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A New Approach to Understanding Aboriginal Educational Outcomes: The Role of Social Capital[1]

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Introduction

In recent years, social capital has received much attention, and been the subject of great debate in the social sciences and policy arenas. Whether social capital has the capacity and utility to produce meaningful change, in achieving the goals of society, is one focus of that debate.

This paper examines the impacts of social capital on Aboriginal educational attainment in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The focus for Canada is First Nations and in other countries it is a similar population. Our aim is to explore how social capital theory has been applied to Aboriginal contexts in each country, and we seek to determine if social capital plays or can play any role in improving educational attainment for Aboriginal populations. Does social capital figure in the formation of programs and policies? Should it be a consideration? What are the specific contexts in which social capital can have an effect on educational attainment? We approached these questions by creating as extensive an inventory of policies and programs as possible for each of the countries. Also, we supplemented our inventory with email, phone, and face-to-face interviews with experts, such as Robert Putnam in the US, David Robinson in New Zealand, Canadian Aboriginal students, and government policy officers in all three countries. We thank everyone who took time to work with us.

We developed a synthesis looking for patterns and distilling the role of social capital. Our research looked at conscious applications of the concept, but also where we could discern its implicit part in educational attainment. In writing our results we chose programs and policies that illustrated our synthesis.

Why Aboriginal Education?

The focus on educational attainment and human capital development is strategic. Much research has illustrated the gap in the standard of living between the greater Canadian society and Aboriginal people, and the foundations for understanding these outcomes (White, Maxim, and Beavon 2004). Recurring themes are the lagging levels of educational attainment, and the consequent poor labour market outcomes among Aboriginals compared to the non-Aboriginal Canadian

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population. The 2001 Census data demonstrates these gaps clearly. Among the population 15 years of age and over, 48% of Aboriginals have less than a high school graduation certificate compared to 30.8% of the non-Aboriginal population. The percentage of Aboriginals with high school and some post-secondary education is 22.4% compared to 25% for the non-Aboriginal population. For trades or college, 23.7% of Aboriginals possess this credential compared to 25.9% of the non-Aboriginal population. At the high level of attainment—university— only 4.4% of Aboriginals have achieved this credential compared to 15.7% of the non-Aboriginal population (Statistics Canada 2003). The picture is not, however, totally bleak. For example, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (2004) data shows there have been some improvements in educational attainment over time, but the gaps are still important.

Our paper is anchored by the desire to develop more insight into the solutions to these problems using the social-capital lens. The trends we have documented are not exclusive to Aboriginal Canadians. Indeed, Aboriginal populations across all three countries have less attainment than the general population, and this issue has not gone unnoticed by their governments. Although our preoccupation with this issue originates within the Canadian context, a logical step is to compare the work done in other countries and develop a general framework of social capital as it relates to Aboriginal educational outcomes. This is what we have done.

Defining Social Capital

Conceptually and theoretically, social capital has various faces and dispositions. Recently, there has been a move to arrive at a single conceptualization and definition of social capital—these efforts have met with much resistance. We do not resolve this issue but match our working understanding with the definition set out by some members of the government, including the Policy Research Initiative. We leave the theoretical debates regarding the "correct" definition of social capital for another forum.

We adopt a structural approach to the concept, which emphasizes social networks as the focal point of investigation. Social capital is defined as the networks of social relations within the milieu, characterized by specific norms and attitudes that serve the purpose of *potentially* enabling individuals' or groups' access to a pool of resources and supports. Social capital is conceptualized in three different forms: bonding social capital (intragroup relations), bridging social capital (horizontal intergroup relations), and linking social capital (vertical intergroup relations in a society stratified by class, status, and power relations) (Woolcock 2001).

