

**INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIES AND FACTORS
THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE ENGAGEMENT
OF
RECENT IMMIGRANT ADULT STUDENTS
IN
ONTARIO POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION**

BY

SHELDON VAUGHN RICHARD GRABKE

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to provide a unique investigation that yields vital data on barriers experienced by recent immigrant adult students (RIAS), the policies, practices and supports in PSE and their impact on RIAS engagement, and factors that contribute to the engagement of RIAS in Ontario PSE. This examination contributes to and furthers the student engagement in PSE literature by providing an original view into RIAS engagement in PSE. This dissertation involves qualitative and quantitative research methods including 18 key informant interviews, six focus groups, one interview and 434 survey responses as well as historical data, policies, procedures and artifacts at colleges and universities in Ontario. These different methodological attributes bring triangulation of sources and methods into the study. All of the data is analyzed using the student engagement conceptual framework. This study finds that PSE in Ontario seems to know little of the number, type, experiences and engagement of RIAS on campus. This research argues how and why the traditional model of engagement does not apply well to RIAS. Key findings include that RIAS are performing well academically in PSE despite the numerous barriers that they face and their lack of engagement. RIAS strong motivation to complete PSE and their inherent optimism is such that many persist to completion. One fundamental factor contributing to the lack of engagement for RIAS is their minimal social involvement in PSE. Using the findings, this dissertation provides numerous recommendations for changes to institutional policies and procedures to further RIAS engagement. Both academic and social engagement of RIAS in PSE significantly predict the hallmarks of a liberal education. This is a noteworthy reason for PSE to make an investment in the engagement of RIAS in Ontario PSE. This study therefore has implications for theory and practice in PSE in Ontario. Through developing creative ways to remove barriers and augment supports for RIAS in PSE, RIAS may begin to be more engaged in PSE. This noble endeavour can help RIAS more fully develop into engaged citizens and truly assist them in their settlement experience in Ontario.

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Examination Committee Members:

1. Paul Axelrod
2. Theresa Shanahan
3. Paul Anisef
4. Glen Jones
5. David Leyton-Brown
6. Roopa Desai-Trilokekar

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Chapter I – Introduction

This dissertation is a study of the institutional factors and strategies that contribute to the effective engagement of recent immigrant adult students (RIAS) who choose to study in Ontario post-secondary education (PSE). The purpose of this study is to provide a unique investigation that yields vital data on barriers experienced by RIAS, the policies, practices and supports in PSE and their impact on RIAS engagement, and factors that contribute to the engagement of RIAS in Ontario PSE. This initial chapter is an introduction to the study beginning with a background to the research followed by a statement of the problem, purpose of the study and overview of the methodology employed in the research including the identification of the research questions. Next is a list of the objectives of this project and highlighting of the operational definitions of key terms used in the inquiry. This is followed by a brief discussion of the importance and benefits of the study and a look into the scope of the research. The chapter ends with an outline of the dissertation and concluding remarks.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Canada is often portrayed as “a nation of immigrants” (Omidvar & Richmond, 2003, p. 21). The Canadian population is getting older due to the aging of the large baby boomer generation and consistently low fertility rates (Foot, 1998). Hence, much of Canada’s current and future population increase stems from immigration. Several new immigrant populations in Canada are visible racial minorities. Many recent immigrants’ hopes of starting a better life in Canada are quickly dashed by obstacles prohibiting them from entering the job market. Often the attributes that contribute to immigrants being able to land in Canada, such as their foreign work experience, overseas educational credentials, and English competencies, are the very elements that are discounted by Canada’s employers.

In order to integrate into the Canadian job market, many immigrants therefore enter the post-secondary education (PSE) stream in an attempt to obtain Canadian credentials, develop networks within the Canadian economy, improve their proficiency in English and even gain some Canadian work experience through internships, co-op placements and/or apprenticeship opportunities. Much of the

“success of the Knowledge Based Economy (KBE) is expected to depend on the economic integration of immigrant racial minorities” (Anisef, Sweet & Frempong, 2003, p. 499).

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Recent immigrants who often are highly educated seek to stem the apparent discounting of their foreign work experience, non-Canadian credentials and English proficiency by employers and therefore RIAs may enter Ontario PSE. Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC) data indicates that of the recent immigrant adults who enter Canada, 40 percent intend to enter PSE, 28 percent wish to pursue language training and 25 percent aim to improve their trade and work-related skills (Anisef et al., 2009). Therefore, we know that there is a considerable proportion of immigrants entering PSE in Canada.

Not all immigrants, though, enroll in Canadian higher education. Duleep and Regrets (1999) found that immigrants tend to invest in human capital in their new host country if the cost of investment is lower than the return on investment using the immigrant human capital investment model. The literature supports the argument that immigrants who are highly educated (whose studies helped them develop very specific non-transferable skills), who have a lack of background in English, who come from economically developing countries, and/or who are unlikely to return to their previous home country are most likely to enroll in Canadian post-secondary education.

While many traditional students enter PSE directly out of high school, recent immigrant adults are already quite highly educated upon arrival in Canada. They are usually older than the traditional Canadian university and college student and therefore for the purposes of this study are considered adult students. There is an underlying problem that is unaddressed in the literature. While there is a growing body of literature on the barriers that recent immigrant adult students (RIAs) face in PSE in North America (Chau, 2012; ACCC, 2011; Casner-Lotto, 2011; Adamuti-Trache, 2010; Finnie, Childs & Wismer, 2010a; Finnie, Childs & Wismer, 2010b; Gildersleeve, 2010; Girard, 2010; Ontario Fairness Commissioner, 2010; Stebleton, 2010; Sweet et al., 2010; Alfred, 2009; Anisef et al., 2009; Grayson, 2009; Kim, 2009; Chambers et al., 2008; Educational Policy Institute, 2008; Grabke & Anisef, 2008; Alboim & Cohl, 2007; Erisman & Looney, 2007; Pilote & Benabdeljalil, 2007; Rubenson, 2007; Wayland, 2006; Zarate &

Pachon, 2006; Aydemir & Skuterud, 2004; Ferrer & Riddell, 2003; Lapierre & Loslier, 2003; Kilbride & D'Arcangelo, 2002; Szelényi and Chang, 2002; Reitz, 2001; Thompson, 2000; Brouwer, 1999; Gray, Rolph & Melamid, 1996; Cumming et al., 1989), there is no substantial research on the factors that result in the effective engagement of RIAS in Ontario PSE. The access, persistence and completion barriers identified in the above literature are as follows: lack of English language proficiency, foreign credential evaluation, financial issues, lack of information about PSE, financial aid, admissions policies and practices, family responsibilities, program irrelevance to student need, location and timing of program delivery, academic and social issues, acclimating to a new culture, lack of academic assistance, settlement issues, dissatisfaction with instruction, understanding Canadian culture and customs, and overcoming racial barriers. Given that recent immigrant adults enter Ontario colleges and universities, and likely face numerous obstacles in PSE as identified in the literature, we do not have a clear and comprehensive idea of the type and magnitude of barriers that RIAS face in Ontario higher education and how these differ from barriers faced by traditional students.

We do not know how well RIAS are performing academically and do not know the extent of their engagement in these institutions. It is not clear if RIAS succeed in PSE despite a perceived lack of social integration and engagement and if they would be even more successful in PSE if they were more socially integrated and effectively engaged. We do not know how responsive these institutions are to RIAS' unique needs and do not understand the factors that contribute to the engagement of RIAS in Ontario PSE.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The intent of this project is to advance the research on the responsiveness of Ontario post-secondary education to recent immigrant adult students as well as identify the factors that contribute to the engagement of RIAS in Ontario PSE. This study aims to ascertain, what, if any barriers RIAS face in Ontario PSE, the nature and extent of those barriers, and the institutional strategies that may assist in engaging RIAS. In achieving this purpose, this dissertation builds upon and furthers the research of two funded studies and intricately linked research projects. The first was a study of post-secondary institutional

responses to RIAS. The second was an examination of the engagement of RIAS in Ontario colleges and universities.

The first funded study was entitled the Economic Adjustment of Adult Immigrants and the Role of Educational Institutions. This project was funded by the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) and sponsored by York University. In the larger project, the co-investigators included Paul Anisef and Lucia Lo at York University, Robert Sweet at Lakehead University, David Walters at the University of Guelph and Maria Adamuti-Trache at the University of British Columbia. The initial portion of this larger funded research project was a quantitative analysis of the Longitudinal Study of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC) where they conducted a detailed examination of the educational and training choices of adult immigrants, six months and then two years after their arrival in Canada. Following on the initial quantitative research and using some of the interviews that I conducted as part of this CCL grant, the first part of this dissertation is a qualitative study that seeks to understand how post-secondary institutions are responding to the growing number of RIAS. This portion of my research involves key informant interviews with administrators within three Ontario universities and two Ontario colleges. In the dissertation, I significantly depart from my work on the CCL grant in that I broaden and deepen the analysis of these key informant interviews and analyze them using a different conceptual framework (student engagement framework rather than social inclusion) and towards a vastly dissimilar purpose (student engagement rather than employment).

In order to validate the institutional responses to immigrants and to fully understand the factors that lead to the engagement of RIAS, it is critical to directly interview RIAS. The second funded study was titled Academic Engagement of Recent Immigrant Adult Students (RIAS) in Postsecondary Education: A Case Study of Ontario Colleges and Universities that was funded by the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) and sponsored by York University. The Principal Investigator in the project was Lillie Lum and Co-investigator was Sheldon Grabke. The broader project began with a quantitative research study in five Ontario post-secondary institutions, namely York University, Ryerson University, George Brown College, Centennial College and Seneca College. The total sample size was 434

undergraduate and college students. This \$108,395 funded project's overall objective was to examine academic engagement and involved a large quantitative survey and a qualitative analysis of a number of focus group sessions. While I use the qualitative focus group sessions, brief demographic inquiry and one more in-depth RIAS interview at four post-secondary institutions that I collected for the HEQCO project, I deepen the analysis of the qualitative material and created entirely new analysis of the quantitative data for the purposes of my dissertation. The institutions included York University, Ryerson University, George Brown College and Centennial College. My dissertation thus involved six focus groups spanning two universities and two colleges for a total of 46 focus group participants and one RIAS interview. It is important to note that the HEQCO study focused largely on academic engagement of RIAS but my dissertation is centered on the barriers RIAS face in Ontario PSE, their social and academic engagement in PSE and the institutional strategies that could help further engage RIAS in PSE.

OVERVIEW OF METHODOLOGY

The overall design of this study is a largely qualitative method comprised of key informant interviews as well as focus group sessions and quantitative survey analysis. I conducted a total of 18 key informant interviews for this study at five post-secondary institutions. In addition, six focus groups and one interview were also carried out at four post-secondary institutions and I analyzed some quantitative survey results specifically for this dissertation. I also gathered historical data, policies, procedures and artifacts for each of the institutions. After the development of the theoretical framework was completed, I analyzed all of this data for the dissertation using the student engagement conceptual framework. These varied methods bring triangulation into the study.

Research Questions

In identifying the fundamental problem and gaps in the literature, there is an essential question that has not been addressed. The original research question that remains to be addressed is the following:

- What institutional strategies result in the effective engagement of recent immigrant adult students who choose to participate in Ontario post-secondary education?

In order to adequately research this problem, there are four subsets of research questions that will help to adequately answer this fundamental question. These questions are:

1. What barriers to access, persistence and completion do recent immigrant adult students face in Ontario post-secondary institutions?
2. In what manner are Ontario post-secondary institutions responding to recent immigrant adult students?
3. What are the differing barriers to engagement of recent immigrant adult students in Ontario in comparison with barriers traditional students experience as identified in the literature?
4. What factors contribute to the engagement of recent immigrant adult students in Ontario post-secondary institutions?

Project Objectives

The objective of this dissertation is to determine the factors that contribute to the engagement of RIAS in Ontario colleges and universities. Framing the integration of RIAS into the Ontario post-secondary education system, this thesis approaches the discussion by utilizing a student engagement framework. The discussion hinges on the varying institutional responses to RIAS, the needs of and barriers faced by RIAS in Ontario PSE and the extent of RIAS engagement within these institutions, which directly affect RIAS integration into Canadian society and the Ontario economy.

Given the original research question, the dissertation project has five key objectives in order to address this problem. The specific *project objectives* include:

1. Identifying the barriers to access, persistence and completion of recent immigrant adult students (RIAS) within the social and academic contexts of the Ontario post-secondary education (PSE) system.
 - a. Determining the unique barriers that RIAS face within Ontario PSE institutions.
 - b. Identifying the differing barriers that RIAS face in comparison with barriers traditional students experience as identified in the literature.
2. Identifying and evaluating the nature and extent of institutional responsiveness to RIAS including services that may bridge barriers into and throughout PSE and RIAS awareness of institutional assistance.
 - a. Identifying the consistency between RIAS' identified need and institutional response to that need.
 - b. Determining the extent of institutional awareness of RIAS on campus, efforts to eliminate barriers to entry, persistence and completion and activities and services that engage RIAS.
3. Determining the demographic predictors of academic and social engagement of RIAS in PSE.
4. Describing what factors and/or institutional services improve the engagement of RIAS within PSE's academic and social environment.
5. Determining if academic or social engagement or both separately are an indicator of a liberal education for RIAS.

Operational Definition of Key Terms

Before undertaking the research, analysis and discussion, it is critical to have a clear understanding of the specific definitions of the key terms used in the dissertation. A glossary of key terms is located in Appendix A.

IMPORTANCE AND BENEFITS OF STUDY

While this dissertation addresses an original question that aims to fill a gap in the literature, it also contributes to post-secondary educational policy development. As Canada's population increase currently stems from the growth of immigration, the success of Canada's economy will also largely rely on the successful integration of immigrants into the labour force. Currently the very criteria that the Canadian government has set to help immigrants enter Canada (their foreign work experience, foreign education and English proficiency) is in a large part discounted by employers. Therefore, immigrants go to post-secondary educational institutions to obtain Canadian educational credentials, stronger English proficiency and Canadian work experience. Many RIAS attend PSE as a way to access the Canadian labour market and therefore as a pathway to economic integration. A successful PSE experience for RIAS including full engagement in and persistence through PSE is arguably necessary to help RIAS gain more robust access to the labour market. It also could help RIAS develop personally and exude some of the attributes and indicators of a liberal education. It is critical, therefore, to see how responsive post-secondary institutions are to immigrant needs and determine what factors help to engage RIAS in PSE. Relative barrier-free access to post-secondary institutions by RIAS could include recognizing RIAS foreign credentials, foreign work experience and level of English proficiency. For RIAS, persistence and completion within PSE could include barrier-free student services, supportive faculty, English as a second language support, linkages to employers and employment, academic engagement, social engagement and many other factors that can contribute to RIAS student engagement. It is important to note that just having more services does not necessarily mean that RIAS will be academically successful, increasingly satisfied or more apt to integrate into the social fabric of PSE and Ontario.

Employing a student engagement framework and mixed methods approach, the purpose of this multi-institutional project is to evaluate the responsiveness of Ontario post-secondary institutions in meeting the unique needs of RIAS, the knowledge and usage of student services by RIAS and whether these services and other aspects of the post-secondary student experience are engaging RIAS and promoting completion of RIAS studies. This dissertation will uncover the barriers RIAS face in PSE, how to mitigate these barriers, the supports that could help RIAS be engaged in PSE, how to deliver these supports, how to engage RIAS academically and socially in PSE, and if it is possible to engage RIAS more in PSE if this engagement will help them develop personally. This will contribute to a better understanding of the factors that contribute to the engagement of RIAS in these Ontario institutions. Increasing RIAS engagement in Ontario PSE arguably could help to increase RIAS integration in the institution's student body, encourage growth in their networking skills, help integrate RIAS in PSE, develop them personally and could assist in integrating RIAS into Canadian employment and society.

STUDY SCOPE

Limiting the scope of the study is integral to focus the findings, aid in distilling the thesis and help the adoption of policy recommendations through reducing the magnitude of the dissertation. In order to determine the factors that engage RIAS in PSE, one needs to locate a significantly large population of immigrants to study. The researcher is located in Toronto and the population of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) is highly diverse with numerous post-secondary institutions. After some initial study and inquiries with key informants in some GTA institutions, it was decided that the study could best be undertaken in post-secondary institutions in the GTA. By studying RIAS in Ontario post-secondary institutions, there is ability to study and interview a relatively large number of RIAS and key informants, which facilitates the analysis and should help inform the study.

OUTLINE OF DISSERTATION

Following this introductory chapter, the dissertation continues with a review of the background literature on immigrant labour market participation, theories of participation in adult education and settlement/barrier issues faced by RIAS. The third chapter is a discussion of the engagement of traditional,

adult and immigrant students. Next, the fourth chapter reviews the framework, research design and methodology employed in this research. The fifth chapter portrays the research findings involving the responsiveness of the three universities and two colleges to RIAS. Following is the sixth chapter that describes the research findings relating to the experience and engagement of RIAS in PSE. The seventh chapter involves a synthesis of the findings. A look at possible applications of the research findings, unanswered questions and areas for further research are located in the eighth chapter followed by the appendices and references.

CONCLUSION

In summary, this dissertation is comprised of an original research query into the institutional strategies that result in the effective engagement of recent immigrant adult students (RIAS) who participate in Ontario post-secondary education (PSE). This chapter presented an introduction to this research with a focus on the background to the research followed by a statement of the problem. Next was a review of the purpose of the dissertation, overview of the methodology employed in the study and initial presentation of the research questions. This was followed by the objectives of this project and operational definitions of key terms used in the research and analysis. Following was an identification of the importance and benefits of the study. Lastly was a description of the scope of the study and a depiction of the organization of the dissertation. Next, Chapter II comprises a review of the background literature utilized in this research project.

Chapter II – Background Literature Review

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I conduct a review of the pertinent literature on immigrant labour market participation, institutional response to RIAS and the barriers to access, persistence and completion of PSE by traditional, non-traditional and immigrant students. This background literature review sets the stage for the student engagement theoretical framework and main research questions that will follow in subsequent chapters.

Firstly, what follows is a summary of the broader reasons why immigrants migrate to Canada and an examination of the immigrant labour market participation literature with a focus on the reasons immigrants enter PSE. This involves a macro glance at Canada's immigrant population and policies, immigrant integration into the labour market and human capital theory. This section concludes with a look at the differences between international and immigrant students and the theories of participation in adult education. Given the increased number of immigrants attending post-secondary education, I will secondly review the literature regarding institutional responses to RIAS and the differing outcomes for university and college students. Third and lastly, I analyze the barriers to access, persistence and completion of PSE experienced by traditional, non-traditional and immigrant students.

REVIEW OF IMMIGRANT LABOUR MARKET PARTICIPATION LITERATURE

This summary of the immigrant labour market participation literature identifies the reasons why immigrants enter PSE in Ontario that paints the background to the student engagement theoretical framework employed in this dissertation.

Immigrant Migration to Canada

In discerning why immigrants enter PSE, it is important to first understand why people migrate to Canada. Individuals migrate to Canada primarily to seek a better future. That future usually begins with a better occupation than their former employment (Alfred, 2009). The face of immigration in Canada, though, has changed over the decades. Historically, immigrants have steadily populated Canada even before it became a nation in 1867. Immigration has played a key role in populating Canada with fluctuating

waves of immigration for the past 100 years. Immigration is important to Canada's population growth as since the baby boom, Canadians have had low fertility rates and as a result have an aging population (Foot, 1998).

Macro Glance at Canada's Immigrant Population

While Canada is the youngest country in the G8, it has the "oldest population in the Americas" (Statistics Canada, 07/17/2007, p. 2). Given this trend, within a decade Canada may have fewer youth entering the work force than those retiring (Statistics Canada, 07/17/2007). Most of the increase in Canada's population will come from the influx of recent immigrants and this is becoming critically important to Canada's economic well-being and success in the knowledge-based economy (Statistics Canada, 09/10/2007; Anisef, 2003). According to recent statistics, "population projections show that net immigration may become the only source of population growth by about 2030 and could account for virtually all net labour force growth" (Statistics Canada, 09/10/2007, p. 2). Research shows that the "proportion of immigrants in Canada increased from 15.7% in 1986 to 17.5% in 1996" (Anisef, 2003, p. 502) and 19.8% in 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2007).

In 1998, the number one source country for Canada was China. This is now followed closely by India (Shan, 2011). Both in Canada and the U.S., immigrants tended to gravitate to urban centres to work in factories or in construction (Gildersleeve, 2010). Historically, immigrants coming to Canada filled blue-collar jobs. Conversely, at present the largest groups of immigrants with strong credentials come to Canada from developing countries such as India and China wishing to work in the professions (Zweck, 2011). Traditionally men immigrated to Canada first with their spouses following later but now there are an increasing number of women immigrating. Many of these newcomers are strongly credentialed women, "economic immigrants, who actively seek labour market participation in the host society" (Shan, 2011, p. 353-354).

In 2008, 240,000 to 265,000 new immigrants landed in Canada (Mamann, 11/05/2007). The Immigration Minister acknowledged that "immigration will be a key source of labour growth in the future"

(Mamann, 11/05/2007) yet the number of Federal Skilled Workers¹ dropped in 2007. Thus Citizenship and Immigration Canada created a “Canadian Experience Class², which allows up to 12,000 individuals with Canadian skilled work experience, or with a combination of Canadian work and studies, to apply for permanent residence from within Canada” (Mamann, 11/05/2007, p. 1). While Canada still allows many new professionally skilled people to immigrate, this policy shift increased the number of foreign students and workers who already reside in Canada to be eligible to become new immigrants (Mamann, 11/05/2007).

Canada’s Immigration Policies

Ideally Canadian immigration policy allows for immigrants to be acculturated into Canadian society through workforce integration (Zweck, 2011, p. 11). In theory, this strategy gives immigrants the opportunity to retain their cultural and social identities while adapting to a new life in Canada. It allows immigrants to use their prior educational credentials and work experience in Canada to benefit the new immigrants and the Canadian economy (Zweck, 2011). Unfortunately, this is only true in theory and not in practice. After being in Canada for four years, 22% of immigrants who participated in the LSIC indicate that the most important reason why they dislike Canada is their lack of employment opportunities (Adamuti-Trache, 2010). This number would likely be higher if one included immigrants who left Canada.

Therefore, even though Canadian immigration policy attracts strongly credentialed immigrants with good foreign work experience and relatively strong English proficiency, these migrants face economic and social barriers to the Canadian workforce. Ironically the very attributes of these immigrants, their strong work experience, English proficiency and excellent credentials that are valued by Canadian immigration policy allowing them to migrate to Canada, are frequently discounted by a number of Canadian employers (Adamuti-Trache and Sweet 2010; Adamuti-Trache, 2010).

¹ Federal Skilled Workers include people who seek permanent residence in Canada and have skills, education and work experience that will allow them to quickly gain employment in Canada and contribute to the Canadian economy (Citizenship & Immigration Canada, www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/applications/guides/ESap.asp).

² The Canadian Experience Class was an initiative that began in 2008 that allows “skilled temporary foreign workers and international students with Canadian degrees and work experience to apply for permanent resident status without having to leave Canada” (Citizenship & Immigration Canada, www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/media/backgrounders/2008/2008-03-28.asp). This was announced in the 2007 budget as a new immigration stream. Utilizing this new method of immigration, Canada hoped to attract and retain skilled, educated and talented people who can integrate into the Canadian economy and allow them to apply for permanent resident status while residing within Canada.

While globalization has increased the international flow of people and ideas, assimilation can be quite difficult. When immigrants land in North America, they can still keep strong connections with their ethnic community in their country of origin as well as in their new city. Anderson from Columbia University recently stated that “you can theoretically import labor, but you are much less sure to integrate these people than in the past” (Bennhold, 01/25/2007, p.3).

Immigrant Integration into the Canadian Labour Market

The future success of the Canadian economy will depend on the full integration of immigrants into the workforce. While immigrants entering Canada hope for a good job and a better life, these aspirations quickly dissipate. According to 2000-2001 data, 44% of new immigrants found work within six months of arriving in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2003a). Approximately 80% of immigrants between the ages of 25 and 44 have found at least one job in their first two years in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2003b). Only a mere 42% of immigrants found a job in their area of expertise within the first two years of their arrival (Adamuti-Trache, 2010). Among the new skilled worker immigrants between the ages of 25 and 44, the number jumps to 90% who found employment in their first two years in Canada and 48% of these immigrants found a job in their field of expertise (Anisef et. al, 2009).

Yet a recent OECD (2011) study found that a significant number of immigrants in Canada “do not have the literacy skills required in their jobs” (p. 276). Shan (2011) stated that “despite their higher credentials, skilled immigrants from developing countries find themselves largely under- and unemployed within Canada” (p. 354). English proficiency is critical to employment as adults in Canada “with higher prose skills are on average 1.2 to 1.5 times more likely to have secured full-time employment” (OECD, 2011, p. 80) than immigrants with lower English proficiency. Numerous barriers exist in integrating immigrants into the Canadian labour market.

Immigrant Lack of Earnings, Employment and Labour Market Integration

The Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC) data indicated that immigrants face numerous barriers in integrating into the Canadian labour market. Many immigrants are still developing human and/or social capital skills and face the following barriers: employers’ lack of recognition of foreign

credentials, language proficiency, education, Canadian work experience and occupational training (Shan, 2011; Adamuti-Trache & Sweet, 2007; Statistics Canada, 09/10/2007; Statistics Canada, 2003). A recent ACCC report (2011) found that “challenges with language proficiency in English or French are one of the biggest barriers that prevent immigrants from accessing meaningful employment in their occupations of choice” (p. 2). These issues also negatively affect their compensation in the Canadian labour market.

Anisef, Sweet and Frempong (2003) found that the earnings of visible minority immigrants are disproportionate to their education level. Bonikowska, Green, and Riddell (2008) found that the literacy skills of immigrants “can explain the entire wage gap for high school-educated immigrants, university-educated women, and about half of the gap for university-educated men” (Desjardins & Cornelson, 2011, p. 4). Anisef et al. (2003) firstly observed that the Canadian labour market discounts the foreign credentials of immigrants. Secondly, Anisef et al.’s (2003) research found that participation rates and earnings rose sharply for immigrants who are fluent in English or French. CIC noted in 2010 that over 257,000 immigrants undertook public language training (Desjardins & Cornelson, 2011). Thirdly, immigrants who lack Canadian work experience have difficulty gaining employment in Canada (Anisef et al., 2003). The Labour Force Survey highlighted, though, that the earnings gap narrows for immigrants the longer they remain in Canada (Statistics Canada, 09/10/2007; Anisef et al., 2003).

Many researchers have further discussed the limited earnings of immigrants (Desjardins & Cornelson, 2011; Ontario Fairness Commissioner, 2010; Anisef et al., 2009; Aydemir & Skuterud, 2004; Galarneau & Morissette, 2004). Girard (2010) also found that immigrants who find employment do not obtain increases in their pay likely “because they are probably still in school four years after arrival” (p. 95). The Ontario Fairness Commissioner (2010) also argued that it takes considerably longer for immigrants trying to get a professional license in Canada because many regulators expect Canadian work experience and often Canadian training or credentials.

Human Capital Theory

Canadian employers seem to discount the amount and type of human capital that immigrants have accumulated. Human capital, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), is the “knowledge, skills and competencies and other attributes embodied in individuals that are

relevant to economic activity” (OECD, 1998 as cited in Grayson, 2004, p. 610). Human capital theory essentially is the common belief that stronger education leads to stronger earnings (Becker, 1993). This theory, though, does not account for the effect of other forms of capital such as social capital and also the effect of a lack of a social network on employment and earnings (Adamuti-Trache, 2010). Canadian post-secondary education tends to help immigrants obtain employment and, at times, increase their position in the labour market (Shan, 2011; Adamuti-Trache and Sweet 2005; Sweetman and McBride 2004). Therefore, immigrants quickly see that entering post-secondary education soon after coming to Canada can help them overcome many of these barriers to employment (Adamuti-Trache, 2010).

Concurring with Anisef (2003), Grayson (2004) found that “measures of cultural capital, parental income, being male and having South Asian origins have statistically significant effects on graduates’ incomes, net of the effects of human capital acquired in university and social capital as measured in terms of potential job connections” (p. 624). Immigrants often accept work that is not related to their foreign credentials and foreign work experience (Adamuti-Trache, 2011; Girard, 2010; Ontario Fairness Commissioner, 2010; Galarneau & Morissette, 2004). They are overqualified for and underpaid in their jobs. Desjardins and Cornelson (2011) state that “there could be room to improve on immigrant outcomes through more extensive language training, faster credential recognition, or other integration initiatives” (p. 1).

Credentials and Immigrant Labour Market Integration

New immigrants to Canada are more highly educated than Canadian-born people and yet they have a higher unemployment rate. Statistics from 2006 showed that of immigrants aged 25 to 54, 36% have at least an undergraduate degree, while only 22% of Canadian-born people have the same level of education (Statistics Canada, 09/10/2007). According to a Statistics Canada (09/10/2007) study,

the unemployment rate in 2006 among the very recently landed who had bachelor's degrees was 11.4%, four times the rate of only 2.9% for Canadian-born workers who were university-educated. Similarly, the unemployment rate for those very recent newcomers who had a graduate degree was 12.4%, compared with only 2.4% for their Canadian-born counterparts. (p. 2)

Adamuti-Trache (2011) further found that the “proportion of immigrants arriving with a university degree increased from 10% in 1980 to 18% in 1990 and to 44% in 2000 (Statistics Canada, 2005)”

(Adamuti-Trache, 2011, p. 62). Integration into the Canadian labour market is difficult for older immigrants and significantly more difficult for racial minority adult immigrants. One can agree that the “labour market is neither colour-blind nor gender-neutral” (Anisef et al., 2003, p. 500). Li (2001) argued that some immigrant earnings are less not because they have lower human capital but because of “lower market value being attached to immigrants’ educational qualifications that are potentially equivalent or comparable to those of [Canadian-born]” (p. 23). Yet, industry and government view Canadian post-secondary education in the knowledge-based economy as a method to increase knowledge and competitiveness in our global economy (Grayson, 2004; Anisef et al, 2003; Lin, Sweet & Anisef, 2003; HRDC, 2002; Finnie, 2000). To summarize, it likely is “the ‘origin of education’ that seems to matter for the valuation of foreign education (Adamuti-Trache & Sweet, 2005 p. 191).

Younger immigrants who obtain Canadian credentials fare better than adult immigrants with foreign credentials (Anisef et al., 2003). While visible minority immigrants face considerable disadvantage in the job market, this “disadvantage...declined over time with assimilation” (Anisef et al., 2003, p. 503). Immigrants face a need to be enculturated into the Canadian labour market and this ethnic integration may increase their Canadian cultural and social capital (Grayson, 2004; Anisef et al., 2003). Another study concurred that the “Canadian immigrant experience involves the interplay between structural constraints and agency to shape individualized pathways” (Adamuti-Trache, 2010, p. 61). Immigrants who come from a professional background face barriers in Canada’s assessment of their foreign credentials (Adamuti-Trache, 2011; Reitz, 2001) and this deficit is not overcome by their foreign work experience or any form of prior learning assessment.

