rate to xxx% graduation rate. (5% increase over the last three years) we went from xxx in the xxx Area to #xxx in the xxx Area (up three to be in top 5). So, from our experience strategy matters. And you can make big impact when you align efforts, with a consistent and common approach to how you want to support students.”
- increased key performance indicators (KPI)
- happy students
- trust and engagement
- “Happy students and good KPI are some of the outcomes. It is slowly evolving.”
- I think that trust results from engaging in those interactions.”
- #xxx for student services
- Bonding and relationships

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>Described by researcher's field notes during semi-structured interview</p>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “We are now # xxx for student services.”</li> <li>• “You feel that you belong, that you are a part of it...Who do you go to when you are down, and when you think you will give in? Us. Trust in us, and in the system. Or if you are really experiencing challenges, you need to trust us enough to give you help. It makes a lot of sense, so it is really critical that there is a sense of bonding. If you do not have a sense of bonding your student departure rates will be higher.”</li> <li>• bonding</li> <li>• persistence</li> <li>• people skills</li> <li>• develop people → why?</li> <li>• success</li> <li>• engaged relationships—bonds</li> <li>• success → why?</li> </ul> |
| <p>Described by researcher through reflection of field notes/interview not during interview</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yep...important</li> <li>• he gave me very good advice—hope to use it</li> </ul>   |
| <p>Described by researcher through observation of cultural artifacts</p>                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• nice work environment</li> </ul>   |

Table 14

*Strategic Plan*

| <u>Data Source</u>   | <u>Relevant findings</u>  |
|--|---|
| Quote described by a leader during semi-structured interview | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• strategy</li><li>• Competitions</li><li>• get high school students interested</li><li>• recruitment</li><li>• “strategy matters”</li><li>• “Over the last five years, competitions have been important in getting high school students into competitions to encourage the high school students to look at our program, to look at our schools to look at the sciences. We do competitions with computer coding, math, and chemical/bio tech competitions for the grade 9, 10, and 11<sup>th</sup> graders.”</li><li>• earn chintz (monies or tokens)</li><li>• recruitment</li><li>• relationship</li><li>• programs are career oriented</li><li>• recruitment</li><li>• “That makes them want to come to xxx. Hopefully we have impacted them to come. They can earn chintz, to come. They know us, they know xxx. Their friends know us too. We have started recruitment and skill building earlier.”</li></ul> |

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “We start interacting with them early.”</li> <li>• “hopefully we have impacted them to come”</li> <li>• “They know us.”</li> <li>• “xxx programs are career-oriented”</li> <li>• “They realize that the programs are career oriented.”</li> </ul>   |
| Described by researcher’s field notes during semi-structured interview                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• yep strategy matters...</li> <li>• Everything goes down from the top ...</li> <li>• leaders model relationship and caring → top down → influence student success</li> </ul>   |
| Described by researcher through reflection of field notes/interview not during interview | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yep → it’s all coming together communication and community from top down → social capital equipping others for success without anything in it for themselves</li> </ul>   |
| Described by researcher through observation of cultural artifacts                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• others are successful...student success continues to increase...</li> <li>• I wonder if the students know how lucky they are to go to school there and learn and get a future...</li> <li>• no amount of thank you will ever be enough, they change thousands of lives</li> <li>• what a great thing to do with one’s life</li> </ul> |

#### 4.10 Key Outcomes for students

In Table 11 I identified the specific key outcomes for students from this research. The following section introduces the themes identified in responding to my question about the outcomes of social capital at the research site for students. These themes include: student

ability to address real life problems, empowerment and independence, increased persistence, engagement and trust, increased student success (graduation) rates, and (those that complete) seeing value in an education.

**4.10.1 Student ability to address real life problems.** Paul, felt that students were usually more aptly able to handle “real life problems,” if the student had great social capital. Mitchel echoed a similar idea in that he felt that students were “empowered” towards building “independence.” These life skills were later mentioned by yet another leader, who felt that students gained life skills and the ability to work together in groups.

**4.10.2 Empowerment and independence.** With regards to their education, a key outcome for the students, according to the Silver Lake College leaders, is that the students “suddenly realize that what they have been learning is related to a career.” Education potentially has notable meaning for them related to a profession that they wish to enter into.

**4.10.3 Increased persistence.** Empowerment may lead to another benefit for students in that the students are more inclined to persist and stay in school and graduate. Students appear to be, as one leader summed up, “successful in their education, [have] increased persistence, increased retention.”

**4.10.4 Engagement and trust.** According to Tom and Vic, students become engaged and trust. The first leader to make such links said: “I don’t know if we focus on trust, or measure trust, but what we measure is engagement and participation and I think that trust results from engaging in those interactions.” While another leader stated:

They suddenly realize that what they have been learning is related to a career. It is related to something on the job, and they say to themselves, oh that’s how to try to do it. That grows trust. That grows trust with the teacher. That grows trust with the program. That grows trust with the networks, and the norms for doing things. They see more value in the teaching. I think a college kid comes here for a career more than an education.

Yet another leader echoed that students learn various forms of collaboration when working on projects and recruiters want students who can work in teams. Paul stated: “Recruiters recruit out of clubs not by marks. They say that they will recruit from the clubs/projects, like out xxx project...What clubs/projects tell me, and what clubs/projects tell recruiters, are that you can work together and accomplish a goal.” Yet another leader mentioned that students grow up and mature, making them more employable.

**4.10.5 Completers see value in an education.** The students get support and skills, as cited by Lydia, a leader with 35 years’ experience. He stated that “this helps students get the skills. There is then a level of support that the college and these projects/or clubs brings to those student’s lives. This support—those skills help students succeed.” This ultimately helps students see value in their education.

**4.10.6 Increased student success (graduation) rates.** Ultimately, student success seems to be the paramount outcome for the students according to yet another leader. I interpret student success to mean graduation and jobs for the students. According to another seasoned leader Sam, Director student success, he stated that student success “helps students get the skills. There is then a level of support that the college and these projects/or clubs brings to those students lives. This support, those skills help students succeed.” And, yet another leader, Vic, VP academic, stated: “I envision student success [for every student].”

In review, the data would suggest that benefits for students include being able to address real life problems, empowerment and independence, increased persistence, engagement and trust, increased student success and completers (student who graduate), which note value in an education. The next section of the discussion may contribute to an outlining of the key outcomes for the leaders.

## 4.11 Key Outcomes for Leaders

This section elaborates on the key findings for the outcomes for leaders. The data suggest that: resources and deployment of resources, faculty involvement and support, staff engagement and staff knowing their purpose, and a sense of fulfillment. These are key outcomes for leaders in order to build social capital.

**4.11.1 Resources and deployment of resources.** My findings support the fact that both resources, and how they are deployed, are important. If leaders take care of faculty, it appears that faculties overwhelmingly take care of students at Silver Lake College. This was echoed by Wayne, a Vice President at the college, when he said: “When I look at the overall social capital in my role, it is to not only to look at students but also to look at staff, to make sure that we are taking care of staff.” This was noted by Tom who said, “I would say that we do not have enough resources to support all faculties.” In talking about supporting each other, as they support students, Wayne went on to say that “we have done some of the research of a few models across Canada, and we have sort of developed something, we just have not been able to resource it yet.” Then later he stated that, “we like it, we just haven’t been able to resource the labor yet. It is ready.” Here, the resources and the deployment of resources are important, especially with regards to taking care of students, which ultimately leads to looking after the staff. I noted that the student success plan indicated that the college promoted training for all faculty and staff. It would appear to me that faculty takes care of students, especially when faculty feels well-resourced, involved, and supported.

**4.11.2 Faculty involvement and support.** The evidence indicated, as Tom stated that: “there is faculty involvement/support especially for academic issues. There is a culture of access for all faculties for professional development.” Tom went on to say that, “we develop policies with faculty. We have a formal mentoring program for new faculty. We also have a leadership training program for faculty, which desires a leadership position. We mentor faculty to support student success. My area spends double the money on support for faculty.” Supporting students and faculty appears to help staff engagement, and then this leads to staff understanding and knowing their purpose.

**4.11.3 Staff engagement and staff knowing their purpose.** Similarly, Vic VP academic stated that staff engagement and staff knowing their purpose was a key outcome for the leaders. They stated: “I think it starts to be involved in the leadership of the institution and the faculty and the staff. We have to be engaged first before we can engage the students we have to understand what is at stake. What’s the value to ourselves or students or community of doing this?” Consequently, there then is a sense of fulfillment and a strategic direction.



**4.11.4 Sense of fulfillment.** The leadership also indicated that there is a sense of fulfillment for them. When the students “are being successful in their education,” and when “xxx ranks the xxx in the KPI for the xxx as # xxx in college success,” leaders feel good about the work they do. Feeling good about your work, being fulfilled deep down with the work that you have accomplished or helped accomplish, helps to contribute to a nice working environment, because you are happy and satisfied with yourself. When you are happy and satisfied with yourself, and you trust the support that you get from your colleagues, you are willing to take risks and try new things with others. This leads to a good, stimulating, and energizing work environment, where great things are accomplished.

The key outcomes for the leaders, unearthed from the data, aimed at the importance of resources and the deployment of resources, faculty involvement and support, staff engagement, and staff knowing their purpose, which leads, potentially, to a sense of fulfillment and a “nice” positive, trusting, productive, energizing work environment. Next, I will discuss the key outcomes for the college.

## 4.12 Key Outcomes for the College

In this section, I elaborate on the key outcomes for the college as presented in Table 14. These outcomes were found to be: increased retention, an increased completion rate for the students, and increased passing graduation rate, and ultimately an increased college provincial standing and strategic planning.

**4.12.1 Increased retention.** Tom, VP student and alumni services indicated that Silver Lake College had a “ten percent greater retention for those [students] that access resources or any other variables.” This links to Paul, who stated, “if you [student] don’t have a sense of bonding, your student departure rates will be higher.” Yet another leader Vic VP academic, reflected that he required that “academic departments have a retention plan. They are focusing on telling us how it is that they will help students have a successful outcome.” Increased student retention seems to be a key outcome for the college.