Outline

In the introduction we have dealt briefly with the focus of the study, our approach to data, and the definition of core concepts. Part I presents our model for under-

standing how social capital operates in the Aboriginal context we studied. The four dimensions of social capital we identify were derived inductively from the study of policy, practice, and outcomes in our target countries. We integrate a small number of examples into this section to make the model grounded and easier to understand. In Part II we explore some examples of policies and programs that illustrate our synthesis. Finally, we return to the four dimensions, integrate our examples into the model, and draw some further lessons for policy making.

Part I—The Four-Element Model

We can draw the following general conclusions from our study of social capital and Aboriginal educational outcomes: first, social capital is not an extremely powerful explanator. It functions as an independent variable that explains some variance in population and individual outcomes. However, understanding what seems to impact on the effectiveness of social capital provides interesting insights into its potential strengths and weaknesses.

We found that there are four elements that interact to influence the policy-program effects of social capital. They are:

1. Levels of Social Capital

Social capital seems to have more influence at set threshold points. For example, in the case of Port Harrison in Canada, the movement of the community to a new location led to the destruction of social capital as it broke generational ties. Parents and elders used to teach the young how to hunt and build ice houses. The relocation to a place where there were no hunting possibilities led to a breakup of the traditional system where young people traveled with the elder skilled hunters, learning many skills, such as language, traditions, etc., during the hunting season. Prior to the move, this community had high levels of educational attainment because in the off-season the community studied at the school. After the relocation this community spiraled downward as evidenced by many social indicators: suicide increased; school non-attendance became endemic; fertility rates declined; and rates of illness rose (White and Maxim 2003). Thus, the state had destroyed, perhaps inadvertently, the social capital of the community.

As social capital approaches zero, there seems to be a relatively great effect on population outcomes. In communities that are decimated of social capital networks, educational attainment is very low. The rebuilding of social capital in these communities can have a positive effect; however, given the threshold effect, as we build social capital to even moderate levels, the effect may be negligible, or, depending on the existence of the following three other elements, we may see declines in positive outcomes as social capital grows very strong.

2. Norm Effects

Increasing levels of social capital are not necessarily related to increasing educational attainment. This can be understood by examining what we call norm effects.

Simply put, where parents and family have low educational attainment and high levels of bonding social capital, the child's educational attainment is likely to be low. This is why we see a high correlation between mothers' and children's educational attainment (White and Maxim 2002). The post-secondary students we interviewed for this study all came from communities where their family-clan networks had relatively high educational attainment. Ward's (1992) work examining the Cheyenne found that the level of educational attainment in the clan group is critical to the educational success of the children. In another US examination of policy, Ward (1998, 102) notes that the more successful community Busby and its tribal school utilize the highest educational achievers where "adults with education are the role models and sources of support for students." This is a case where the norms available for the child are critical, and substituting higher norm adults for the bonded network of the family has positive effects.

Where we have low educational norms embedded in a child's family, it is counter productive to build bonding social capital. The higher the bonding social capital, the more the low norms are reinforced, and the lower the educational attainment is likely to be. In Part II we have several indications of this process. In Queensland, Australia, they had truancy problems and developed a program whereby buses went to the homes of every Aboriginal student to get them in the morning. They discovered that the parents who had little schooling would not wake the children to get on the bus—they preferred to have them sleep.

3. Cultural Openness Contexts (Building Relationships Based on Cultural Context)

Where bonding social capital networks are integrated into wider society (either bridged or linked), there is greater potential for increasing educational attainment. Even remote communities can experience more improvement if culturally open. Open cultures can exist in a few ways. For example, where language use includes dominant languages, people engage in the wider economy, and traditions are not exclusionary. Openness is a relative concept; hence, if that which is "outside" can be made more like the target group's culture it simulates a more open situation, and allows bridging and linking. Highly closed dominant cultures and marginalized or non-integrated ethnic groups can have high levels of social capital and very low educational attainment. Integrated and open cultural contexts that have much lower social capital will have more potential for educational attainment.

