



## How Children Use their Relationships to Succeed?

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### Abstract

Why do some students perform well and succeed, in spite of unfavourable conditions? From this apparent paradox, I conducted the present PhD research, focusing on the social and environmental factors contributing to school resilience. The central assumption is that social relationships “count”, that they can compensate with distributive, cultural and symbolical inequalities, helping students get through educational problems. The main objective is to understand how students use their relationships when facing educational problems, in order to better define and target the interventions in their environment (school-family-community-pairs).

The theoretical framework is dual: structuration theory (Giddens, 1987) lays the foundation for the framework for action; symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969) provides access to the different meanings given by students. The method is a 3-year ethnography and includes participant observation, formal and informal interviews (Woods, 1992). It takes place in a local youth center inside a secondary school in an impoverished multiethnic neighborhood in Montreal, Canada.

More specifically, this presentation will focus on the diverse relationships secondary students use when they face problems at school. From empirical evidence, I will bring out practical keys for understanding the multiple processes behind the actuation (or non-actuation) of a specific relationship, taking into account the roles of the main actors. From theories, I will examine and confront the different ways of studying such a dynamic and interactive process, taking care to highlight the advantages and limits of each theoretical concept.

### References

- [1] Woods, P. (1992). *L'ethnographie de l'école*. Paris : Armand Colin.
- [2] Giddens A. (1987). *La constitution de la société*, Paris : PUF.
- [3] Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic Interactionism; Perspective and Method*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ : Prentice- Hall.