4.12.2 Increased completion rates for the students, increased passing graduation rates, and ultimately, increased college provincial standing. Another outcome for the college was illustrated by five senior leaders when they mentioned a benefit was an increased completion rates for the students, increased passing graduation rates, and ultimately, an increased college provincial standing. Vic VP academic said:

We met our first of the three goals. From 2012/2013-2016 we went from xxx% graduation rate to xxx% graduation rate. We went from xxx in the GTHA to # xxx in the GTHA so, from our experience, strategy matters, and you can make big impact when you align efforts with a consistent and common approach to how you want to support students.

Tom, VP student services summarized this sentiment when he said that the outcomes of social capital are “happy students and good KPI [Key Performance Indicators] are some of the outcomes. It is slowly evolving.” Yet another senior leader stated that “we are now #xxx for student services.” The data suggest that when leaders support social capital, an outcome for the college is an increased completion rate for the students, increased passing graduation rates, and ultimately, increased college provincial standing for the college. They all appear to bond and form relationships working towards a goal.

4.12.3 Strategic planning. This section elaborates on the strategic planning as noted in Table 14. The data revealed that strategic planning, and everyone adopting the strategic plan, is a key outcome, which encompassed the college, the leaders, and the students.

When leaders were talking about the issue of student social capital, and how and why to increase student social capital, one senior leader stated that “strategy matters.” To this end I gleaned some strategy from various other leaders’ perspectives. Another leader Paul, Associate Dean stated, when speaking about relationships that,

over the last 5 years, competitions have been important in getting high school students into competitions to encourage the high school students to look at our program, to

look at our schools to look at the sciences. We do competitions with computer coding, math, and chemical/bio tech competitions for the grade 9/10 and 11<sup>th</sup> graders.

Lydia, stated that familiarity and monies or tokens, known as “chintz” matter: “That makes them want to come to [Silver Lake College]. Hopefully we have impacted them to come. They can earn chintz to come. They know us, they know [Silver Lake]. Their friends know us too. We have started recruiting and skill building earlier.” Sam stated the strategy of relationship was important when he asserted that, “we start interacting with them early.” While Tom stated, “they know us.” Paul referred to the career aspect of the programs, stating: “They realize that the programs are career oriented.”

### 4.13 Summary of Findings

In this chapter I presented themes identified from the data. Of particular interest were the ways that the college leadership helped students succeed, and the ways in which those leaders made purposeful decisions to include meeting spaces to help student network, and how leaders have purposefully promoted student involvement. The students appeared to trust the college, or be more trusting of the college, if the courses they took were related to “real work,” and if they found utility in the work. Students appeared to work together and bond, and there was an equalization of the playing field in terms of access to resources (i.e., buses, computers, tutors, educational competitions and opportunities for help). Students appeared to be successful in their academic programs of student (i.e., honor rolls and student recognition, as well as knowledge performance and pass rate indicators). There seemed to be community relationships developed (i.e., students and leaders interacted with each other on projects and with community leaders at golf tournaments and dinners).

At-risk students were identified in this chapter, along with various markers or indicators of student success, in response to question two. Key outcomes for the students, the leaders, the college, and key strategic directions to support social capital were uncovered from the data.

In the next chapter, I discuss the results in relationship to relevant literature from a broader context of the importance of social capital to student success in Ontario post-

secondary institutions. I position and describe how the findings of this study are critical, especially for those students who are at-risk.

## Chapter 5

### 5 Discussion

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the meaning and significance of my research. As noted earlier, one purpose of this exploratory case study was to explore:

1. In what ways and why have leaders at one Ontario Community College contributed to increased student Social capital?
2. What are the key outcomes from building social capital at one Ontario Community College?

I analyzed the data using a modified constant comparative method (Corbin & Strauss, 2015), and I identified the ways in which social capital was constructed at Silver Lake College. Further, I identified the key themes as: networks, norms, and trust, institutional responses to students at-risk, student success, and the redesign of the web of support based on my findings. The data from this study suggest:

1. There is more to social capital than norms, networks, and trust. The construction of social capital is a choice, and must be done mindfully.
2. The leaders must know their environment to construct appropriate norms, networks, and trust for students.
  - a. Students were successful when social capital supports were in place.
  - b. Social capital supports put in place for at-risk students made a difference.

I will address each of these findings beginning with a discussion on networks, norms, and trust.

#### 5.1 Construction of Social Capital as a Choice

My research suggests that the construction of social capital at Silver Lake College is more than networks, norms, and trust: The construction of social capital is a choice that is made mindfully by the participating college leaders. These purposefully crafted decisions have a purpose and a reason. I will elaborate on this in the following pages.

## 5.2 Networks

Networks at the Silver Lake College were constructed mindfully through choice for students, by college leaders. This was crafted and built community. The building of networks in this way correlates with Coleman's (1988) belief, as he theorized the importance of family and school as "family" or school as "community." My data also suggest that community and the building of community is important. Specifically, social capital from Coleman's (1988) perspective refers to the creation of an educational community as an environment where there is love, kindness, and a sense of "doing good." A community can occur in various settings where people share values, norms, and beliefs. The data suggest that at Silver Lake College the educational leaders value (both implied, and/or stated, and in practices) the college as a community within a network. Leaders sought to develop networks outside of the college community, as well as within the college community. The purposeful construction of networks may lead to the (deeper) development of community within the college environment.

Creating networks, as a choice, can lead to an enhanced access to resources both within and outside of the college. Coleman (1988) felt that certain institutions, such as schools, churches, and clubs were more open to the notion of community-building. However, Smith (2007) felt that networks could be oppressive, because they were often closed to the underprivileged. Further, he asserted that elite members of society maintained their position through connections in clubs and networks, to which membership was closed for the majority. However, my research has found that college leaders can influence the marginalized to form networks outside of the college. Networking can particularly help those placed at-risk as determined by their socio-economic status, perhaps by virtue of being non-English speakers, or consideration of Indigenous heritage (given the historical factors of colonization in Canada). Others are at-risk, because they are trapped in low-paying jobs and generational poverty. Students who meet and network with individuals (including Silver Lake College leaders), often gained contacts and access to valuable information through leads from these interactions, which sometimes resulted in the securing of resources and critical information on employment opportunities. Within networks, information and resources are shared. In this way, networks, as a part of building social capital, can level the playing field by making

access to resources equitable for both the privileged and the disadvantaged student. The leaders at Silver Lake College did this, because they valued equity, and therefore, created opportunities for shared knowledge, shared skills, and shared their values. These may help ensure adequate resources for all and promote opportunities, and these kinds of opportunities may lead to an education and employment for those within the college network.

Within a network there are often “symbols” or “signals” to group members regarding the expectations within that relationship (Coleman, 1988). In his influential work, Coleman (1988) suggested that a tightly-knit network, such as those from a church community, facilitated sharing and caring attitudes for those within the group. There was a sense of closeness and goodwill, coupled with trust—to the extent to where others looked out for each other. This closeness may often lead to community. In closed networks, there is often a reluctance to accept new ideas or information from outside of the group. Silver Lake College leaders promoted those types of close-knit network interactions through arranging leadership mentoring, partner dinners, and community events that brought educational leaders from the college together with the students and community partners. By cultivating these networks, college leaders modeled the values, norms, and expectations of the network, such as caring and openness. The college leaders helped to create community for the purpose of bonding, and thereby encouraged students to see a purpose in their studies and encouraged students to work towards graduation (as opposed to dropping out). Ultimately, this led toward student success.

Another example, from the data of building networks, comes from an unlikely source that has been purposefully created by Silver Lake College leaders: helping each other to arrive at the best solution through conflict resolution, which can cultivate learning while demonstrating a caring relationship, thus creating community. For example, the data suggest that resolving student/institutional conflicts, through the appeals process, can result in the construction of healthy relationships among faculty and students. During the appeals process, others’ points of view are realized through negotiation and cooperation, and the building of strong networks that promoted a sense of community often results. Further, the construction of these relationships built trust. As my Ontario-based research suggests, having student representation in the appeals process ensures that the student voice is heard. While disputes

and disagreements are inevitable, it is the successful management of these conflicts that reveals a healthy network, where diverse points of view are recognized en route to an equitable, and agreed upon, solution. Resolving conflicts within the school network, with both students and academic leaders as active participants is important, because it builds trust and sets a standard for valuing peoples' points of view. The college leader's cultivation and use of positive strategies for problem-solving is a life skill that helps people—both students and leaders at Silver Lake College—to work productively in teams, potentially creating community. Creating community, team work, building strong networks, and resolving conflicts were all traits that the community partners, employers, wanted to see in the graduates that they hired. This has potential to help students get jobs.

Networks that are purposefully created for the public good by the educational leaders show the leader's values in relation to student services. Support and influence from the individual educational leaders within the network appear to be the single most important influence on student success after family influences (Kilpatrick & Bell, 2001). Trust, support, and the commitment of members within the network help students to grow in self-confidence and to develop interpersonal communication skills (Kilpatrick & Bell, 2001). These are competencies that are developed in close-knit communities and help make students ready for jobs, as my research found had occurred at Silver Lake College.

### 5.3 Leaders Must Know Their Environment to Construct Appropriate Networks, Norms, and Trust for their Students

Coleman (1988) suggested that socialization first afforded opportunities and second builds a student's attitudes of "self." I feel that in order to do this, leaders have to know their environment, and build the environment accordingly. For most people, their interaction as a family is what influences and supports them in terms of attitude and self-concept. However, if the family does not favorably influence or support a student, then the school is often the next institution to socialize and support the student through constructed opportunities and rewards. Coleman (1988) asserted that as families change schools must change—if they are to remain effective. My data suggest that Silver Lake College has given students multiple supports and opportunities within the formal network to be successful, whether in extra-curricular



activities or their academic program. Students at the college have opportunities to redirect their interests to another program if the one they are currently enrolled does not meeting their interests or goals. Additionally, they can participate in co-op and work terms to help them connect with employers. Work terms, where the student is actually practicing the skills and understandings learned in college in a work environment, help the student build networks that may be helpful to find employment post-graduation. Contacts made through networking, before and during work terms, are extremely beneficial, especially for the at-risk student and for those students whose family may not have established networks. The example of work terms to help build networking aligns with Coleman's (1988) assertion that communities are networks that are interconnected. Specifically, it is the connections and the relationships that build the community within the networks (Dika & Singh, 2002; Finnie, et al., 1010; Goldrick-Rab, 2010, Jones-White, et al., 2010).