This phenomenon can be understood in different ways. For example, if we look at the more successful endeavors in our target countries, we can understand the process as one where the dominant cultural group gathers a clear appreciation of the Aboriginal culture. This appreciation is translated into behaviours that are consistent with the norms within the Aboriginal culture, which facilitates the development of relations and allows linking and bridging to take place. We find this process most clearly manifested in New Zealand. Williams and Robinson (2002) have sought to identify Indigenous applications of social capital.

Interestingly, they argued that "the nature of social capital in New Zealand can only be understood by taking into account elements of social capital important to the Maori," which led to their development of a Maori concept of social capital (ibid, 12). Robinson and Williams (2001) argued that there were nine key factors or emphases in a Maori concept of social capital. Our review of their work indicates that the key differences involve the role of primary network. For example, in their estimation social capital is not produced outside of family. The extended family in Maori thinking is the community. Imposition of networks outside the family or community are deemed to be less functional. Robinson and Williams (2001, 55–60) outline their theory:

> A Maori concept of social capital emphasises the following elements: Extended family relationships are the basis for all other relationships. The whanau [family] is the nucleus of all things. Maori community values and norms come from traditional values that are rooted in the whanau ... It is essential to have knowledge of, and to know one's place in ... the hierarchy of whanau, hapu and iwi[2] ... Relationships in Maori society develop around informal association rather than formal organisations ... The connectedness that is derived from this association ... The holistic, integrating nature of relationships and networks are of primary importance, while their use or functional activity is secondary ... Family, tribal and community networks may take priority over functional contracts with specified agencies such as health, education or welfare ...

> Membership in customary Maori associations is based on an exchange of obligations and acceptance by the group. Conditions for joining are verbal, implicit and obligation-driven—rather than rule-driven, specified and written down ... The concept ... includes obligations based on a common ancestry and the cultural dimension that obliges one to act in certain ways that give rise to the development of social capital. Key concepts of Maori society that relate to social capital include hapai (the requirement to apply the concept of uplifting/enhancement) and tautoko (providing support within the community).

So New Zealand views of social capital imply that relationships must be built through informal associations as opposed to formal institutionalized structures, and the informal relations that lead to the connectedness and networks that are created have specific functions and expectations at the family kin group (whanau), sub tribe (hapu), and tribal (iwi) level. According to Williams and Robinson (2002) these relationships take precedence over formalized contractual relations in things such as education. The traditional culture has two social capital related processes that New Zealand policy can utilize: hapai (bridge or connect) and tautoko (support or commitment) which we will see in the form of drawing the family into pre-school.

From a practical point of view, the problem is how to utilize the strong bonding capital networks within the community at the family and clan level to enhance population outcomes. The simple approach to this would have included bridging and linking them to wider social capital networks. Robinson (2004) notes that success depends on two factors: creating or drawing on a collective historical memory of relations held by the iwi (tribe) with another community that facilitates the bridging process (i.e., the memory and history of relations with the central

government in this case); and the perception of, or lack of, shared understandings. These are assessed and developed through interaction. Interaction takes place in traditional forums such as the hui—a ceremonial gathering that allows people to get to know each other in a recognizable context. It seems from our assessment that this recognition can, therefore, manufacture a collective knowledge/memory of shared understandings which permits linkages.

New Zealand has developed a Maori concept of social capital where it is only produced in the extended family (whanau), and cannot be created for the Maori from the outside through linking or bridging networks. Thus, programs that involve the imposition of networks outside the family or community are deemed to lack functionality. Success rests on bridging networks based on relationships that must be built through engagement in informal associations at the whanau (family), hapu (clan), or iwi (tribe) level. Informal associations that work can eventually be translated to more formal institutionalized structures.

The Maori have specific practices where whanau, hapu, and iwi levels develop understandings of each other. These specialized meeting and exchange structures, such as the hui, are used to create higher level linkages and bridges between social capital networks. You will see, in the program and policy examples below, how this has been utilized.