This lack of foreign credential recognition and deficiency in acknowledging foreign work experience has a substantial negative economic impact. According to the Conference Board of Canada (CBOC), Canada has lost over \$2.3 billion due to our inability to integrate immigrants into the Canadian workforce (Zweck, 2011). This number virtually doubles to an estimated loss of between \$4.1 billion to \$5.9 billion due to the lack of credential recognition of immigrants (CBOC, 2001). This substantial loss comes from the “lower motivation and community participation, reduced health status and increased social deviance and conflict” (Zweck, 2011, p. 11) experienced by our un-integrated immigrants. In order to

overcome these barriers, immigrants feel forced to enter formal education and training to “validate, recycle, enrich or change their occupational profiles” (Anisef et al., 2009, p. 19).

Many Immigrants Enter Post-Secondary Education

Since a number of Canadian employment recruiters do not highly value foreign credentials and experience (Aydemir & Skuterud, 2004; Anisef, Sweet and Frempong, 2003; Thompson, 2000), many immigrants who lack full or adequate employment try to gain Canadian higher education qualifications (Adamuti-Trache & Sweet, 2007). Many immigrants enter PSE as they believe that having Canadian post-secondary credentials, stronger English proficiency and some Canadian work experience through practicum or internships will increase their access to the Canadian labour market and more quickly merit promotion (Adamuti-Trache & Sweet, 2005; Sweetman & McBride, 2004). Immigrants with stronger educational backgrounds tend to continue their studies in Canada in order to gain Canadian credentials in their profession. A number of immigrants, though, do not always continue to study in the area of their prior professions. Immigrants may focus on educational programs ranging from basic applied study to more advanced professional degrees (Alfred, 2009).

Immigrants, though, are convinced that an investment of time and money in higher education will be financially rewarded after re-entry into the Canadian labour market (Li, 2003; Anisef et al., 2003; Reitz, 1998). Ann Buller, President of Centennial College, commented that immigrants with foreign education still come to college to help them “get a foot in the Canadian door” (Crawford, 08/25/2007, p.2). In addition to attending PSE, immigrant women, in particular, seek out a practicum as part of their studies as this directly exposes them to Canadian workplace habits (Shan, 2011). However, the fact remains that while immigrants may choose Canadian PSE, the entry path to the Canadian job market is not clear or barrier-free (Anisef et al., 2003). According to Bauder (2003), “Canadian professional organizations – supported by federal and provincial legislation – enforce the reproduction of their own members through the differential treatment of foreign and Canadian-educated workers” (p.702) and a recent Ontario Fairness Commissioners Report (2010) concurs. Immigrants are responding to the perceived devaluation of their institutionalized cultural capital that is not wholly recognized in Canada (Anisef et al., 2009).

A Statistics Canada (2005) report indicated that “at the time of arrival, approximately two-thirds of new immigrants interviewed had plans to take education or training” (p.46), and within 6 months after arrival, over 20% of immigrants enrolled in education leading to a degree or diploma, about 10% in job-related training, over 60% in English language courses and about 10% in French courses (Ibid.). In a recent study, Anisef et al. (2009) wrote that the “primary motivation for immigrants to engage in further study in Canada is economic...[and]...previous higher education appears to dispose immigrants to seek further education as an effective strategy for economic and social advancement” (p. i). Girard (2010) also argued that “immigrants with credentials from countries with a low HDI are more likely to enrol in an educational program, as their degrees may be less valued on the Canadian labour market [and] age is negatively correlated with enrolment” (p. 95).

Forty-six percent of new immigrants entered post-secondary education within 4 years of arriving in Canada and 11% of these immigrants began higher education within their first 6 months of arrival (Statistics Canada, 2005). Anisef et al. (2009) similarly reported that “within 2 years of landing some 33% [of immigrants] were enrolled and, by the 4th year, 44% had participated in either a college or university course or program” (p. i). Research indicates that the more education immigrants have completed, the more likely they are to participate in post-secondary education (Statistics Canada, 2003; Adamuti-Trache & Sweet, 2007). Likewise, the higher the level of English proficiency, the more likely an immigrant is to undertake further education. Age can often be the deciding factor for immigrants on whether to choose specific educational pathways as many older immigrants have weaker English proficiency (Adamuti-Trache, 2010; Anisef et al., 2008; Adamuti-Trache & Sweet, 2007; Statistics Canada, 2003). In addition, men are more likely than women to participate in post-secondary education. If an immigrant has children, he or she is also less likely to pursue further education (Statistics Canada, 2003; Adamuti-Trache & Sweet, 2007).

Sixty-eight percent of immigrants who plan on entering PSE in Canada already have a university degree and a further 15% have other non-university instruction (Statistics Canada, 2005). A large number of immigrants, and especially immigrants with foreign bachelor degrees, choose non-university education but “immigrants with foreign graduate degrees tend to engage in university education in Canada [and]

women are less likely than men to engage in PSE, especially at the university level” (Anisef et al., 2008, p.

11). Adamuti-Trache and Sweet (2007) noted the following:

rates of participation in post-secondary education are largely determined by immigrants' prior level of education, which suggests that newcomers use existing human capital (knowledge and skills) and cultural capital (dispositions toward learning) to create new forms of human capital (Canadian credentials) as a strategy to improve employment opportunities. (p. 0)

Anisef et al. (2008) further found that immigrants often pursue one of four different PSE pathways:

1. Recycling – those who seek further job-related education and training in the form of a credential in non-university institutions (e.g., community and career colleges, institutes, trade school)
2. Value Added – those who enrol in university to pursue a degree in same field
3. Starting Anew – those who seek a university degree in a different field
4. Non-participation – those with no education or non-PSE education or training...We found that all pathway groups as well as non-participants improve their employment status in Canada after arrival, but the level of improvement is lower for non-participants and those in the Recycling pathway group and higher for the two university pathway groups. (p. i)

In either continuing their educational path or embarking on a new career, immigrants inherently perceive that obtaining Canadian credentials will enhance their employment prospects. While there is limited research on immigrants continuing to build on their foreign credentials, studies show that immigrants who gain a Canadian education are better positioned in the Canadian labour market (Adamuti-Trache & Sweet, 2005; Sweetman & McBride, 2004).

Differences between International and Immigrant Students

It is vital to understand that international students come to Canada with the sole purpose of returning home with a completed Canadian credential whereas immigrants migrated to Canada to live, work and often raise a family (Statistics Canada, 2003). When educational institutions equate international and immigrant students, they render invisible the unique needs of both groups. Immigrants, though, share some attributes with adult students. It is important to note that Canadian educators often equate international and immigrant students, as they are visually indistinguishable. International student characteristics, though, differ substantially from immigrant student attributes. Most international students come to Canada or the U.S. with the sole purpose of obtaining a post secondary degree (Casner-Lotto, 2011; Lo et al., 2010; Erisman & Looney, 2007). While some international students may remain in Canada, this was not their original intention. On the other hand, immigrants are migrating to Canada to live, work and often raise a family. This holds true as well in the U.S.

The parents of international students who come to study in the U.S. are generally more highly educated than U.S. immigrant parents (U.S. Department of Education, 2004 as cited in Erisman & Looney, 2007). In the U.S., international students are overall more financially secure than immigrants. Scholars suggest, “the parents of international students are likely to hold high-status and well-paying jobs in their own countries, even if their income is low by U.S. standards” (Erisman & Looney, 2007, p. 26). This is further substantiated by the fact that international students pay 82% of their post-secondary tuition cost³ (Institute of International Education, 2006).

Undocumented students in the U.S. include any student who is an illegal resident, who does not have U.S. citizenship, a visa or a green card. Even though they do not have any documented status in the U.S., many post-secondary institutions treat them similarly to an immigrant. According to recent statistics, there are approximately 11.9 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S. in 2008 (Gildersleeve, 2010). In the U.S., undocumented students “are considered to be ‘under the radar’ or ‘in the shadows’ while living their lives in plain sight” (Gildersleeve, 2010, p. 24). These American findings regarding undocumented students are likely transferable to immigrants in Canada. Both undocumented students and Canadian immigrants tend to be invisible within a sea of international and racially diverse domestic students. Immigrants come from poorer and less-educated families and arguably carry lower social capital than international students (Erisman & Looney, 2007). Again, these U.S. based findings are likely transferable to Canada. By equating international with immigrant students, educational institutions render invisible the unique needs of both groups. While there are some visual similarities between international and immigrant students, their differences vary widely. Immigrant students in Canada, though, carry some similarities with adult students.

Theories of participation in Adult Education

There is ample research on adult participation in post-secondary education. Most of the research involves the barriers to participation in post-secondary education (Rubenson, 2007). The studies, though, rarely explicitly depict adult immigrant students. Yet, as immigrants in Canada are often adult students,

³ In most post-secondary institutions in North America, domestic (and in many American states only in-state students) students pay only a portion of the total cost of education while the remainder of the cost is subsidized by the government. International students, though, have to pay considerably more in tuition as their fees are not subsidized by the government.

focusing on the adult education literature is relevant to this literature review. In particular, the adult student literature is employed in this dissertation to further clarify the literature on traditional students and specifically to inform the unique barriers faced by immigrant students who are adults as well as their experience and engagement in PSE. The adult educational participation literature can be conceptually organized around three theories: rational choice theory, dispositional theory, and life course theory (Anisef et. al, 2009).

Rational Choice Theory

Rational choice theory has its origins in human capital theory. Economists often refer to human capital theory as the educational return on investment principle, where one could estimate the subjective value of educational credentials. Adherents to rational choice theory balance educational costs with potential revenue gains in the labour market. For adults, the costs involve tuition, books, transportation and lost employment revenue. The potential revenue gains can include higher pay, stronger job security, more senior positions and better working conditions. While this theory can be applied to RIAs, it does not account for the earning and employment gaps experienced across the gender, race and class divides (Anisef et al., 2009).

Dispositional Theory

Dispositional theory refers to adult student preferences and natural tendencies toward educational choices. This theory has its origins in cognitive attitude and motivational need theories (Anisef et al., 2009). For an adult student, choosing an educational goal is derived from their access to economic, cultural and social capital. In other words, the higher their economic, cultural and/or social positions the better their ability to be a post-secondary student and complete their studies. Despite an adult student's desire to enter a particular educational pathway, their social status and class may inhibit them from following this goal. This theory can also be applied to RIAs and takes into account earning and employment disparity across class partitions but not fully gender and race divides (Anisef et al., 2009).

Life Course Theory

Life course theory has its origins in Cross' (1981) Chain-of-Response (COR) model. The COR model identifies dispositional, situational and institutional factors that contribute to the individual student responses over their life course. These factors include family obligations, money, time, employment and

motivational attitudes. Accessing higher education involves numerous processes and decisions but participation “in the sociocultural sense is viewed as coconstructed [*sic*] by the social contexts, including one’s schooling, as well as more individualized, internal forces” (Gildersleeve, 2009, p. 21). Thus, through the course of an adult student’s life, they choose to participate or not to participate in higher education based upon the factors that they encounter (Anisef et al., 2009). Similarly, when this theory is applied to RIAS it can account for earning and employment gaps across the gender, race and class divides.

These theories help advance the understanding of adult and even some immigrant participation in higher education. Numerous studies demonstrate that a student, whose parents attended PSE, has a stronger participation and persistence rate than a first-generation college student. There also appears to be a link between a student’s engagement with the institution and their cultural history with the school (Gildersleeve, 2009). Researchers note that students who come from communities that have long-standing traditions of blue-collar work have minimal educational expectations and “their academic underachievement was reinforced by the teaching, learning, and labor practices to which they were subjected as children” (Gildersleeve, 2009, p. 20-21).

While these theories can account for some of the different participation levels demonstrated by RIAS in PSE, there are some exceptions such as older immigrants who have less education. Most immigrants who have strong credentials entering Canada are more likely to pursue higher levels of education in Canada. Immigrants entering PSE with business credentials and experience tend to have the lowest educational participation. These differences also vary by the immigrant’s region of origin and prior education level (Anisef et al., 2009).

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE TO RIAS LITERATURE

There is limited scholarly Canadian literature on the institutional response to RIAS in Canadian PSE (Adamuti-Trache & Sweet, 2007; Kilbride & D’Arcangelo, 2002). One Canadian study conducted by Kilbride and D’Arcangelo (2002) examined immigrant student needs at George Brown College. While this study focused on immigrant students of all ages, the researchers found that slightly more than half of the surveyed immigrant students arrived in Canada after high school. The study concluded that a majority of

immigrant students came to a community college as a way of assimilating into Canadian society (Kilbride & D’Arcangelo, 2002). While the sampling methodology in the study may have highlighted a higher than proportional number of student problems, the study findings are still valid. Kilbride and D’Arcangelo’s (2002) study listed the following issues faced by immigrant students: perceived low degree of support from the college, serious financial issues surrounding tuition fees (especially for refugees), “traumatic personal experiences” (p. 9), “socio-emotional needs or need for moral support” (p. 13), difficulty locating information on agency or government services and problems finding shelter (p. 15).

Kilbride and D’Arcangelo (2002) discovered many positive solutions to immigrant student needs. One powerful method that allows immigrants to cope well is to “refuse the role of outsider that is placed on [them by those]...who see them as foreign, reflecting a language and culture these more established youth may have in large part rejected” (p. 5). While they have immigrated to Canada and wish to establish roots here, it is not imperative that RIAS adopt Canadian culture as their own. Kilbride and D’Arcangelo (2002) argue that immigrants should be able to retain their own customs, culture and ways of knowing and doing. This change could help RIAS gain moral support and improve their socio-economic needs and traumatic personal experiences. The informal caring of teachers who spend considerable time outside of class with immigrants also seemed to help meet many RIAS needs as well as peer tutoring and a learning resource centre. Common meeting areas allow immigrant students to collaborate and socialize. Kilbride and D’Arcangelo (2002) learned that there is no “structural recognition of the significant numbers of students for whom the community college is their introduction to Canada and the Canadian educational system” (p. 23). The researchers feel that there remain many unmet RIAS needs simply because post-secondary institutions do not know how many immigrants are on campus.

One of the most relevant studies to institutional responses to RIAS is a study of 14 higher education institutions completed by Gray et al. (1996). In these case studies, Gray et al. examined the institutional responses to immigrant needs in the United States and reported the strong institutional opposition to begin support programs for immigrants. Gray et al. (1996) found that only 8 of the 14 colleges “were able or willing to provide the research team with any statistical data about immigrant student (permanent resident or refugee) enrollments, and only two routinely reviewed enrollment data

about immigrant students” (p. 30). One of their recommendations is for post-secondary institutions to focus on helping immigrants including if and how they can identify and record immigrant student status on their institutional student information system.

Patrick Kelly (2007) also recently completed a dissertation on the role of Centennial College in helping immigrants settle. This largely qualitative study examines the experiences of immigrant students at the college (admissions, credential assessment, retention and work placement) and immigrant perceptions regarding how this college experience helps them settle in Canada. While the thesis did not exclusively examine the college’s role in responding to immigrants, it did touch on it. The positive findings in this study include the following: the majority of immigrants feel that the college experience, the search for a job, career potential and marketability of them as graduates exceeded their expectations. The proposed areas of improvement identified in this study are the following: the college did little to help immigrants settle in the community, RIAs received relatively low employment earnings and their employment tended to be part-time and not permanent full-time work (Kelly, 2007). While these two studies focused specifically on RIAs in colleges, it is important to understand the differences between outcomes for university and those for college students in Canada.

Differing Outcomes for University and College Students

When RIAs choose to enter PSE, they usually make a choice between studying at a college or a university. One study discovered that high school graduates who were born outside of Canada tend to attend a university as opposed to a college (HEQCO, 2008). Another study indicated that students with foreign graduate degrees choose university education and immigrants with foreign bachelor degrees choose non-university study (Anisef et al., 2008).

While this dissertation involves both university and college data, it is important to note some of the differences between the two types of post-secondary institutions, especially concerning outcomes in the Canadian context. Canadian colleges are comparable in focus with two-year American community colleges. In both countries, these institutions have three strong similarities: (1) they provide applied courses, (2) the faculty focuses primarily on teaching with little to no involvement in research, and (3) in

many programs students undertake co-op, placement or practicum to give them the necessary skills to work in a specific occupational field as well as to gain local work experience. Canadian colleges, like U.S. community colleges, “recruit different kinds of students, provide a limited general education, strongly focus on vocational training, and typically place graduates in different kinds of occupations” (Anisef, Ashbury & Turriffin, 1992, p. 80). These jobs are usually in blue-collar vocational positions (Ibid., 1992). Canadian universities are similar to four-year colleges in the U.S. In both countries, these institutions provide courses that are more theoretical, employ faculty who focus on research as well as teaching and teach students broad transferable skills that they can apply to many different jobs and professions. These jobs are often white-collar occupations in management and the professions (Ibid., 1992).

This diverse focus, though, has slowly been changing in the Canadian context and specifically in Ontario. In addition to certificates and diplomas, colleges in Ontario now offer applied degrees and graduate certificates in many subject areas. While these college degrees still tend to be applied in focus, they are much closer in design to university-level programs and some of the college degrees are even removing the applied label. Conversely, some universities are offering not only more professional and applied programs but also curriculum with more applied focus including opportunities for coop placement. There is also a growing trend among Ontario students to treat colleges as more of a finishing school after university study in order to obtain a job in a particular field of interest. Therefore, these perceived lines of focus between universities and colleges in Ontario are slowly being altered thus making the choice between college and university even more difficult for RIAS.

Anisef et al. (1992), in a large study, became aware that the “type of educational institution was statistically significant in explaining current occupational status attainment” (p. 74). Using the Blishen score index⁴, Anisef et al. (1992) learned that Canadian university graduates score five points higher than college graduates did and the finding is statistically significant. Essentially, “university graduates do better than college graduates in attaining high status jobs” (Guppy, 1992, p. 85). While the research subjects were

⁴ The Blishen occupational status index (often referred to as the Blishen score index) is based on the educational level and somewhat on the income of people in the labour force. It also measures the “social prestige of an occupation independent of the typical educational level of holders of that occupation” (Anisef et al., 1992, p. 71). There is, though, some controversy in using the Blishen score in regression analysis.

students who reside in Ontario, the findings could hold true for immigrants who were included in the studied population. However, some research argues that the type and reputation of educational institutions either reduces social stratification or just maintains social status disparities (Anisef et al., 1992). Given that this study was conducted over two decades ago when colleges and universities were more binary and bounded and Ontario colleges in particular have significantly changed, it is not certain if the findings would still be true. Research does agree, though, that “education is one of the best predictors of life chances, especially occupational attainment” (Guppy, 1992, p. 86). Therefore, the differing outcomes for university and college graduates are quite important to note given the choices made by immigrants and any varied institutional responsiveness to RIAS.

REVIEW OF BARRIERS TO ACCESS, PERSISTENCE AND COMPLETION OF PSE BY TRADITIONAL, NON-TRADITIONAL AND IMMIGRANT STUDENTS

Even though there is sparse literature on college and university responses to immigrants and the engagement of RIAS in PSE, there is a growing body of research on barriers to access, persistence and completion of PSE. Most of this literature focuses on traditional and adult students. Given the focus of this thesis on the factors that engage RIAS in higher education, I draw upon this research and also focus on the barriers faced by non-traditional and immigrant students as well. Students do not divide barriers into categories when facing issues in attending and completing studies but to more easily discuss barriers, I will organize them into the broader categories of barriers to access, persistence and completion. Within these extensive groups, some of the literature reveals three broad types or categories of barriers: academic, financial and dispositional (motivation, knowledge and/or information) barriers (HEQCO, 2008).

REVIEW OF BARRIERS TO ACCESS, PERSISTENCE AND COMPLETION OF PSE BY TRADITIONAL STUDENTS

Access Barriers Faced by Traditional Students

Access barriers refer to the various difficulties students face in entering PSE. Barriers to persistence and completion prevent a student who enrolls in PSE from continuing and finishing studies (Berger, 2007). The term access, though, is rather contested in the literature (HEQCO, 2008). Access can be thought of as precluding persistence and completion barriers but it also can involve participating and

persisting in PSE. There is a growing body of literature that divides access barriers into financial and non-financial limitations but even these types of barriers are quite inextricably linked. Considerable research focuses on the factors that impact access to PSE such as society, institutions and personal traits (HEQCO, 2008). Given the dispositional aspects of access, one researcher even states that accessing college can be learned and so it therefore can be taught (Gildersleeve, 2009).

In understanding access barriers, there is benefit in reviewing the contested variety of views on what access entails. Anisef (1985) defined two forms, Type I and Type II, of access to PSE. Type I access refers to the number of people participating in PSE, which involves ‘how many’ can gain entry. Type II access identifies who attends PSE including the type of participants and how they relate to the total population. For instance, changes like the double cohort in Ontario in 2003 could have doubled the number of students entering PSE, thus affecting Type I access. Changes to the available seats in a program or changes in admissions averages can directly affect Type II access (Anisef, 1985).

Adelman (2007) developed four definitions of types of access: number one is threshold access (i.e. entering PSE for one or more days); number two is recurrent access (i.e. re-entering a PSE program after starting or beginning a graduate or post-graduate program); number three is convenient access (i.e. entering into PSE at any specific time and place); and number four is distributional access (i.e. being able to choose a specific school or a particular type of institution). Adelman argued that threshold access identifies the critical issue in PSE as the other types of access confuse the definition by including additional issues such as “institutional capacity and individual preferences” (HEQCO, 2008, p. 3).

Regardless of what definition of access one chooses, many students have difficulty gaining entry to PSE. For a number of students, admissions poses a strong access barrier. Tinto and Wallace (1986) have argued that “the most effective retention programs begin with admissions” (p. 291). A number of researchers agreed that while typical admissions criteria, such as test scores and grades, help predict future academic performance, the fit between student and the school including the student’s attitudinal, personal and behavioural attributes better predict future performance (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Hossler, Bean & Associates, 1990). Junor and Usher (2004) have contended that academic barriers, while important, affect only about 10% of those who do not attend higher education. Financial barriers affect 20% to 33% of

students who do not attend PSE (Berger, 2007). Dispositional barriers such as motivation and information affect nearly 50% of students who do not attend PSE (Berger, 2007). A lack of motivation to attend higher education, in particular, tends to encompass many other factors such as students coming from a lower income family or with poorer parental income (HEQCO, 2008).

Access also varies depending on the post-secondary institution a student may choose. Ontario colleges were created to help fill the demand of the labour market and were designed to provide open access to students who wish to attend. Even this 'open access' rule has changed over the years as many programs have more stringent admission requirements including those programs that are oversubscribed. Access, therefore, can change over time.

In summary, the literature identifies numerous factors that limit access to PSE including the following:

family income, parental education, family type, age, race/ethnicity, gender, geographic location, immigration status, language, experiences in high school, academic achievement, extra-curricular involvement, part-time work, attitudes toward school, existence of postsecondary educated role models; parents' attitudes toward PSE, parents' savings for education, parents' intentions for their children, sources of financial aid available for postsecondary study, information about financing, access to student supports, attitudes toward borrowing and debt, knowledge of the benefits of PSE, and others. (HEQCO, 2008, p. 4)

These barriers also do not function alone but they tend to link together and compound one another making access to PSE considerably more difficult (Berger, 2007). If a student gains access to higher education, they may face persistence and completion barriers.

Persistence and Completion Barriers Faced by Traditional Students

Many researchers state that persistence and completion barriers tend to be similar to access barriers (HEQCO, 2008). There is a strong positive correlation between a student's high school GPA and their academic performance (Dooley, Payne & Robb, 2011; Chemers, Hu & Garcia, 2001). Researchers such as Day (2008) argue that if an institution would raise the GPA in its admissions requirements, then persistence rates would also increase. Unfortunately, though, grade inflation has been prevalent in Ontario high schools since the late 1960s (Axelrod, 2008). While curbing grade inflation is quite necessary (Axelrod, 2008; Day, 2008), Hallgrímsson (2007) believes that PSE has not adapted well to teaching such a diverse student population. Axelrod (2008) concurs that the critical issue is the "substance of the

educational experience” (p. 6). Access to PSE seems to be researched considerably more than persistence especially in Canada (Dooley, Payne & Robb, 2011; Mueller, 2008). A few studies focus on the socio-demographic characteristics of students who persist to completion. As with access barriers, financial and dispositional barriers appear to have the strongest effect on students.

Financial barriers, while affecting access, also have a strong effect on persisting in PSE. This can include the student and/or family’s ability to pay tuition, books and living expenses as well as forgone earnings. Berger (2007) estimated that the number of students participating in PSE decreases by 1.3% for every \$1000 increase in tuition. Finances, though, go beyond the obvious constraints. Junor and Usher (2004) identified three types of financial barriers: price constraints (the cost of education outweighs the potential increase in earnings), cash constraints (students cannot pay for their studies through financial aid, income or savings even though they wish to continue to study) and debt aversion (learners do not wish to borrow money for studies). These barriers point indirectly to dispositional issues. Many students lack information about costs and financial aid options (Berger, 2007; Cavanagh, 2004). Unfortunately, lack of financial information and planning affect the neediest students. Further, financial need tends to “mask a more serious barrier for college aspirants: lack of academic preparation” (Cavanagh, 2004, p. 1). Eighteen percent of students identify academic barriers to PSE (Berger, 2007). Research indicates that 84% of the gap between high and low income students is related to academic ability, parental influence and the quality of the high school (Berger, 2007). Day (2008) found that “a student’s overall high school average, marital status, and parental attitudes toward post-secondary education have a much larger impact on postsecondary persistence than does financial aid” (p. i).

Dispositional barriers, particularly, lack of motivation, affects numerous students. Finnie, Childs and Wismer (2010) argue that the most important reasons for students leaving PSE are that they are no longer interested in the program (50%), experienced personal issues such as poor health (25%), ran out of money (15%) or had academic reasons. Fifty-two percent of students leave higher education because they are dissatisfied with their program, lose interest in their studies and/or lack career direction (Berger, 2007). Self-confidence and academic achievement also account for difficulties continuing in higher education. Studies also show that the following negatively affect persistence and completion: stress, pressure,

alienation, lack of diverse faculty and students, lack of campus support services, lack of time, poor campus recreation facilities, unhelpful academic advising, poor career counselling, academic stress, and difficulty with instructors (Huesman, 2009; Maramba, 2008; Berger, 2007; Rayle, 2007; McKinney, 2004).

As with access barriers, persistence and completion barriers often do not act alone but interact and tend to compound each other (HEQCO, 2008; Berger, 2007). For instance, a financial barrier may affect the ability to pay tuition but also generally inter-relates with a lack of cultural and social capital (HEQCO, 2008). Likely one of the few barriers that negatively affect persistence and completion but generally not access is what Tinto (1992) referred to as academic integration or fit with a program or course of study. It is difficult to identify a lack of fit prior to the student beginning their program of study as it is a motivational barrier that can arise often after studies commence (HEQCO, 2008). Finnie, Childs and Wismer (2010) also found that students experienced deep feelings of engagement when they received higher marks in PSE and thus “lower probabilities of leaving PSE” (p. 2). Research also reveals that when non-traditional students choose to enter PSE, they face numerous barriers. After a brief review of this literature, I will outline the barriers experienced by immigrant students.

REVIEW OF BARRIERS TO ACCESS, PERSISTENCE AND COMPLETION OF PSE BY NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS

Immigrant students share a number of characteristics with non-traditional students and therefore it is helpful to concisely review studies concerning this varied group. This body of literature encompasses Canadian Aboriginals, Native Americans, adults and also first-generation students.

There are a few research papers on First Nations students. Berger et al. (2007) discovered a number of barriers that Canadian First Nations students face including the following: “inadequate financial resources, poor academic performance, lack of self-confidence and motivation, absence of role models who have post-secondary education experience, lack of understanding of Aboriginal culture on campus and experience of racism on campus” (p. 25-26). The barriers that have the most impact on Canadian First Nations students are finances, alienation and academic preparation (Berger et al., 2007). R.A. Malatest and Associates, Ltd. (2004) argued that First Nations students face significant persistence and completion barriers. While they may gain access to PSE, personal and family situations make it difficult to persist. This

study found that First Nations students are, on average, an older demographic than traditional students and therefore have more pressing needs in childcare services, financial aid and also support services as they often have to move away from their home and community to a new urban centre (HEQCO, 2008; Malatest, 2004).

Minner (1995) observed similar barriers for Native American students. The following barriers influenced Native American students to drop out of PSE: academic performance, inadequate financial resources, campus attitudes towards Native Americans, indifferent and insensitive faculty members, family obligations, distance from home, time management, cultural differences, poor academic advising, alcohol and drugs, inadequate high school training, and language barriers (Minner, 1995). Likewise, the OECD (2011) reported that the academic performance of native English speakers is significantly different from non-native English speakers in Canada. The OECD (2011) also identified that “adults who are low educated, older, belong to a minority language group, and/or have a disadvantaged socioeconomic background are much more likely to perform poorly in multiple skill domains” (p. 211) in PSE.

Berger et al. (2007) also studied first-generation students, who are students who are first in their family to attend higher education. The researchers noted that first-generation students face a significant access barrier as they often delay entry into PSE because they wish to work immediately after high school. Other barriers experienced by first-generation students include academic, financial and dispositional barriers including motivation and information (Berger et al., 2007). As I review next, some researchers also find that when immigrant students choose to enter PSE, they face numerous barriers.

REVIEW OF BARRIERS TO ACCESS, PERSISTENCE AND COMPLETION OF PSE BY RIAS

Immigrant Access to Higher Education

There is a small but expanding literature on the barriers that immigrants face in accessing, persisting and completing Canadian PSE. Unfortunately, “overall scholarly research on immigrant student populations at the postsecondary level remains scant” (Stebleton, 2010, p. 2). The most substantial segment of this literature focuses mostly on access to Canadian higher education. Anisef et al. (2009) noted that immigrant women are less likely to enroll in PSE and this difficulty in access “is complicated by social and cultural biases” (p. ii).

Lack of English Proficiency

Rubenson et al. (2007) found that 43% of immigrants participate in PSE in Canada in comparison with 41% in the United States. Approximately 12% of undergraduate students in the U.S. are immigrants⁵ (Erisman & Looney, 2007). Many post-secondary institutions and notably universities in Canada do not record the immigration status of students. Therefore, while the precise number of RIAs in Canada remains an uncertain statistic, Rubenson's 2007 study argues that slightly more immigrants in Canada attend PSE than in the United States. A major barrier for RIAs in entering higher education is a lack of English proficiency (Ogilvie, K.K. & Eggleton, A., 2011). For a majority of RIAs, English is not their first language and they often do not speak English at home (Erisman & Looney, 2007). In the U.S., 18% of immigrants do not speak English or do not speak it well (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005a). In Canada, 27% of immigrants list that they have a language barrier in entering PSE (Statistics Canada, 2003a). The majority of universities and colleges in Canada and the U.S. require non-native speakers of English to pass an English proficiency test in order to be admissible to the institution (Erisman & Looney, 2007).

If RIAs do not score well enough on an English proficiency test, they are often required to take an English as a Second Language (ESL) course or program in order to improve their English language skills prior to entering the institution or, in some schools, alongside their higher education studies (Gray, Rolph, and Melamid, 1996). While this delays entry into PSE, adds to the cost of the degree and delays entry into the labour market, these barriers arguably contribute to the long-term academic success of RIAs (Erisman & Looney, 2007). Overcoming the barrier of English proficiency debatably is essential to the academic success and social engagement of RIAs in PSE and their future success in the labour market.