These purposefully built bridging opportunities, based on knowledge of the environment, offer the possibility of new communities and new ties for students. As such, there is a shared ownership for the student's socialization and success within the norms of the school. In today's society, where the nature of families has changed, more and more families are relying on resources outside the family unit to support at-risk students. In this way, Silver Lake College leaders created a bridge between the academic world and the working world for their students. The academic leaders at Silver Lake College engaged in efforts with and for students to connect students to "new ties" and "new networks" that worked to the students' advantage. This is possible, because the leaders knew the environment at the college, and the outside (city, country, government) environment, and had contacts. Silver Lake College leaders knew the state of the community and the state of the college, due to where the community college was located. For example, the students may be able to get a job through these new ties. These bridges, networks, or ties have no extrinsic or material advantage for the academic leaders but are created by the leaders for the benefit of all the students, especially for these who do not have family resources upon which to draw. Leaders do this to help potentially ensure monetary aid as a primary factor for reducing student dropout rates (Goldrick-Rab, 2010).

From his U.S. based research, Loury (1977) perceived social divisions and inequalities based on race and social class. Bourdieu (1986) conceptualized social capital as opportunity for the socially and materially privileged, because of membership and belonging in networks. Coleman (1988) adopted a different angle and argued that social capital involved caring for other people's children, becoming involved with other peoples' children beyond one's own family and beyond one's social class. It would appear that the educational leaders at Silver Lake College created networks for their students. The leaders cared for other people's children and promoted student leadership network opportunities and student leadership communities, thereby spreading privilege. One way students learned about leadership and the role of caring for others that leadership entails was through the relationships. When student leaders learn to care for others, a community of future leaders has the potential to evolve, and the potential to care for others and/or create networks beyond targeted social classes spreading privilege. Yet another way that students can learn about leadership is through observations; the students would observe these relationships. This was potentially done to model these behaviours for the students, perhaps then, in the future, these students will also model this behaviour for others helping to disperse inequality.

When student leaders learned about other government institutions, trade authorities, and professional associations involved with their projects and initiatives, the leaders introduced the students to networks: Networking may bring contacts. These contacts may increase the circle of contacts, thus increasing privilege. Additionally, caring for and being involved with others in a close relationship, helps at least most of the students learn about caring for others and learn about community. At Silver Lake College, the educational leaders clearly displayed and modeled to students, leadership practices, which engaged numerous efforts to connect the students with ties, both outside of the college (networking) and ties within the college, thus promoting community building within the college, and within the community networks, which was a potential benefit to students.

## 5.4 Construction of Social Capital as an Intentional Choice Based on Leaders Knowing the Environment

### 5.5 Norms

Coleman (1988) asserted that norms are “intentionally established” (p. 117). My findings are supported by Coleman’s (1988) view that educational leaders intentionally establish at least most of the norms for that institution. The educational leaders at Silver Lake College demonstrated and reinforced the expectations for being a member of the college in a myriad of ways including: recognizing student achievement through the presentation of awards, holding dinners to bring college and community together—highlighting student achievement, posting names of students on honor rolls in the hallways and on the school website, and recognizing the accomplishments of students and faculty in articles in the local newspaper. These were demonstrations, by the senior education leaders, of the norms of academic achievement, norms of behaviour, cooperation, norms about the importance of community, and altruistic behaviours. It appears, from my research, that these public displays of expectation, success, and reward were implemented by leaders to demonstrate to the student body that excellence was valued.

**5.5.1 Norms of academic achievement.** In situations where there was a possible erosion of norms within a student’s family or a family network, my research demonstrates that senior administrators created opportunities, purposefully, to build and reinforce norms within the college environment that represented family or community. When academic leaders create opportunities to support each student towards academic excellence, towards graduation, and towards the procurement of employment, social capital has been enacted (and advanced). Leaders at Silver Lake College did this, and other leaders can potentially build community, but only if leaders know the environment, and if they make the choice to create these opportunities for the student’s benefit.

**5.5.2 Norms of behaviour.** Norms of behaviour are built on purposeful interactions by leaders. Leaders have to know what behaviours are missing and then what behaviours are needed to reinforce. My data suggest that trust, although difficult to measure,

is at the basis of complex college interactions of community building. Falk (2000) contended that if trust is nurtured and supported through increasingly complex interactions, relationships are constructed to, and through, deeper levels of (student) vulnerability. If trust does not progress beyond a superficial level, the relationships may dissolve. According to Falk (2001) this “how” is missing from the educational literature. My data suggest that the norm of relationship building is fostered, for example, during the practice of student involvement in the appeals process at the college. The “why” for this activity may be to increase trust within the student body. The “how” may be through curriculum, which helps to prepare the student to be job ready. These are the skills, along with their application, that will help students to find and (hopefully) retain employment. These are also interpersonal skills, which may help students build relationships within the world of work. Falk (2000) suggested that if social capital is the micro accumulation of purposeful social interactions, then these actions help. This current study suggests that the purposeful building of relationships and community, based on need and on knowing the environment within these micro purposeful social interactions, may be an important aspect of relationships, specifically within community.

The leaders at Silver Lake College shared with other colleagues/leaders the expectation of behaviours, thereby constructing social capital as a mindful choice (strategy) of behaviour. For example, it was expected that all leaders of all levels met with and mentored students based on the student’s needs—all leaders had to have retention strategy plans. The norm of shared expectations and behaviours was intentional and was made explicit to all leaders by the most senior leaders. The leaders had to know the students and the environment, and then construct the appropriate social capital for the students. Loury (2003) stated: “The relationship between the values of individuals and the criterion of social choice cannot be arbitrary—[or] else ‘liberty’ is a sham” (p. 115). The leaders instill the norms of behaviour based on their strategic direction and values set. They do not happen by chance. The norms of behaviour are not created by chance. They are instilled based on the premise of “good” seemingly without substantial consideration for themselves.

According to Coleman (1988), social capital and social capital in the community “play roles in the creation of human capital...and in the creation of human capital in the rising generation” (p.109). Leaders at Silver Lake College were intentional in their behaviour

creating social capital for the students. Ultimately, they were intentional in the creation of human capital for the future (and also future generations). This is based on knowing the learning and labour market or work environments. Changing the potential of individual human capital, may reduce generational poverty.

**5.5.3 Norms of cooperation.** Problem solving, conflict resolution, team-work, and negotiation demonstrate and create a norm of cooperation that was modeled to the students by the leaders at Silver Lake College. It became the students' lived experience. This sense of community building is vital, because it builds team players who learn to work together, inside and outside of the team. I am suggesting that the community at Silver Lake College, went beyond the leadership team. The leadership community went outside of the team or leadership family, to others (students, community leaders, community agencies) outside of the leadership group at Silver Lake College. Going outside of the group, or family, was pivotal in Coleman's (1988) work, as well as in Bolden and Bagnall's (2009) reflections, and my research found this as well, where the college leaders built purposeful relationships based on knowing the learning and work environment, with the students, with the community through golf tournaments, and recognition dinners, which both students and formal leaders could attend. These networks provided opportunities for relationships and community to flourish. These communities were for the student's benefit, created by the leaders purposefully based on needs. There was a sense of sharing of community, where the intent of the sharing is for the benefit of the student.

**5.5.4 Norms of community.** Silver Lake College was, in one respect, a community for students nested within the serving of a greater community. The leaders consistently displayed respect for the students by creating a relationship-building norm, both inside and outside of the college. Bolden and Bagnall (2009) also found that leaders built relationships, and Putnam (1996) referred to bonding and bridging, and associations with others in building relationships. With bonding, Putnam (1996) viewed it as an emotional connection, whereas bridging was more of a situational relationship. In speaking with the leaders, my data revealed that the leaders built bonding relationships with new communities of learning (i.e., universities), businesses (i.e., co-op opportunities), government institutions (i.e., accreditation bodies), trade authorities, and professional authorities for the purpose of

helping their students. Many of these ties continued. My site audit revealed a bank on campus and campus jobs for students. This enhanced students' employment opportunities, because there were ties and relationships for the student community to access. Students may learn banking and money management skills, and/or begin to secure credit ratings or jobs. This may be similar to communities that certain elite family members have access too. Parents may create relationships and opportunities within and outside of the immediate family that only family members benefit from. For example, some families who own businesses may give their children summer jobs and/or help them set up bank accounts with opportunities for credit ratings. Other parents, who renovate homes, may introduce children to tradesmen with whom they have a long trusted relationship with. These parents may also show their children how to talk with and respect, for example, building code regulation enforcement officers. At Silver Lake College the educational leaders, who participated in this study, knew that many families did not know how to greatly enhance their children's community social capital, hence they acted to build the students' social capital in this regard. This is supported in the literature by Kantabutra and Saratun (2013) where leaders contributed to and promoted networks for students.

**5.5.5 Norms of altruism.** Silver Lake College leaders displayed the norm of good will for others within and outside the college community. The leaders acted without consideration for themselves by making sacrifices of personal time and weekends away at student leadership training. The college leaders were motivated by internal rewards, as Coleman (1988) noted that social capital had the norm of altruism within communities. Altruism is the expectation that actors act in certain ways, in certain situations, without consideration for themselves. They consider the needs of others, namely the students, more than the needs of themselves. The leaders at Silver Lake College went above and beyond the obligation of the typical work week for the good of the students.

## 5.6 Mindful Construction of Trust based on Knowing the Environment

I will now look at trust, as social capital, and how Silver Lake College leaders construct trust based on knowing the environment.

## 5.7 Trust

According to Coleman (1988) social capital involved the building of trusting relationships. Coleman (1988) asserted that trust is cultivated as people interact, mutually cooperate, and work together for the greater good. Trust varies from person to person and from situation to situation. My data suggest that having student representation on the policy committees, and on the appeals committee at the college, may be one way to help to engender trust.

Kantabutra and Saratun (2013) contended that a key leadership strategy was for leaders to promote ethical behaviours and trust. Trust-building relationships were noted in the fact that Silver Lake College had very few appeals going forward and that most appeals were resolved earlier rather than later in the process.