So in New Zealand, we found that government policy and program development was preceded by an understanding of Maori culture. The implementation of the programs to help with educational attainment issues could only be done by creating the conditions for bridging and linking, which meant opening the cultural context by adopting the Maori ways.

There are many examples around the world where Aboriginal cultures have changed and become more open. Exogamy creates more openness for example. In Australia and Canada, the residential schools were an attempt to force assimilation. We can see that these attempts to create linkages are very destructive.

4. Community Capacity

Strong bonding social capital networks, with high attainment members, that are bridged to school networks and linked to resources seem to have a positive effect on the transitions to high school and post-secondary institutions, graduate rates, and overall educational success. The context within which social capital works seems much more important than the "strength" or "level" of the bonded network. Networks cannot hold all the resources necessary to ensure educational attainment. They must operate in capital-rich environments; that is, they require other forms of capital in order to have a positive influence on educational attainment. This is why we observe that communities with low economic development (high unemployment) have low educational attainment. Those willing or able to integrate with wider capital formations (e.g., physical capital), or who have the capacity to develop such capital based on their infrastructures tend to have high educational attainment.

Our investigation of Australia demonstrated this dimension very clearly. Stone, Gray, and Hughes (2003) argue that using social capital generated by low-capacity communities can reinforce low capacity. They are looking at this in the context of job searching, but it has implications for education. Interventions to network low-achievement parents with the schools may encourage a reproduction of the lower achievement according to the Australian approach.

Hunter (2000) notes that unemployment of adults is a key problem in creating and sustaining poor educational results for children. Community capacity is once again seen as playing a fundamental role in educational processes. Hunter's study of social capital concludes that reinforcing social capital in a community with low employment levels reinforces lower norms of achievement, and leads to children uninterested in educational attainment.

A study by the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (Hunter 2000), however, does call for Australia to vet all policies (as per Putnam's call) to determine the effects on social capital, and how to ensure that policies increase the involvement and connection of Aboriginal society with wider Australian society. This "connectiveness" may actually increase integration and mitigate the effects of high levels of bonding capital, which works with low education norms to reinforce separateness. There has been considerable research on Portes's four negative attributes of social capital and their application to the Australian Aboriginal context. Hunter (2004) notes that the "exclusion of outsiders" prevents access to services, especially in the area of education; "excessive claims on group members" plays out as "demand sharing" that may undermine educational involvement by youth; "restrictions on group members' freedom" can undermine autonomy where norms dictate non-involvement; and "downward leveling of norms" creates a non-achievement context as we noted in the previous studies.

The Australians are developing a theoretical model that differs from the one used in New Zealand and advocates the need to intervene to build community capacity, including at the level of network construction. They have also placed cultural specificity at the core of approaching the issue of social capital and educational attainment, but it appears somewhat differently (more interventionist) in practice as we will see in the policies we review in Part II.

Conceptual Modelling of the Four Elements

If we examine some combinations of cases, the interrelationships and impacts of the four dimensions may become clearer:

Scenario 1: Aboriginal children with moderate to high social capital, where educational attainment norms in their networks are moderate to high, who live in communities with cultural openness and low unemployment levels, will have high educational attainment.

Scenario 2: Aboriginal students who have high levels of social capital with low educational attainment norms in their network and low economic

development, will have low educational attainment. This scenario is often compounded by being resilient to outside network bridging and linking—a result of being culturally closed.

Scenario 3: Aboriginal children with zero or extremely low social capital will have no educational attainment norms to draw upon and will have low educational attainment. In this case alone, building social capital is a key prerequisite to increasing educational attainment.

Part II—Selected Policy and Program Examples in New Zealand, Australia, and Canada

Part II explores some of the policies and programs aimed at confronting problems of educational attainment among Aboriginals in New Zealand, Australia, and Canada. This is not designed to be an exhaustive review of the activities in each region; instead, it examines some key illustrations of the four dimension model we presented earlier.