In some North American cities, it is even difficult to gain access to ESL classes (New York Immigration Coalition, 2001) due to a limited supply of and a much larger demand for ESL classes. Taking ESL training uses an immigrant's time and money. Wayland (2006) found that "access to federally-funded English as a Second Language adult programs is limited to permanent residents and Convention refugees. Refugee claimants, those awaiting residency status, and Canadian citizens are not eligible, though they may qualify for some provincial programs" (p. 13). While students no doubt need to be proficient in English in

⁵ This statistic does not include undocumented students.

order to succeed in their educational and employment pursuits, obtaining that needed minimum proficiency may be a difficult barrier to enter PSE. This is often a confusing PSE access barrier for RIAs as they have to demonstrate a certain level of English proficiency in order to immigrate to Canada but this level seems to be deemed inadequate by employers and PSE. The OECD (2011), though, indicates that current immigration policy in Canada has likely been a factor “where immigrants outperform the established immigrants in all skill domains” (p. 36). This means that Canada’s current immigration policy appears to be attracting immigrants with even stronger educational and work credentials and perhaps even English proficiency levels in comparison with more established immigrants. There does not yet seem to be consistency between educational and immigration policy with respect to English proficiency. Erisman & Looney (2007) identify the difficult English proficiency barrier for RIAs to enter PSE but acknowledges that this is likely a necessary barrier for future success of RIAs in PSE and the labour market.

Foreign Credential Evaluation

Another entry requirement for higher education is prior education determined by the evaluation of high school and/or post-secondary transcripts. This requires applicants to secure original transcripts from their former institution(s), but frequently, this proves to be rather difficult. Students who are refugees or undocumented immigrants cannot obtain original transcripts (Gray et al., 1996). In addition, if these transcripts are in a language other than English, RIAs need to pay for an official translation. While many post-secondary schools will evaluate transcripts, others require that immigrants pay an outside nonprofit organization to evaluate them. This again is quite costly and all of these steps can add months to the application process (Ontario Fairness Commissioner, 2010; Erisman & Looney, 2007). In discussing one of the toughest access barriers in Canada, Reitz (2001) noted that the “declining relative value of immigrant education may be due to the location-specific nature of credential validation processes” (p. 579). In other words, a foreign educational credential is not necessarily considered equivalent but its relative value, both in terms of level of education and marks, is determined by educational institutions in relation to what country and institution where it was earned.

One of the most comprehensive reviews and analyses of immigrant barriers to employment also examines foreign credential recognition and is entitled *Access! Task Force on Access to Professions and*

Trades in Ontario. This article along with Brouwer's (1999) report *Immigrants Need Not Apply* reinforced evidence on the difficulty immigrants have in accessing PSE because of inconsistent and/or inequitable credential assessment. Cumming et al. (1989) argued that institutions have "little capacity for assessing educational credentials of individuals who may lack complete documentation or have arrived from countries having low or irregular rates of immigration to Canada" (p. xiix). As stated above, studies show that foreign credentials are fundamentally discounted in Canada (Girard, 2010; Ontario Fairness Commissioner, 2010; Anisef et al., 2009; Aydemir & Skuterud, 2004; Ferrer & Riddell, 2003; Reitz, 2001; Thompson, 2000). This credential reduction occurs either by discounting the value of the immigrant's prior studies and the resultant outcomes and/or not recognizing the student's foreign credentials (Anisef et al., 2009). As detailed above, the Ontario Fairness Commissioner (2010) also reported that immigrants face numerous credential assessment barriers when trying to obtain a professional license.

Financial Issues

In order to plan for PSE, immigrants need to forego employment earnings and pay for tuition. This is very difficult for RIAs as immigrants in general have a difficult time reaching Canadian income levels (Wayland, 2006). Further, many immigrants have to support children who landed with them and/or have a responsibility to send funds back to their source country to support their relatives (Erisman & Looney, 2007; Wayland, 2006). According to LSIC data, twenty-five percent of immigrants to Canada claim that they have difficulties in financing their studies (Statistics Canada, 2003a). Finnie, Childs and Wismer (2010b) noted that "immigrants are considerably less likely than non-immigrants to have personally saved for PSE" (p. 2). In Canada, refugees who are not yet immigrants are not eligible for student loans (Brouwer, 2000). In many provinces, landed immigrants have to reside in Canada for one full year before they can have access to student loans (Goldberg, 2000). Those enrolled in non-degree and non-credit courses offered by Canadian post-secondary institutions often do not qualify for student loans (Ms. S, personal communication, April 16, 2008). It is even difficult for immigrants to obtain bank loans until they have at least one year of credit history in Canada. Tuition and financial aid are significant barriers for RIAs (Szelényi and Chang, 2002).

In a recent American study, Zarate & Pachon (2006) observed that while 98% of their survey respondents state that it is important to have a college education, many lack some basic knowledge of financial aid, cost of study, the education system and government educational grants. Zarate & Pachon (2006) discovered that “over half of all respondents erroneously thought students have to be U.S. citizens to apply for college financial aid” (p. 1). In addition, 25% of those replying to the survey thought that their parents also have to be U.S. citizens in order for them to receive financial aid. Only a few of those surveyed could “accurately estimate the cost of attending” (Zarate & Pachon, 2006, p. 1). This financial stress in combination with the stresses of immigration can be overwhelming to a new immigrant and can create significant barriers for RIAs wishing to pursue PSE (Erisman & Looney, 2007). In response, the Calgary Foundation and Maytree Foundation in Toronto provide micro loans for the “accreditation, training and upgrading of internationally trained immigrants” (Ibid., p. 27).

Numerous Other Access Issues

Other access barriers RIAs face in PSE include the following: lack of information about PSE education, work responsibilities, lack of academic preparation, no specific immigrant advising services, isolation and lack of social involvement, irrelevance of a program to student needs and context, location and timing of program delivery, admission practices and policies, and a lack of family involvement (Adamuti-Trache, 2010; Gildersleeve, 2010; Stebleton, 2010; Chambers et al., 2008; Erisman & Looney, 2007; Wayland, 2006). Numerous RIAs face significant income and occupational penalties in the Canadian economy because of racial, ethnic and colour differences (Pendakur, 2000). Wayland (2006) found that “the settlement experiences of many newcomers are characterized by isolation, vulnerability, and a lack of civic engagement.” (p. 21).

Settlement in Canada does not occur just when an immigrant arrives in Canada. Even before an immigrant lands in Canada, he or she begins to research the Canadian job market, social customs, educational opportunities, housing, health care, religious institutions, ethnic communities and so on. Settlement therefore begins considerably before an immigrant arrives and continues for many years after they have begun a new life in Canada. Even though Canada boasts having an open immigration policy,

Canadian society and the labour market do not seem open to many immigrants. Omidvar and Richmond (2003) underline this point by stating:

it is particularly and bitterly ironic for newcomers, and for those who try to assist them, that the various licensing and professional bodies as well as Canadian employers appear to deny the legitimacy of the very skills and education that gained them admittance to our country. (p. 15)

Immigrants develop strong ethnic communities as a cultural support network in multi-cultural cities such as Toronto. As many immigrants feel excluded from the Canadian dominant culture, immigrants try to obtain some support through their own race, culture and society, thereby further limiting their integration and inclusion into Canadian society (Qadeer, 2003). Many immigrants also feel excluded in PSE experienced in the form of social and academic barriers, perceived and/or real, as well as a lack of response by institutions to their needs. Family involvement is very important to RIAS but there seem to be few opportunities for family to be involved in PSE. A lack of family involvement, in particular, is a barrier faced mainly by immigrant women. This is especially complicated as to an immigrant, family is very far-reaching and can consist of mother, father, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents and even friends of the family (Gildersleeve, 2010).

Limiting access to PSE, in turn, causes added concern if the immigrant has already received considerable training in the field from their previous home country (Brouwer, 1999). One study indicated that Ontario colleges, over the past two decades, have been “working to reduce the barriers to college entry for immigrants, eliminating duplication in training and skills upgrading initiatives, and providing adequate support (such as language training) to ease transition to the Canadian workforce” (ACAATO, 2004, p. 18).

Persistence and Completion Barriers Immigrants Face in PSE

With regards to RIAS persistence in Canadian PSE, there are a growing number of influential studies (Educational Policy Institute, 2008; Erisman & Looney, 2007; Kilbride and D’Arcangelo, 2002). The Educational Policy Institute (2008) developed a report on the barriers to access and persistence by under-represented students including immigrants and found that barriers to completion are the same as barriers to access including financial obstacles. Tinto (1992) and Barr-Telford et al. (2003) argued that academic integration or lack of fit is primarily a motivation barrier that is fundamental to persistence. The Educational Policy Institute acknowledges that “there is a growing consensus among researchers that

supports the need to understand the impact of race, ethnicity, and immigrant status on postsecondary access and persistence” (Educational Policy Institute, 2008, p. 6). Persistence and completion barriers can be organized into two broad categories: tangible and intangible barriers.

Tangible Barriers

If RIAS penetrate the access to PSE barrier, immigrants may face tangible or structural barriers that include: academic and social difficulties, lack of English proficiency, inadequate academic preparation, cultural issues, different studying and learning methods, financial difficulties, supporting their family here and abroad and settlement issues.

Even if an applicant’s academic record is acceptable for admission, he or she may still be inadequately prepared for the level of work associated with their studies (Erisman & Looney, 2007). This is often because RIAS possess limited oral and written fluency in English or may have limited foundational prerequisite knowledge. Grayson (2009) identified that the “self-reported English communication skills of foreign-born ESL university students are less developed than those of Canadian-born speakers of English and Canadian-born ESL students” (p. 58-59). Grabke and Anisef (2008) similarly noted that even though RIAS must meet or surpass the TOEFL or IELTS minimum admission score requirements to enter PSE, verbal expressive English still is a problem. Casner-Lotto (2011) also noted that RIAS are not fully immersed in everyday English, may not have the English proficiency to enter the same career as they had in their country of origin, may not know how to network in their profession, may lack the cultural knowledge of their profession here in North America and often face difficult re-credentialing processes. Ogilvie & Eggleton (2011) state that RIAS have varying levels of English proficiency often due to the languages spoken in their source country. Hence in mitigating this barrier, they urge PSE to “use caution to ensure that the specific circumstances of each ethnocultural group is taken into consideration” (Ogilvie, K.K. & Eggleton, A., 2011, p. 37). Chau (2012) similarly argued that RIAS have added barriers including “learning a new language and acclimating to a new culture” (p. 1). Lapierre and Loslier (2003) found that many RIAS learned by memorizing while in Canada faculty tend to encourage comprehension. Pilote and Benabdeljalil (2007) found that RIAS experienced significant intercultural communication issues especially in teamwork.

Casner-Lotto (2011) recorded these same barriers as well as the following settlement issues that RIAS experience all at once: “finding housing and understanding rental agreements, enrolling their children in school, applying for a driver’s license (if they have a car), locating medical care, getting legal help, navigating social services, or applying for jobs” (p. 2). Kilbride and D’Arcangelo (2002) concluded that immigrant students often withdraw from PSE “because of unmet needs such as financial assistance, academic assistance, and dissatisfaction with the instruction” (p. 6). Lack of financial support include not being able to find sufficient work, supporting family here and abroad, not having adequate information on financial assistance and not having enough information on government and agency services (Kilbride & D’Arcangelo, 2002). One immigrant to the U.S. from El Salvador summarized these barriers: “we really want to have a degree. We want to study. But if we don’t have the possibilities, then we stop” (Erisman & Looney, 2007, p. 38). Sweet et al. (2010) found that parental expectations of RIAS often act as a “buffer against structural disadvantage and results in higher levels of academic achievement and school attainment” (p. 11-12).

Intangible Barriers

RIAS also face intangible barriers that include: lack of English proficiency, difficulties with social integration, financial issues, family responsibilities, disparity in cultural understandings and a lack of ethnic sensitivities. These barriers are often psychological and can have a deeper impact than the barriers to entry and other tangible barriers. In a recent study, Kim (2009) revealed that RIAS, in dealing with these psychological barriers, bypass institutional representatives such as counsellors, faculty and academic advisors, and seek help from their peers. Immigrants feel more comfortable with their personal network of friends than with the very services set up to help them (Stebleton, 2010; Kim, 2009). Lack of English proficiency, while a more tangible barrier, can often be a large mental barrier to RIAS. Not feeling able to communicate or being nervous about communicating in English with fellow students and in job interviews with recruiters, is a large psychosomatic barrier that is often insurmountable for RIAS. Diversity in literacy training and abilities exists even between immigrants who were educated abroad and those who completed high school in Canada (Adamuti-Trache, 2010).

Immigrants may also face a difficult time integrating into Canadian society. These barriers involve negotiating the path to citizenship, understanding Canadian dominant culture and customs, gaining Canadian work experience and overcoming racial barriers (Erisman & Looney, 2007). Some studies also distinguish between visible minority (Vismins) and non-visible minority (non-Vismin) immigrants in discussing RIAS financial issues. Finnie, Childs and Wismer (2010b) ascertained from the Longitudinal Survey of Low Income Students (L-SLIS) the following for university and college students:

1. Immigrants are considerably less likely than non-immigrants to have personally saved for PSE.
2. Regardless of immigrant status, Vismins are considerably more likely than non-Vismins to have family members who saved.
3. Vismin immigrants are the most concerned about debt. They are also the most likely to say that they will delay further PSE and/or live with their parents until they can repay some or all of their debt. (p. 2)

The intangible barriers identified in studies on undocumented students⁶ are similar to those listed for RIAS: language barriers, family responsibilities, differences in cultural understandings, ethnic sensitivities and many others (Gildersleeve, 2010).

CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented a review of the background literature that forms the basis of this dissertation. It provided a summary of the immigrant labour market participation and institutional response to RIAS literature as well as the barriers to access, persistence and completion of PSE by traditional, non-traditional and immigrant students.

As immigration has changed over the years, initially drawing from Europe and now from more developing nations, the multifaceted diversity in language, culture, race, ethnicity and ways of knowing has created many opportunities and also many access, persistence and completion barriers in PSE (Alfred, 2009). The literature is clear that educational institutions could obtain more detailed research and data on RIAS to fully understand the true extent of these barriers. This could allow educational leaders and institutions to better mitigate these barriers for RIAS and determine how they can help RIAS succeed (ACCC, 2011; Kilbride, 2002). RIAS are also quite resilient as Finnie, Childs and Wismer (2010a),

⁶ Undocumented students include students who are an illegal resident, who does not have citizenship, a student visa or a work permit/green card.

similarly with Sweet (2010) state that immigrants study longer and likely remain in higher education longer due to strong parental expectations.

While there is a significant body of literature covering the issues in immigrant settlement in Canada and access barriers to PSE, most discuss these issues from the viewpoint of immigrants lacking social capital. Many of these studies also use the social inclusion/exclusion framework but do little to analyze the engagement of immigrant students in PSE. Even the highly influential discussion paper by Alboim and Cohl (2007), which provides an excellent framework for how colleges can facilitate integrating immigrants into the Canadian labour market, falls short in identifying immigrant barriers to access, persistence and competition in Ontario higher education. While these environmental scans provide a good foundation for this thesis, many use frameworks and methodologies that do not develop a strong argument for the nature of immigrant integration and engagement in Ontario PSE.

There is a need for discovering what immigrants believe are the barriers to access, persistence and completion that they face in PSE and the institutional responses to RIAS. Analyzing this is arguably best accomplished using a student engagement framework. Perhaps mitigating RIAS barriers to access, persistence and completion that PSE can better engage RIAS in their studies. A second gap in the literature relates to an examination of both Ontario college and university responses to RIAS and RIAS experience in both types of educational institutions. This dissertation begins to fill these critical literature gaps. Specifically the next chapter reviews literature that forms the basis for the theoretical framework of this dissertation.

Chapter III – Theoretical Framework Literature Review

INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter was a review of the background literature to this thesis including a review of immigrant labour market participation, institutional response to RIAS and barriers to access, persistence and completion of PSE that traditional, non-traditional and immigrant students' face. As noted in the prior chapter, there is a large body of literature on student engagement of traditional and even some non-traditional students but limited research on immigrant engagement in PSE.

Few scholars have discussed the lack of research on immigrants in PSE. Some speculate that particular races of immigrants are represented well in our North American society and therefore do not have any particular issues in the academy (Maramba, 2008). Perhaps there is so much research attention on integrating immigrants into employment that there is little focus on RIAS engagement in higher education. It is clear, though, that the number of RIAS attending PSE is escalating (Statistics Canada, 2005). Studies indicate that immigrants have very rarely “been identified as a group with specific needs in post-secondary institutional policies” (Adamuti-Trache, 2010, p. 78). In bridging the research gap, this chapter reviews the student engagement literature for traditional, non-traditional and immigrant students in PSE that is used to develop the theoretical framework for this research study.

DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

The barriers to access, persistence and completion faced by students in PSE outlined in the previous chapter provided a foundation for the building of the student engagement framework. Virtually all research on student retention, success and engagement identifies specific barriers faced by students and offers solutions to these barriers. What appears rather obvious but is not always implicitly stated, is that the mitigation, elimination or even the diminishing of access, persistence and completion barriers helps students gain access to PSE and persist to completion. The linkages between overcoming barriers to access, persistence and completion with student engagement are many. Bridging access barriers allows the student to enter PSE (Ogilvie, K.K. & Eggleton, A., 2011; CSA, OSTA-AECO & OUSA., 2011). For instance, Tinto's (1993) insistence that post-secondary institutions “should ensure that new students enter with or

have the opportunity to acquire the skills needed for academic success” (p. 138) is generally referring to PSE using admissions, advanced standing and credential/skill assessment as a tool to ensure student retention and academic success. Once a student gains access to PSE, eliminating the barriers to persistence, creating a positive student experience, promoting student success and developing a great sense of belonging helps the student persist to completion of PSE and facilitates student engagement (Stebleton, 2010; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Astin, 1993; Tinto, 1993). Hence access, persistence and completion barriers are the first addition to the student engagement theoretical model.

Positive student experience and student integration are but two components to increase student engagement. Analysis of the LSIC (2003) data indicates that immigrants generally face short-term positive economic integration when having taken specific PSE. RIAS engagement in PSE therefore may be able to assist in their short-term economic integration. It provides an opportunity for students to learn and benefit through these interactions within the micro community of an academic institution and can facilitate integration into Canadian society through the skills developed from a liberal education.

At present, PSE institutions conduct student surveys, such as Kuh’s National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), to assess the level of student participation and/or engagement within the academic community. These results are often used primarily at the institutional level to determine annual increases or decreases in the experience and engagement of students and to determine appropriate institutional response to the annual changes. In recent years, some of these surveys have been used as macro-level indicators of organizational effectiveness through comparisons of scores between institutions.

There is considerable debate about how effective some of these American-based surveys are in comparing engagement across Canadian institutions. In analyzing and measuring student engagement, many universities worldwide use the NSSE survey. NSSE was not designed to be used as a form of ranking institutions but rather as a benchmark for individual institutions to identify the current engagement of students and highlight areas of success and weakness (Kuh et al., 2006b). Through comparing individual institutional annual NSSE surveys, post-secondary institutions can see relative changes, improvements and declines in the engagement of students as solely identified by the NSSE survey.

While NSSE is a frequently used measure of student engagement, this project's framework will not focus primarily on NSSE benchmarks. NSSE is an excellent place to begin the discussion of RIAS engagement but many aspects of the student experience and student engagement are still missing. NSSE falls short in identifying what students bring as inputs to their educational experience such as their socio-economic status prior to their studies, their country of origin and English proficiency skills. NSSE also fails to ascertain learning outcomes, quality of the student experience, value of engagement, excellence of teaching, the role of faculty and the long-term impact on student engagement. This project's framework will include the broader aspects of student engagement as highlighted in the *Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education* (Chickering & Gamson, 1987).

In reviewing the student engagement literature, as with barriers to access, persistence and completion, it is useful for organizational purposes as well as for clarity in discussion to separate the literature on engagement of traditional students from non-traditional and immigrant students. As found with barriers, there are a number of similarities in engagement of different types of students but the literature is considerably richer and deeper for traditional students. There are six seminal theorists who in essence form six pillars that support the student engagement literature: Tinto, Astin, Pace, Pascarella & Terenzini, Chickering & Gamson and Kuh (NSSE). These particular theories in many ways form the foundation of the student engagement literature and the backbone to the student engagement theoretical framework. Both Astin and Tinto suggest that when "students are engaged in college experiences, it was more likely that student learning, retention, and a quality undergraduate experience as outcomes occurred" (Umbach, 2005, p. 156). While the literature supports this for traditional students, it is a gap in the immigrant student research.

Rise and Prominence of Student Engagement in PSE

Student engagement is often considered as "the proverbial new kid on the block, with the first appearance of the term engagement occurring in the 1980s" (Reschly and Christenson, 2012, p. 14). Interestingly, the student experience was spoken about by Cardinal Newman in his prominent book, *The Idea of a University* that was published in 1879, near the beginning of modern educational era:

They will be too often ignorant of what every one knows and takes for granted, of that multitude of small truths which fall upon the mind like dust, impalpable and ever accumulating; they may be unable to converse, they may argue perversely, they may pride themselves on their worst paradoxes or their grossest truisms, they may be full of their own mode of viewing things, unwilling to be put out of their way, slow to enter into the minds of others;—but, with these and whatever other liabilities upon their heads, they are likely to have more thought, more mind, more philosophy, more true enlargement, than those earnest but ill-used persons, who are forced to load their minds with a score of subjects against an examination, who have too much on their hands to indulge themselves in thinking or investigation, who devour premiss [*sic*] and conclusion together with indiscriminate greediness, who hold whole sciences on faith, and commit demonstrations to memory, and who too often, as might be expected, when their period of education is passed, throw up all they have learned in disgust, having gained nothing really by their anxious labours, except perhaps the habit of application. (Newman, 1999, p. 134-135)

The recent rise of student engagement to the forefront of PSE appears to be occurring within a period of substantial post-secondary institutional change and is one dimension of PSE attempting to be more responsive to students. In tracking the more recent history of PSE, the 1970's saw significant budget austerity in comparison with previous years (Kezar et al., 2005). This gave rise to greater accountability for student learning outcomes in PSE especially given the significant public funding of higher education. In the 1980's, there was an encouragement of students to be more involved in their community and a general push towards student engagement. A lack of engagement for traditional students often meant that they would drop out and not persist to graduation. Retention rates became quite important not only in helping students succeed in PSE but also to the financial stability of institutions as they relied increasingly more on tuition to cover operating expenses. Over the years, PSE continued to play a stronger role “in addressing important social issues and preparing their students for the civic, economic, and cultural demands of this and future generations” (Kezar et al., 2005, p. 17).

In the 1970's, post-secondary institutions in North America were focused on educating primarily traditional students. Similarly, the engagement literature was first developed around traditional students, then students who were considered to be at risk including minority groups, low-income students, students with different racial and ethnic backgrounds (such as African American students in Minner's 1995 study, Maramba's 2008 study on Filipina American students, Gildersleeve and Ranero's 2010 study on undocumented students and also international students), distance education learners and then those with specific demographic factors such as age (numerous studies on adult students such as Tweedell's 2005 paper, Knightley and Whitelock's 2006 study and Wyatt's 2011 research), family income, single parent

families, etc. In further PSE engagement studies, these demographic factors are expanded to include students who were first in their family to attend PSE (first generation students), students with only one parent who attended PSE and marginalized students.

Kuh (2009b) articulates a cautionary note about applying the engagement construct to non-traditional, part-time, non-residential and historically underserved students (p. 684). His summary shows that “the bulk of the empirical research suggests that students from different backgrounds all generally benefit from engaging in effective educational practices, although conditional effects apply, meaning that some students benefit more than others from certain activities” (p. 684-685). Kuh (2009b) stresses the importance of students being involved in high-impact activities that can deepen learning and include the following: “first-year seminars, learning communities, writing-intensive courses, common intellectual experiences, service learning, diversity experiences, student-faculty research, study abroad, internships and other field placements, and senior capstone experiences” (p 688-689). Kuh (2009b) also states that NSSE does not measure all aspects of engagement and refers to Astin who similarly contends that there has not been enough study on the varied types of engagement with a deeper look into other forms of positive involvement as well as exceptions to this involvement. Kuh (2009b) discusses the separation of engagement data by different student backgrounds such as “race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, first-generation status, and transfer status” (p. 697). Even though PSE caters primarily to traditional students but is slowly changing and responding to diverse students, the rich and deep student engagement literature informs the student engagement conceptual framework for this dissertation. In the analysis and synthesis of the qualitative and quantitative research on RIAS, this traditional student engagement model will likely be modified in order to best engage RIAS.

Student Engagement Literature for Traditional Students

Specifically for traditional students, the six engagement theorists share the viewpoint that student involvement in PSE promotes student success in college. They also link student involvement in post-secondary community activities together with social engagement, which helps improve student success. Student success is defined as persistence, academic achievement and performance, developed social networks and completion of studies. The terms ‘student experience’ and ‘student engagement’ are defined

in Appendix A. They are inextricably linked but the differences are important to note. A positive student experience can lead to stronger student engagement. In reviewing the student engagement literature, there are many references to the student experience that help define, improve and create student engagement.

A traditional student is defined as a young adult, full-time, middle-class, Caucasian student who lives in an on-campus residence (Kasworm, 2003). Acknowledging the literature focus helps one appreciate the need to strengthen the research and literature concerning a very diverse, older adult, recent immigrant student such as found in this study. It is also important to note that currently some institutions are responding to surveys such as NSSE by creating projects that will improve retention or further engage students (Baird, 2009). While this is important and can be helpful, the student experience has multi-dimensions and, as seen below, there are multiple ways, methods and understandings to help engage a student. In further developing a student engagement framework, the numerous studies are broken into broad segments of engagement: student inputs, student activities and learning inside and outside the classroom, faculty involvement, student context, student outputs including social, academic and student service involvement and student outcomes.

Student Inputs

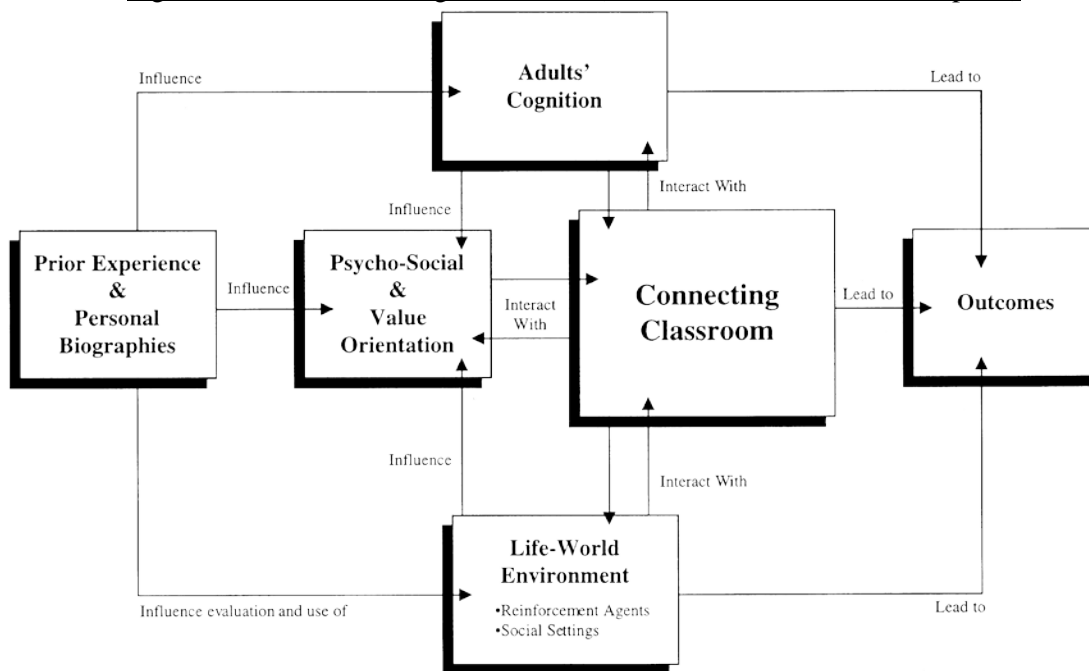
When a person attempts to gain access to PSE, their specific background, education, knowledge, attributes, experiences and demographic makeup tends to shape their experience and engagement in PSE. These pre-PSE attributes can be labeled as student inputs. One of the early engagement models that outlined student inputs was developed by Astin (1993) thirty years ago. He used the ‘input-environment-outcome’ (I-E-O) framework in reviewing student development. This model further informs the development of a student engagement conceptual framework for this dissertation through the analysis and contribution of student pre-PSE attributes. According to Astin (1993), these inputs are defined as “the characteristics of the student at the time of initial entry to the institution” (p. 7).

Donaldson and Graham (1999) in their research on adult students developed a comprehensive model of college outcomes (see Figure 1). This model is very helpful in designing an engagement model for RIAS as it encompasses six primary elements in adult PSE experiences:

(a) prior experiences; (b) orienting frameworks such as motivation, self-confidence, and value system; (c) adult’s cognition or the declarative, procedural, and self-regulating knowledge structures and processes; (d) the “connecting classroom” as the central avenue for social engagement and for negotiating meaning for learning; (e) the life-world environment and the concurrent work, family, and community settings; and (f) the different types and levels of learning outcomes experienced by adults (Donaldson & Graham, 1999).

Specifically this College Outcomes Model informs the pre-PSE student inputs as encompassing prior experience and personal biographies of students. These, according to Donaldson and Graham (1999), influence the value orientation of students as they enter PSE that in turn shape their early engagement and outcomes in PSE.

Figure 1 – Model of College Outcomes (Donaldson & Graham, 1999, p. 28)

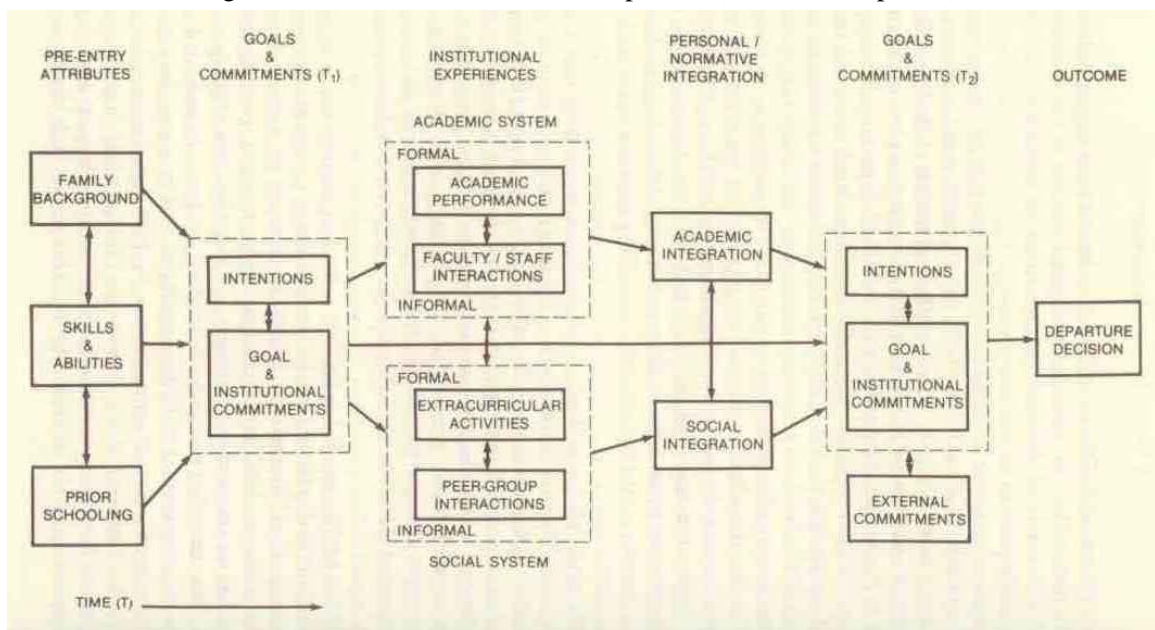


Tinto (1993) in his model of institutional departure also clearly labels the ‘pre-entry attributes’ of students before they enter PSE (p. 141). These include family background, skills & abilities and prior schooling (see Figure 2). These inputs, according to Tinto, are what in essence predispose or help shape a student’s experience in PSE and can contribute to their engagement, lack of engagement or departure from PSE.