**5.7.1 Trusting relationships.** In Ontario, unemployment rates for those students with a high school diploma have increased by over five percent in the five years between 2006 and 2011 (Statistics Canada, n.d.). However, students who earn a college diploma or certification are better positioned to procure employment by up to approximately 10% as compared to those who did not finish high school (Statistics Canada, n.d.). Student dropout rates, according to Coleman (1988), were not based on extra-curricular demands, but rather based on relationships. A trusting relationship between the school and the parents seemed to suggest the child or youth stayed in school. Where the family and the parents do not form this relationship with the school, the school leaders can take an interest in someone else's child. Perhaps this is why Silver Lake College demonstrated positive student outcomes with a five percent increase in student graduation rate. To quote a Silver Lake College leader, Paul, he stated that "strategy matters." He went on to say that "you can make big impact when you align efforts with a consistent and common approach with how you want to support students." Paul concluded by saying, "developing more opportunities for students to engage on campus."

The Silver Lake College leaders and the strategies that they implemented support students (i.e., retention plans, realignment plans, on campus jobs, hassle free bursaries, on campus banking, leadership training and mentoring, tutoring, study centers, college in a city, community building projects, community golfing, and student recognition dinners). In a similar vein, Coleman (1988) believed that where there is relationship, trust, and

trustworthiness (from the family or from school leaders) much more is accomplished in an educational setting. Kantabutra and Saratun (2013) also contended that leaders should contribute to trust and trustworthy work environments.

Trusting relationships connected the students emotionally and personally in multiple ways (networks) at Silver Lake College. I suggest that trust within the relationships is an important factor, specifically for any community built for students by the leaders. This particular college community helped as many students as possible to succeed and pass. Student success, as evidenced by graduation rates, increased, and students found jobs. Additionally, Vic, VP academics final comments were:

Another way is to measure...student satisfaction. We have to be part of the key performance indicator survey...so among the colleges in the [Silver Lake College] area, if you are in the top one or two of the largest colleges...we take a lot of pride in that. There is a lot of effort to make sure that we maintain that.

When the participants spoke about face-to-face interactions with students, they were ensuring any at-risk students received support, such as earning monies or were able to attend dinners, and/or had access to good technology. Silver Lake College leaders were building mutual trust and a common reciprocal understanding. Warren, Thompson, and Saegert (2001) argued that local communities who support face-to-face interactions demonstrated that trust and common understanding are created. In this way, the leaders at Silver Lake College helped to promote community through creating trust opportunities, especially among the at-risk students, through the building of trust while giving the at-risk students opportunities for building ties and networks on all three levels of networks (within, across, and through). Here, the college performed the same function as a local community or family, which helped the students' flourish.

## 5.8 Students Were More Successful When Social Capital Supports Were in Place

In the following section, I speak to the opportunities for student success, when supports were put in place by the leaders. I start with a look at at-risk students.



## 5.9 Supports and Opportunities for At-Risk Students

In the following section, I speak to the opportunities for at-risk students and social capital. I begin with a definition of at-risk students, vertical networking, changing peer groups, access to financial aid, and access to information, programs, and services.

Social capital for the students at-risk is especially important at school (Bishop, 1999). For the purpose of this study, at-risk students are those who are or have suffered abuse, or have come from war-torn countries. They may be first generation school attendees or live in socially and/or economically depressed areas. Others deemed at-risk may be refugees or come from a home where the first language is a minority language. Still, other at-risk students suffer notable economic hardships or may be less materially privileged students (Bishop, 1999). Economic factors, financial constraints, and delayed entry into post-secondary education often position students at-risk with an inability to form relationships after school because of work or family commitments.

**5.9.1 Vertical networking.** Although it can be argued that at-risk students may have social networks: These networks are often horizontal. Their networks are in their social class and on their level. Their social ties and networks may not include personal connections or contacts with power and influence above them. Additionally, mentoring or role modeling to encourage education may be absent, because no one in that group has the expanded skill base. The number, density, or positioning of social ties and networks may be weak or un-influential. Burt (1998) asserted that the important issue with contacts was hierarchy and location of the vertical networks. Vertical networks reach up, higher than the person themselves, to people of influence. Often students at-risk form horizontal networks rather than vertical networks. Silver Lake college leaders provided opportunities for students at-risk to connect with other students and community stakeholders, outside of their sphere of familiarity. This may help to form vertical relationships (i.e., golfing and some of the dinners) (Palmer & Gasman, 2008). In this current study, the data supports the concept of vertical relationships being established for students through mentorship programs and various inclusive and diverse opportunities. Diverse opportunities engendered by Silver Lake College leaders included: stakeholder (donor) dinners, community (donor) golfing tournaments, and student projects with the local university. These concerted efforts were purposefully

constructed by the leaders to create opportunities for students to form vertical relationships. Students knowing, for example, the leaders of companies and being able to speak about projects, may help the student become employed at one of these companies. This proactivity from college leaders highlighted for me that not only are students supported through caring, trusting, and mentored relationships, but that students are also fostered into (new) vertical networking relationships. These influential relationships may not be available to the student from their family of origin or from within their own network. Palmer and Gasman (2008) also found that administrators and faculty in supportive, successful schools formed these caring relationships. This finding from Palmer and Gasman correlates with Coleman's (1988) analysis of public Catholic and other private schools, where student achievement improved when individuals and family had relationships both within the school, and within the community. Community relationships were established first by the leaders thereby enabling them to encourage relationships to flourish to benefit their students.

**5.9.2 Changing peer groups.** By changing peer groups, students potentially change their valued networks. The college administrators at Silver Lake College deemed bursaries, which college staff administered, available for at-risk students from particular geographic areas. Purposefully providing these at-risk students with financial resources, potentially changes their peer group or the values of that group by having them attend college. Astin (1999) argued that peer groups exerted the greatest source of influence on student success. Loury (1977) and Coleman (1988) argued that having students from at-risk neighborhoods attend school with privileged students promoted student success, because all students potentially had a chance to connect and develop relationships.

**5.9.3 Access to financial Aid.** Goldrick-Rab (2010) spoke of monetary issues and at-risk students as not knowing how to access monetary aid—another reason that at-risk students might not attend college. In Canada, at-risk students are approximately three times more likely to secure a job once they complete college (Statistics Canada, n.d.). At Silver Lake College, I noted a bank on campus, which may help some students with access to monetary aid. Also, my data suggest that up until a few years ago the bursaries were not being used in their entirety. To this end, senior leadership stated that they changed this practice: College staff now administers bursaries on the student's behalf if the student comes

from a particular demographic based on residency (i.e., these demographic areas are areas where often few from that high school area have come to college). These areas were deemed as high-risk from city reports and public health records. This initiative ensures that the bursaries are distributed to those in need. Through the leader's purposeful disbursement of funds to at-risk students, generational poverty is, in a modest but very important way, being addressed.

**5.9.4 Accessing information.** Goldrick-Rab (2010), Dika, and Singh (2002), Finnie, et al., (2010), and Jones-White et al. (2010) found that overall, at-risk students did not access services, resources, and social opportunities although they were provided for them. Further, it appears as if knowing how to access information on their personal progress and their program transferability, were additional limitations for these students. Their knowledge often limited due to these students not reaching out to access information. At-risk students would often claim that they did not know that they were not doing well and would drop out of school believing that there were no options for them at college.

Age of enrolment was also another limiting factor with regards to student success. Older students often seemed to have competing loyalties (i.e., family obligations) and competing demands. To combat these risk factors, Silver Lake College leaders created methods to track student success and opportunities to meet with all students deemed at-risk in order to give them other options of programs or access to resources. According to my participants, dropping out of college was not the option of choice at Silver Lake College.

**5.9.5 Access to programs.** Leaders at Silver Lake College had information sessions and fun competitions for the new recruits from high school. Silver Lake College leaders changed the vision and mission of the college about six years ago, to establish the college as an *open access* school. This meant that there were some programs of study that did not have pre-requisites. Every student still has the opportunity to access a college program: especially those students who had not graduated from high school, those students who graduated from high school but without the required pre-requisites, or even students who had graduated high school years ago. At Silver Lake College, the leaders had changed the focus of the educational institution to give all students the opportunity to learn the skills that would

help all students procure employment. Silver Lake College, being an open access college, offered a “second chance” for education beyond high school for those with academic troubles, financial constraints, delayed entry and other at-risk factors. This progressive step was taken at the college to support students, whether for the provincial or at the national level, opening access to funding and programs designed to reduce Canada’s unemployment rate. Clearly the college had success with their students, as stated by the leaders, that students gain employment after graduation. That is what kept the students coming.

**5.9.6 Access to services.** My data suggest that Silver Lake College leaders have established resources (i.e., funding, chintzes, and information) for students and leaders, which make the resources easy and comfortable for students to know about and access. The college leaders have chosen to share information and resources with students. During my field visit I noted that college resource information was readily available: flashed on screens, printed in newspapers, and posted on bulletin boards. Access to services was also easy and confidential. The health services created friendly environments where students can easily walk into for attention. To illustrate, the health services employees could bring a dog to work as therapy, therefore potentially help students in need feel comfortable. If students feel comfortable, they are more likely to access services. Additionally, certain health service providers are not college employees. College leaders have purposefully implemented this strategy so that the service providers remain free from bias about student success and illness. There is no reporting to the individual Silver Lake College teachers, and everything is kept confidential. If the students feel comfortable and if they feel as if the services are unbiased, the college hopes that the students will utilize the established services to get the help they need to then succeed in college.

Using these different access pathways, college leaders shared information about resources and networks, and then located the networks on campus to help ensure access to the networks by the students. Not only did the college leaders share the information with the students, the college leaders ensured that the services, and “helping” networks, were available on campus in a bias-free manner: Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained. The leaders consistently acted in a way that ensured there was no labeling of students. Further, the college leaders took steps to ensure that professors did not know any information that may

cause them unintentional or intentional bias or any untoward treatment of that student, because of their access to Silver Lake College health services and support.