New Zealand

New Zealand has targeted educational attainment for the Maori as the key to reversing the negative population indicators all too common among Indigenous populations worldwide. The New Zealand Ministry report small yet positive improvements based on two identified factors that have made the biggest difference in engaging students and raising their achievement: the quality of teaching and the relationship between whanau/home and school (New Zealand Ministry of Education 2003). We will concentrate on the second issue, the relationship between family and school, because this is clearly connected to the use of social capital to increase educational outcomes, and provides the clearest indication of opening relationships based on cultural context.

Since 1988 the New Zealand Government has moved to "hand over responsibility for governing educational institutions to the local community and make communities accountable ... reforms have encouraged more innovative ways for communities and education institutions to work together" (Ministry of Maori Development 1997,10). The evaluation of the reforms overall, cited that the successful initiatives occurred when there was a developed community-school co-operation, and when the community families proposed, developed, or participated in and supported the programs (ibid.).

One of the first policies developed and translated into programs was the stepwise creation of pathways for parents to be involved in supporting their children's learning. The Parent Support and Development Program (PSDP), Study Support Centres (SSC), and Parents as Mentors (PAM) initiatives were set up as partnerships between schools, whanau (family), and communities. If social capital is created in the kin group (whanau), and social capital in the form of networks of support are key to improving school achievement, then building network

connections between schools and whanau would be the way to proceed. This is exactly what they have done. The building block of their improvement program is increasing Maori involvement, but that cannot be done top down but only bottom up (recall our discussion in Part I).

The Parents as First Teachers (PFT) program is one of the most illustrative. It focused on providing support and guidance to parents with children zero to three years of age. Maori children tend to come less prepared for elementary school, which leads to performance and discipline issues. This led to a widespread discussion between those running the program and the whanau and communities about establishing and running preschools in those communities to increase the preparedness of the children. From our modeling perspective we have to ask: "How did the Ministry get the whanau to be involved?" The Ministry set up stalls at community events, attended *hui* (special meetings with dialogue), etc., and the Ministry networks became "known" to the Maori. Recall that relationships in Maori society develop around informal association rather than formal organizations, and so family, tribal, and community networks may take priority over functional contracts with specified agencies. Thus, building the personal informal links was a precursor to more formalized relations. After being known to Maori families, the New Zealand Ministry explained the benefits of preschool, and helped parents set up their own early childhood programs, or helped children enroll in the founding ones. In 2003, 3,000 Maori families were involved in the PFT program (Farquhar 2003; New Zealand Ministry of Education 2003).

The case of New Zealand illustrates the need to build culturally sensitive pathways that open the bonding social capital networks up to linking and bridging resource-rich networks. Also demonstrated is the role of norms and the relative unimportance of levels of social capital in the basic bonding networks.

Australia

In this section we want to highlight what is distinctive in the Australian approach and point out how their understanding contributes to our model. While the Australians have launched a myriad of programs to improve teacher cultural understanding, train new teachers, develop preschools, and integrate parents, they see building community capacity as integral to making education relevant to Indigenous peoples. Thus, jobs and access to markets are the foundation of success. They also see that the skills of the labor force have to increase in order to take advantage of any development. There is little evidence that the Australians are looking at any particular strategies that involve utilizing or developing social capital in this process. Some exceptions are, however, notable. The Gumala Mirnuwarni (Coming Together to Learn) Program, West Australia, was established in 1997. The House of Representatives Standing Committee (2004,189) reports that the impetus for this program was the community's desire to see their children more actively participate in school: "It has involved collaboration and partnership between children, parents, schools, State and Commonwealth

education authorities, three resource partners and a philanthropic organization, in a program designed to improve educational outcomes for local Indigenous students." A representative of Rio Tinto outlined one element of the project, it is a personal commitment contract that reads: " 'I, the child, agree to go along to school and I, the family member, agree to support my child going to school. ... ' If the child does not participate in school, then they are not welcome at the after-school program ... that has been set up for them. So there is an expectation that their participation in school will lead to enhanced benefits"[3] (House of Representatives Standing Committee 2004, 189).