Charles Robert Pace, in his 1979 book *Measuring Outcomes of College: Fifty Years of Findings and Recommendations for the Future*, also included student inputs as being influential in student

engagement. This prominent research is comprised of data gathered over a long period of time that underscores a quality of effort theory. In many ways, Pace's research extends Astin's theory of involvement to argue that in order for students to learn and develop, they must invest time and effort (Pace, 1979). Student development, according to Pace, originates with student background and type of study (full-time vs. part-time), which shapes their perceptions of PSE and involvement inside and outside the classroom (CCI Research Inc., 2009). Therefore, Astin (1993), Donaldson and Graham (1999), Tinto (1993) and Pace (1979) all support the notion that student inputs are important in shaping student engagement in PSE. Thus student inputs involve the following: student knowledge, skills, GPA, prior study, work experience, language proficiency, cultural background, age, diversity, family background and much more.

Figure 2 – Model of Institutional Departure (Tinto, 1993, p. 114)



Student Activities & Learning Inside and Outside the Classroom

As students bring their prior experiences or inputs into PSE, they are involved in activities and learning both inside and outside the classroom. George Kuh, John Schuh, Elizabeth Whitt & Associates wrote *Involving Colleges: Successful Approaches to Fostering Student Learning and Development outside the Classroom* in 1991. In this book, Kuh et al. (1991) used the existing student experience literature and

constructed a student engagement model. Using the model, Kuh et al. (1991) then evaluated the time and effort students devote to activities on campus that improve learning both inside and outside the classroom and the students' academic success (Matthews, 2011; Umbach, 2005). In addition to measuring student activities, Kuh et al.'s (1991) model also evaluated how well institutions involve students in learning and how well the support systems improve student academic success (Matthews, 2011; Umbach, 2005). Kuh argued that positive student engagement increases student grades and retention rates (Wyatt, 2011).

Approximately a decade later, Kuh developed NSSE – a tool which institutions can administer to evaluate how engaged their students are on campus and how well the school's support system is helping students learn so the college can improve its engagement. The survey “identifies five benchmarks of effective educational practice which include: level of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student interaction with faculty members, enriching educational experiences, and supportive campus environment (NSSE, 2008)” (CCI Research Inc., 2009, p. 15). The survey instrument, its application and subsequent comparisons have generated considerable discussion and criticism. One article warned that “caution should be applied when considering this data as it is not a direct measure of learning outcomes and provides only one piece of evidence concerning educational excellence” (Matthews, 2011, p. 107). Kuh's writings and survey instruments add a significant pillar to the literature on student engagement and support the notion that student activities both inside and also outside the classroom shape the experience and engagement of students in PSE.

The student engagement literature often refers to student learning activities inside and outside the classroom as academic involvement. Academic involvement in higher education occurs through learning activities, being engaged in the classroom and interactions with faculty both inside and outside the classroom. A number of studies support the theory that increased quantity and quality of academic activities enhances student engagement. Kuh and Hu (2001) found that when students pursue “educationally purposeful activities” (p. 310) in PSE, these intellectual activities have the strongest correlation with student engagement. Umbach and Wawrzinsky (2005) similarly found that stronger program-related encounters lead to enhanced student engagement and the perception of a more supportive college milieu.

A considerable amount of engagement literature focuses on student learning. In order to further engage students, PSE can remove barriers to student learning, understand better how students learn and develop in-class and out-of-class activities to help advance learning (Umbach, 2005). Learning takes on various meanings in different regions of the world and also with different approaches to student research projects. Learning, to some, means memorization, rote learning, little reflection and reproduction to finish the assignment (Mann, 2001). A number of non-Western approaches to learning fit this model of a collectivist orientation (Alfred, 2009). Other, more strategic approaches to learning involve focusing on teacher expectations, course and assessment constraints and time management (Mann, 2001). This more Western approach to learning can be referred to as an individualistic orientation (Alfred, 2009). Therefore, how students approach learning and how faculty members teach can significantly differ. A culturally responsive curriculum assists in student academic involvement (Alfred, 2009). Villegas and Lucas (2002) summarize it well by stating that “if teaching involves assisting students to build bridges between their preexisting knowledge and experiences and the new material they are expected to learn, then teachers must know not only the subject matter, they must also know their students” (p. 26).

Research also shows that when first-year students, in particular during their first-term in college, do well academically, this plays a critical role in determining their academic success for the rest of their studies in PSE and also helps to engage them in college (Huesman, 2009). It is also important to note that first-year students often experience depression, anxiety and academic stress and therefore colleges need to address this academic tension in order to help students’ persist and be engaged in PSE. Both Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) and Kuh (1991) argued that in order to construct student learning, colleges need to focus on course involvement, program design, interactions with peers and faculty both inside and outside the classroom as well as focus on quality teaching (Umbach, 2005). Maken (2009) concurred that a focus on quality teaching and learning helps to further engage students.

Social involvement is also an important aspect of student activities and learning inside and outside the classroom. PSE Financial Aid departments, Sports and Recreation Departments and Student Services tend to offer a broad range of services to assist students in various activities primarily outside of the classroom. In order for students to be socially involved, though, they need to be able to spend time with

friends both inside and outside of the classroom. Because of rising tuition fees and inability for students to pay to attend college, they often have to seek financial assistance and seek employment. Astin (1993) found that full-time and sometimes part-time off-campus work negatively affects persistence and engagement. Yet, Pascarella & Terenzini (1993) found that part-time on-campus employment can “have a net positive impact on persistence, completion, as well as the probability of enrolling in graduate or professional school” (p. 407). An increasing number of Canadian students seem to be working given that tuition is rising faster than earnings (CCL, 2006). Given that employment status has a significant effect on involvement and engagement, this could be a growing concern. Similarly, extracurricular activities can, according to Pascarella & Terenzini, help improve the student experience and aid students in finishing college.

Vincent Tinto wrote the influential book *Leaving College* in 1987 and a revised edition in 1993. Many studies on student retention, student experience and student engagement reference this text. In this work, Tinto developed a theory of retention and argued that students withdraw from PSE if they are not successfully integrated academically and socially. Involvement, according to Tinto, is essential for integration into PSE and integration assists students in persisting to completion (Matthew, 2011; Anisef, 2009; Huesman, 2009; Umbach, 2005). Tinto further defined social integration as incorporation into the college’s social system through informal and formal manners such as clubs, extracurricular activities, peer groups, associations and interactions with faculty and staff (Huesman, 2009; Umbach, 2005).

Tinto linked social integration with academic integration. He argued that providing students with social supports helps them stay connected and therefore they become more involved in the academic environment. Because of their developed social network with family and friends, students then feel less academic stress and have a greater likelihood of persisting (Rayle, 2007). Tinto (1993) also postulated that students will be more integrated into the social and intellectual aspects of PSE if they join learning communities. These communities, according to Tinto, are both ethnic/racial and learning groups that are developed to decrease tensions and develop safe support networks for students through increased communication and interaction (Maramba, 2008).

A student’s social network helps to support the student in their transition to PSE (Rayle, 2007).

Tinto further stipulated that:

positive and integrative experiences reinforce persistence, whereas negative or disconnecting experiences, or the absence of interaction, can weaken intentions and commitments, thereby enhancing the likelihood of leaving. (CCI Research Inc., 2009, p. 12)

Tinto also made some assertions that, along with his main arguments, fueled numerous other studies. Tinto argued that students who leave college need to be better understood. Their leaving is a confluence of networks and interactions between the student and the college (Huesman, 2009).

Tinto's (1993) model of institutional departure (see Figure 2) clearly indicates the student activities inside the classroom as academic performance and faculty/staff interactions. Tinto (1993) also separately identifies in the social system the student activities outside the classroom involving more formal activities as extracurricular activities and more informal peer-group interactions. Tinto (1993) also wrote about the importance of orientation programs in providing the necessary foundation to integration in PSE (p. 146). Orientation programs offer information necessary for academic integration and also provide the opportunity for the building of new friendships and the introduction of student clubs that develop social integration.

Student activities and learning both inside and outside the classroom therefore involve the following: PSE program design, student services, financial aid, student clubs, orientation, sports and recreation and many others. This informs the student engagement conceptual framework for this dissertation.

Faculty Involvement

Faculty members do matter in student learning and engagement. This is supported in numerous studies (Matthews, 2011; Maken, 2009; Umbach, 2005; McKinney, 2004; Astin, 1993; Tinto, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Chickering & Gamson, 1987). Faculty who are more responsive to students and who have some one-on-one communication with learners especially with regards to academic progress tend to more strongly engage students (Maken, 2009). Also, Maken (2009) found that faculty members who use multiple teaching methods tend to develop effective methods of engaging students. Tinto (1993) argues that the "commitment of individuals to the institution appears in turn to be most strongly influenced by the quantity and quality of individual contact with other students and with the faculty and staff of the institution" (p. 185).

Pascarella & Terenzini first wrote *How College Affects Students: Findings and Insights from Twenty Years of Research* in 1991 and updated it in 2005. This book is a compilation of twenty years of research and over 2600 studies looking at how college changes and benefits students. Essentially this text is a synthesis of the student experience in PSE (Matthews, 2011). Pascarella & Terenzini (1991) made a case that social participation has a positive effect on commitment and persistence, in that it is believed to “enhance one’s social integration and interpersonal bonds with the institution” (p. 390). Further, Pascarella & Terenzini argued that faculty can be role models for students outside of the classroom, instilling educational attainment as a goal. Pascarella & Terenzini (1991) further stated that “whatever form engagement might take...students should be helped early in their careers to find academic and social niches where they can feel they are a part of the institution’s life, where friendships can be developed, and where role models (whether student or faculty) can be observed and emulated” (p. 654). Through these interactions, students tend to have a higher affinity for the institution and often experience stronger social integration and persistence in PSE. Their research also demonstrated links to how often students interact with their peers and the quality of this interaction together with persistence.

Pascarella & Terenzini (1991) also found that student learning is enhanced with formal and informal student and faculty communication. Astin (1993) agreed that team projects, problem-based learning, cooperative learning and various forms of teaching strategies can help to engage students given these two stipulations: “first, students may be motivated to expend more effort if they know that their work is going to be scrutinized by peers; and second, students may learn course material in greater depth if they are involved in helping teach it to fellow students” (p. 427). McKinney (2004) also found that student social involvement with faculty both inside and outside the class strengthens student engagement and also increases participation in student research projects.

Umbach’s (2005) research findings indicate the following:

students report higher levels of engagement and learning at institutions where faculty members use active and collaborative learning techniques, engage students in experiences, emphasize higher-order cognitive activities in the classroom, interact with students, challenge students academically, and value enriching educational experiences. (p. 153)

Yet, faculty members, particularly in the university sector, are often promoted and rewarded based on their research which is underscored by the issuance of grants and tenure incentives in many institutions (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Therefore, it is highly unlikely that faculty will be able to spend significant time outside of class with students. In order to shift the focus back to teaching and learning, faculty “reward processes may have to be redesigned to reflect an institution’s serious interest in student learning in all areas” (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, p. 649).

Chickering & Gamson wrote a short, six-page article in 1987 that features prominently in the student engagement literature (CCI Research In., 2009). It is entitled *Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education* and is essentially engagement indicators that can help improve student learning and experience (Umbach, 2005). Chickering & Gamson (1987) argued that good practice in undergraduate education involves the following:

1. Encourages contacts between students and faculty
2. Develops reciprocity and cooperation among students.
3. Uses active learning techniques.
4. Gives prompt feedback.
5. Emphasizes time on task.
6. Communicates high expectations.
7. Respects diverse talents and ways of learning. (p. 2)

These principles also can help institutions and faculty determine the educational activities that best engage students (Matthews, 2011). Of the seven principles, five of them directly address faculty duties, expectations and actions (Umbach, 2005). Chickering & Gamson (1987) also cited numerous examples of best practices and practical applications of these principles including the following:

freshman seminars on important topics taught by senior faculty; learning groups of five to seven students who meet regularly during class to solve problems set by the instructor; active learning using structured exercises, discussions, term projects, and peer critiques, as well as internships and independent study; and mastery learning, contract learning, and computer-assisted instruction approaches, which required adequate time on learning. (p. 1)

Faculty beliefs, attitudes and actions therefore have a dramatic effect on students and on student engagement. Therefore, faculty involvement that strengthens student engagement involves the following: expectations, lectures, marking, multiple teaching methods, research, response to students, role models, communication and many others. As Umbach (2005) concludes, “if educational practices lead to student engagement and student engagement leads to certain outcomes of college (e.g., student learning and

retention) then it can be said that educational practices indirectly lead to student outcomes from higher education” (p. 156).

Student Context in PSE

The literature supports various aspects of the student context as being important in engaging students in PSE. Astin’s (1993) I-E-O model specifically informs the student context portion of the student engagement model. Astin describes the student bringing their ‘inputs’ into college and then enters the institutional environment. According to Astin (1993), environment “refers to the various programs, policies, faculty, peers, and educational experiences to which the student is exposed (p. 7).

Kuh et al. (1991) found that the institution’s mission, vision, core values, philosophy and purpose together formulate the school’s culture and provides a framework for its future development (Kezar & Kinzie, 2006). Student services, programs and policies as well as faculty, staff and institutional culture are all shaped by the vision and mission of the college. These, together with the history of a school, shape the involvement and engagement of students. According to Kuh et al. (2006), institutional reputation, rankings and campus symbols and mythology generally do not have a significant impact on educational experiences. While these can influence who attends PSE, myths and institutional stories have only a slight impact on student learning outcomes (Kuh et al., 2006). Campus myths and symbols, though, would arguably have a significant impact in rallying students, staff and faculty together around change, learning and even engagement (Bolman & Deal, 2003). This, though, has not been adequately researched. Maramba (2008) argued that the college culture or campus climate such as the acceptance of diversity gives students the feelings of inclusiveness and can have a strong positive effect on student persistence. Kezar and Kinzie (2006) as well as Bolman and Deal (2003) provide research that indicates that institutions are more effective and efficient if they align their mission together with their policies and procedures. When institutions achieve this missional and procedural alignment, they create “‘a mission that is alive’ guiding the activities and work of students, staff and faculty” (Kezar & Kinzie, 2006, p. 169-170) that in turn promotes student engagement.

The campus environment also has a significant impact on student engagement. The campus buildings including residences and on-campus housing shape the student experience as well as the campus

environment. Living in residence on campus is documented as being one of the most important factors in integrating students into PSE (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Logically speaking, living on campus allows a student to be able to be more involved in outside of class activities. It also allows students to have more access to libraries, laboratories, group study and classrooms. This involvement can strengthen engagement. Social integration also occurs in residence. Pascarella & Terenzini (1991) found that “living on or near campus while attending college is consistently one of the most important determinants of a student’s level of integration or involvement in the social system of an institution” (p. 400). Astin also argued that the opposite is true. Astin (1993) stated that students who live off campus experience negative “cognitive and affective outcomes” (p. 395) given separation from their peers. Huesman (2009) agreed that freshmen living in residence for their first term tend to have stronger academic success but nonresident students are less successful academically.

Huesman (2009) also found that students who use on-campus recreational facilities have stronger academic success. Astin (1993) developed positive correlations between the physical campus (i.e. residence, library and classroom), student satisfaction and choice of college with persistence (Huesman, 2009). Astin further argued that the college environment actually provides opportunities for social and academic involvement (Maramba, 2008).

Baird (2009) notes that the physical ambience and/or convenience of campus location can have a positive effect on the student experience. Baird (2009) found that access to child care, parking and disability services can improve the student experience but this alone does not directly engage students. Students love a beautiful campus, good services, close parking and fantastic clubs but these things do not fundamentally transform a student. As Baird (2009) noted, “the experience is not of the institution but because of the personal transformation that occurs, albeit often in a setting facilitated by a culture of acceptance and welcome” (p. 195).

Hence, for traditional students, engagement is often promoted through students being involved in the context of PSE that includes the following: social, political, cultural economic, symbolic, institutional policies and procedures, campus and human resources environment, residence and on-campus housing

(Baird, 2009; Huesman, 2009; Maramba, 2008; Kezar & Kinzie, 2006; Kuh et al., 2006; Bolman & Deal, 2003; Astin, 1993; Kuh et al., 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

Student Outputs

Even though campus leadership spends considerable financial and human resources in support services, there is a small body of literature linking staff and student support services with engagement. In Maramba's 2008 study of Asian Pacific American (APA) students, she found that because APA students are high academic achievers, the college assumes that they do not need any specific student services. Maramba (2008) stated that this stereotype tends to silence the voices and needs of this student group. The APA students have thus become more involved in cultural student groups and with the multicultural student services on campus (Maramba, 2008). Similarly, Maken (2009) developed a "just-in-time" student service framework for first-year college students. In this framework, she outlined many support services that help to engage students including orientation strategies, integration of support service information into faculty lectures and some seminars on developing good study skills (Maken, 2009).

Even though there is little literature on student service involvement, studies show that educational policies and practices shape student involvement and engagement. Kuh et al. (1991) researched 14 colleges to determine best practices in advancing student learning and engagement outside the classroom. They (1991) found the following:

Efforts are directed to: communicating expectations that students fully participate in the life of the institution; creating opportunities for and removing obstacles to student involvement in their own education; and encouraging students to be responsible for the quality of their living and out-of-class learning environments. Student learning is promoted by creating numerous contexts, such as residences, governing bodies, and work, in which students can take significant responsibility for their lives and education. (p. 256)

Student use of student support services shape student engagement.

Academic involvement also helps promote student engagement. Alexander W. Astin first wrote *Predicting Academic Performance in College* in 1971 followed by his seminal books *Four Critical Years* in 1977 and *What Matters in College: Four Critical Years Revisited* in 1993. Astin is likely best known for developing a theory of involvement in PSE. Simply put, the more involved students are in PSE, the more they learn, positively experience college and persist to completion (Matthews, 2011; CCI Research Inc.,

2009; Maramba, 2008; Rayle, 2007; Umbach, 2005). In greater detail, this model consists of physical and psychological student investments, environmental experiences, institutional practices and time and energy spent (i.e. student-faculty contact, joining student association clubs, living on campus, full time vs. part-time and having a close peer group) in PSE, the stronger quantity and quality of which achieves greater student outcomes (i.e. academic performance, student learning, student development and graduation) (Matthews, 2011; CCI Research Inc., 2009; Umbach, 2005). Negatively put, a lack of involvement strongly contributes to student attrition (Matthews, 2011).

Astin does account for student motivation in attending college but encouraged stronger and more active participation and involvement in the college experience. Astin (1993) specifically stated that “the student’s peer group is the single most potent source of influence on growth and development during the undergraduate years” (p. 398). Astin also argued that grade point average (GPA) is the strongest predictor of college retention. In summary, Astin (1993) annotated that a “wide spectrum of cognitive and affective outcomes is negatively affected by forms of involvement that either isolate the student from peers or remove the student physically from the campus: living at home, commuting, being employed off campus, being employed full-time, and watching television” (p. 395). Thus academic involvement promotes student engagement.

Social involvement also helps to engage students in PSE. Most of the leading student engagement theorists listed above, such as Tinto (1993) and Astin (1993), identify social involvement as being significant to student engagement. Part of being socially involved in higher education is for a student to belong, fit and matter. One of the first to develop the concept of mattering are Rosenberg and McCullough (1981), who stated that “it is fair to conclude that mattering is a motive; the feeling that others depend on us, are interested in us, are concerned with our fate, or experience us as an ego-extension exercises a powerful influence on our actions” (p. 165).

A number of years later Nancy Schlossberg developed a theory of mattering within the college context. To Schlossberg (1989), mattering involved others being concerned about us, being interested in us and depending on us. Schlossberg (1989) studied 533 first-year undergraduate students to better understand their relationships with each other. In this study, Schlossberg (1989) found that a student’s peer group is the

most important predictor of mattering, that female students have stronger levels of support from family and friends and that academic stress levels increase when the student feels the institution matters to them (Rayle, 2007).

Schlossberg (1989) also defined marginality as the opposite of mattering: to not be needed, not fit in and not be accepted. In 1979, Michel Foucault (1995) also wrote about alienation, which is in many ways similar to marginality. In this work, Foucault (1995) argued that there is invisible power in the world that is expressed in the examination and the confession. In the higher education context, this alienation or form of estrangement is from a group or situation to which a student should be involved or belong (Mann, 2001). This could involve separation from “the subject and process of study itself” (Mann, 2001, p. 8). This alienation or marginality could be a lack of fit in the academic and social structures in PSE, which can result in a student feeling worthless, inadequate or powerless (Schlossberg, 1989; Rayle, 2007). These feelings of inadequacy can often lead to less engagement and success. The reverse also holds true. Students who feel that they matter in PSE have fewer feelings of alienation and therefore usually have stronger academic success and social involvement (Rayle, 2007).

In one recent study on the mattering of first-year undergraduate students, Rayle (2007) found that when students have significant support from family and friends, they then transfer that mattering to their friends in college. This support from friends and family also helps these students with their feelings of academic stress (Rayle, 2007). Similarly, Astin (1993) demonstrated that a student’s peers have a strong impact on their engagement in PSE. Likewise, Pascarella & Terenzini (1993) found that social involvement increases commitment and persistence, which leads to engagement.

Other studies support the same theory of socialization increasing engagement. Huang and Chang (2004) researched third-year PSE students in Taiwan and found that involvement in extracurricular activities strengthens persistence and engagement. Specifically, Huang and Chang (2004) found that “student clubs and organizations may promote academic involvement by providing students with the opportunity to informally develop support groups, find study partners, and seek advice from other students” (p. 392). Chang (2002) also found that students who are socially involved in peer networks tend to have stronger academic achievement.

Maramba's (2008) research confirms the same findings. Students want to belong in PSE and if they do not, they tend to create and/or find a "safe space" at the school. This doesn't necessarily mean a safe physical space but a safe cultural, political and social environment (Maramba, 2008). This space allows them to have a voice and to be able to "express oneself without the feeling of being tokenized and essentialized" (Maramba, 2008, p. 1054). Students' sense of belonging occurs in community, both personal and the PSE community, according to Maramba's (2008) research findings. This reflection of feelings is referred to by Villegas and Lucas (2002) as sociocultural consciousness, which is "an understanding that people's ways of thinking, behaving, and being are deeply influenced by such factors as race/ethnicity, social class and language" (p. 22). In order to engage diverse students, colleges therefore could engage their sociocultural consciousness (Alfred, 2009). Therefore, engagement occurs through student outputs that include the following: student service, academic and social involvement in PSE (Matthews, 2011; Alfred, 2009; CCI Research Inc., 2009; Maken, 2009; Maramba, 2008; Rayle, 2007; Umbach, 2005; Huang & Chang, 2004; Chang, 2002; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Mann, 2001; Foucault, 1995; Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1993; Tinto, 1993; Kuh et al., 1991; Schlossberg, 1989; Rosenberg and McCullough, 1981).

Student Outcomes

Likely the hope of many students who enter PSE is to have some return on their investment of time and money. These student outcomes can include a gain in skills, knowledge expansion, persisting to completion and even demonstrating some hallmarks of a liberal education. Astin's (1993) I-E-O model informs this portion of the student engagement conceptual framework. After a student brings his or her 'inputs' into PSE and experiences the many aspects of PSE, the student can face varied 'outcomes'. Astin (1993) defines these outcomes as "the student's characteristics after exposure to the environment" (p. 7). The measurable change experienced by the student through the collegiate experience is determined by comparing their student outputs such as the student skill, knowledge and learning development with their inputs.

Tinto's (1993) model of institutional departure, while focusing on disengagement leading to departure rather than student engagement, does encompass many components of a student's experience in PSE. The model's focus on a negative departure outcome to engagement rather than a positive persistence

or completion outcome still can inform this student engagement theoretical framework. Tinto's model clearly delineates the academic system from the social system (see Figure 2). The academic system leads to academic integration while the social system leads to social integration with both being outcomes of PSE. Similar to Tinto's (1993) model, Weidman (1989) developed a model of socialization that includes student background characteristics. As a student experiences PSE, the student then develops distinct socialization outcomes such as: "career choices, lifestyle preferences, aspirations and values" (Weidman, 1989, p. 299).

Student outcomes also include the hallmarks of a liberal education. James Côté and Anton Allahar argue for the current role of a liberal education in their book *Ivory Tower Blues* (2007) and discuss the fall of liberal education in their book *Lowering Higher Education* (2011). Yet, in both books they infer the importance and value of liberal education as an outcome for students in PSE. They discuss that the outcome of PSE should be education and not training (Côté & Allahar, 2007). The hallmarks of a liberal education are "a broad-based, wide-ranging exposure to ideas that enhances intellectual development and civic awareness (Côté & Allahar, 2011, p. 3). It is "about the sculpting of the human mind and spirit; the cultivation of rounded human beings, and the facilitation of civilized discourse among them" (Côté & Allahar, 2007, p. 184). Axelrod, Anisef and Lin (2001) similarly contend that the traits of a liberal education should include the following: critical thinking, intellectual creativity, breadth and depth of knowledge, autonomy, comprehension, resilience, clear writing, persuasive verbal skills, embracing of diversity and effective citizenship that will "intrinsically reward the individual and serve him or her well in the world beyond the university" (p. 54). It involves learning for its own sake, where ideally the learning process "is valued irrespective of the product (a grade or a credential)" (Coté and Allahar, 2011, p. 64). These indicators of a liberal education are arguably the student outcomes that should develop when a student is academically and socially engaged in PSE.

Pace's quality of effort theory also informs student outcomes and was operationalized in the "1979 questionnaire, the College Student Experiences Survey (CSEQ) and its more recent community-college counterpart, the Community College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CCSEQ)" (CCI Research Inc., 2009, p. 12). Pace (1979) articulates that

what students can gain from the variety of events depends on the amount, scope, and quality of their engagement. As these encounters broaden and deepen, the student's capacity for growth is enhanced. To document objectively the scope and quality of students' effort is crucial for understanding growth and development. (p. 127)

Pace's theory of involvement includes not only "the opportunities for engagement that the institution offers, or student participation in college events, [but also] it is the quality of their engagement that most impacts their growth and development" (CCI Research Inc., 2009, p. 42). Thus Pace also links student engagement with the outcomes desired from PSE.

The literature identifies numerous outcomes that motivate and form through PSE including the following: financial gains from completion of PSE, emotional growth, moral development, problem solving skills, cognitive advancement, improved quality of life, knowledge expansion, leadership abilities, social capital acquisition, occupational preparation, transferability of skills, psychosocial maturity and personal development (Miller & Butler, 2011; Astin, 1993; Kuh, 1995; Kuh et al., 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Astin, 1985; Astin, 1977). These PSE outcomes largely occur when a student is academically and socially engaged (Miller & Butler, 2011; Pascarella et al, 2001; Kuh, 1995; Kuh, 1993). Miller and Butler (2011) state that "not surprisingly, students who engage in good educational practices, particularly racially, culturally, intellectually and politically diverse activities, report that they are more successful in their occupations, were well prepared for their occupation, and have higher levels of community involvement than peers who do not engage in good educational practices" (p. 21). Therefore much of these student outcomes come from the academically and socially engaged student who demonstrates the characteristics of having had a liberal education. Before reviewing literature on the engagement of immigrant students, I examine the literature on non-traditional student engagement.

Student engagement literature for Non-Traditional Students

Much of the literature on the involvement and engagement of students, as discussed above, focuses on the traditional student. From the onset of student engagement research, which is still quite recent, perhaps researchers assumed that the findings could be collectively applied to non-traditional students. While much can be learned from the traditional student engagement literature, it is recently expanding to include a more diverse student population. As noted above, Kasworm (2003) argued that this

restricted single-minded approach on a traditional young, middle-class Caucasian student has “limited utility and relevance in today’s college environment” (p. 2). Given Ontario’s increasingly diverse student body and for the interests of this particular thesis, the literature review needs to include non-traditional students.

Adult Students

Given the focus of this thesis on recent immigrant adult students, knowing best practices in engaging adult students informs this study. Traditional students generally are 18 to 24 years old so adult students are usually 25 years old and older. Learners are increasingly diverse in higher education including age. Zhang and Palameta (2006) argued that there are increasing numbers of adult students entering and re-entering PSE. Theorists suggest that strong academic and social involvement increases persistence and engagement (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1993). Given these arguments, adult students who generally are less involved in PSE should demonstrate lower persistence, grades and engagement. Tweedell (2005) agrees stating that “conventional wisdom says that adults who have family and career commitments cannot be as engaged in their education as traditional-aged students” (p. 1).

Adult learners generally study part-time, live off campus, study at institutions close to home, lack confidence in going back to school after a long hiatus and have little time to spend outside of class with faculty, with students or in student clubs (McGivney, 2004). These adult students rarely fit in a cohort and take courses in the evenings, weekends or whenever they can find time. They also generally have off-campus employment, significant family responsibilities, prior experience in PSE and a social network outside of college (Kasworm, 2003). Tweedell (2005) and Wyatt (2011) note that adult students are very involved academically, are highly focused, come prepared to class, are serious, have their assignments and readings completed, demonstrate stronger motivation than traditional students and also contribute significantly in class. Wyatt (2011) also argued that adult students are continually in a mode of transition. According to Pascarella & Terenzini (1991) and Tinto (1993) these adult students should be disengaged, high-risk, marginalized and academically unsuccessful. Capps (2010) research showed low persistence rates for adult students especially when they have family, job and other obligations. Graham and Long (1998) argued that adult students performed as well or better than traditional students “across all four

measures of the intellectual and academic outcomes, despite different patterns of involvement both on-campus and off-campus” (p. 30). Contrary to most traditional student engagement theory, many adult students are academically engaged. Kasworm (2003) found that even though adult students are not socially engaged in PSE that they academically perform as well as or at times better than traditional students in both grades and in aptitude tests.

In general, adult students are less socially engaged than traditional students including involvement in co-curricular activities and unpaid community service. Wyatt (2011) completed a study of adult students in the US and found that the barriers or challenges that they experience in PSE are “exaggerated when students are unable to garner a sense of belonging or connection” (p. 11). Donaldson and Graham (1999) argue that institutions may not be successful in involving adult students socially on campus because of the multiple time constraints and conflicts that they experience. Wyatt’s (2011) findings suggest that “there is nothing that the institution could do to socially engage students in the collegiate environment and campus life due to their hectic lifestyle and personal preferences” (p. 16). Grayson (1997a) stated that further research is needed to understand how adult learners remain academically successful in college even though they experience little or no social engagement on campus. Wyatt (2011) noted that adult students “did not feel the need to be engaged in specific activities or events on or off campus” (p. 16).