**5.9.7 Social Capital and return on investment.** Post-secondary education literature is replete with empirical studies, which support the economic and social “returns” of higher education to graduates and their families (Bowman & Small, 2012; Burns, 2010; Finnie, et al, 2010; Jones-White, et al., 2010; Puranam & Vanneste, 2009). Canadian community colleges have been mandated to devise strategies to increase student success, retention, and to enable student graduation. The at-risk student and the Canadian economy directly benefit economically from education (Burns, 2010; Finnie, et al., 2010, Jones-White, et al., 2010; Leithwood, 2013; Stephan, 2013). By attaining a college education, Canada’s unemployment rate of at-risk students decreases (Colleges Ontario, 2016b; Dika & Singh, 2002; Finnie, et al., 2010; Jones-White, et al., 2010). At the very least, levels of education almost invariably shapes the nature and amount of earnings, the type of neighborhood to live in, and the quality of food accessed. Parents’ acquired education levels impact the elementary and high schools that the children attend, the peer groups that the children establish, and the educational level that the children aspire towards affect and are affected by social capital.

This exploratory case study highlights the various ways that senior leaders at Silver Lake College demonstrated social capital initiatives to contribute to society by developing ways to ensure their students graduated. The college leaders efforts, in concert with other Silver Lake College leaders, benefited the student directly, and potentially future generations as well as the Canadian economy over the longer term (Goldrick-Rab, 2010; National Survey Student Engagement, 2007; Pascarella et al., 2011). An education at Silver Lake College holds the prospect of playing a vital role and a means for life chances.

The data from this study, answered the question why and reinforces Coleman’s suggestion (1988) and Loury (1977, 2003) desire that schools can help create social capital for the at-risk, non-privileged students, solely for the benefit of others (the student and perhaps future generations). It is through initiatives at the college level that college leaders can normalize and augment resources for students to support academic success. The college leaders cited multiple networking success strategies and procedural mechanisms that the students could access. Not only were bursaries designated for at-risk students from particular

disadvantaged areas of the city, but my research also shows the provision of major bus routes to and from campus, and free bus passes for everyone, as ways that help enable at-risk students to come to Silver Lake College. Giving bus passes to everyone normalizes bus use and makes the college accessible for everyone. Additionally, some college jobs are available for students. As was clear to me during fieldwork, computer stations were available free of charge throughout the college, for everyone, and specifically for students who did not have a computer. Library and Internet access help all students, but specifically, the students who cannot purchase books, enabling them to have the books and resources needed to study. There is also learning support available for all students, but more specifically, for those students who cannot afford a tutor. In this sense, the college leaders have established norms that include all students, thereby taking care of the at-risk students to help equalize the playing field, at least somewhat, with regard to equitable directing of resources. Note that this is not equal to all. With equality the gap stays the same—the gap is reinforced. With equitable resourcing, the support or networks are based on need and necessity to make up or equalize the playing field.

From my observations and site checks, both at-risk and privileged students at Silver Lake College learned to socialize by playing on the same sports teams and joining the same clubs. College leaders have supported free teams and clubs, which are open to all. In this environment, students learn to interact and work towards a goal. The leaders' actions normalized the opportunities for privileged and at-risk students to grow together, and equalized the playing field in terms of respect and mutuality, based on an understanding of each other and through purposeful and fun interactions. When students know each other, it leads to the development of a range of cooperative activities where there is bonding, bridging over inequities, team work, and success. With successful encounters, trust may develop. College leaders created opportunities for trust to begin and to develop within the school family, informally through sports teams and interest clubs, through relationship building.

These groups, teams, and clubs were accessible and open to all students. Because of the nature of teams, the students learned how to manage conflict. Achieving conflict management is worthwhile, because unequal, unfamiliar groups can merge. The building of social cohesion and networks is potentially enhanced amidst strife. Often lifelong friendships

are built in college. These relationships may enable links and integrate resources and networks, especially for the at-risk student. Linkages and networks build bonds that allow communities of people, such as team members, to develop a common purpose: a goal which builds ties, support networks, and trust around a set of norms. Perhaps not surprisingly, the explicit efforts of leaders that elevated social capital amongst students did not result in universal student success. However, many Silver Lake students gained and benefited socially from this form of developing social capital.

## 5.10 Responding To Question Two

In the next section, I will respond to question two:

2. What are the key outcomes of building social capital at one Ontario Community College?

I will discuss my findings as the key outcomes for students, for leaders, and for the college.

## 5.11 Key Findings for Students

The college leaders felt that the students were increasingly able to handle a growing number of real life problems as the students realized, for example, that what they were learning was related to a career. This type of learning empowers students and may promote their independence, especially within the working world where they have to solve workplace problems and where they have to learn to communicate with other team members.

Based on participant perceptions and my field site inquiries, the students seemed to be engaged and participated in their learning, building a trusting relationship. This seemed to be particularly meaningful when the students understood that what they were learning was related to the work world. The leaders felt that as the students began to see the utility in what they were learning, the students began to trust the teachers and the educational system. The students worked together and learned collaboration. The students learned the job skills and the relationship skills and graduated, as evidenced by this college excelling in the Key Performance Indicators (KPI).



## 5.12 Key Outcomes for the Leaders

The key outcomes for the leaders were found to be engaged staff, fulfillment, and a satisfying working environment. The key outcomes were not for the personal gain of the leaders, as Coleman (1988) noted, but the key outcomes were for others, namely students. The leaders expressed fulfillment as expressed, for example, when Vic stated that what he liked was that students “are being successful in their education.” It would seem to reason then that this overall focus on others and the focus on good will to others not on oneself, impacted the leaders working environment.

## 5.13 Key Outcomes for the College

The key outcomes for the college appeared to be an increased retention rate, an increased completion rate, increased Key Performance Indicators (KPI) standings, bonding, and relationships. I will elaborate first on the increased student retention and completion rate, then on the bonding and relationships,

Improved student retention, a five percent improvement in graduation rates, and a documented and stellar (superb) rating in the KPI over the last five years, were key accomplishments. The leaders were very motivated and pleased with this accomplishment. They all appeared to be in alignment with the strategic plan of student success as well as what it took to get there.

Although Silver Lake College is an open access college in Ontario and any student can enroll, they have nevertheless improved and transformed their graduation/retention rate. This is often difficult, because some of the students come to an open access college, because they were not accepted into elsewhere. This then may make their academic achievement harder, and they may potentially need more help than other students would. This involves purposeful investment in the students, on the part of the college. Transforming the retention rate and the graduation rate, even so slightly, is a valued contribution to society and to Ontario’s workforce. Bolden and Bagnall (2009) expressed that investing in people, creating networks, building trust through policies and projects are key leadership acumens. Senge (2006) believed that building and empowering people, and helping people achieve are



noteworthy leadership purposes, which impacted student's views of reality and academic success. Changing the peer group for some students, through busing students from various locations, exerts the greatest influence on student success (Astin, 1999). This may be potentially true for students from the at-risk bursary areas, because these students may have potentially found a new peer group, bonded and succeeded in their academic pursuit.

**5.13.1 Bonding and relationships.** Putnam (2015) stated that there is “growing inequality” (p. 36) in American society. Loury (2003), when talking about racism, contended that, “it’s not the figment of the pigment, it is the enigma of the stigma that causes race to be so salient for blacks today” (p. 143). Creating relationships and bonding opportunities through the creation of social capital may help alleviate the inequality and stigma associated with race. At Silver Lake College the neighborhood divisions (Putnam & Campbell, 2010) were mixed with the college being an open access college, where everyone from many different neighborhoods can come and interact together while learning. Bourdieu (1986) conceptualized social capital as being about social and material privilege. People within the elite groups provided their members with the benefits of membership. Often this involved education, contacts, and employment. One key outcome was the dispersal and sharing of the privileged opportunities through relationships and bonding between groups.

The staff also appeared to have a common focus, a common bond. This was evident in leaders working on projects within the community, such as in research and community projects promoting vertical bonding relationships (Palmer & Gasman, 2008). As the bonding occurs, the vision for student success appeared to be evident to all the leaders. This bonding helped the leaders bond contributing to a nice work environment.

## 5.14 Summary

In the literature exists a conceptualized, scrutinized, and depiction of social capital from many different lenses, based on the view of each particular theorist. The intent of this chapter was to explain the meaning and significance of my research. The questions that guided this study are potentially helpful to college leaders at this time in Ontario, to ask, in order to reflect on, the ways and why social capital is enacted in their institution and how the structures support student success.

In the final chapter, I will provide conclusions, my final thoughts on the web of support, which developed into a triangle of support, a description of the characteristics of the triangle of support, a summary, limitations of the study, thoughts about the contributions of this study, and recommendations for further research, concluding with a final summary.

## Chapter 6

### 6 Conclusion

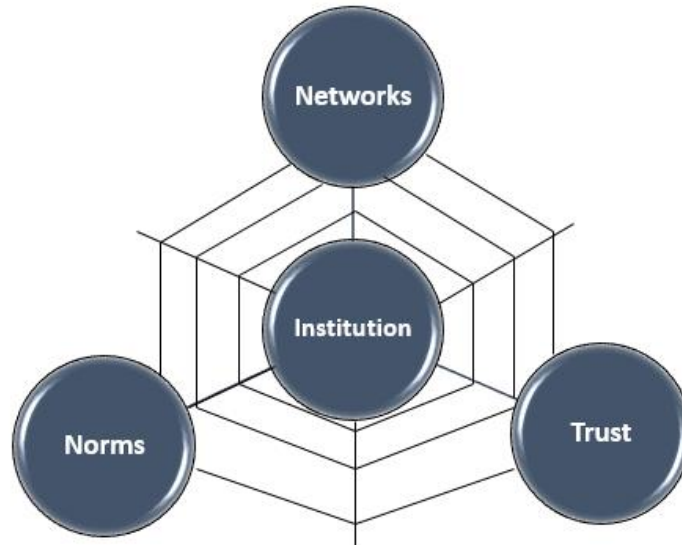
The purpose of this chapter is to offer finality of meaning to the study. I discuss the transformation of the web of support to a *triangle of support* supporting the web, the structures, and benefits of social capital. I also discuss the implications, recommendations, and limitations. Further, I will make recommendations that other higher education institutions may wish to adopt in order to support social capital in their schools. I conclude with a reflection on how the exploration of this research has changed how I view my role as an educator, working in a community college

#### 6.1 From a Web of Support to a Triangle of Support

Initially when I created the web of support I based my conceptualization on what I had read about social capital. However, after collecting and analyzing the data, and using the tool to gather participant ideas in the interviews, I have reimagined the web of support as a triangle of support.