The Gumala Mirnuwarni has been successful because of the attempts to link family networks, students, and school networks together utilizing reciprocity mechanisms. The Government noted that they recognize the success of the project, and have proceeded to use it as a foundation for other initiatives. They have developed the notion of compacts around the country in which diverse stakeholders forge beneficial working relations, for example, families with schools and industry (House of Representatives Standing Committee 2004). This has the effect of increasing the apparent benefits of school. The use of networks in the community is less developed and less widespread than in New Zealand; however, an analysis of policy development does show the employment of networks. The Australians are cautious on social capital issues.

The Australian experience indicates the relationships between the goals of being educated and the motivation to be involved in the process of being educated. Where there is development in the community (higher capacity) there is a tangible reward or return for the work of going to school. Where there are no opportunities for work or societal involvement, the rewards are unclear and involvement in the educational process diminishes.

Canada

The last set of examples we will cover are from Canada. This section is broken into two parts as we want to look at examples from National program and policy, delivered under the auspices of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), and some provincial examples.[4]

National Policies in Canada

INAC operates two major sets of programs. First, The Elementary/Secondary Education National Program aims to "provide eligible students living on reserve with elementary and secondary education comparable to that required in provincial schools ... where the reserve is located" (INAC 2003a, 3). Funding is transferred to a variety of deliverers that can include the Bands (communities) themselves, the provincial school boards if they are delivering the services, or federal schools maintained by the government. INAC outlines the expenditures acceptable for funding. Second, the Post-Secondary Education Program's objective is to "improve the employability of First Nations people and Inuit by providing

eligible students ... access to education and skill development opportunities at the post-secondary level" (INAC 2003b, 3). Moreover, this program aims to increase participation in post-secondary studies, post-secondary graduation rates, and employment rates (ibid).

Canada launched a review in 2002 to identify and address the factors of a quality First Nations education (INAC 2002). Several initiatives have been started in the past few years, but more time will have to elapse before we can evaluate these initiatives. However, we can see that many of these initiatives parallel those that have been successful in other countries.

Provincial Initiatives

There are many policies and programs across the country affecting Aboriginal people that are aimed at enhancing their educational and labour market outcomes. We look at only a few illustrative examples in British Columbia, where the work that has been done is quite extensive.

The Best Practices Project by the First Nation Schools Association and First Nations Education Steering Committee of British Columbia (1997) is a very successful initiative. For example, the First Nations Role Model Program in School District 52 (Prince Rupert) involves the use of very successful First Nations role models in the classroom. The goal is to promote awareness of First Nations cultures and issues for all students and teachers, while promoting self-esteem and pride in cultural heritage. There is a benefit to the school and students as the mentor links the students to the resources of the outside world, and they substitute for the low educational norm context of the parental networks. Not only can the mentor's resources be potentially drawn upon, but they establish a relationship that is grounded in a culturally familiar context. The provision of a higher norm model substitutes for lower attainment levels in the child's bonding capital group (family) while fostering openness. The key is not building bonding social capital, which can reinforce low attainment (scenario 2).

The Summer Science and Technology Camps Initiative, funded by INAC and coordinated by the First Nations Education Steering Committee, targets First Nations youth to engage them in science and technology issues, and expose them to the numerous education and career opportunities available. The program includes local elders and other community members through the process of having First Nations communities and organizations develop the initiatives in accordance with their local priorities. Through partnerships with institutions outside of the community, such as BC Hydro, BC Gas, Ministries of Fisheries and Forestry, Science World BC, and the University of British Columbia, the reason for education becomes clear. In a way, this initiative connects the students directly to the job market, and makes education seem to have a purpose. In that respect, it plays the role that higher levels of community capacity and development would play. This is an illustration of what the Australians are arguing, concerning the need for resource-rich environments for social capital to operate. As well, links

are forged between the communities (children) and resource-rich institutions. The immediate effects are increased interest in science subjects, and the long-term establishment of relations between the community and the labor force.