Price and Baker (2012) argued that traditional and adult students may engage differently in PSE. They found that “adults may utilize the classroom as the avenue for developing friendships and making meaning of their college experience” (p. 29-30) in order to make up for their lack of time on campus. They also believe that the NSSE benchmarks may be biased against adult students. Adult learners see the classroom as the central focus of their student life and through this framework they experience higher education in this ‘connecting classroom’ (Kasworm, 2003). Ashar and Skenes (1993) found that the social environment in PSE is what helps adult students persist in PSE. In particular, adults experience social integration in the classroom rather than in the institution as a whole. This integration can occur with a small group of adult “peers at the same level of career maturity [who] created a social environment that motivated adult learners to persist (Kerka, 1995, p. 3-4). Tweedell (2005) found that “adult students may know fewer of their fellow students, but have very close relationships with those students” (p. 2). Likewise, Hoskins

(2012) noted that student peer collaborations (transactional engagement indicators) were more important to adult students than the institutionally-led social interactions (institutional support indicators).

Some faculty have tried to help adult students by providing more flexibility in assignment deadlines and course schedules as well as encouraging adult student participation in class discussions (MacFadgen, 2008). Faculty recommended in MacFadgen's (2008) research to create social space within academic areas to help facilitate faculty and student outside-class interactions. Adults approach PSE differently from traditional students. Research notes that adult students make less use of the following services than traditional students: religious centres, orientation, on-campus housing, health services, academic advising, financial aid, campus union, counseling and student activities (Kasworm, 2003). Interestingly, adult students make stronger use of more individual services than younger students such as library, registrar, admissions and tutorial services. In other words, adult students are involved in services and activities that they perceive as having a direct impact on their academic success. MacFadgen (2008) noted that "goal orientation, perceived relevance of studies, student-faculty relationships, and financial concerns emerged as the most influential contributors to mature students' persistence" (p.69). In the study, MacFadgen (2008) discovered that adult students were "less inclined to change their programs and were more determined, confident, and satisfied with their faculty relationships and classroom experiences than their younger counterparts" (p.7).

Donaldson and Graham (1999) in developing a model of college outcomes (see Figure 1) for adult students recognize that it is difficult to involve adult students in campus life because of their conflicting life responsibilities even though there is so much evidence regarding the merits of involvement. Similar with Kasworm (2003), Donaldson and Graham (1999) note that even though adults are not socially involved in PSE that they use the "connecting classroom as the central avenue for social engagement on campus" (p. 28). Adult students seem to connect their new learning with their existing knowledge and "achieve a new, more 'authentic involvement' that addresses their comprehensive community and life roles and is not limited to the classroom or to experiences in college clubs or organization" (p. 27). Therefore the classroom becomes the central focus of adult student learning as they spend such little time on campus.

Kasworm (2003) suggested that future studies should focus on “experiences connected to the current adult lives and knowledge structures rather than collegiate out-of-class experiences for forming more vibrant and vital conceptual frameworks targeted to the adult student” (p. 29). Since many adult learners have studied and/or will study in other institutions, a longitudinal study of the engagement of adults as they learn in numerous institutions could inform PSE in better servicing adults. This research could consider adults’ “rationale for exiting or entering college in relation to their adult life supports and life deterrents as well as their collegiate institutional barriers and supports” (Kasworm, 2003, p. 9).

Taylor, Kajganich and Pavić (2011) specifically discussed adult students who have low literacy and numeracy skills and their resultant social outcomes. They argue that social capital is not only an input to learning but also an educational outcome for adults. Taylor et al. (2011) also agree that adult learning needs to be situated in a framework of life-long learning. Using additional literature support, they state the importance of engaging adult students through the development of social capital and that the ideal method of this engagement is to link adult prior learning experiences with social capital. They urge further research to fill the literature gap on the social capital of Canadian immigrants. Further research on adult student engagement is still needed as after all, adult students still experience alienation from their own cultural backgrounds (Case, 2008).

Diverse Students

Greater numbers of students from various cultural and racial backgrounds are entering Ontario higher education in recent years. This influx of diverse learners is a result of immigration to Canada, a lack of Canadians having children and the presence of international students. As a result, researchers have begun to look at how engaged minority students are in PSE. Kuh et al. (2006) found that diverse students are less likely to persist to degree completion than traditional non-minority students. This racial/ethnic academic performance gap is likely due to the difficulties diverse learners have in negotiating the different institutional culture (Alfred, 2009; Kuh et al., 2006). Some of the difference is that Western colleges have a more individualistic orientation in comparison with a non-Western collectivist orientation (Alfred, 2009).

Rendón et al. (2000) and Guiffrida (2006) critiqued Tinto’s contention that diverse students need to assimilate into the college culture thus denying their native culture. While Tinto’s model is applicable to

traditional students, it appears to be outdated for the diverse student body. Rendón et al. (2000) found Tinto's model to be based on an "assimilation/acclulturation framework" (p. 128). Guiffrida (2006) found that diverse learners are academically successful if they are involved and engaged in their native environment and the new institutional culture. Hurtado (1997) agreed that minority students should decide their own methods of involvement, which could include joining diverse cultural clubs, networking with non-college friends and taking racial courses. Skadberg (2005) concurred that diverse students are more engaged when their native culture is affirmed rather than having to conform solely to the new institutional environment.

The literature on the engagement of non-traditional students is sparse and tends to focus on adult, diverse, disabled and part-time students. Yet, this literature helps inform the focus of involving and engaging immigrant students as the literature on immigrant students is also highly limited.

Student engagement literature for Immigrant Students

Researchers agree that there is a growing urgency to understand immigrant engagement in PSE (Stebbleton, 2010; Kim, 2009; Erisman & Looney, 2007; Szelényi & Chang, 2002; Gray, Rolph, & Melamid, 1996). Kim (2009) specifically noted the need to understand "how immigrant students negotiate acculturative stress, social integration, cultural values, and academic engagement to navigate toward success in college" (p. 9). Huesman (2009) also indirectly encouraged further study of immigrants by stating that "institutions should pay particular attention to underrepresented populations of students and to students who are academically at-risk to ensure that they are aware of opportunities for involvement and that their involvement is not limited by real or perceived barriers" (p. 67). While we do not have a clear idea of the number of immigrants in higher education in Canada, in the U.S. over 12% of the total number of undergraduate students are immigrants (Stebbleton, 2010). Finnie et al. (2010) found in their study sample that 8.4 percent of the college students in Canada were immigrants and 11.7 percent of the college students in Ontario were immigrants. This is a review of the minute literature on immigrant engagement, where I will examine immigrant social, academic (learning and teaching), student support service (PSE policies and practices) and campus environment involvement.

Immigrant Social Involvement

There have been many studies examining social involvement of traditional students, a few studies on diverse student social engagement but a dearth of research on immigrant social engagement (Stebleton, 2010). Perez (2007) in discussing strategies to help immigrants stated that “precisely because schools represent the strongest influence to the socialization of new immigrants, educational policies and practices must be based on a better understanding of the cultural and academic orientations of its diverse students” (p. 1-2). Lapierre and Loslier (2003) established a strong link between immigrant integration in PSE and their success. In reviewing this study, Pilote and Benabdeljalil (2007) stated that there were two stages of integration: “quotidian functioning (habituating to the climate, to food, to transportation, etc.)...[and] social integration...[that was] tied to national origin, to the level of French proficiency, and to the familiarization with the cultural codes and values that predominate in the society of reception” (p. 29). Guiffrida’s (2006) notion of bicultural engagement, which is being involved in their native and college culture, is significant for immigrant students. Similar to adult and minority students, immigrant students have little spare time and therefore their social involvement is generally not on campus but with off-campus family and friends that Guiffrida (2006) referred to as “home social systems” (p. 457).

Katherine Ross (2010), in her dissertation, found that immigrant students do well in secondary school largely because of the social capital within their family units and immigrant communities. Ross (2010) argued that “while immigrant parents may have reduced human capital themselves, parental culture and social capital within immigrant communities appeared to play a more important role in transmitting the attitudes, behaviours, and value of a university education” (p. 157). In many ways, the aspirations of immigrant parents’ helped to instill a type of immigrant optimism with children to work hard in their studies and to be strongly motivated. Ross (2010) noted that “it was the immigrant parents’ “stories of sacrifice that instilled parental expectations for their child’s participation in post-secondary education in hopes of creating a better life in their adopted country” (p. 157-158). While Ross’s (2010) study was specifically on immigrant secondary school children, it does highlight the importance of socialization of immigrants while they are pursuing studies and this can inform the socialization of RIAs in PSE.

Stebleton (2010) examined socialization of immigrants in PSE. Using the Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) survey, Stebleton (2010) gathered responses from 55,433 students from six major universities and found “that immigrant students’ perception of their sense of belonging and satisfaction is significantly lower than their non-immigrant peers’ perceptions (p. 1). This strongly suggests that many RIAS are not being socialized in PSE, that they desire to be socially engaged in PSE and that social engagement is linked to RIAS satisfaction in PSE. Given the focus of the research, large sample size and severity of the conclusion, this finding is significant to this thesis. It is also important to test whether Pascarella’s & Terenzini’s (1991) argument that socialization helps persistence and commitment to PSE and that living in residence helps social engagement applies to not only traditional students but also RIAS.

Immigrant Academic (Learning and Teaching) Involvement

Some immigrants enter PSE with a collectivist orientation whereas teaching in Canada is most often from an individualist viewpoint (Alfred, 2009). While it may be difficult and unreasonable to change teaching orientation, faculty also cannot assume that all learners will be able to quickly adjust to a new outlook. Given the influx of immigrants in higher education, Alfred (2009) argues that faculty and students should be provided with a clear understanding of what constitutes different cultural orientations. This would assist faculty in creating a more “culturally-responsive education that would bridge the cultural divide” (Alfred, 2009, p. 139) as well as support RIAS in creating a bicultural orientation. These changes are rather difficult as faculty members are altering historical institutional culture and immigrants are also dealing with the dichotomy of school and home culture. Some helpful tools are for RIAS to become involved in reflective journals of themselves and their studies and for faculty to infuse increasing amounts of nonwestern information into the courses (Alfred, 2009). This could assist in creating more inclusive learning communities.

Ogbu (1991) and Gibson & Ogbu (1991) also reviewed the bicultural outlook of immigrant minorities and non-immigrant minorities and, while they share this outlook, found differences in psychosocial orientation in educational accomplishment. They discovered that immigrant minorities have a voluntary outlook while non-immigrant minorities have an involuntary viewpoint on educational attainment. These researchers determined that immigrant minority students have a dual conceptual outlook,

where they can compare their experiences now with often more difficult circumstances from their country of origin (Ogbu, 1991). Non-immigrant minorities do not have this multiple viewpoint. Ogbu (1991) observed that immigrant minority students see difficulties, in comparison, as temporary that they can overcome through more education and hard work. Gibson & Ogbu (1991) argued that minority immigrants see PSE as “one arena where minorities have the opportunity to compete on a more or less equal footing with members of the majority group regardless of family background” (p. 361). Immigrant minority students have stronger personal agency but non-immigrant diverse learners perceive barriers as being insurmountable and therefore feel less likely to persist in PSE (Gibson & Ogbu, 1991). These findings have implications for educating immigrants in that immigrants work diligently to overcome language and cultural barriers in PSE and persist so that they can eventually gain employment. PSE can assist in offering courses that affirm RIAS’ identity and encourage continued social integration with their off-campus friends and family.

With regards to RIAS academic involvement, Skadberg (2005) ascertained that RIAS have “higher degree aspirations, higher college GPAs, greater odds of graduating, and take fewer years to graduate than native-born students” (p. 123). Other recent studies indicate that RIAS have the same or higher grades and are more satisfied with PSE than traditional students (Kasworm, 2003). These are unexpected outcomes given the traditional student engagement literature and the experiences of RIAS in PSE. Astin’s (1993) theory of involvement indicates that students need to be involved in all aspects of campus life both inside and outside the classroom in order to persist. This is not possible for RIAS as they generally have to seek off-campus employment, have to care for their children and even their parents and usually cannot live in residence on campus. Likewise, Pace (1979) argues that students need to spend considerable time and effort in PSE in order to learn and develop. RIAS do not have much time and yet earn good grades. Similarly, Kuh (1991) states that students need to spend time and effort in on-campus activities to improve their grades and retention. Again, RIAS do not have time to be involved in many on-campus activities yet they achieve good grades and often persist to completion. The Skadberg (2005) and Kasworm (2003) studies are quite vital to this thesis as traditional engagement theory dictates that RIAS should achieve lower grades, be less satisfied with PSE than traditional students and leave PSE.

Immigrant Student Support Services (PSE Policies and Practices) Involvement

There is limited literature on immigrant involvement in student support services including policies and practices in PSE. Most immigrants entering into PSE are adults who have already completed some PSE in their country of origin. Szelenyi & Chang (2002) learned that in comparison with traditional students, immigrants are 20% more likely to start their studies in college and complete their education in university. Being adult students and often having family and employment responsibilities, causes many immigrants to attend PSE part-time. Statistics Canada (2003a) showed in the LSIC data that 87% of RIAS enroll in only one course with a smaller group only taking two or more courses per term. Most colleges and universities plan curriculum and support services for regular full-time students but RIAS do not fit this model of study (Chang, 2002). Kuh & Love (2000) similarly argued that even though educational institutions explicitly state that they value diverse students, the institutional culture is such that immigrants need to change themselves to fit into the dominant culture. Gibson (1991) identified one way to combat this issue was to include a bicultural orientation into institutional policy and practice that in turn helps to engage RIAS.

A few studies identified how institutions can help RIAS use services and better engage in PSE. Out-of-class activities that involve learning teams or collaborative study arrangements help engage RIAS in PSE (Chang, 2002). Tracy (2004) observed that involving RIAS' families and friends in on-campus activities such as orientation strengthened the support networks for immigrants. Schonfeld (2003) identified that degree completion programs, generous prior learning, fair credential assessment, work placements, coop learning, off-campus and online courses as well as evening and weekend courses also help RIAS. RIAS make strong use of institutional financial aid offices and specifically the Canada Student Loan program due to the increasing cost of tuition, books and child care expenses (Anisef et al., 2009).

Staff and faculty often interpret and carry out the institutional mission, policies and practices. Caring support of RIAS in both an academic and personal nature by faculty and staff is found to create a strengthened support system for immigrants and can transform them into successfully engaged students (Kilbride & D'Arcangelo, 2002; Rendón et al., 2000). Tracy (2004) articulated that giving RIAS information on academic and faculty expectations, Canada's educational system, financial aid and the free student services helped RIAS.

Immigrant Involvement in the Student Context in PSE

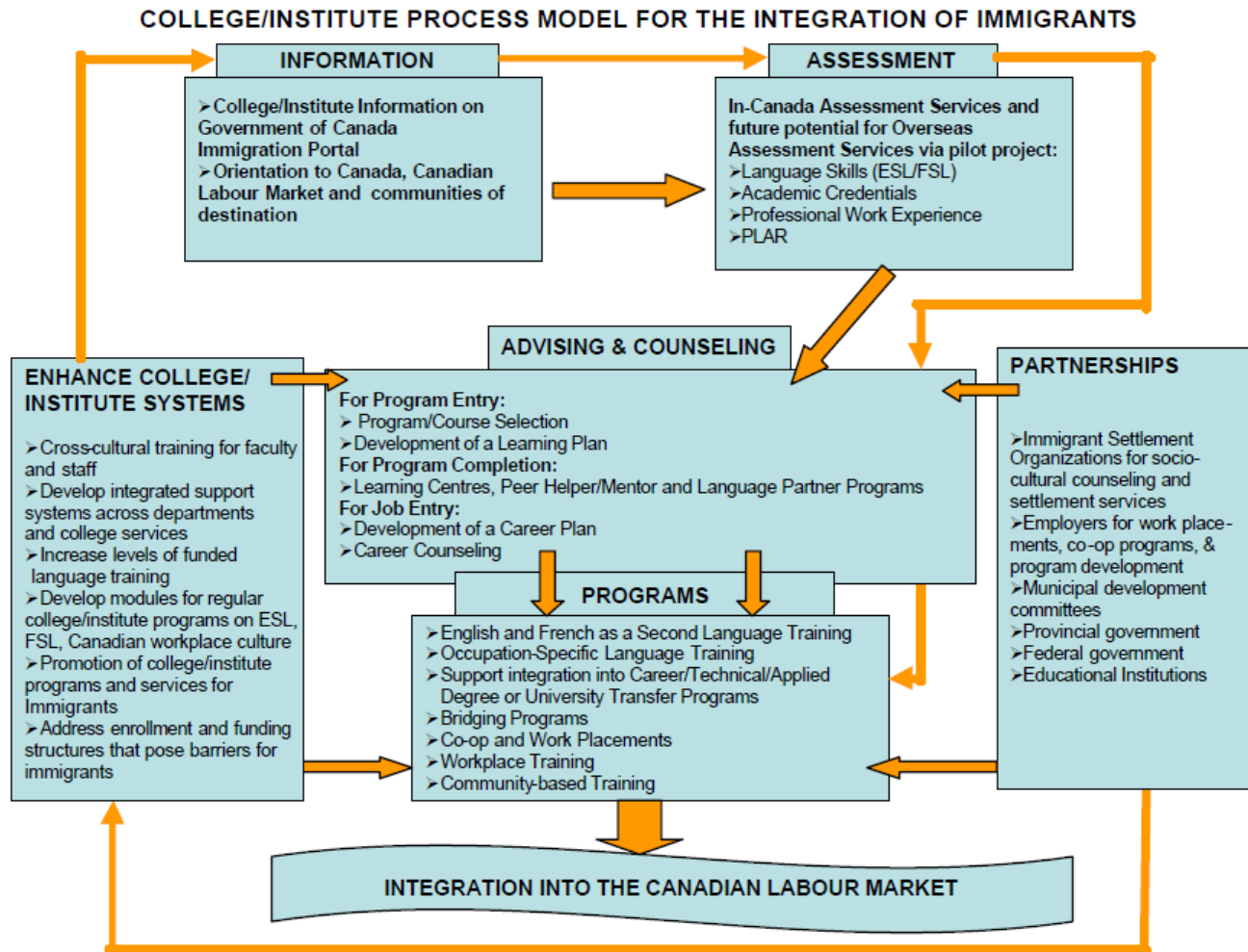
Similar to adult students, RIAs tend to live and work off campus (Kasworm, 2003; Rendón et al., 2000). As noted above, immigrant involvement and social interaction tend to take place off campus. Once again, as the literature on RIAs is so very limited there is little research on immigrant involvement in the student context in PSE. Tracy (2004) stated that the few studies on RIAs demonstrate that higher education has little planned to support immigrants and adult learners.

The Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) published a study in 2004 funded by the Federal Government (HRSDC), another study in 2008 (funded by the Federal Government's Foreign Credential Recognition Program) and subsequently in 2011 an updated Executive Summary of the 2008 study. The initial 2004 report reviewed the diagnostic survey of programs and services for RIAs in Canadian colleges. This report produced a model (see Figure 3) that identified how colleges can enhance structures, systems and services to help integrate immigrants to employment. In the subsequent 2008 and 2011 reports, ACCC expanded upon its first model to develop a more comprehensive model (see Figure 4). This revised model included wrap-around services specifically geared towards RIAs. While these two models were developed specifically to help RIAs better integrate into employment, there are a number of factors identified in the exemplars that could play a role in identifying the institutional strategies that result in the effective engagement of RIAs in PSE such as the following: "immigrant specific orientation activities; diversity/immigrant integration office; peer helpers or mentors with immigrants/alumni; immigrant student info in library; daycare; and personal, diversity, cross-cultural and anti-discrimination counselling" (ACCC, 2011, p. 5).

Immigrant Optimism

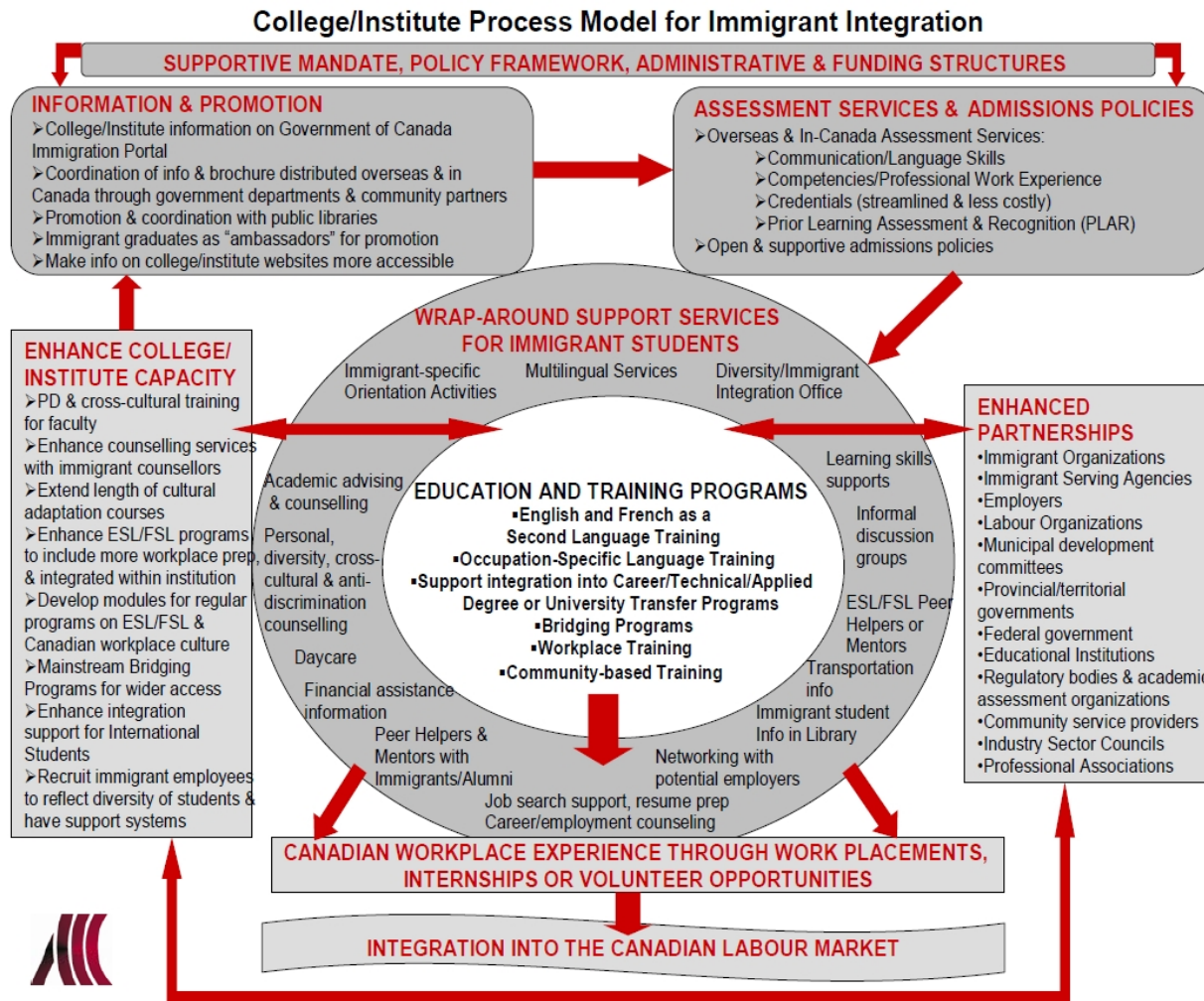
The concept of immigrant optimism has been discussed since the 1990's but in virtually all cases involves immigrant secondary students, yet this optimism concept and immigrant attributes are arguably applicable to RIAs. Immigrant optimism refers to the notion that "recent immigrants may have greater faith in the use of education to achieve upward mobility than their more established racial or ethnic minority peers in the second or third generation (Gibson and Ogbu, 1991)" (Cruz, 2008, p. 2). Perez (2007) in discussing immigrant children in the U.S. found that their optimism accounts for much of their higher

Figure 3 – 1st Process Model to Integrate RIAS to Employment



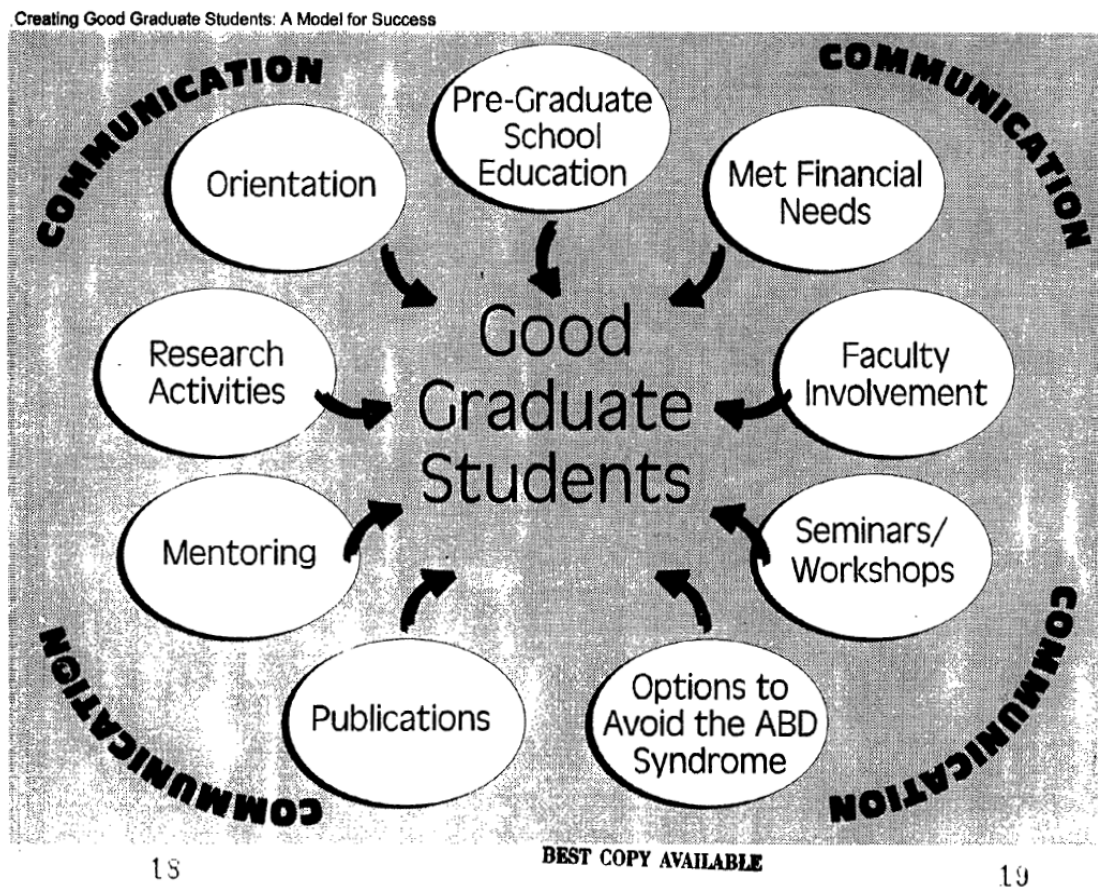
(ACCC, 2004, p. 29)

Figure 4 – 2nd Process Model to Integrate RIAS to Employment



grades and stronger retention rates in comparison with later generations of immigrants. Kao and Tienda (1995) similarly argued in favour of the immigrant optimism theory pertaining primarily to children going to high school with immigrant parents. In attempting to explain immigrant optimism, Escobar (2006) noted that “they filter their expectations through the prism of their current, difficult circumstances...Leaving one country in search of a life elsewhere is a self-selective process--the immigrant often takes on the challenge where others don't because he or she believes that in doing so life will get better. And, even if going to a new land involves hardships, immigrants tend to believe fervently that it will make life better for their kids” (p. 1). That being said, Escobar also found that immigrant optimism only seems to be effective for one generation. This finding may be applicable to RIAS as well.

Figure 5 – Graduate Student Success Model



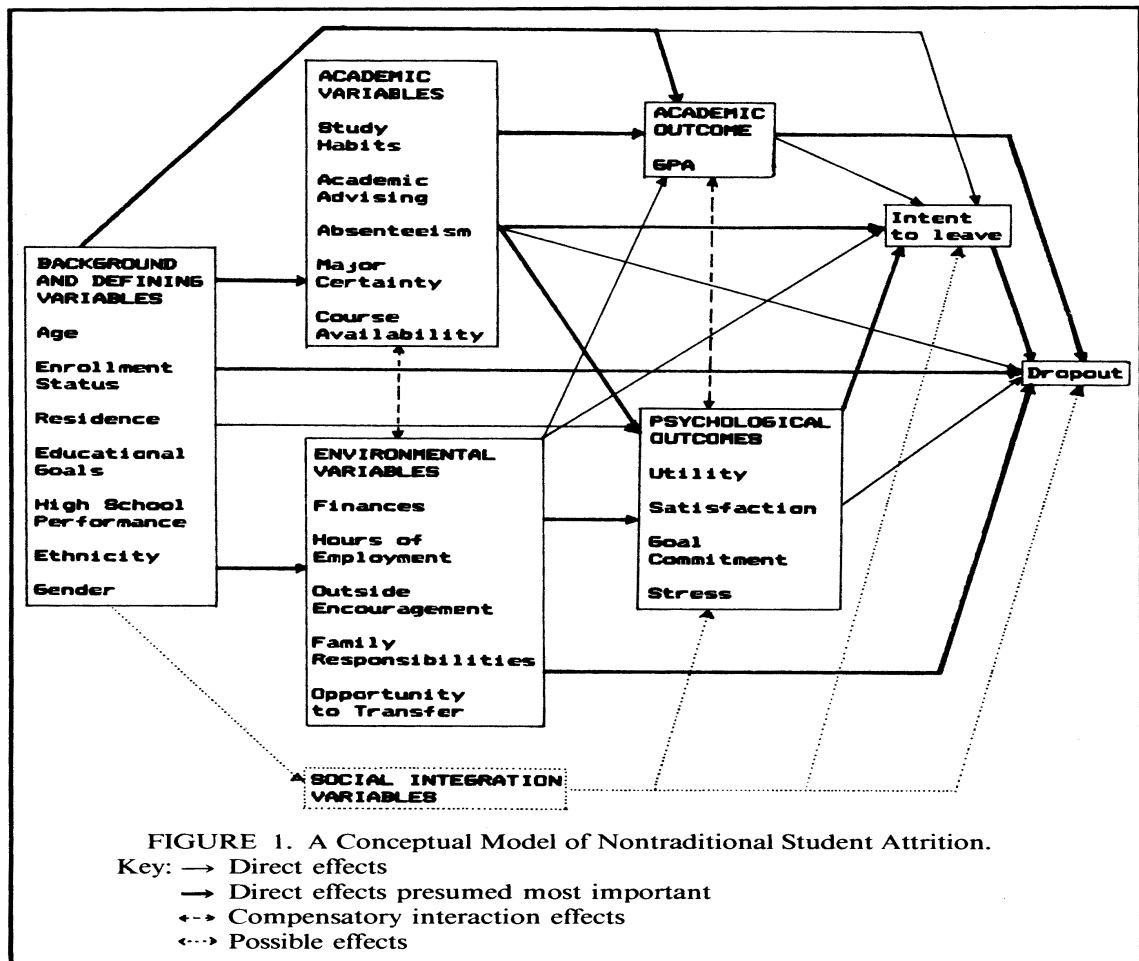
(Hahs, 1998, p. 18-19)

Graduate Student Success, Nontraditional Student Attrition & RIAS Engagement Models

Hahs (1998) created an interesting model for graduate student success (see Figure 5). This serves as a visual representation of some of the factors that combine to create a stronger graduate student experience. While this example takes some of the literature on student engagement into account to help improve aspects of the student experience, it is incomplete with regards to full student engagement. The Hahs model shows limited student inputs such as pre-graduate school education and does not mention student colleagues and other social influences on students while they are in higher education as well as the policies, procedures, student services and culture that are found within PSE. Aspects of this exemplar, though, can be used to create a more complete engagement model.