**6.1.1 Web of support.** The web of support was a metaphor for how social capital can support student success. The web of support, as I had originally envisioned it, looked like a spider web, with filaments to adhere the chattels of networks, norms, and trust. The institution was represented by a circle to stand for it being “well-rounded,” accepting of all similar to the nucleus of a cell, or the yolk of an egg. To me, an institution’s leadership is the life giver of the organization. The conceptual connections (filaments) or lines were all solid lines, one color, fluid, and flexible, able to move and respond to conditions imposed upon the web. The web can ebb and flow, which I thought important as educating students involves ebbing and flowing with new technology, various curricular additions, and differing partners and stakeholder. It was flexible, because the student body is complex and comes to the institution with a diversity of needs. Leaders within the institution need to be flexible and adjust to various circumstances.

Lines representing relationships between people within the various areas are sometimes strong, sometimes weak, and sometimes become fragmented. Sometimes, the lines can change and heal and become solid again, other times, they deteriorate further.



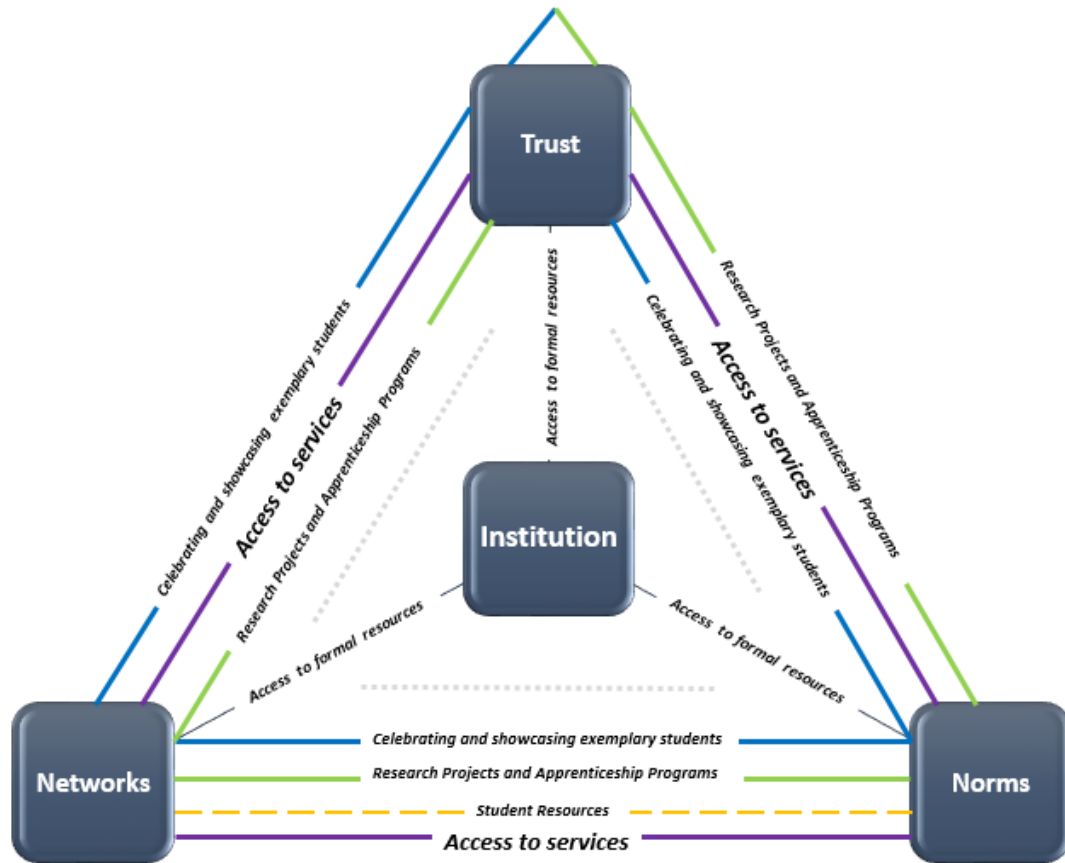
**Figure 2: Conceptual Framing of Institutional Social Capital as a Web of Support (based on Coleman, 1988)**

The key concepts in Coleman's (1988) description of social capital were labeled norms, networks, and trust, because I had read and conceptualized networks, norms, and trust to be concepts that were neatly labeled, clearly identified and defined. These concepts seemed to me to be a matter of fact, a solution for every student, and in every situation. Once norms, networks, and trust are established, one has provided social capital. In other words, once leaders institute norms, networks, and trust, they provide social capital for the student and the student will succeed. I now believe that a conceptual framing of social capital must be responsive and relational (bonding). Social capital is about relationships and community. Social capital is responsive to the student, their needs, and the resources of distribution. Although my metaphor has changed from a web of support to that of a triangle that houses the web of support, I describe this transition in the next section.

**6.1.2 Triangle of support.** After conducting my research, I now realize that norms, networks, and trust, are the cornerstones upon which educational leaders can build a community (college). This community structure is there to help and support the student—the student is undergirded by the web. But what I had originally envisioned as a web with the institution at its center is actually a triangle where each of the constituent elements of social capital anchors a corner. In joining across to each aspect (i.e., norms, networks, and trust) or connecting to adjacent elements, the triangle is made stronger. The role of the institution at the center is to act as the hub—to reinforce, support, and connect to the elements.

The triangle of support (see Figure 3) provides the outer structure and support for a college student, yet the college community can be a flexible web of support internally for the student where the student feels safe and secure to learn. When a student knows the context of relevant or appropriate norms of behaviour and there is trust, as well as networks, students have the means to build and possibly prosper in a “learning” community. There may be learning through, for example, risk-taking, and heightened self-esteem (on the way to the development of personal and professional characteristics and work practices).

The triangle can also house a web within it purposefully crafted, not a random creation. This is similar to the concept of a college being a community within a community, or a manufactured (strategic) community. Therefore, I have reimagined the web of support into a triangle of support to illustrate the strength of the networks, norms, and trust that were uncovered in my study at Silver Lake College, to support students.



**Figure 3: New Conceptual Framing of Institutional Social Capital as a Triangle of Support**

## 6.2 Characteristics of the Triangle of Support

In the following section I will highlight the characteristics of the triangle of support. I will discuss the color of the triangle, connections to the institution, and links to norms, networks and trust. The triangle is viewed as underpinning each student and will therefore be different depending on the needs of the student and what resources are accessed by each student.

**6.2.1 Colour.** The different color additions on my reconfigured triangle represent the growing expanse of strategies for student success. I collected these ideas from the data that I unearthed at Silver Lake College.

**6.2.2 Connection to institution.** Like the institution, the leaders celebrate and show case exemplary students, and therefore, trust and networks grow. That is why I reimagined the triangle of support with “celebrating and showcasing exemplary students” as the link on the outside. Others, who peer in from the outside of the triangle of support, will believe Paul, as he stated that Silver Lake College prepared students for careers. This builds trust within the academic community and outside of the community. As well this builds networks for the students, networks within which the students potentially can find jobs. One participant also noted that he would add this component to the web.

On the other side of the perimeter of the web of support is “student access” to services in large print. The large print was purposeful. This is very important as it is the girding and the support for the students. Leaders at Silver Lake College supported and managed the services—offering services. But, equally important was access to these services. With access comes use of the services through ease and comfort. This builds student networks as students become familiar with accessing services for different issues. This becomes a norm at the college, where students are not afraid to access services. Access to services is a strong internal link supported by the institution’s leaders, and, as such, access to services is in large print within and joining networks and trust. As the student body uses more of the services supplied by leadership, such as the counseling services and the tutoring help centers, trust develops, and overtime it becomes a norm to access services and it becomes a norm to trust the Silver Lake College leaders. It becomes the norm to realize that the College’s leaders want to help students succeed, while maintaining standards.

The “research projects and apprenticeship programs” are on the outer right perimeter of the triangle of support, because the research projects can be presented abroad (outside of the college world). This showcases the successful projects at student fairs and student competitions. Working with community partners on research projects increases trust, because the students and community partners realize that the projects are useful and that the projects can lead to jobs. Project work/community partnerships become a norm in some of the courses. Project work helps draw in students and shows students a practicality to their learning. Students see merit or job readiness in what they are learning. Students from high schools come to the college for information nights, and students see what other students have

accomplished with the community partners. This reinforces to the potential students that these skills gained from the projects can help them secure a job. This showcasing of projects involves an interfacing with the outside world.

The gray dotted lines that is unlabeled refers to faculty resources. It is not labeled, because some years there are many resources for faculty and other years there are not enough resources: The resources can disappear. According to Tom and Vic, there are always more requests for resources than there are resources. I placed this line on the inside of the web, because I feel that it is crucial to hold together the faculty and the students. As Tom indicated, what the leaders do for the staff, they do for the students. If the faculties feel supported, they will more consistently support the students. If the faculties feel that they can trust the academic leaders, the faculty will be more inclined to go the extra mile for students. The students see this care and dedication and then the students believe that they can trust the faculty as well. Trust, therefore, becomes a norm. Other norms (as they become common place) build more elements of trust.

**6.2.3 Links to networks, norms, and trust.** Student resources is placed in close contact with networks and norms, because student resources at Silver Lake College are of paramount importance. Through their networks, students can support or not support each other. I have joined that line to norms, because depending on the norms of peer groups, students can help or hinder their academic success. I placed it on top of access to services, because the college leaders can provide access to services, but the student can choose not to access the service. For example, the student may choose to rely on informal student resources instead of the formal resources. The student may choose the informal resources based on values other than academic values. I have undergirded student resources with informal resources, because although formal resources may exist, a student may not make use of the college's formal resources. I have put student resources at one side of the triangle, between networks and norms, because, depending on the network and on the norms of that network, trust may or may not be present. I used a broken yellow line, because sometimes the networks and norms are broken. Generally, these are voluntary networks, based on various norms that the group or its members may create. The resource is generally always there, it just may be delivered in a different way by a different person. The Silver Lake College leaders devise



pathways for the formal resources to support the students. Access to formal resources may include a variety of leadership and educational strategies, such as pathways for academic success, orientation programs, and peer support services

In the expanded metaphor of the triangle, college leaders have the ability to construct additions or deletions similar to the strands and threads in a web (similar to what I did on the computer). The deliberate construction of lines, strengthens and adds shape to the triangle formation that can house a web. The triangle is a strong structure with a solid base of support. Adding layers of reinforcement to the structure's perimeter, adds strength to the entire structure in a nucleating, embryonic sense. These added lines and concepts are based on my findings. This correlated with Coleman's (1988) findings where he fleshed out that resources, contacts, knowledge, and opportunities occur through participation in networks. I also believe that it is about relationships and community within networks. College leaders in this study cited: working on research projects, attending awards dinners, and joining clubs as networking opportunities for students. This triangle of support can ebb and flow differently for each student, while the student remains secure. Active involvement in clubs, organizations, or associations may help students and staffs develop important skills for team work and real life.