Policy and Program Implications

As we developed Parts I and II above we drew some tentative linkages between the policy and program initiatives, and the four elements that we feel interact to enhance success generally and optimize social capital based initiatives particularly. We can draw some more general conclusions in this section, and push a little deeper into how we can approach the critical issue of Aboriginal educational attainment. Policy and program success seems highly sensitive to context.

In New Zealand where the Maori are a large proportion of the population, we find well-developed programs to build educational attainment levels. They are also based most closely on a homegrown, culturally specific notion of social capital. As we noted, New Zealand has determined that social capital is only created in the communities at the family level. Given that the families and sub-clans all have high-bonding social capital levels, and that the higher tribal organizations are built on this social capital base, any bridging or linking that is going to take place must be rooted in the core family networks. They have a restricted yet functional view of using social capital, where the high levels of bonding social capital must be shaped and utilized in the wider institutions to promote the norms of external networks. We saw for example that the programs began at the preschool with the families running the preschool, which changed attitudes towards schooling. Parents (the whanau) became involved in preparing children for school, which was often done in the school setting, by passing school skills onto them. It is through this process that the school system becomes a part of the family. The school networks, including teachers, principals, etc., became "known" and began to "share a history" with the Maori while developing "knowledge of the customs and norms." This process allowed the whanau to be bridged and linked to the educational institutions, which precipitated the flow of the bridged and linked resources. The policy aimed at creating a context of cultural openness in this case.

Openness can be created in two ways. First, one can transform aspects of the cultural norms of the target populations, although this is the most difficult and runs the risk of being seen as assimilationist. A second approach is to make sure the program is delivered in a way that is not challenging to the Aboriginal culture, using the ways of the people to the greatest possible degree. This has the effect of making the institution, such as a school, more like the people and less "outside." A closed cultural context is one that has two approaches that are culturally distant. Narrowing the gap through the introduction of Aboriginal language, community elder participation, and using the forums that are acceptable (e.g., the hui in New Zealand) helps create a more open context.

Specific policies and programs across our three countries all reinforce the importance of this condition being fulfilled. Many have aspects of their programs tailored, albeit often unconsciously, to reinforce openness. This process is clearly seen in initiatives such as "Teaching the Teachers" which teaches Aboriginal culture as well as programs that integrate community cultural leaders and make use of family and Elders.

The Australians have a greater focus on economic development as a necessary condition for improving educational attainment. They are generally more skeptical of the concept noting that the high levels of bonding social capital combined with poor norms around schooling reinforce non-attainment. Australia seeks a more step-wise process to improving educational attainment where the key is community development and improved community capacity. Having access to jobs enables citizens to understand the utility of education. Also, this strategy retains those with human capital in communities, which in turn provides better norm models. Recall, Queensland had a problem with school attendance and developed a program to have buses drive to each student's house every morning to take them to school. The result was poor because the parents would not wake the kids if they were sleeping. Attendance, leading to graduation, leading to jobs was the needed understanding. The successful programs have developed partnerships with the business community, creating job opportunities. These partnerships around the country link industry and community interests, giving meaning to educational attainment. They created the integration of the family bonding capital networks with the resources that made education more important. In these cases it was the building of community capacity that was key, and the other elements, while important, needed to be less prominent. Building social capital at the community level (bonding) was of little importance, and may have been detrimental in the absence of economic development given the low educational norms.

Using our framework, and incorporating the Australian experience, we might argue, given our examination of initiatives, that in the unsuccessful programs, the parents were not easily involved because they had little understanding of the importance of schooling, given their low educational attainment. Given the low community capacity in terms of economic development, the purpose for supporting the schools and promoting higher educational attainment for the children was unclear to both the community and the students. The more successful programs were, indeed, linked to job paths.