Figure 6 – Nontraditional Student Attrition Model

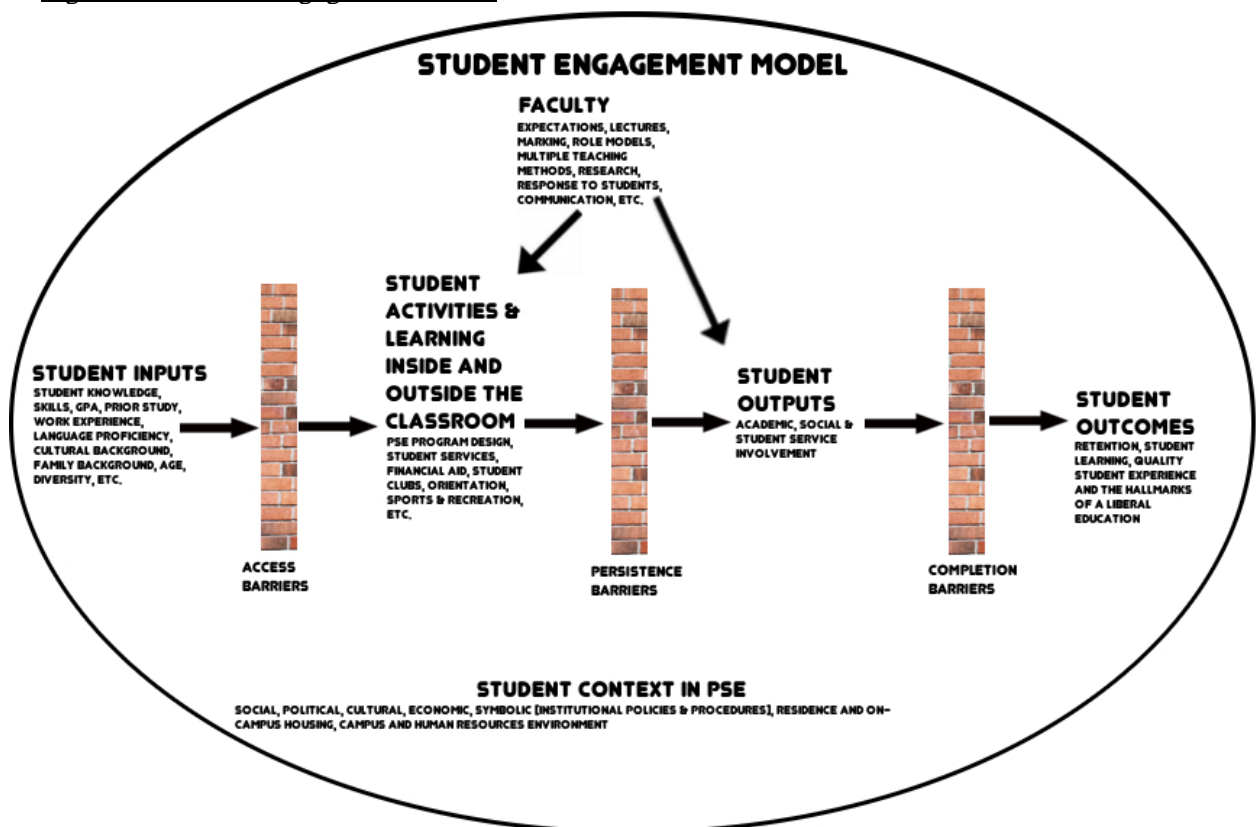
NONTRADITIONAL STUDENT ATTRITION



(Bean & Metzner, 1985, p. 491)

Bean and Metzner (1985) wrote a key article on nontraditional student attrition that informs the development of the RIAS engagement theoretical model. The student inputs in this model (see Figure 6) are notated by the background and defining student variables such as age, gender, ethnicity and GPA. Academic involvement is included under academic variables and similarly social involvement is highlighted by social integration variables. One very influential portion of this model is the environmental variables. These are persistence variables for RIAS that include many barriers identified in adult and immigrant literature include finances, hours of employment, family responsibilities and encouragement. Similarly, the psychological outcomes such as satisfaction are a form of student outputs of engagement in PSE.

Figure 7 – Student Engagement Model



The RIAS engagement model is derived from the traditional, non-traditional, adult and immigrant student engagement literature. Firstly, this student engagement model (see Figure 7) entails Finníe & Usher’s (2000) and Bean & Metzner’s notion of student inputs including high school or equivalent grades

and quality of education, learning inputs, social integration in high school, source country of origin, social capital, resources and whether they are a first generation PSE student. Using this model as a conceptual framework allows the researcher to take into account the social, cultural, emotional and structural factors RIAs bring with them as they try to gain access to PSE. The model also visually demonstrates the numerous barriers to access that students must overcome in order to enter higher education that are also supported by Bean & Metzner's model (Figure 6). Student inputs are also supported by Donaldson & Graham's (1999) model of college outcomes (Figure 1) and Tinto's (1993) model of institutional departure (Figure 2).

Secondly, through using this student engagement model as a conceptual framework one can analyze the student activities and learning that takes place both inside and outside the classroom within PSE. This entails how involved RIAs are within PSE including participation in clubs, interacting with co-learners inside and outside of class, orientation, program design, student services, financial aid and sports and recreation to name a few. Faculty members are also heavily involved in this stage as well as in the student output stage of the model. Faculty member expectations, lectures, marking, instructional methods, research and response/contact with students and many other factors make up the faculty interaction with students and contribute to the engagement of RIAs. All of these stages within the student engagement model take place within the student context in PSE. This is the social, political, cultural, institutional policies and procedures, residence, on-campus housing, campus and human resources environment. The notion of the student context is supported by Hahs (1998) graduate student experience model (Figure 5) as well as both ACCC's (2004 & 2011) models of immigrant integration that show the structure, systems and services within PSE. Throughout this stage and onwards, a student faces numerous barriers to persistence.

Thirdly, as a student persists, he or she will arrive at the student output stage, where the student experiences optimal academic, social and student service involvement in PSE. This highlights the strong academic involvement both inside and outside the classroom as well as the social involvement. This is specifically supported by Tinto's (1993) model of institutional departure (Figure 2) and Bean and Metzner's attrition model (Figure 6), where they discuss academic and social engagement in PSE. This stage often involves utilizing a number of student services on campus and possibly taking leadership in

clubs and student associations. Once again, the student faces numerous barriers to completion through this phase.

The fourth and final stage in RIAS engagement is student outcomes. This involves completion of studies, academic success as measured by a good GPA and strong learning outcomes. It also involves social success as measured by a strongly developed network of friends and well-developed social skills. As the student completes PSE, the ultimate end goal is retention to convocation, academic success, student learning, a quality student experience and the hallmarks of a liberal education. This student outcomes stage is supported by Donaldson & Graham's (1999) model of college outcomes (Figure 1). Through this entire process including student inputs, conquering barriers, student activities, learning, faculty involvement, student outputs, social and academic involvement, student outcomes and studying effectively in the PSE context, these are all factors that can lead to the ultimate engagement of a student.

A conceptual framework, according to Calabrese (2006), provides "an explanation of the relationship among the factors, constructs, or key variables in the inquiry" (p. 24). In other words, a conceptual framework allows the researcher to ascertain a model that describes the experiences, facts, constructs and ideas involved in the study (Calabrese, 2006). Therefore, I am using this student engagement model as a conceptual framework that I will apply to this study of the factors that contribute to the engagement of RIAS in PSE. This engagement conceptual framework also informs the qualitative and quantitative research inquiry as described in the following methods chapter.

SUMMARY OF THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK LITERATURE REVIEW

The engagement of RIAS is informed by research on traditional, adult and diverse students. The influential theorists Tinto, Astin, Pace, Pascarella & Terenzini, Chickering & Gamson, Bean & Metzner and Kuh all tend to agree that social and academic involvement helps to engage students. Reschly and Christenson (2012) in reviewing engagement literature highlight three types of engagement. "Behavioral engagement is defined by participation in academic, social, or extracurricular activities. Emotional engagement is comprised of affect (positive and negative) in interactions with teachers, peers, schoolwork, and the school. The definition of cognitive engagement was rooted in personal investment, self-regulation,

and striving for mastery” (p. 10). Tweedell (2005) revealed that there is a “wealth of higher education literature suggesting that students who are socially, emotionally and intellectually engaged in their education have greater learning outcomes in college” (p. 1). In order to better retain students and increase their chances of success, student engagement offers institutions a potential solution to their improvement. Through several quality interventions and/or services offered to students, institutions can help student interactions with their peers and faculty within the campus environment (Jamieson-Ball, 2011). A student’s fit with the institution and peers is often strengthened by institutional traditions and rituals that together help student satisfaction and persistence (Kuh et al., 2010). Motivation and academic preparation together are some of the best predictors of student persistence in PSE (Kuh et al., 2010; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Immigrant optimism also is a significant factor in keeping RIAS motivated through PSE (Cruz, 2008; Perez, 2007; Gibson & Ogbu, 1991).

Not all of the student engagement literature and findings, though, seem to apply wholly to RIAS. Wyatt (2011) argued that the changes to the student body demographics, enrolment trends and public accountability demands will likely push PSE to engage nontraditional students and reinvent their institutions. Wyatt (2011) further urges PSE to immerse nontraditional students in the campus culture. Perez (2008), though, speaks against “forced linguistic and cultural assimilation” (p. 3) and rather advocates for strengthening biculturalism by encouragement from educators and educational administrators. Parsons and Taylor (2011) in discussing student engagement note that “the jury is out on whether a learner needs to be functioning in all arenas of engagement for successful learning to take place” (p. 3). They further contend that the purpose of engagement is to address inequities and egalitarianism (that all people should be able to equally succeed in life). While there needs to be a more consistent and agreed-upon definition of engagement, Parsons and Taylor (2011) wonder how we can evaluate student success if the goal of student achievement is not a destination but a journey (p. 49). Perhaps engagement is not only persistence through PSE and a measure of achievement but also a measure of learning and demonstrating the traits of a liberal education.

The ACCC models (Figures 3 & 4), while written to help RIAS integrate into employment, inform the engagement literature as they identify programs, services and processes that can benefit the engagement

of RIAS in PSE. Kuh et al. (2010), in discussing the furthering of the student success agenda, stated that institutions should “target efforts to specific groups of students or to develop specific programs and practices” (p. 327). Perhaps this advancement of the student success agenda is one of the reasons that the engagement literature is more recently being applied to RIAS. Immigrants desire to gain access to PSE and increase in knowledge as well as fit into their college and persist to completion (Case, 2008). According to the literature, when RIAS are academically and socially involved, respecting their bicultural viewpoint, they will be more engaged in PSE. Anisef et al. (2010) argued in the conclusion of their study on the impact of Canadian PSE on RIAS labour market outcomes that “efforts to improve the student experience for immigrants will help provide an enabling environment for effectively integrating them into the Canadian labour market” (p. i). The student engagement model that is supported by this literature review forms the basis of the conceptual framework for this thesis. This research literature and conceptual framework are vital to consider as I portray the research design and describe the methodology next in Chapter IV.

Chapter IV – Research Design and Methodology

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I summarize primarily the methodology that I use in this study. First, I describe the research methods employed in the study beginning with a review of qualitative and quantitative research theory. Second, I briefly outline the researcher's role in the study. Third, I describe the data sources, collection procedures and analysis that I use in the project. Fourth, I explain the verification of the data and analysis and the delimitations and limitations of the study. Fifth, I conclude by addressing the ethics and considerations of the research project. This research will be analyzed through the student engagement framework while scrutinizing social and academic involvement as well as systemic and broader policy issues.

RESEARCH METHODS

Both arms of this research study, institutional responses to immigrants and the engagement RIAS experience in PSE employ unique methodologies in finding, gathering and analyzing the research data. This study involves a mixed methods approach including both qualitative and quantitative research entities. It is important to note that full ethical reviews and considerations were conducted prior to commencement of this research and these are discussed later in this chapter. Before discussing the particular methods employed in each subsection, I briefly review the literature that shapes the research methods.

Qualitative Research

In this study, I primarily use qualitative research methods in order to understand how post-secondary institutions respond to RIAS and the experiences of RIAS in PSE. The goal of a qualitative researcher, according to Bogdan and Biklen (1998) is to "better understand human behavior and experience" (p. 38). In general, qualitative research design is flexible and tends to evolve over the course of the study. Further, qualitative research produces more descriptive data with results produced in "people's own words" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 41). As a result the sample size tends to be rather small and purposeful but unrepresentative of the entire population. Qualitative research, according to Gay (1996) is the "collection and analysis of extensive narrative data in order to gain insights into a situation of interest

not possible using other types of research” (p. 209). I primarily chose qualitative research for this study as it allows me to “explore the participants’ responses in depth” (Maramba, 2008, p. 1047).

We know from Statistics Canada (2005) data that increasing numbers of immigrants are entering Canadian PSE. Much of the engagement literature referenced in the previous chapter discussed factors of engagement for traditional students with some references to non-traditional students but very few studies on RIAS engagement. This sparse literature offers little understanding of the experiences of RIAS in PSE, the access, persistence and completion barriers faced by RIAS and the factors that engage RIAS in PSE. Therefore I use in depth qualitative research primarily in the form of focus groups to discover the experiences of RIAS, their connections with peers and faculty and their academic and social involvement in PSE. Qualitative research allows the researcher to gain data rich in description and meaning, lived experiences and personal insights not only about the experiences of RIAS but also concerning the factors that engage RIAS and those that limit RIAS engagement in PSE.

For the institutional responses to immigrants’ portion of the study, qualitative research allowed me to discover not just how the institution responds to RIAS through the key informant interviews but also the reasons why they respond or fail to respond. For the portion of the study that reviews the engagement of RIAS in PSE, qualitative research through the focus groups and one interview provides a strong venue for me to explore the experiences of RIAS in a complex, cultured environment and allows me, through this social inquiry, to develop a complex, holistic picture (Maramba, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The data gathered in this qualitative research investigation tends to be descriptively rich and the methodology in particular allows for a full in-depth analysis of the engagement of RIAS in PSE. Even the event that occurred when I gathered the data, according to Silverman (2000), was in itself “a source of data rather than just a technical problem in need of a solution” (p. 35).

Quantitative Research

For this study and in particular the engagement of RIAS in PSE section, I also used quantitative research. Quantitative analysis simply means to systematically examine phenomena using mathematical, computational or statistical techniques (Given, 2008). Quantitative methodology was used in this study for a number of reasons including primarily to give an objective focus to the study, specific demographic data

and to determine the factors of academic and social engagement. After the survey, the researcher had such a large number of respondents willing to be interviewed that focus groups enabled the researcher to gather large amounts of qualitative data in a timelier manner than possible through individual interviews. Conducting focus groups made it much more difficult to gather individual demographic background information and more specific personal information. Therefore, in order to capture specific vital information and to determine how similar the focus groups and survey participants were in demographic makeup, a demographic survey was employed at the beginning of the focus groups. While the focus groups provided deep understanding of the experiences of RIAS, there were a number of occasions where more detailed and specific information was necessary to obtain about RIAS and this was only possible through gathering quantitative research involving survey results.

In order to further provide triangulation in the research, quantitative methodology was employed in addition to qualitative research and the gathering of institutional data. Methodological literature supports the use of multi-method research. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) state that the researcher needs to choose the method to fit and be consistent with the subject matter. While they tend to support qualitative research, they also agree that mixed methods are appropriate for a number of studies. Attinasi and Nora (1996) wrote an entire article making a strong case for using multiple research methods when analyzing diverse students in PSE. They argue that quantitative research allows the researcher to gather large amounts of statistical data. Yet, they believe that the researcher may not know exactly what survey questions to ask of a diverse student and therefore more in-depth qualitative study should also be employed. This is precisely the rationale behind the usage of mixed research methods in this dissertation.

For this study, I utilized a multi-case approach at each institution. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) viewed a case study as a “detailed examination of one setting, or a single subject, a single depository of documents, or one particular event” (p. 54). A case study is much like a pyramid approach to research. Starting at the wider end of the pyramid, I began to look for institutions in Ontario to research, firstly for institutional responses and then later, once a suitable site was found, for immigrant experiences in these schools (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Also a multi-case approach allows the study to be reproducible. For

instance, if I found in one institution a particular service that engaged students, a multiple case method would allow me to ascertain if this service is present and engaging in another school.

In this multi-case study, I used four specific research methods: collecting data, background and historical documents and artifacts, interviewing key informants, surveys and conducting focus groups and one interview. Using these four methods allows for triangulation in methods of data collection. Collecting the data from three universities and two colleges inform the findings and yield triangulation in sources (Attinasi and Nora, 1996). Triangulation, according to Calabrese (2006), is a “qualitative process that tests the consistency of findings garnered through different methods and sources of data, including field notes, artifacts, and transcripts” (p. 60). In other words, as I have gathered data from multiple perspectives and sources, I can compare and contrast the findings that will assist in increasing the validity and trustworthiness of the results (Patton, 1990).

Methodology for Institutional Responses to RIAS

In order to determine the factors that contribute to the engagement of RIAS, it is important to first understand how responsive Ontario post-secondary institutions are to immigrants. This research began with a broad CCL-funded study that focused on the economic adjustment of immigrants and how post-secondary institutions assist immigrants in being employed. While I use some qualitative data from this grant, I have significantly broadened and deepened the review of the key informant interviews, analyzed them using a different conceptual framework (student engagement framework rather than social inclusion) and towards a vastly dissimilar purpose (student engagement rather than employment). This portion of the dissertation involves a qualitative study that seeks to understand how post-secondary institutions are responding to the growing number of RIAS and specifically how PSE is engaging RIAS.

Within the engagement conceptual framework, I utilized a qualitative approach with key informants at five post-secondary institutions. In first developing the interview guide, a few key informants were contacted to ensure that the questions being asked would best inform this study. The literature review notes that there are increasing numbers of immigrants entering PSE (Statistics Canada, 2005). The sparse literature on immigrant engagement in PSE offers no detailed information about the responsiveness of PSE to RIAS. Therefore, a qualitative approach in the form of key informant interviews was most effective in

order to garner deep and rich information concerning the responsiveness of PSE to RIAS. I also collected institutional background data, artifacts and historical documents in order to fill in the gaps in the responsiveness of the individual institutions to RIAS. Key informant interviews and the gathering of institutional background data were necessary to bring triangulation to the methods and sources of data collection for this study.

In this research project, I examined institutions within the post-secondary educational system, as they play a significant role in integrating immigrants into the Canadian labour market. In analyzing the process of immigrant post-secondary integration, the relationship between learning, a successful job search and the processes for career advancement need to be researched. Much of this immigrant integration occurs in post-secondary institutions, which have been dramatically affected by changes in access policies, funding and credentialing procedures (Reitz, 2004). Anisef et al. (2009) stated that “in Ontario, post-secondary education is broadly divided along academic and vocational training lines with the academic comprising universities, and the vocational consisting of community colleges, proprietary career colleges and private training institutes” (p. 29). This research encompassed 18 key informant interviews with administrators from three Ontario universities and two Ontario colleges. The participating institutions were York University, the University of Toronto, Ryerson University, George Brown College and Centennial College. Data, background articles, historical documents and artifacts helped to validate the interview results. This involved research on the policies, practices and histories of these five Ontario institutions. I will next review the reasons for choosing these particular data sources and also the data collection procedures.

Methodology for RIAS Engagement in PSE

In order to validate the institutional responses to immigrants and to fully understand the factors that lead to the engagement of RIAS, it is critical to directly interview and survey RIAS. This part of the dissertation stems from a study entitled Academic Engagement of Recent Immigrant Adult Students (RIAS) in Postsecondary Education: A Case Study of Ontario Colleges and Universities that was funded by the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario and sponsored by York University. The Principal Investigator in the project was Dr. Lillie Lum and Co-investigator was Sheldon Grabke. The HEQCO

project examined the relationship between student engagement and student service user patterns including demands of immigration, factors affecting demands of immigration and service needs and utilization patterns (Lum & Grabke, 2012).

While the HEQCO study primarily involved examining academic engagement, this dissertation, involves more in-depth qualitative and original quantitative research into the academic, social and student service involvement of RIAS in five post-secondary institutions. The thesis involves an in-depth and unique examination of the survey data, a brief demographic inquiry, one in-depth RIAS interview and thorough analysis of qualitative focus groups at four post-secondary institutions viewing RIAS experiences in PSE, the level of their social, academic and student service involvement and their engagement in PSE. The institutions include York University, Ryerson University, George Brown College and Centennial College. This portion of the study thus involves six focus groups spanning two universities and two colleges for a total of 46 focus group participants, one RIAS interview and 434 survey participants. These multi-methods involving qualitative and quantitative research, focus groups, surveys and an interview at four post-secondary institutions together provide triangulation in methods and sources of data collection for this study.

RESEARCHER'S ROLE

I am the primary and sole researcher in this thesis though I have drawn, to a limited degree, on previous research in which I was involved. While I was intimately involved in setting up the interview guide for the key informant interviews, I solely conducted and analyzed all of the interviews. I was also involved in setting up the survey questions and virtually solely responsible for setting the focus group questions. My caution, as identified in the literature, is not to bias the research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). In particular, I did not wish to set the questions, conduct all of the interviews, surveys and focus groups and then also interpret what was said. Hence, I set some research parameters in order to strengthen the validity and trustworthiness of the results as seen below. It is very important to note that I solely conducted all of the qualitative and quantitative analysis reported in this thesis.

Researcher's Role in Institutional Responses to RIAS

In this portion of the research, I was involved in setting the interview guide. Before using the guide, I sent the proposed questions to a number of senior PSE administrators and researchers in order to ensure the validity of the interview guide. After some minor tweaking of a few questions, I was then able to use this guide as a basis for the 18 key informant interviews. While I was keen to develop rapport with the interview subjects, the guide helped me to remain within the confines of the study and not influence the direction of the interviews. In some ways my position as researcher in these interviews is unique as my own employment was in one of the studied institutions and my network of colleagues and friends have formal and informal relationships with a number of the interviewees. Being in this unique position actually helped me to gain entry into the field and gain trust and rapport, as this often can be a difficult task (Bogdan & Bilken, 1998; Patton, 1990). I solely gathered all of the historical information, artifacts, policies, services and other post-secondary information as well as conducted all of the in-depth analysis for this thesis.

Researcher's Role in RIAS Engagement in PSE

Similarly with the qualitative and quantitative study on institutional responses to RIAS, I was involved with the gathering and analyzing of data for this thesis. I set the focus group questions as well as the brief demographic inquiry. I also was very involved in establishing the survey questions and making sure that the qualitative and survey questions were reviewed and refined by a number of researchers who are prominent in the study of immigrants. In this portion of the thesis, I was even more concerned about the field work being influenced by observer effects (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998) given the nature of focus group work and the necessity to ensure all students participate and a lively discussion ensues. In order to retain a focused and defined research parameter, the survey data was used in select areas of the thesis in order to answer questions that the qualitative findings could not answer, in instances where the focus group results were weak, to provide additional data when the focus groups did not look at an aspect of study such as in a full understanding of the socialization of RIAS, to provide clear quantitative data analysis to draw significant conclusions to the thesis and also to provide triangulation of sources and methods.

As mentioned above, there were six focus groups with a total of 46 focus group participants and one in-depth RIAS interview. In order to remove my own personal bias from some of the sessions, I therefore conducted half of the focus group sessions with the remaining sessions being conducted by the other members of the HEQCO project. When I conducted the focus group sessions, I developed quite a rapport with the students and this, according to Bogdan and Biklen (1998) and Denzin and Lincoln (2000), put me in a stronger position to collect the research data. This rapport was also quite apparent when I interviewed the 18 key informants.

DATA SOURCES

Data Sources for Institutional Responses to RIAS

I began the search for institutions within Toronto, as conducting site and interview visits close to my residence would reduce transportation and data gathering expenditures. Post-secondary institutions within Toronto also made the ideal locale for this research as the City of Toronto is a highly diverse city with a strong immigrant population. I also could leverage some of my personal contacts in setting up some of the key informant interviews in local universities and colleges. Gaining rapport and trust with my interviewees is quite important at the beginning of the study and maintaining this through the length of the study is quite critical to the success of the project (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

In my exploration of background historical data, I spoke with a PhD student who was just finishing a dissertation on Centennial College and found that Centennial had many immigrants and the administrators were quite open to further research. After numerous phone calls and emails to Humber College with little to no response, I removed it from this study. In the course of my key informant interviews, I had a strong impression that it may be very difficult to locate immigrant students at the University of Toronto (U of T). While I kept U of T in the study at this point, I started to examine some contacts at Ryerson University in order to maintain a minimum of two universities in this study. Therefore, for this portion of the project I chose to research the University of Toronto, York University, Ryerson University, George Brown College and Centennial College.

Data Sources for RIAS Engagement in PSE

As I first completed the institutional responses to RIAS, my aim for this next phase was to examine the same schools in order to build on the completed research. Finding RIAS at George Brown College and Centennial College was quite straightforward as both colleges identify immigrant students and were very open to the research being completed at their institution. Seneca College also was identified for the larger HEQCO project but as I did not include them in the initial portion of my study, I decided not to include Seneca at this point in the thesis.

Finding RIAS at Ryerson was relatively more difficult and at York University, despite my numerous contacts, was very challenging. Ontario universities in general do not ask students upon entry if they are immigrants and therefore gathering data for RIAS was complex. The University of Toronto, in particular, did not wish this study to be carried out on campus and therefore I removed this school from this portion of my research. I managed to locate a number of RIAS in order to keep York University and Ryerson University as part of this research study. Therefore, the institutions that remained as part of the entire dissertation study are as follows: York University, Ryerson University, George Brown College and Centennial College with the University of Toronto in only the first section of the study.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

Data Collection Procedures for PSE responding to RIAS

The key informant interview guide (see Appendix B) was developed “after extensive review of scholarly literature and consultation with senior administrators at a number of Ontario universities and colleges” (Anisef et al., 2009, p. 29). I located some key informants through the historical data collection research and began to conduct an initial interview with a few key informants. Through asking preliminary probing questions from the interview guide, the key informants self-identified whether they could comment on the delivery of programs and services to RIAS. This initial qualifying interview was conducted on the phone or by electronic mail. If the key informant could not inform the research, they often helped identify other administrators, faculty and/or management who could further the research. Once I located a few key informants, I conducted the interview in the key informant’s workplace. After I completed a few

interviews, I then conducted a brief analysis of these interviews and slightly refined the interview guide as it was a bit lengthy and I wanted to finish all of the interview questions with each key informant.

I then continued to interview key informants. I administered one interview schedule to a group of key informants in an institution but the remainder was completed in a one-to-one face-to-face meeting. In order to focus on conducting the interview and to best document the sessions, I audio-taped each key informant interview and completed a word-for-word transcription of the sessions. I stored these on a password-protected computer. At the end of each individual interview, I generally asked the interviewee for their recommendations of other key informants who could further inform the study. Through this “snowball” technique, I gained access to sufficient key informants until saturation was reached (Anisef et al., 2009). Eighteen key informant interviews were conducted in this manner with management, administration and faculty across the five noted community colleges and universities in the Greater Toronto Area in Ontario, Canada. I supplemented these qualitative key informant interviews with research on the history, services and policies at Ontario universities and community colleges. These qualitative interviews and background documents inform the collective PSE response to RIAS.

Data Collection Procedures for RIAS Engagement in PSE

I applied both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies to this portion of the dissertation. Qualitative research involves an interpretive “naturalistic” approach. RIAS and their experiences cannot be divorced from the social, cultural, racial, gender and class context in which they live, work and learn. Therefore, in order to understand RIAS’ life learning processes, it is necessary to understand the students’ relationship with their world. Quantitative research involves the gathering of statistical data on RIAS. It was important to understand the demographic makeup of the focus group participants. The most efficient and ideal way to gather this demographic information was through the surveys and I also conducted a brief survey prior to the focus group sessions to compare the diversity of the groups. In the focus group sessions, some information such as RIAS balancing their studies with other commitments and also RIAS socialization was not discussed or not discussed thoroughly and therefore I utilized this data from the surveys. The focus groups also did not fully address the predictors of social and academic engagement and the attributes of a liberal education so the survey data was critical in informing

these areas. In order to also bring triangulation to the methodology, I added survey data to the focus group information and institutional historical records.

Developing the Survey Instrument

Data collection for this section of the dissertation research began with surveys. The survey instrument was created through a broad investigation of the literature. As described above, NSSE formed the basis of the engagement portion of the survey instrument and the demands of immigration and service utilization pattern literature helped to inform the survey guide (Lum & Grabke, 2012). In addition to NSSE, questions and portions of the survey instrument were derived from a number of pre-existing scales such as a student involvement scale derived by Grayson (2006) and the Demands of Immigration Scale (Aroian, Norris et al., 1998). After much consultation with a number of key informants and developing numerous versions of the survey instrument, the final version of the survey was developed (see Appendix C). The limits of participation included the following: “undergraduates, enrolled on a full- or part-time basis, 24 years and older; landed immigrants or Canadian citizens, and resident in Canada for up to 10 years as permanent residents or citizens” (Lum & Grabke, 2012, p. 14). For the purposes of this study, graduate and international students were excluded.

Locating Initial Survey Respondents

Locating immigrants to fill out the survey was challenging. Initial efforts involved posting public notices on campuses, having advertisements in PSE newspapers and requesting voluntary participation at classes that should have a larger proportion of immigrants such as bridging programs (Lum & Grabke, 2012). As these efforts produced few survey participants, the institutional research areas of each school were approached and asked for a list of immigrant students whom we may be able to directly contact. While there were some issues with institutional research departments identifying immigrants particularly on university campuses, this method still proved overwhelmingly successful with a potential sample size of 2500 RIAs identified. After three electronic mailings to the identified immigrant group, the survey was administered to the students at each campus in a classroom setting at a specified time. This produced a total

of 434 survey responses. Participation was voluntary and participants were given a \$20 honorarium to cover their travel and other expenses (Lum & Grabke, 2012).

Shifting from RIAS Interviews to Focus Groups

RIAS consist of a highly diverse, heterogeneous group of students who are dispersed throughout PSE institutions. While RIAS are often difficult to locate in PSE, once identified they have limited time. For this reason, a brief question was included at the end of the survey asking survey participants to self-identify if they were willing to take part in an in-depth interview (see Appendix D). My aim was to interview 8 to 10 RIAS in each institution. The response to this final survey question was tremendous with over half of the survey respondents, approximately 200, offering to participate in an in-depth interview. Unfortunately this response was unexpected and interviewing all 200 RIAS was simply not feasible due to financial and resource constraints.