Interaction through the triangle of support provides opportunities for participation in groups and in community. Active participation is voluntary and supportive and meets the needs for a network. This networking has the potential to build acceptance of diversity and inclusiveness, promoting student bonding. Bonding can build trust and learning, through feedback.

Feedback is also important in the triangle of support, because feedback can lead to improvement. Strong feedback may lead to improvements and may provide destruction of the uninformed. Where there is high trust, feedback can be helpful and can promote bonding. Feedback and bonding may provide opportunities for new circumstances, and an enhanced sense of identity can result from feedback, based on improvement and new goals. Feedback comes from the leaders at the center of the institution. As long as the student has supports in place, feedback can be beneficial. If supports are lacking on one side, feedback may be detrimental for that student. At the base of the triangle, lines or layers of lines acting as a

strong base of support may allow for some negative feedback. If the base of the triangle has no layers, or if the layers are thin, negative feedback may destroy the student. At Silver Lake College, there are other support mechanisms in place.

The triangle of support can emphasize variations of strongholds of social capital for different students. This is represented by the flexibility of the different possible configurations and angles of a triangle. For some students the triangle of support may be important for network reasons, while for other students the triangle of support may be advantageous to establish norms or reinforce trust. Yet, other students may reach out and access school supports, such as the library or bus passes.

Another feature of the triangle of support is that academic leaders, who construct supports for current students, influence future generations towards an education, thereby limiting or stopping generational poverty. The triangle has a sharp point, a stimulus, for some students, propelling them to go and try something new, similar to a tack. For some people generational poverty can be stopped through an awakening about their circumstances, or a stimulus to exit their situation. The parents, who are the first in their families to attend college, are role modeling for their children that an education is possible and that an education is worth striving and working towards. This may be a stimulus for that cycle of generational poverty. The triangle of support/stimulus at the college can help change the direction of all students, particularly the students at-risk.

The conceptualizing of a web of support helped me to envision the ways in which Coleman's (1988) work could look in action at a college. As a result of this study, and in uncovering the key themes in my data, the web has become a triangle and has become less about a student and more about institutional structures available to support every student to succeed.

### 6.3 Implications

This was an exploratory case study that sought to explore senior leaders' contribution to student social capital in one Ontario College. The questions to guide this research were:

1. In what ways, and why, have leaders at one Ontario community college contributed to increased student social capital?
2. What are the key outcomes from building social capital at one Ontario Community College?

Data analysis was conducted using a modified constant comparative method (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Key themes identified from the data were networks, norms, and trust, responses to students at-risk, student success, and were represented iteratively with the web of support. The following implications emerged from my research. The data from this exploratory case study suggest the following implications:

1. There is more to social capital than norms, networks, and trust. The construction of social capital is a choice, and is done mindfully.
2. The leaders must know their environment to construct appropriate networks, norms, and trust for students.
3. Students were successful when social capital supports were in place (Coleman, 1988; Kilpatrick & Bell, 2001; Loury, 1977).
4. Through their purposeful planning and leadership with others at the college, leaders can provide opportunities for students to build networks, norms, and trust (Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Senge, 2006).
5. When leaders focus on social capital with students they also increase the connections that students can make on their web of support transforming it to a triangle of support (Coleman, 1988).
6. Students flourish when leaders create social capital for the students (Coleman, 1988; Leithwood & Riel, 2003).
7. Networks, norms and trust are all important in the building of social capital within a community. It is these qualities and the enactment of these qualities within the relationships and within the people that make the difference (Kirschling, 2004).

Findings from this study provide key areas for both school leaders and higher education institutions to consider. I will elaborate briefly on each of these implications.

College leaders, in this study, provided opportunities for building networks, norms, and trust. While many instances of efforts that contributed to students' social capital were observed during data collection (i.e., signage about expected conduct, spaces to meet, clubs to join) it is highly probable that even more opportunities can be offered at the instructional level for students. These opportunities of building social capital at the instructional level could include, for example, teachers encouraging students to work in groups in classes. Additionally, students and faculty can work on research projects together. Norms may be considered and named in the mission and or strategic plan of the institution. Norms then, if explicit, may be reinforced in terms of how teachers treat students, encouraging students and providing ample opportunities for in-class group work. Naming norms of excellence in college mission or strategic plan statements may, in turn, encourage teachers to give out recognition and awards for many different types of success. Different types of success could be: most improved student, best attendance, or the student who has successfully juggled or overall improved at everything. The norm being pursued may then become encouraging and supporting students toward success and treating all people with respect.

Coleman (1988) reminded us that leaders can create and provide the opportunity to build norms, networks, and trust for the students at their institutions. My triangle of support has additions to the norms, networks, and trust based on my research. My research builds on these notions highlighting the need for a triangle of support where college leaders, similar to a family or community, provide the opportunities for students to build their norms, networks, and trust. While supporting all students, especially those at-risk, Silver Lake College leaders are sharing, and in effect, extending privilege from their local community of Silver Lake College, within, across, and through ties.

I highlighted the new conceptual framing of social capital as a triangle of support that houses the web of support, believing that students flourish when leaders purposefully create social capital for the students. This new conceptual framework included elements linked to findings from my research.

The study underscores the need for networks, the building of community and relationships, because the data indicates that it is the relationships and the people (leader/professor) to student relationships that make the difference. The leaders support

relationships and the teachers and students within the networks, establish the norms and reinforce the trust.

Silver Lake College leaders recognize the need to engage with students inside and outside of the college through various activities and the ways that leaders facilitate, indirectly or directly. Those opportunities promote the building of networks, norms, and trust. Modeling professional behaviour by the leaders, for example, becomes an asset to the students and to other leadership team members. That demonstrates the expectations of behaviour in terms of how to treat each other as a relational norm of behaviour at the college.

Trust, although often times unseen so-to-speak, can be cultivated through activities and resources that leaders provide. Trust can sometimes be built, over time. As this case study showed, trust is especially valuable and needed for the at-risk college students.

The values of the educational leaders at Silver Lake College were evident from the interviews and from my observations. Those educational leaders embedded social capital values into their way of “doing education.” The values included: community service, civic engagement at the college with businesses and tiers of government, and treating all students with dignity and respect. Decisions had been made by the educational leaders so that there were no memberships needed by students to join clubs. All students could enter networks, and access resources. There was a norm for belonging and there was a norm for trust (openness, information sharing, and protection). There were also values of an open access college. There was close attention from college leaders and professors to ensure that every at-risk student was supported and accounted for and helped with social capital.

Social capital is related to the idea of human and economic capital. Regardless of the theory, it is widely acknowledged that social capital concerns people, interactions, networks, resources, and the building of resources. Most scholars have conceptualized social capital in terms of networks, norms, and trust, and social capital is critical for understanding how the relationship between actors, and among actors, ensues and how these resources are accessed (Coleman, 1988). Norms, networks, and trust are resources that exist in the relationships of people within communities, across communities and through ties (Warren et al., 2001). The individual giving the social capital gets no benefit of the social capital: The social capital

benefits the others (Coleman, 1988). Giving social capital in this way to students, especially the at-risk students, can help combat poverty (Warren et al., 2001) through helping the current and future student generations. Silver Lake College leaders' understanding and acting on social capital is important, potentially, for understanding equality and reducing poverty.

## 6.4 Recommendations

This exploratory case study has demonstrated that educational leaders at a community college in Ontario utilized a variety of strategies to effectively increase student social capital. Data from my study suggest that this strategy matters. As well, my field visit showed that a variety of programs, clubs, resources, and meeting places existed, as well as available supports and opportunities for fun, for students to engage, and for students to form relationships.

The findings of this study relate to the literature on social capital by Coleman (1988) in so far as recognizing that social capital is important for student success. Student engagement and the opportunity to build community were part of the strategy of Silver Lake College leaders.

Coleman (1988) noted that when social relationships were broken, for example, when a family moves twice and relocates (to another city or part of the country) the dropout rate of students increased to 23.1% (p. 113). Nevertheless, the importance of,

social capital in the family is a resource for education of the family's children, just as is financial and human capital. The social capital that has value for a young person's development does not reside solely within the family. It [social capital] can be found outside as well in the community consisting of the social relationships that exist. (p. 113)

As this study at Silver Lake College shows, social capital can be found outside of the family, in the community, and in many parts of an educational community. Just as there were low dropout rates were "3.4%" (p. 115) in Coleman's study of Catholic schools, because of community (church, neighborhood, teams, clubs, parental and child involvement), the educational leaders at Silver Lake College thought they could increase retention. Coleman was suggesting the importance of social capital in the community was compensating for a

lack of social capital in the family, so too did the college educational leaders believe social capital could make up for what families may not have been able or willing to offer.

The following recommendations from this study highlight the need for college leaders to continue to provide opportunity for students to engage with other individuals at the college, thus building a community within the college.

## 6.5 Limitations of the Study

There appears to be many U.S. studies about aspects of social capital, but there is a dearth of Canadian post-secondary education based studies. Transferring and enacting understandings of the U.S. studies to the Canadian college educational system is troublesome, because the educational systems are complex and have different funding models along with different social supports. Not surprisingly, therefore, to some extent, I had to translate the data findings from some of those U.S. based studies in order to focus on relevant samples, research designs, and types of educational leadership.

While this study was able to uncover demonstrations of social capital in one Ontario community college, generalizations across campuses cannot be made about how students are, or indeed should, be supported. A further limitation may be related to the fact that the data were collected from a small group of senior educational leadership participants.