In Canada, at the federal level, some of the recent initiatives that have been started in the past few years parallel initiatives that have been successful in other countries. These initiatives have not had sufficient time to develop and evaluate at this stage. The provinces have developed programs that address specific local needs. The provincial programs that are most successful target the specific problem associated with our model. For example, in the Science and Technology Camps, the inclusion of local elders and other community members as teachers led to the First Nations communities and organizations developing the initiatives in

accordance with their cultures; consequently, family networks were bolstered by having adult participants that came back and encouraged support for education. In the case of the First Nations Role Model Program, the mentors substituted for the low educational norm context of the parental networks. Other initiatives examined but not reported showed similar patterns.

In conclusion, we would argue that understanding social capital is important in promoting educational attainment. However, it has a moderate influence, and rarely acts alone. It influences outcomes for Aboriginal educational attainment in conjunction with other resources (human and economic/physical capital). It is contingent on the context and this can be assessed by using the four elements we have discussed throughout our paper. We have argued the following:

1. It is key to identify the specific context and interrelation of the four identified elements, and address programming toward the specificity of the situation. Just building social capital would rarely be the most effective strategy. Where communities, families, and clans face grave social problems and have low bonding social capital, then it is appropriate to build that resource. It could, however, under certain conditions, be the wrong strategy.

2. Where there are very low educational norms in the child's networks, reinforcing social capital in those networks is the wrong approach. It will reinforce low norms and non-attainment strategies. Substituting higher norm roles is one strategy for overcoming this problem; however, that involves bridging and linking to the child and their networks, which depends on the appropriateness of strategies and the degree of openness of communities to outsiders.

3. The ability to engage children depends on how open their communities are. Schools, ministries of education, federal departments, and teachers will have to depend on the target groups having accepted or incorporated aspects of the dominant culture and goals in order to connect with their programs and resources; or the dominant culture and its institutions can adopt, and adapt to, the Aboriginal minority culture, and create an openness context to connect in that manner. Such adaptation must be context specific. However, even where connections can take place, there is no guarantee of any "buy-in" to goals of educational attainment.

4. Enthusiasm for education is linked to seeing a purpose for the effort. This point is key particularly where past experience has been negative for the parents. For example, residential schooling in Canada and Australia created a legacy of mistrust and anger among Aboriginal peoples. The key to providing purpose is related to the development of community or related capacity.

Future Research

The development of a better understanding of the interrelationship between the four identified elements is the next step. This should involve two separate processes. First, the development of methods to measure the different elements will allow us to produce useful diagnostic tools. The second process is to develop a simple planning tool that gives its user a way to draw conclusions about the relative problems across the four dimensions: levels of social capital, norms effects, cultural openness, and community capacity. The planning tool could be a crude guide to assess existing programs, diagnose problems, and design improvements.

Endnotes

1   This is a revised version of a paper originally published in the Policy Research Initiative's *Social Capital Thematic Studies Book* in 2005.

2   Whanau is family, hapu is sub clan, and iwi is tribe.

3   "The programs involved Education Enrichment Centres where students can study after school, with supervision and support. Homework and individual tutoring was undertaken. The centres were set up with educational resources including computers with internet access ... Students were assigned a school-based mentor ... who also worked on well-being. Extracurricular activities could be arranged to develop confidence and abilities including ... visits to industry ... and cultural awareness camps ..."(Western Australia Department of Education n.d.)

4   In Canada education falls under provincial jurisdiction in the Constitution. However, note that INAC funds basic elementary and secondary education for the 120,000 students who live on-reserve (INAC 2004). The federal government also provides funding that supports roughly 26,000 First Nation and Inuit students in post-secondary education each year. About 4,000 of these students graduate annually (ibid).

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