Initially, I began developing an in-depth interview guide from the broad engagement, student experience and immigrant employment literature. Once it was determined that the response was too large to accommodate individual interviews, the plan was altered to conduct focus groups in order to involve more participants. I therefore adapted the interview schedule to a focus group guide. I initially conducted a few focus groups, briefly analyzed the results of the sessions and then tweaked the focus group questions. We then used the resultant focus group guide for the remainder of the sessions (see Appendix E).

Locating Focus Group Participants

While the focus group participants were randomly chosen, there was a strong likelihood of these contributors forming a select sample. The *sample* consisted of a group of multicultural and multidisciplinary students currently enrolled in three types of educational programs: 1) college diploma programs; 2) general university degree programs and 3) specialized professional bridging programs. With the identification of RIAS in professional educational programs, the focus was on those in the larger professions such as health (nursing and pharmacy), teaching and engineering (Lum & Grabke, 2012).

The potential focus group members were identified at each institution by any of the following: their institutional demographic data, faculty, leadership or partner service groups. These potential

participants were already screened for participation in the larger survey study, self-identified as willing to participate in an interview and were then contacted randomly by email to see if they were still willing and able to participate in a focus group. Student participation was entirely voluntary. This selection method resulted in a self-selective sample, which has consequences for generalizing the findings. Given that RIAS have limited time and in order to increase participation rates, they were monetarily compensated \$30 each for their participation.

I could draw upon the pool of RIAS from the survey as selection criteria for student inclusion in the focus group was the same as in the survey including the following: landed in Canada within the last three years, 24 years or older, and an undergraduate university or college student enrolled on a full or part-time basis preferably during the last stages of their degree or diploma. Despite the fact that RIAS may possess PSE from their source country, their service needs are most likely significant within undergraduate programs. Bridging education programs vary significantly in their duration from several months up to two years in length. The researcher aimed to recruit students nearing completion of their programs since they are proceeding to obtaining licensure and professional designations and may demonstrate a need for services different from basic diploma or degree students who are relatively new to the institution. Being longer in the institution, they also may have a better knowledge of the services available to them in comparison with new students.

Developing the Focus Group Guide

Each focus group session began with a brief demographic and academic success quantitative inquiry. The aim of including this portion was to capture some detailed information that would take considerably longer to gather verbally in the session, to compare the demographic makeup of the focus group and survey participants and to gather details that participants may not want to publicly share such as their academic performance. The background inquiry included 1) socio-demographic variables (e.g. gender, age group, ethnicity, length of time in Canada, marital status, family dependents and work commitments) 2) educational variables (e.g. historical academic achievement in their country of origin and current academic standing) and 3) barriers accessing PSE in Canada. The focus group guide solicited specific thematic issues such as: perceptions of RIAS academic service needs, historical and current academic achievement, what it

means to be a RIAS participating in PSE, what are the socioeconomic, cultural, racial and gender contexts in which they live and finally what contributes to RIAS' engagement including their prior student experience in their source country and their current experience in Ontario PSE.

The focus group sessions specifically covered five dimensions of student engagement: level of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interactions, enriching educational experiences and supportive campus environment. RIAS also had the opportunity to reflect on their current engagement in PSE as well as their prior engagement in the institutions in their source country. In order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the learning needs and experiences of RIAS, additional questions focused upon learning inputs such as academic standing, results of entrance linguistic testing and financial needs. The next section focused on student services including their awareness of academic and student support services, frequency of usage, perceptions of student service needs and perceived effectiveness of services offered.

There was an opportunity for RIAS to compare services in their country of origin with those they currently use. I probed their service utilization patterns and their perceived usefulness of these services. There were some questions that allowed RIAS to reflect on what it means for them to participate in PSE as well as an opportunity for them to identify their own socioeconomic, racial, cultural and gender contexts, barriers, involvement and social engagement. The focus group session concluded with a macro analysis of advice or suggestions RIAS could give to improve engagement and student services on campus (Lum & Grabke, 2012). This structured focus group guide helped the interviewer ask the same questions of all groups to aid comparative analysis. This also assisted the three different facilitators to conduct the sessions in the same manner and to reduce researcher bias in the gathering of the responses (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Silverman, 2000). Conducting two focus groups on the same campus with different facilitators also helped to remove researcher bias in the sessions and assisted in increasing the validity and trustworthiness of the responses of the participants (Silverman, 2000). After conducting the first focus group and completing a preliminary analysis of the results, it was clear that the guide was too lengthy with some repetitious questions. The focus group guide was thusly redeveloped in a more concise manner and used for the remainder of the sessions.

Implementing the Focus Group Guide

A total of six focus groups and one face-to-face interview were conducted at four post-secondary institutions. There was broad representation across universities and colleges and also between different facilitators as seen in Table A.

Table A – Focus Group Institutions, Participants and Facilitators

Institution	Number of Participants	Facilitator
Focus Group at University A	9 RIAS	Facilitator A
Focus Group at University A	8 RIAS	Facilitator B
Focus Group at University B	8 RIAS	Facilitator B
Interview at University B	1 RIAS	Facilitator C
Total in Universities	26 RIAS	
Focus Group at College A	6 RIAS	Facilitator A
Focus Group at College A	7 RIAS	Facilitator B
Focus Group at College B	8 RIAS	Facilitator A
Total in Colleges	21 RIAS	
TOTAL at all PSE	47 RIAS	

DATA ANALYSIS

Data Analysis for Institutional Responses to RIAS

Taking the detailed word-for-word transcriptions of the 18 key respondent interviews, I conducted an analysis of the data by grouping it into themes (Anisef et al., 2009). The coding of themes began to emerge once the narratives were read in succession. These qualitative interviews were supplemented with research on the history, services and policies of the participating institutions. Though post-secondary and private training institutes and learning centres help RIAS obtain industry-recognized credentials and Canadian skills, there is a small but growing body of knowledge about this integration process⁷. I thus

⁷ In helping close this gap, the Colleges Integrating Immigrants in Employment (CIITE) project was created to help over 15,000 immigrants who wish to attend an Ontario college have a smoother transition into college and employment. CIITE released three main phases of the project with the final report published in March 2011.

utilized the historical data regarding each institution's response to RIAS as well as industry information such as CIITE project data to help inform, validate and verify the findings of the interviews.

Further content analysis techniques were used to analyze emerging themes and concepts arising from the individual key respondent interviews into meaningful categories. I specifically used the student engagement conceptual framework to analyze and summarize the findings⁸. This analysis should likely draw unique conclusions considering the inclusion of additional qualitative data and working towards different objectives such as understanding how responsive PSE is to RIAS and understanding what factors contribute to the engagement of RIAS. Using the student engagement framework for this entire dissertation will also facilitate the drawing of conclusions from the findings.

Data Analysis for RIAS Engagement in PSE

Survey Data Analysis

After the individual survey responses were loaded into SPSS, I reviewed the survey questions in order to focus specifically on questions that did the following: were demographic in nature that could be used as predictor variables, would fill in gaps in the focus group responses, questions that together would be a good indicator of academic engagement, questions that would denote social engagement and questions that would be strong indicators of a liberal education. I then removed all of the other responses from the SPSS data file and made sure that all of the remaining data were clean and ready for analysis. In the survey, there were a number of items based on different Likert scales that were used and some of the demographic categories were quite broad and numerous making analysis rather difficult. I therefore aggregated or condensed a number of the categories as described in the following chapter.

Interview Data Analysis

Analysis of the interview data was conducted within the student engagement framework. A word-for-word transcription was created from the sound recordings of the focus group sessions. Taking these transcriptions, I then marked the transcription using specific headings in order to facilitate preliminary auto-coding within the qualitative software NVivo 9. I initially ran the auto-coding program within the

⁸ I used the social inclusion framework in the original analysis of the key informant interview and historical data for the CCL project.

software in order to tag the responses to specific questions. This auto-tagging helped further analysis by marking identifiers for particular questions so I could compare answers to the same question by participants from different campuses and/or sessions. After the first reading of the transcriptions, I then reviewed the transcriptions and tagged responses according to the emerging themes from the focus group data (White & Marsh, 2006). These themes began to emerge and some took prominence as similar themes coalesce from other sessions. As identified in my report,

some patterns and concepts may emerge that had not been expected but are, nevertheless, important to consider. In reading through the narratives, key phrases and text segments that correspond with the research objectives are often identified. Other phrases that seemed important, unexpected, and similar were compared with existing categories and constructs that emerged through this process. (Lum & Grabke, 2012, p. 30)

I also wrote down noteworthy portions of the transcriptions that highlighted key themes that arose from the data as they could be representative of a certain perception, barrier or factor in engagement.

The analysis was used to develop a profile of a sample of RIAS within each institution and across institutions. Content analysis techniques were used to analyze emerging themes and concepts arising from focus group sessions into meaningful categories. The researcher anticipated emergent themes to reflect RIAS' perception regarding access to PSE, their academic performance, satisfaction with academic programming and support services, reciprocity and cooperation between themselves and faculty and engagement within the larger PSE system.

Synthesis of Research Findings

From a student engagement perspective, the focus group findings, demographic inquiry information, survey results, key informant data and historical document review aggregate to identify the strategies that effectively engage RIAS in PSE. The anticipated themes arising from key informant interviews and RIAS focus groups formulate the varying aspects that contribute to the engagement of RIAS in PSE, the differing degrees of institutional responsiveness and recommendations for enhancing engagement of RIAS.

VALIDITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS OF DATA AND ANALYSIS

This study involves qualitative research as well as quantitative research and therefore is subject to bias and error. Hence it is critical to explicitly underscore the potential for bias and error in order to help

validate conclusions derived from the research findings (Calabrese, 2006). Validity and trustworthiness of the data are essential in order to draw accurate conclusions (Calabrese, 2006; Patton, 1990).

Validity and Trustworthiness of Data and Analysis for Institutional Responses to RIAS

Before conducting the 18 key informant interviews, I made sure that the interview guide was well examined and vetted by a number of researchers and senior administrators familiar with immigrant literature and study. I continued interviewing key informants until saturation was reached at each site and no new information was being presented. Key informants by nature are “subjects who are unusually perceptive and articulate” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 163). Involving key informants in the initial stages of the research and using a vetted interview guide helped to eliminate bias in the research. It is important to note, though, that qualitative research by nature is not generalizable (Patton, 1990) but is ideologically driven (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) argued that “there is no value-free or bias-free design” (p. 385).

My bias from the outset of this portion of the research is that many post-secondary institutions and a number of universities in particular do not track immigrant students and therefore have little knowledge of and services for RIAS. I also anticipated that it would be very difficult at the University of Toronto to find key informants and be able to locate and interview RIAS. Some of this bias was borne out but there were many surprises in the findings.

Validity and Trustworthiness of Data and Analysis for RIAS Engagement in PSE

Similarly, in this portion of the research, my aim was to be as unbiased as possible and to make a number of methodological decisions to help increase the validity and trustworthiness of the data. As Patton (1990) observed that there is little disagreement about objective research as virtually all research is inevitably subjective. Essentially the issue “is about researcher credibility and trustworthiness, about fairness and balance” (Patton, 1990, p. 481).

The student engagement literature significantly informed the development of the survey instrument including NSSE, Grayson’s (2006) involvement scale and Aroian, Norris et al.’s (1998) Demands of Immigration Scale. There was virtually no engagement survey that has been developed specifically to analyze RIAS engagement so the significant reliance on the traditional student literature was

necessary. In order though to help improve the validity and trustworthiness of the data and analysis, the survey instrument was vetted by a number of key informants in the student engagement and immigrant research field. Further, validity is improved with having a large sample size. Initially approximately 2500 RIAs were invited to participate in the survey through a number of e-mails. This resulted in 434 survey participants, which is a strong sample size that helps improve the validity of the data.

The validity and trustworthiness of the survey data analysis was enhanced through a number of measures. Factor analysis or principal components analysis was performed on groups of survey results in order to reduce or summarize the data into a smaller set of factors or components. Pallant (2005) argues that this analysis helps to reduce the data and find intercorrelations from a number of items into a smaller subscale. This exploratory procedure assists the researcher in finding the underlying structure from a set of variables and the resultant factors or components that can be used in multiple regression and/or multivariate analysis (Pallant, 2005). Cronbach's Alpha was systematically checked in the analysis of the survey data to ensure that the factors would surpass the .7 reliability threshold. The final survey analysis was further vetted by a number of key quantitative researchers who were well versed in immigrant employment and engagement research to strengthen the validity and trustworthiness of the survey data and analysis.

After designing the focus group guide, I vetted the guide with a number of key informants in the immigrant research field. In choosing a conceptual framework, my initial choice of viewing the research data through the lens of social inclusion was a little too biased. As I began to apply the social inclusion framework to the data, I realized that I was trying to observe factors and strategies that engage RIAs yet I was analyzing the data through a rather limited lens of what socially included and excluded RIAs. The social inclusion framework seemed too restrictive and limited the analysis of the research. Social inclusion or exclusion is perhaps one small part of student engagement but it does not involve all aspects of engagement. An engagement framework encompasses social inclusion as well as academic involvement, use of student services, overcoming barriers and many other aspects of the student experience. The social inclusion framework in some ways could skew the researcher's perception of results. In other words, if the researcher is specifically viewing the student experience looking only for aspects that socially include or exclude RIAs in PSE there could be numerous parts of the student experience that could be overlooked

such as the academic experience, access and persistence barriers, faculty, student service involvement and financial aid among others. The engagement framework does not preclude these findings.

In conducting this research, my desire was to explore the issue of RIAS engagement, or lack of engagement, in Ontario PSE. Hence I was looking for factors that encourage and discourage RIAS engagement in PSE. Considering this bias, I deliberately removed myself from conducting half of the focus groups to retain a nonjudgmental, neutral and unbiased position in the gathering of the findings. Similarly I used NVivo 9 software to help devise a more neutral analysis of the focus group results. Having focus group sessions led by a few researchers and in gathering multiple data from the same institution brings a validity check into the research. It also reduces researcher bias and increases the trustworthiness of the investigator and findings (Silverman, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). By the end of these focus group sessions, considerable data was gathered to the point of saturation as virtually no new information was being captured and focus group discussions were becoming repetitious.

I also consciously aimed to bring triangulation into this entire research project. Triangulation, according to Bogdan & Bilken (1998), comes from the “application of trigonometry to navigation and surveying” (p. 104). Just as triangulation is beneficial in navigation, to locate yourself in relation to two other points (hence making a triangle), similarly in qualitative research it is helpful for validity of the data to approach and gather data from three or more sources (Bogdan & Bilken, 1998; Patton, 1990). I interviewed key informants who, by the nature of their position and work are paid to support all students in their institution. To balance this potentially biased viewpoint, I also analyzed and gathered third-party information, historical data, policies and artifacts. The gathering of focus group responses, demographic inquiry findings and survey results helped to bring triangulation into the report in order to verify the data. Understanding that my position is biased, I sought to maintain a nonjudgmental, unprejudiced and fair gathering of the data and analysis of the results (Patton, 1990). Through triangulation and using data analyzing software, I aimed to increase the validity of the study.

DELIMITATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

As found in all research projects, this dissertation study has limitations and delimitations. Locating initial key informants was completed through personal contacts and leveraging networks. While this was not the only method in gathering data, both this technique and even the “snowball” method could pose limitations given I was building on my networks and the connections of key informants. These participants were not a random sample and therefore may be considered somewhat biased. Yet, this was the ideal method for locating key informants and conducting interviews given the limited time of senior administrators and the inherent reluctance to be interviewed for research. Even in the gathering of documents, policies, practices and artifacts, while every attempt was made to be thorough, there were limitations in terms of it being very difficult to find and examine every policy, practice and artifact on all campuses. Also, not having knowledge of a particular service, policy or practice may not necessary mean that it does not exist. Many attempts were made in the course of this study to be exhaustive in research but there still may be small gaps.

There also were limitations and delimitations in the research methodology. Most of the surveyed students were randomly chosen through pulling student data from the individual college and university databases. The students who participated in the survey then self-identified to participate in focus group sessions. As more than half of the survey respondents were open to participating in the session, it was not possible to include all respondents. We randomly emailed students from this list to solicit participation in the focus group sessions. Each session’s participants therefore came from the positive responses to the random email blasts, which helps remove some researcher bias. Nonetheless, the students still offered to be part of this study and chose to respond to the email and therefore there is an element of self-selection bias.

This could have consequences to the limitations of the methodology as it could be argued that only students who have faced significant barriers, social issues or academic problems may have self-identified for the study. As the survey and focus group participants were currently enrolled in PSE, they all persisted to that point in their studies. It was not possible through the gathering of participants to locate any RIAS who left the institution for any particular reason. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to be able to locate,

contact and interview any student who has dropped out of PSE. In analyzing the demographic inquiry, the focus group respondents show gender diversity but in terms of ethnicity, there is a concentration of Asian and Southeast Asian students. Again it could be argued that this is reflective of the immigrant population on these campuses but it could be a possible limitation in this study. Lastly, it was not possible to have more students attend the focus groups or to conduct additional sessions due to financial and resource constraints. Regardless of these constraints, as the focus group sessions progressed, data from them started to become repetitive so the researcher felt that saturation was reached at each site. In order to remove all limitations, all immigrants on campus would need to be located and then surveyed and interviewed but this is neither feasible nor practical.

ETHICAL REVIEW AND CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical Review and Considerations for PSE Institutional Responses to RIAS

Ethics submissions were made for this portion of the dissertation study as part of the broader CCL grant⁹ (available from the author upon request). Appendix F contains the final ethics approval. Each key informant signed a consent form (available from the author upon request) indicating that they agreed to be interviewed for the purposes of this study and they also could state if they agreed or disagreed to be audio taped, be quoted and/or to attribute their name to any quotes. In the publication of the broader study as well as in this portion of the dissertation research, no names were used in order to respect the wishes of the key informants and to abide by the ethics agreement.

Ethical Review and Considerations for RIAS Engagement in PSE

For this portion of the dissertation project, ethics submissions were similarly made as part of the larger HEQCO grant for both the focus group sessions and the survey (available from the author upon request). Appendix G contains the final ethics approval. The survey and interview guide that was later modified into a focus group guide also went through ethical review. Minimal risk was indicated for the survey and focus group participants, participation was completely voluntary and a small honorarium was

⁹ Specifically the interview guide that I used for the key informant interviews was submitted for ethical review as well as a detailed description of the research that was to be conducted. The ethics submission indicated no risk to the key informants especially considering the informants would remain anonymous and the personal identifying information was stored on a password protected computer.

listed as an incentive to participate. As indicated in the ethics submission, data from the survey and focus groups were stored on a password-protected computer and any identifiers of the participants will be destroyed one year after completion of the project. Regardless of receiving participant's permission, no name was attached to any quotes in this or any publication arising from this data. Each focus group participant filled out a consent form (available from author upon request) and similar to the key informant consent release, they indicated consent to be audio taped, to be quoted or to have their name attached to any quotes. It is important to note that during the course of conducting the survey and focus group research, a few institutions requested submission of an ethics proposal to their campus Research Office. Where requested, this additional ethics proposal was submitted and ethics clearance was received to complete the research on specific campuses.

CONCLUSION

In summary, I conducted 18 key informant interviews for this study at five post-secondary institutions. Six focus groups and one interview were also carried out at four colleges and universities as well as a 434 survey responses. Therefore, this study involves qualitative and quantitative research methods. In addition to the interviews, surveys and focus groups, I gathered historical data, policies, procedures and artifacts from each of the institutions. After the development of the theoretical framework was completed, all of the data was analyzed using the student engagement conceptual framework. These different methodological attributes bring triangulation of sources and methods into the study.

In this chapter, I discussed the research methodology, researcher's role, the data sources including how I chose the sites, data collection procedures, the validity and trustworthiness of the data and its analysis, limitations and delimitations of the research and a review of ethics and considerations in the study. It is important to note that even though the goal of this study is not generalization, the research findings can be extrapolated to other universities and colleges (Patton, 1990). Patton (1990) continues that extrapolations are "logical, thoughtful and problem orientated rather than statistical" (p. 489) and generally involve modest speculation. The barriers faced by RIAS, their student experience on these campuses and what factors contribute to the engagement of RIAS will be discussed in Chapter V.

Chapter V – Research Findings: RIAS Engagement in PSE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of a portrayal of the results of the study of RIAS engagement in post-secondary education. As outlined in Chapter I, the underlying research question that I am addressing in this thesis is:

- What institutional strategies result in the effective engagement of recent immigrant adult students who choose to participate in Ontario post-secondary education?

This chapter is a presentation of findings that will begin to answer the first of the four questions arising from the above original research question, which is:

- What barriers to access, persistence and completion do recent immigrant adult students face in Ontario post-secondary institutions?

Using the student engagement conceptual framework identified in Chapter III, I will present the findings from the focus group sessions, demographic inquiry and survey in order to identify the barriers experienced by RIAS and the factors that engage RIAS in PSE. The findings from the responsiveness of PSE to RIAS will be presented in Chapter VI and a synthesis of all of the findings will be in Chapter VII.

RIAS ENGAGEMENT IN PSE RESULTS

Firstly, I provide a summary of the focus group demographic inquiry and survey demographics with a brief discussion of the similarities and differences in the composition of the samples. Secondly, I present an analysis of the focus group data that follows somewhat closely the organization of the student engagement model outlined in Chapter III. I also present an analysis of select portions of the survey data in instances where there are gaps in the focus group data or when the focus group data is weak and needs support. I also conduct a deeper analysis of the survey results with the aim to understand the academic and social engagement of RIAS in PSE, the predictors of RIAS engagement and whether levels of RIAS engagement can help predict attributes of a liberal education. This data analysis centres on the inputs to PSE, barriers to access, persistence and completion faced by RIAS in PSE, student activities and learning inside and outside the classroom, student outputs, faculty involvement, student context in PSE and student outcomes. The data was gathered at the following institutions: York University, Ryerson University,

George Brown College and Centennial College. It is important to note that the University of Toronto was omitted from this portion of the research as it was difficult to locate a significant number of RIAs on the U of T campus to fill out the survey or join in a focus group session.

Descriptive Statistics of the Focus Groups and Survey

There were far more participants in the survey than in the focus group sessions but the composition of both groups were quite similar. As the focus group participants were a subset of the survey participants, it would stand to reason that their composition would be similar. If it were observed that the demographics of the focus groups and survey were not very similar, it would be very difficult to draw conclusions from both findings as the base comparisons and potential outcomes could be quite dissimilar due to the composition and makeup of the different groups. Comparators between the focus group demographic and the larger survey sample are important to ensure generalizations, comparisons and contrasts of results.

RIAs Demographic Considerations

Understanding the diverse mix of RIAs involved in both the survey and focus groups help to determine the variety of barriers, responses to barriers, predictors of engagement and hallmarks of a liberal education and also to ascertain the applicability of the results to RIAs in other situations. The following aspects were used to establish the diversity of the participants and the similarity of the focus groups and survey participants: school type, gender, age, length of time in Canada, study type, work while studying, programs of study and ethnic origin. Other demographic characteristics reviewed include the following: highest level of schooling completed before arriving in Canada, annual household income and length of time RIAs were landed in Canada. There were 46 focus group participants, one interviewed RIA and 434 survey participants. Only one focus group participant and the interviewed RIA did not fill out the demographic inquiry, which resulted in 45 RIAs completing it. It is important to note that not all participants filled out every question of the demographic inquiry and survey. Both the focus group and survey participants consisted of a strong, even and wide representation from both the college and university sectors.

As seen in Table B, there were 17 RIAS from University A, 9 from University B, 13 from College A and 8 from College B. This means that there were 26 university participants and 21 college attendees. The survey participants have a relatively similar split between university RIAS at 59% and college RIAS at 41%.

Table B – RIAS School Type

School Type	Focus Group Number	Focus Group Percentage	Survey Number	Survey Percentage
University	26	55%	251	59%
College	21	45%	175	41%
TOTAL	47	100%	426	100%

With regards to gender as displayed in Table C, 19 focus group participants indicated they are male and 28 female. This is a fairly diverse representation of genders with 40% being male and 60% being female. The survey participants had a similar gender mix with a heavier concentration of females than in the focus group sample with females at 65% than males at 35%.

Table C – RIAS Gender

Gender	Focus Group Number	Focus Group Percentage	Survey Number	Survey Percentage
Male	19	40%	150	35%
Female	28	60%	276	65%
TOTAL	47	100%	426	100%

Another limit of participation was being a recent immigrant, namely to be a landed immigrant or new Canadian citizen who has been in Canada for up to 10 years. The focus group participants spanned the full spectrum of the criteria limits and ranged in being in Canada from 1 year to 10 years with the largest number, 12 (27%), being here for 5 years. The majority of participants, 24 (53%) of the total, have been in Canada between 3 to 6 years. In the survey, the majority of participants (66%) had been in Canada for 5 years or less.

While the limit of participation in both studies was 24 years old and older, there were two students in the focus group sessions and a few more in the survey who were younger than this criterion. The ages of focus group participants ranged from 20 to 51 as denoted in Table D. There was a broad representation of ages in the focus groups with 17 RIAS being in the 20-29 age range, 20 in the 30-39 bracket, 7 between the ages of 40-49 and 1 being age 50+. The majority of students, 35 (78%), were between the ages of 24 to 38.

The mean age of the participants was 32.3 and the median age was 32 years old. The survey RIAs, as displayed in Table D, had similar ages with an average of 33, median of 32 and range of 20 to 53.

Table D – RIAs Age

Age	Focus Group Number	Survey Number
mean	32.3	33
median	32	32
range	20 to 51	20 to 53

Given some of the difficulties discussed in the literature for adult students in stretching their time and resources, I asked the focus group RIAs about their marital status, if they have children and if yes, how many children they were raising. The majority of RIAs were single (21 or 47%) and 17 (38%) were married. Only a few RIAs were separated (4), living common-law (2) or were divorced (1). Of the 45 focus group participants, 44 responded to the question asking if they had children. Just slightly over half, 23 (52%), indicated that they did not have children while a high number, 21 (48%), stated that had children. Of these 21 RIAs who indicated that they had children, 17 identified the number of children. The majority, 10 (59%), had one child, 6 (35%), had two children and one indicated that they had three children.

Table E – RIAs Ethnic Origins

Ethnic Origin	Focus Group Number	Focus Group Percentage	Survey Group Number	Survey Group Percentage
Non-Asian	16	36%	154	36%
African	6	13%	51	12%
Caribbean and Latin American	4	9%	42	10%
European	6	13%	61	14%
Asian	29	64%	272	64%
Chinese	13	29%	101	24%
West Asian	8	18%	53	12%
Southeast Asian	3	7%	80	19%
South Asian	5	11%	38	9%
TOTAL	45	100%	426	100%

There was a broad and rich diverse ethnicity in the focus group attendees and survey participants as seen in Table E. The majority of RIAs, 13 (29%), were of Chinese heritage, 8 (18%) participants from West Asia including the Middle East and 7 (16%) students from Africa and the Caribbean including students who identified themselves as being Black. There were 6 (13%) RIAs from Eastern Europe. Of the

remaining RIAS, 5 (11%) came from South Asia, 3 (7%) from Latin America and 3 (7%) from the Philippines, Korea and Vietnam. The survey RIAS had a similarly diverse ethnic background. I also asked the language that they first spoke at home while growing up. Again the findings were quite distinct and far more numerous than their birth regions. The main languages spoken were Chinese (12 or 27% including Mandarin and/or Cantonese), Farsi (5 or 11%) and English, Spanish and Russian (3 or 7% each).

To help facilitate and simplify analysis of the survey, I aggregated the 26 birth country variables (see Appendix C) into 8 groups. I used the United Nations geographic classification system for grouping the countries of birth in this analysis. There were some regions that had few or even no survey respondents. In cases where the number of RIAS were less than 10 for a geographic region, I grouped them together with nearby geographic regions for the analysis. Many respondents were born in a country not listed in the survey and therefore wrote in their responses. I categorized each individual response into regions. These aggregated regions are: West, South and North Europe; East Europe and Central Asia; Caribbean, Central & South America; Africa; East Asia; South-East Asia; South & West Asia; and Other consisting of the remaining unlisted countries (see Appendix H).

Table F – RIAS Study Type

Study Type	Focus Group Number	Focus Group Percentage	Survey Number	Survey Percentage
Full-time	43	91%	356	84%
Part-time	4	9%	70	16%
TOTAL	47	100%	426	100%

The majority of focus group RIAS, as seen in Table F, (43 or 91%) were studying full-time. Only 4 students (9%) were studying part-time. In comparison, a slightly lower proportion of survey participants were full-time with 84% full-time and 16% part-time (see Table F). Once again because of the multitude of demands on RIAS as articulated in the literature, I asked how many were working while studying (see Table G). Twenty-nine focus group participants (64%) indicated that they were not working while studying while 16 (36%) stated that they had employment in addition to their studies. Next, I asked the 16 who were working how many hours they worked per week and 13 responded. Hours worked per week ranged from 6 to 37 hours with the mean being 17 hours per week and the median being 21.5 hours per week. Half of the

13 respondents worked 6 to 12 hours per week while the other half worked 13 to 37 hours per week. A slightly larger percentage (67%) of survey participants did not work while studying. As the survey participants and the focus group participants self-selected to participate, it could stand to reason that a larger proportion of RIAS who do not work while studying participated in the research project as they could have more free time than RIAS who work while studying.

Table G – RIAS Working While Studying

Working While Studying	Focus Group Percentage	Survey Percentage
Not working while studying	64%	67%
Working while studying	36%	33%
TOTAL	100%	100%

The focus group and survey participants also demonstrated diverse programs of study. While the nomenclature of degrees and diplomas were quite unique in each school, they categorized into a few general areas. The majority of focus group participants (23 or 51%) were in an applied or professional program such as business, nursing and the sciences except those studying ESL prior to starting their program (see Table H). Specifically 13 (29%) were in a business program, 10 (22%) in nursing or the sciences, 8 (18%) in engineering or computers, 5 (11%) in ESL studies, 5 (11%) in social work and 4 (9%) in education or other programs. The majority of survey participants were in nursing and the sciences (44%) and business (27%) with the rest in engineering/computers (11%), education/other (9%), ESL (5%) and social work (4%).

Table H – RIAS Program of Study

Program Type	Focus Group Number	Focus Group Percentage	Survey Number	Survey Percentage
Business	13	29%	116	27%
Nursing/Sciences	10	22%	192	44%
Engineering/Computers	8	18%	48	11%
ESL	5	11%	23	5%
Social Work	5	11%	19	4%
Education/Other	4	9%	37	9%
TOTAL	45	100%	435	100%

Income can also have an impact on engagement. The survey had 8 different levels of annual household income (see Appendix C). While it could be easier to analyze a smaller grouping of annual

household income, the Statistics Canada income categories quite resembled these existing 8 groups and so I chose not to reduce it any further. Time spent on homework and assignments can also have an impact on engagement. Of those surveyed, 18.2% had a household income up to \$10,000, 17.7% made \$21,000-\$40,000, 15.7% made over \$100,000 and another 15.2% made between \$11,000 and \$20,000.