## 6.6 Contributions

This research has contributed to the landscape of social capital in Ontario in the college sector and recognizes the role that senior college leaders can play in supporting student trust, norms, and networks. This unique and fresh fleshing out of relevant theory on social capital in this study is one of relatively few I could discover that addressed a Canadian post-secondary education context. This research is important to the understanding that much of the social capital research is built upon the work of Coleman (1988) and highlights the importance of intentionally developing a triangle of support for students that builds on the norms, networks, and trust identified in his research.

As this study was positioned in Canadian higher education where there appears to be a paucity of research on social capital, this study modestly, yet clearly, helps to address this gap. I built upon Coleman's work using an interpretive lens then added my reflections and thoughts from the perspective of a current nursing educator and doctoral student. These unique perspectives are often overlooked by faculty and researchers in daily life. Now, as a result of this study, and being aware of the ways to build a triangle of support, I am able to notice and name elements of social capital in my daily work. More interest in social capital may create social capital in post-secondary education institutions to support student success. The triangle of support, as operationalized in my research, may help bring an awareness and support for at-risk students, including Indigenous youth, and it may help advance the Truth and Reconciliation action including, but not limited to, providing succinct funding to possibly close educational gaps within one generation.

Lastly, this study supports the continued growth of the discussion of social capital in Ontario, in college education among senior leaders, and invites the conversation to include faculty and students. This research, and the invitation to discussion, potentially paves the way for educators and researchers to learn more about social capital and its connections to student success. Leaders can support their college colleagues by purposefully providing structured opportunities to discuss the application of social capital endeavors.

## 6.7 Recommendations for Further Research

This study was exploratory in nature. However, the findings from my study provide the stage for an enhanced dialogue among college leaders and researchers on aspects of social capital, which may be useful to student success in the college sector. I offer three recommendations for other research.

Firstly, one may wish to examine the connections between social capital and health and how nutrition, and mental health, may be important factors in light of social capital. Through reflection, it would appear that some college students, who have an opportunity for a balanced diet, plenty of exercise, and who have learned how to control stress, may perform better in college.



Secondly, this research could be replicated with the addition of an exploration of the students' voice. The researcher could include observations of students and how they view social capital and the web of support. This new study could build strategies from the student perspective, as there appears to be a dearth of studies in this area as well.

Finally, this research could be extended to explore the relationship between technology and building social capital in an Ontario College(s). An understanding of the importance of technology and student social capital may contribute to strategies and professional learning programs for leaders to identify and develop for staff and students. Research in this area may provide the stimulus to produce a new triangle of support for strategies in the educational leadership journey.

## 6.8 Summary

This study is unique and contributes to the building of the Ontario college-based gap of information on student's social capital. As the research process unfolded, the information generated a further understanding for me of higher education leadership and the creation of student social capital. I learned that social capital is more connected to academic success than I first realized. As I became more aware of social capital, I began to see it everywhere. Awareness sometimes breeds familiarity, and familiarity often leads to action. As I recognized the networks, norms, and trust of social capital around me, I began to be more active in relation to social capital in my classroom and in my own life.

Social capital may be under recognized and/or highly undervalued by teaching staff, and it may be almost forgotten in educational leadership. Perhaps this research, and an increasing awareness of social capital, may bring along the simplicity of being able to enact social capital in the classrooms through activities that promote networks, norms, and trust. This can be achieved through meaningful interactions and an awareness of supportive interactions in the daily lives of college educators and college students.

College leaders can positively influence student success by being aware of the language of, and research pertaining to, social capital and by promoting relevant enactments of social capital within their organizations for all students, especially for those deemed at-

risk. Educational leaders can, in effect, *backfill* for the student (i.e., purposefully provide the triangle of support). Without, what in effect is social capital, backfill from educational leaders, it is difficult for at-risk students to succeed. Students need to draw on the supports that the educational leaders create purposefully at their institutions. Under the leaders' direction and support, a network or a community within the college community may ensue, encompassing both college staff and students. If the inference is correct about the college leadership community purposefully providing social capital initiatives, and the college leaders purposefully supporting the building of student social capital, the importance of the social capital structure—the triangle of support—may help even in a modest way to stem the trend of college students dropping out of college.

## 6.9 Final Conclusions

In a modest attempt to offer finality of meaning to the study, I offer a few concluding thoughts to the following questions:

1. In what ways, and why, have leaders at one Ontario Community College contributed to increased student Social Capital?
2. What are the key outcomes from building social capital at one Ontario Community College?

College leaders at Silver Lake College built a community within a community. They equalized the playing field for all students. For example, college leaders gave free bus passes to all students so all students could come to school, scholarship monies to the students that came from certain disadvantaged areas, free tutoring help, re-engineered the design of the buildings to allow for common meeting spaces for students to build community, and a no-fee opportunity to sports teams and clubs. College leaders at Silver Lake College modeled norms of behaviours and built trust through relationships. For example, the college show cases student excellence through the college media (TV screens), dinners, and awards posted on the college walls. The appeals process is open and has student representation, and the college leaders at Silver Lake College built a support network for the students that would benefit and help the student's succeed.

College leaders contributed to student capital, because they realized the importance of the supports of a college community. College leaders recognized that not all students can go to, or succeed in, college without the support of the college community. College leaders realized that backfill is often needed if students are to succeed, because not all students come from a place of privilege. According to my study, it would appear that college leaders contribute to student success, not for their own good, but for the good of the students and for the good of society. College leaders at Silver Lake College mindfully constructed social capital. It would appear that the key outcomes of building student Social Capital are enhanced networks, norms, and trust. Student graduation rates and retention rates rose since the mindful, purposeful construction of social capital and the college became a nice, supportive place to work, thrive and excel for both staff and students.

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## Appendix A: Letter of Information



Letter of Information

Project Title: Creating an Institutional Web of Support for Students by College Leaders: An Exploratory Case Study of Social Capital at One Ontario Community College

Principal Investigator: Dr. Pam Bishop (Associate Dean), Faculty of Education, University of Western Ontario

### Letter of Information

Dear Potential Participant:

You are receiving this letter because I have noticed that you do a lot for students at your institution. You are invited to participate in this research study about student social capital and college leaders' contribution to student social capital because you are in a leadership position at this college. The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information required for you to make an informed decision regarding participation in this research.

The purpose of this study is to explore the potential relationship between college leaders contribution towards student social capital. Establishing such a relationship may offer insight into the outcomes of student capital and the creation of more student capital by college leadership for the benefit of helping students succeed and graduate. You are being included in the research because you are a current

administrative leader at the College in a position where you can make decisions. Current students and other ancillary staff who do not have a formal leadership portfolio will be excluded from this study.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to contribute in a personal interview that is potentially up to one hour in length. This will take place at a date and time that is convenient for you. The co-investigator Marilyn Ott will be conducting the interviews with your consent if you choose to participate in the interviews. There are no known or anticipated risks or discomforts associated with participating in this study.

You may not directly benefit from participating in this study but information gathered may provide benefit to society as a whole and to students in particular giving insight into student social capital. You will not be compensated for your participation in this research. Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on your future academic status. All data collected will remain anonymous and accessible only to the investigator of this study. If the results are published, no identifying information or school names will be published. If you choose to withdraw from this study, your data will be removed and destroyed from my data bases. The information collected for this project is confidential and protected under the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 1989.

The Research Steering Committee of the College and the University of Western Ontario has granted approval for this study. If you require any further information regarding this research project or your participation in the study you may contact the co-investigator, Marilyn Ott, (xxx) xxx-xxxx email: xxxxxxxx or her EdD supervisor, Dr. Pam Bishop (Assistant Dean of the Faculty of Education), xxx-xxx-xxxx email: xxxxxxxx. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact the University of Western Ontario's Office of Research Ethics, at (519) 661-3036, email:

[ethics@uwo.ca](mailto:ethics@uwo.ca) .



When the results of the study are published, your name and institution will not be used. If you would like to receive a copy of any potential study results, please contact Marilyn Ott, (xxx) xxx-xxxx email: xxxxxx

Completion of this consent form is indication of your consent to participate. The letter is yours to keep for future reference.

## Appendix B: Consent Form



Consent Form

Project Title:

Study Investigator: Marilyn Ott

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

Participants Name (Please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Participants Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher obtaining signed consent: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C: Interview Protocol

### Interview Questions:

1. In your role as an institutional leader, what does your job entail?
2. How long have you been at this College?
3. Can you tell me about the student demographics here?
4. How does the student population reflect student culture?
5. In this study, social capital refers to norms, networks and trust. I have noticed you have an open doors policy, an open communication styles, and a relaxed conversational tone. There is a lot of food, book clubs, and places to gather. How else is student social capital supported at this institution?
6. How does your role contribute to the development of institutional SC supports for students? Can you give some examples?
7. (Explain and show the conceptualization of the Web). Could you add specific networks, norms, and ways in which trust is built at the college / represented so far as students and supporting students' SC is concerned at this college?
8. Why do you see SC as ultimately being important for students at the College Level? What outcomes do you envision?
9. What outcomes have already been apparent over the past 5 years that pertain to students' SC?
10. In broad terms, to what extent does the trust of students grow [or improve] over the course of their time here? Is it different between 'completers' and 'non-completers'?
11. Is there anything else you would like to add about the connection between your role as an institutional leader and the social capital supports for students at the college?

## Curriculum Vitae

**Name:** Marilyn, Ott

**Post-secondary Education and Degrees:** McMaster University  
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada  
1990-1993 B.Sc.N.

The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, Canada  
1994-1997 M.Sc.N.

**Honours and Awards** St Joseph Hospital  
London, Ontario  
David Zivia Meltzer Award 2016

**Related Work Experience** Fanshawe College  
Professor Nursing  
London, Ontario, Canada

Teaching Assistant  
University of Western Ontario  
1994-1996

### Publications:

- Ott, M., Shen, J., Sherwood, S. (2005). Evidenced-based practice for Control of Methicillin - resistant Staphylococcus Aureus. *AORN Journal*, 81(2): 359-372.
- Ott, M., Browne, G., Roberts, J., Gafni, A. (2006). Recreation for Children on Social Assistance, 4-17 Years Old, Pays for Itself the Same Year. *Journal of Public Health (UK)*, 28(3), 203-208.
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