In the survey results, I condensed the number of hours RIAS spent preparing for class in a 7-day week from 9 categories into 4 groups: low being 0-10 hours/week; medium as 11-20 hours/week; moderate being 21-30 hours/week; and high as 31 or higher hours/week (see Appendix H). The survey involved students from various institutions. I aggregated the 6 different institutions into two groups: University including Ryerson University, the University of Toronto and York University; and College comprising of Centennial College, George Brown College and Seneca College (see Appendix H). More survey respondents (57.8%) attended University than those (41.2%) attending College. The average length of time in Canada for the surveyed RIAS was 4.44 years.

Table I – Focus Group RIAS Difficulty Accessing PSE in Ontario

Difficulty Accessing PSE in Ontario	Number	Percentage
No Difficulty Attending PSE in Ontario	14	61%
Difficulty Attending PSE in Ontario	9	39%
TOTAL	23	100%

In asking RIAS if they had any difficulties accessing PSE, 23 of 45 responded. At the beginning of the focus group session, we had participants fill out the demographic inquiry so it could be that some felt a bit rushed, did not fully understand this question or perhaps came late to the session and therefore did not complete this question. As shown in Table I, the majority, 14 (61%) did not experience any difficulties entering PSE in Ontario. This result, though, may be somewhat skewed as we surveyed RIAS who were already attending PSE.

Of the 9 (39%) that experienced difficulty accessing PSE (see Table J), 6 indicated that their spoken and written English was not strong enough to enter the school. Three indicated that they had to write a hard subject-related entrance test, two pointed out that they had difficulty obtaining transcripts and one specified that it was difficult getting their transcripts translated. Two also stated that their prior marks were not high enough to enter PSE. Other students indicated that while trying to obtain access to PSE they

were sick, got second career funding which complicated the process or it took a long time to prepare a portfolio on top of working full-time and having a family.

Table J – Focus Group RIAS Type of Difficulties Accessing PSE in Ontario

Type of Difficulty Accessing PSE	Number
Spoken and Written English Not Strong Enough	6
Hard Subject-Related Entrance Test	3
Difficulty Obtaining Transcripts	2
Prior High School Marks Not High Enough	2
Difficulty Translating Transcripts	1
Sick	1
Complicated Second Career Funding	1
Portfolio Preparation Was Time-Consuming	1

When I asked if the respondents had difficulty balancing studies with other commitments, 23 students responded. The majority, 14 (61%) indicated that they had problems (see Table K). Of these respondents (see Table L), the majority or 11 stated that they had financial problems and 8 specified that they had family commitments. Two pointed out that they had difficulties speaking English and one declared that it was hard to balance studies with their immigration issues.

Table K – Focus Group RIAS Balancing Studies with Other Commitments

Difficulty Balancing Commitments with Studies	Number	Percentage
No Difficulty Balancing Commitments with Studies	9	39%
Difficulty Balancing Commitments with Studies	14	61%
TOTAL	23	100%

Table L – Focus Group RIAS Type of Difficulties While Studying

Type of Difficulties While Studying	Number
Financial Problems	11
Family Commitments	8
Difficulties Speaking English	2
Immigration Status	1

Table M displays the survey RIAS response to the same question. The majority or 66% had difficulty balancing school with their other commitments. A slightly larger proportion of university than college RIAS experienced these difficulties. Many of the difficulties RIAS experienced while studying involved family responsibilities. Overall 63% stated that family commitments made studying difficult, 30% argued that they had to care for dependents in Canada and 19% provided financial and social support for their family back in their source country. Financial problems were the second largest issue for RIAS in

trying to focus on their studies. Specifically 42% of RIAs could not afford the cost of tuition, books and/or a computer. Also 33% of RIAs had to work at a paid job and 21% had difficulty obtaining financial support such as OSAP. These findings were quite consistent with the focus group RIAs where financial problems were most prominent followed by family commitments. It is clear, therefore, that RIAs had difficulty balancing numerous family, financial and various commitments on top of their academic studies.

Table M – Survey RIAs Types of Difficulties While Studying

Types of Difficulties While Studying	University	University(%)	College	College(%)	Total	Total(%)
Balancing school and other commitments	176	70	105	60	281	66
Personal or family responsibilities	140	56	128	73	268	63
Cannot afford the cost of tuition/books/computer	98	39	79	45	177	42
Lack of confidence	92	37	47	27	139	33
Working at a paid job	82	33	57	33	139	33
Providing care for dependents in Canada	53	21	73	41	126	30
Courses available do not match my needs	58	23	34	19	92	22
Difficulty obtaining student loans such as OSAP or other loans	57	23	32	18	89	21
Providing financial and social support for family back in my country	45	18	36	20	81	19
Personal health problems	35	14	18	10	53	12
Other	43	17	19	11	62	15

Table N – Survey RIAs Prior Education from Source Country

Prior Education Completed	Number	Percentage
High school or equivalent	76	18%
Some trade/vocational (no diploma)	19	4%
Trade/Vocational certificate	5	1%
Apprenticeship certificate	2	0%
Non-university certificate or diploma from a college, school of nursing, technical institute or other such educational institute	48	11%
University transfer program	8	2%
University certificate or diploma below bachelor's degree	33	8%
Bachelor's degree	112	26%
University certificate above bachelor's degree	6	1%
First professional degree (medicine, veterinary medicine, dental, optometry, law, divinity)	9	2%
Master's degree	45	11%
PhD	5	1%
Other	57	13%
TOTAL	425	100%

Prior Education from Source Country

The highest level of schooling that RIAs completed before they immigrated to Canada could affect their engagement in PSE. Approximately 69% completed some PSE, 18% completed high school and

13% had some other training apart from PSE in their source country (see Table N). The majority of RIAS (26%) completed a Bachelor's degree and 11% completed a Master's degree. The survey had 16 different educational qualifications (see Appendix C). In order to help facilitate analysis, I chose to aggregate these into 7 groups (see Appendix H). I used Statistics Canada's educational qualification categories as a basis for these condensed groupings as the Statistics Canada definitions are quite similar with the categories used in the survey. The 7 aggregate groups consisted of: Incomplete Secondary School; High School Diploma or equivalent; Some post-secondary education; Post-secondary certificate or diploma below bachelor level; Bachelor degree; University certificate, diploma or degree above bachelor level; and Other comprising no defined level, don't know and other. A few participants could not identify with any of the educational categories and wrote in their responses. A number of participants did not seem to understand the question and wrote in all of the education that they completed to date. I categorized these written in responses as much as possible but where categories did not exist, I listed them as other. With regards to the highest level of schooling completed, the most RIAS completed a Bachelor's Degree (26.5%), the second highest completed some PSE including a College Diploma or University Certificate (23.3%), the third highest completed High School (18.0%) and then those who had completed some education above a Bachelor's degree such as a Graduate Certificate or Master's Degree (16.4%).

Current Academic Success and Comparison with Prior Studies

The majority of focus group respondents, 40 (89%) reported that they were doing well academically in PSE (see Table O). The demographic inquiry further probed to find out how well they academically performed in relation to their previous studies in their country of origin. Of the 43 respondents to this question (see Table P), 20 (47%) indicated that they were academically doing better, 17 (40%) stated that they were doing the same and 6 (14%) specified that they were performing worse in comparison with their prior studies. To summarize, the focus group results provide deep insight into the PSE experience and the survey provide specific data on RIAS. Likewise, the focus group provides good understanding of the diverse gender experience of RIAS. The ages of both focus group and survey participants were very similar with the focus group yielding slightly more perception of a younger student experience. In terms of length of time in Canada, the focus group results give a bit more insight into the

experience of those who have been in Canada more than 5 years. With regards to study type, the focus group results provide less of a view into the part-time RIAS experience. The focus group data yields greater insight into the working while studying RIAS experience. The focus groups provide greater understanding of the RIAS experience in diverse programs than the survey. Both the survey and focus groups provide the same look into ethnicity where the majority of participants are from an Asian heritage. The factor analysis of the survey data will help determine if ethnicity is a significant predictor of engagement.

Table O – Self-Reported Academic Performance in Ontario PSE

Academically Doing Well in PSE	Number	Percentage
Yes	40	89%
No	5	11%
TOTAL	45	100%

Table P – Focus Group RIAS Current Academic Success Related to Prior Study

Current Academic Performance Compared with Prior Study	Number	Percentage
Currently doing better academically than in studies in my country of origin	20	47%
Currently doing the same academically than in studies in my country of origin	17	40%
Currently doing worse academically than in studies in my country of origin	6	14%
TOTAL	43	100%

Focus Group Sessions and Survey Results

Using the inherent organization from the student engagement model that I created in Chapter III, I will present the results from the focus group sessions and specific survey questions. It is important to note that the focus group comments are often based on a relatively small sampling of students. It involves mostly their impressions and may not be representative of all RIAS. Survey results are included in cases where the focus group findings need additional support, in instances where the focus group sessions do not touch on a particular area and where the analysis needs data support. This chapter’s results includes the student inputs, barriers to access, persistence and completion faced by RIAS in PSE, the student activities and learning inside and outside the classroom, student outputs, faculty involvement and student outcomes. The student context in PSE and responsiveness of PSE to RIAS will be discussed in Chapter VI and the full analysis and synthesis of the results will be presented in Chapter VII. This portion begins, though, with a look at some general findings from the focus group gatherings. Please note that the focus group guide is listed in Appendix E and the description of the inherent methodologies for the focus group sessions and survey are listed in Chapter IV.

Student Inputs: pre-Admissions Issues

Immigrants wishing to begin PSE in Canada bring with them a unique set of work experience and skills as well as demographic make-up such as age, cultural background and prior PSE. These inputs can affect RIAS access to PSE. It is important to note that PSE cannot be expected to alter the pre-admission attributes of RIAS. In many ways, these traits are part of the pre-PSE RIAS experience. PSE could address these attributes by changing the admission requirements to PSE or working with RIAS prior to their PSE experience but this discussion is reserved for the synthesis of the research findings in Chapter VII.

Age

According to the 2006 Statistics Canada data, the median age of a college student was 21.6 years old and university student was 22.8 years old (Statistics Canada – Megan Dale, 2010). Because this is a median age, it takes into account students beginning studies as well as completing their education. The mean age of the focus group participants was 32.3 and median age was 32 years old. The mean age of the survey RIAS was 33 and median age was 34. RIAS therefore are on average significantly older than the average college and university student. Age was a significant barrier in immigrants accessing higher education. RIAS discussed age differences as barriers to persistence and completion of their studies as well as affecting their social and academic involvement in PSE. The focus group quote below demonstrates just how different the age demographic was for RIAS:

God... It's horrible! They're [making] phone calls, they're [listening] to their ipod, they're [listening] to their this, they're [chatting], they're hugging, they're [kissing], they're [making] out over there and....if I said [anything] I look like so nineteen eighties...They're like "you're so old fashioned. Get with the program old man." So I don't say anything. I don't go there. (Mr. A, age 38, Focus Group UA)

Changing Careers

Besides age, immigrants also bring their foreign work and educational experience into PSE. Employers tend to discount immigrant foreign work experience and foreign credentials. As an immigrant analyzes whether to begin PSE in Canada, he or she examines their own work and educational experience. A number of immigrants believe that they should complete most and even all of their educational credentials again in a Canadian institution. This predicament as well as English language difficulties often

causes an immigrant to change careers in Canada. RIAS identified this problem 11 times in three different focus groups. Many RIAS did not continue in the same field as their prior work and study but changed programs and careers as stated in the following three focus group excerpts:

Sometimes I think that this class [doesn't] help me... I just study Accounting Clerical. So after...I have finished my program...I am still confused what should I be, for I have changed my career. Before I come [to] Canada I worked [as an] Engineer, but now I think Accounting Clerk can easy find a job... [I] study a new career. I still [confused] if I should continue studying Accounting or stop...and I should come back my old career to study Engineering. (Ms. A, Focus Group CA)

I used to work in business...but it was not so easy for me to find the same position in Canada...Sure...had to change...Not only me, I found... quite a lot of students are in the same situation, they change their career. (Ms. G, Focus Group CA)

I have been doing a job forever, more than 20 years, and...I am again student here...I had science background and later I...was a student of Economics. But here, I am Accounting student. So, it was initially difficult for me to cope with the subject... But, the thing is there are some problems...for the student like, of my age. We are competing with the regular students...very high pressure for student like me and I felt pressure, too much pressure in the end. (Mr. B, Focus Group CA)

Immigrants also struggled with being stereotyped into a particular career. Even in the short time of being in Canada, the focus group participants indicated that there were particular programs and fields that Canadian employers seemingly expected them to enter. Some RIAS chose programs unrelated to their prior study such as accounting or finance as they would not need to speak English as much. Other RIAS, who were doctors in their source country and cannot practice as a doctor in Canada, then went back to PSE to become a nurse. Similarly, RIAS who were lawyers in their country of origin and cannot practice law in Canada are now studying to be a legal assistant. RIAS often change careers because of the discounting of their foreign work experience and credentials and it would take too many additional years of study to gain Canadian credentials.

These focus group findings are quite similar to Anisef et al. (2009) who realized that RIAS chose to take one of three different courses of study in Canadian PSE. The first was that RIAS would recycle their studies in Canada, meaning that they would attend a college or trade school in order to obtain additional job-related training. The second course of study was more value added, where RIAS would pursue a university degree in a field related to their prior study. The third program of study would be to start anew, which would involve seeking credentials in a field unrelated to their prior education. When RIAS ventured

outside the particular fields that Canadian employers seemingly expected them to enter, they felt truly out of place as seen in this account: “Yeah, because in my field, Art and Design, I don’t see immigrant people...most of them they’re white people, I don’t see this diversity” (Ms. C, Focus Group CB).

New Educational Environment and Terminology

RIAS expressed difficulty understanding the educational environment and terminology in PSE in Canada because they are relatively new immigrants and have not studied in PSE in Canada. For instance, RIAS did not know what to do when they were offered admission to an alternate course of study:

I applied for Social Work, because I had some background in that field. You [had to indicate a] second choice [that] I put [as] Public Health and Safety...but what I wanted was Social Work, only to receive later through the mail that you have been accepted in Public Health. I didn’t know what it meant. I didn’t know the details. I had just a rough idea it is something to do with the health... So I asked a few friends...They said “Oh, that’s good!” They said Public Health is much better than Social Work. Then, they encouraged me to accept. But when I started class, a lot of everything was science. Sciences! And I didn’t have the science background...I said, “Oh my god”, it was overwhelming. And I had reached a stage where I can’t retreat, I can’t surrender. So, that is very challenging. And in such a situation, you have already accepted. You signed. You are in the program. You have already committed yourself, time and money; you have nothing to do. You have to remain there although you may struggle to catch up with other people who are into that program. [They put me] in the fast track...[another student] asked me what [I studied previously]...I said I did Social Sciences, Sociology; and he said, “What? What are you doing here? This is pure Science. You are going to disgrace yourself”...Indeed, when I continued going deeper in the program, [I found] too much Chemistry...too much sciences and I find that a bit challenging, now. (Mr. C, Focus Group UB)

When thinking about studying in Canada, RIAS also indicated that they were worried about how they could cope with the academic work and understand the new educational system. While many RIAS took PSE in their source country, most did not have any educational experience in Canada. This concerned a number of RIAS while some also received good assistance from staff members:

When I came here I was like, “Oh, a whole new system.” Because I didn’t go to high school here, I didn’t do any other schooling except upgrading, and... it was like I felt overwhelmed...People in the Business office they were pretty...helpful. I can go them and ask so many questions and I didn’t feel like, “Ok, I’m a stupid black person” cause it’s just that I don’t know. (Ms. B, Focus Group CB)

Lack of Money and Time

RIAS shared their concern about scarcity of money and time. Lack of money could negatively affect access to PSE as RIAS needed to forgo full-time earnings as well as pay tuition. Similarly, lack of time was critical as a RIAS was already stretched between their family responsibilities and earning money.

Time was already so limited that it was difficult for an immigrant to think about going back to PSE to begin a new course of study or upgrade a credential.

English Proficiency

An immigrant's language proficiency could make it difficult to enter and persist in PSE. RIAS indicated that they were concerned about their ability to speak and/or write English. This lack of language proficiency was stressful for RIAS as they entered and started PSE:

When I first got here to Canada five years ago and I went straight into college, I would blush. I would be so red every time I spoke in class; but I did. And then, as time went by, I felt more comfortable, but I still did speak, I don't stop to this day. But...you have to make that first step. (Ms. D, Focus Group UB)

Student Inputs: Differences between Prior Studies and PSE in Canada

Quite often focus group attendees compared and contrasted PSE in their country of origin to the Canadian system. RIAS indicated that their prior educational experience strongly affected their desire to study in Canada as well as their approach to PSE. RIAS prior studies in their source country improved their skills and knowledge about a particular field of study. It also brought a good understanding about the more intangible ways in which an educational system operates. While some of the prior knowledge regarding their source country's educational system was transferable, much of the Canadian system was quite unique to RIAS as seen in this reference:

Probably the hardest thing [is] to adjust [to a] different educational system because you don't study in high school [in Canada]...here they take accounting in high school. Back home, you don't have any accounting, so for me it's [a] completely new subject. For them, they can build on accounting. (Mr. D, Focus Group UB)

It is important to note that because immigrants hail from such a diverse set of countries and continents, comparing educational backgrounds had quite varied results. Some RIAS stated that they had larger class sizes at home than in Canada while others remarked that class sizes in Canada were much larger than in their source country. Similarly, some commented that they had to work harder in PSE in their home country than in Canada while others claimed exactly the opposite. These varied experiences are likely derived from their diverse educational backgrounds. RIAS did not indicate any correlation between the type and quality of their prior PSE with their choice of institutional type and program of study in

Canada. Please note that while these and subsequent findings are reported in this chapter, they will be analyzed using the student engagement conceptual framework in the synthesis chapter (Chapter VII).

Comparing Quality and Costs

When RIAS were comparing PSE studies at home and in Canada, there were a few significant issues that consistently arose. Firstly, even though PSE in some RIAS source country was quite inexpensive, a number identified a corresponding poor quality. Some RIAS even had free tuition, accommodation, books and services in their source country. This summarizes one immigrant student's thoughts: "We couldn't get loans back at home. It was cheap but the quality is not comparable here. The quality is good here but it is not cheap" (Mr. E, Focus Group UC).

Learning Methods

Secondly, the method of learning in many RIAS source countries was significantly different from Canada. Some RIAS stated that their prior learning involved rote memorization, theoretical concepts and no transferable employment skills. In their prior studies, attendees mentioned that they rarely held classroom discussions and most classes were lectures with no student input indicating significant differences in learning styles and classroom activities:

This is a challenge for me, because back home...we just sit there and listen to the teacher. We never speak out. (Ms. E, Focus Group CB)

10 years learning experience, just to sit there. So, it's a big change. (Ms. E, Focus Group CB)

A professor will stand there, read from the book, and it was up to me to do the study, and found the facts, and it was very overwhelming. The schooling only was about memory and whatever I memorize, as long as I put it on the paper, that will be it. I wouldn't have any use for it whatsoever after. (Ms. T, Focus Group CB)

Lack of Student Services in Country of Origin

Very few RIAS indicated that they had student services in their source country. There was much discussion about Canada having better student services than their prior experience. Of note was the library. RIAS mentioned a number of times that the libraries in their country of origin were very old with few books whereas Canadian libraries were very large with newer texts. Even though most RIAS stated that services were better in Canada, quite a few also argued that this was their expectation:

In my country [we only had] the library. [We didn't] have any computing services. No other services. (Mr. G, Focus Group UC)

In my...home country...there was a student service by name, but in fact... there was no...student service. Here, I find that they have some beneficial student services and they provide some supporting service like... different computer facilities and different ways that provide students [with] medical supports... Canadian institutions are better than that of my country. (Mr. B, Focus Group CA)

Therefore in the focus groups, RIAS gave numerous comparisons between their education back in their home country and here in Canada with most favouring study in Canada. They found that Canadian PSE was more practical, applied and involved more experiential learning than their previous education, which was dominated by rote learning and textbook study. Even though they preferred study in Canada, they found the adjustment very difficult and they did not feel adequately prepared:

I think I'm having difficulties with the research thing, the assignments; it's a lot of assignments. You have to write a lot of papers. Like, back home we're not used to writing papers; it's just easy stuff. They give you something, you just write short answers but here, it's more multiple choice. So you really have to study hard to do well. So, I think that's the barrier for me, the papers and the research. It's killing me! (Ms. H, Focus Group UB)

Yes, I think after the first year I'm in university study here, I think I do very well at the beginning. Because...I can't focus on the study and the beginning [I felt] a lot of confusion...I don't know how I need to work. (Ms. F, Focus Group UD)

By and large, RIAS felt that they worked hard to earn the credentials in their source country. RIAS strongly valued their prior learning credentials even though they complained about a lack of student services, differences in style of teaching and learning and relatively lower quality of education.

RIAS inputs, as noted above, could shape access to PSE and have a bearing on success and engagement in PSE. Immigrants brought their knowledge, skills, GPA, prior study, work experience, language proficiency, cultural background, age and diversity with them as they began their approach to higher education. The first thing that they encountered, however, were barriers in accessing PSE, which we will examine next.

Barriers to Access Faced by RIAS in PSE

Barriers to Access Experienced by RIAS: Admissions Issues

When immigrants wish to attend PSE in Canada, they often face access barriers such as difficulties with the admissions process. RIAS indicated numerous problems in applying to Ontario PSE including the

following: obtaining and getting certified translations of original transcripts, writing numerous assessments, in-house English tests and standardized English proficiency tests, going through a very lengthy and at times confusing admissions process and having to navigate through and pay for a foreign transcript evaluation process by World Education Services (WES) or International Credential Assessment Service of Canada (ICAS). In some cases, RIAS had to go in person to their previous post-secondary institution in order to obtain the original transcripts in a sealed envelope. Once applicants obtained the original transcripts, they often needed to pay a translation service to have the transcripts officially translated into English. This process could significantly delay the processing of an admission application and was quite costly.

At most colleges, RIAS indicated that they had to send their original transcripts to WES or ICAS to pay for an official evaluation of their foreign credential. This process was not always clear to the applicants as they were not sure if they needed to obtain a basic evaluation or a more detailed course-by-course evaluation. Again, this took more time and money as the evaluation cost anywhere from \$110 to \$240 and could take anywhere from a week to a month. One RIAS explained the expensive process:

To get into school is also very expensive. So far I've spent maybe \$4,000 just to...go to English exams. Every time I go to [another school, I have to pay for] one of these exams...[and] to get my documents from my university. It's too much. (Ms. C, Focus Group CB)

What Ms. C and other RIAS identified are the many tests that an applicant had to write in order to obtain admission and, after obtaining admission, placement tests before registering for courses. Applicants whose first language is not English must write a standardized English proficiency test such as TOEFL or IELTS. This is an admission requirement where RIAS have to take time to prepare for the test, time to write the test and money to pay for the test. After obtaining admission, though, applicants often need to write additional assessment tests particularly at Ontario colleges. These are placement tests and often include English writing, vocabulary, math and sometimes more specialized knowledge and skill tests. As these tests are unique to each school, RIAS need to pay separately at each college for each test. While RIAS understand the necessity to write an English proficiency standardized test, they had difficulty comprehending the stipulation behind non-standard school-specific pre-admissions and placement tests.

Ultimately RIAS indicated that the admissions process was confusing, time consuming and costly. As their input knowledge of PSE was based on their prior education, the Ontario admissions process was

foreign and confusing. RIAS also indicated that they often had trouble understanding some of the terms used in the admissions application and process as summarized by the following RIAS:

Maybe it's a big challenge... at least it was to me...to understand the system. What [does] 'major' mean? I was calling the administration to inquire about the application process and...I felt like the person was bored...like she had to explain things that are so obvious. (Ms. C, Focus Group CB)

Some RIAS felt that they were getting the administrative run-around. While these issues are not unique to RIAS, their already stretched lives were further complicated by the bureaucratic maze. RIAS indicated that they did not know what forms to fill out and what department would best help them, both in terms of admissions and financial aid:

Most of my complaints are [about] the admissions process. I feel like I am being played. You go in this department and then you go to that department and you just get passed along...The difficult part is trying to get all the paperwork done... because I'm doing double majors and so one doesn't know anything about the other and then you gotta find out all these different information...and the worst of all I found was getting information about financial assistance. They really don't go above and beyond to really help out, especially for the newbies like ourselves here. There are so many things that [this school] offers for us, but we don't know about. They are not advertised. So what's the use of these things if it's supposed to be beneficial to me but I don't know about it? (Ms. K, Focus Group UA)

Barriers to Access Experienced by RIAS: Advanced Standing Issues

Many RIAS came to Ontario with some prior PSE. Many RIAS applied for advanced standing for a particular program of study as they did not wish to repeat courses or take full programs given their strong educational and work background. Some RIAS who applied to different Ontario institutions indicated that the type and amount of advanced standing widely varied. For some, there was little to no recognition of their foreign study and work experience and found that the advanced standing office was not helpful:

For the administration office, I feel that they weren't very friendly. Also not very helpful...When I was enrolling with the program, one staff...serviced me...but some information he provide was wrong...Because I already had a degree, I should get credit for this course because this course...is a pre-requisite course for others... but he asked me to enroll this course...So I was caused delay. After probably two weeks I...asked...faculty. She told me I can get [advanced standing] for this course so eventually I [got it]. (Mr. I, Focus Group UA)

A few RIAS, though, disagreed:

I already have my science degree from back home...so they took that into [consideration]... [They] took my years of experience...[and] work experience and they gave me more options [at this school] in terms of [counting my] experience... [and] my previous degrees counted...more than everywhere else. (Mr. A, Focus Group UA)

Barriers to Access Experienced by RIAS: Positive Bridges to Barriers

In discussing barriers to enter PSE, RIAS also spoke about why they chose to go to a particular institution including some factors that helped them overcome access barriers. Some RIAS argued that they deselected a school that asked for an additional English assessment or selected a school where the admissions requirements were less stringent, the program less demanding or the quality decidedly better. Institutions that offered lower tuition and/or more advanced standing were also a motivating factor allowing the students to overcome some financial access barriers to PSE. The following statement by a RIAS indicated some reasons for overcoming access barriers and starting at a particular institution:

[Here] it's based on competitiveness. So at [another school] you get a little bit ...less competition and more time to develop your own skills and your choice of your area of interest. (Mr. H, Focus Group UA)

Personal attachments to the institution was likely the strongest motivator for RIAS to overcome access barriers such as the following: a friend already attended the school, the community was welcoming, the people were friendly or they felt like they fit into the rich diversity of the institution. Some even chose the school primarily because of its location. The following two statements highlight a few of these more personal feelings and reasons for overcoming access barriers in PSE:

I chose [here] because I originally had a family member at school here and she gave me a very good idea of what [it] is like....I could have gone to Alberta but it was too far away and I didn't know what it what it there. My family member at school here [said this school]...has the most liberal curriculum for everybody...I'm told at [another school] is pretty conservative...almost everything but if you want liberalism, if you want multiculturalism...you'll find that you'll like it here and so far that's been my experience. (Mr. A, Focus Group UA)

Yeah, I was thinking of being comfortable...I really liked the diverse situation here...for safer spaces...the positive spaces...It was really good and people are made [to feel] comfortable and they don't have anything to hide...it's a really positive situation. (Mr. J, Focus Group CC)

RIAS Activities and Learning Inside and Outside the Classroom

RIAS use their skills, prior study, work experience and other inputs to overcome access barriers and enter PSE. There are a multitude of student activities and learning both inside and outside the classroom that could help engage RIAS. Some RIAS chose not to join in the PSE activities or be involved. Sometimes, though, RIAS were not even aware of these activities and therefore their lack of knowledge

precluded their involvement. In this section, I will examine orientation, financial aid, PSE program design, student learning, student clubs, sports and recreation and student services encountered by RIAS.

Orientation

In virtually all of the focus group sessions, RIAS noted that their institutions had orientation sessions. Some RIAS stated that there was an orientation for the entire school while others had a specific program orientation. The majority of RIAS attended orientation and those who did not attend either did not have time to attend, did not feel it was necessary, the school did not have orientation or they just forgot. At a few of the institutions, there was no orientation for continuing education, part-time and ESL students. Of those who attended orientation, two-thirds felt that it was helpful while the remaining third deemed it too general and not helpful. Orientation to this RIAS was quite important at the beginning of her studies: “At the beginning, I [experienced] a lot of confusion. I need more time...how to research, how to use the library on line” (Ms. F, Focus Group UD). A number of RIAS specified that orientation, while often helpful, would be more beneficial if it was specifically developed for their program:

[Orientation is] so general...how to use the library, facilities...For sure it's a little helpful. But not so much as we expect it because we don't have a special orientation for all of programs, we just have the whole college kind of thing. (Ms. I, Focus Group CA)

Some RIAS also stated that as they progressed in their studies they could benefit from other services or more detailed knowledge about how to research:

We need to have orientations for second year or third year, cause like, by the first year, I came and then I didn't know that it's really helpful for me so I didn't pay much [attention]. There's no more [sessions] unless I attended the first year sessions. That's pretty helpful for me to have that again but I forget by now. (Ms. J, Focus Group UB)

Financial Aid and Limited Financial Resources

Financial aid and limited financial resources were significant issues for RIAS. While limited money supply was often a barrier to access, persistence and completion, RIAS also discussed problems with the Financial Aid Office. RIAS had a number of complaints regarding unhelpful financial aid staff such as the following two examples:

I find that [the] Financial Aid office is...not really helpful. They don't give any information unless you find out by yourself. After studying for three years, I found out I could apply for this bursary but they never told me. (Ms. J, Focus Group UB)

With Financial Aid, the one sentence that they know how to say is, “Go check it online.” So I don’t know what they are doing there. It’s a waste of space. (Ms. D, Focus Group UB)

RIAS felt the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) requirements were unfair. Generally when a RIAS was married, they then had to take into account their spouses income and this could disqualify them for OSAP. Likewise OSAP did not take into account RIAS who had to financially support dependent children residing in their source country. Also, part-time students were not eligible to receive government financial assistance in most provinces. So even though OSAP was a government loan program designed to help students including RIAS, it tended to fall short of meeting immigrant student’s needs. Similarly, RIAS discussed that scholarship and bursary criterion were difficult for them to meet:

I also find out that when you want to apply for scholarship you have to take volunteer work. I don’t have time for volunteer jobs, that’s why I’m not working... You have to volunteer [for] something like 100 hours. Come on guys. I’m not working because I don’t have time for that. That is why I apply for bursaries. (Ms. L, Focus Group UC)

With regards to limited financial resources, RIAS felt that there was an impact on their studies. A few mentioned that they did not have the luxury to consider taking a course again or even dropping out of a particular subject as they did not have sufficient funds to take it at a later time, as one RIAS commented here: “I don’t want to fail. It is \$6000 for me tuition a year. I don’t want to take it again and pay again. I just want to get it done” (Ms. M, Focus Group UC).

Program Design

RIAS demonstrated considerable interest in how their program was structured, if it included co-op and if the design was tailored to internationally trained immigrants (ITI’s). Co-op was a critical component of RIAS’ education and ability to gain some Canadian work experience with the hope of leading to a job as seen in this statement: “My program is a one year program but no co-op. No work placement. So, it’s so hard to find a job” (Ms. N, Focus Group CA). RIAS also stated that programs designed particularly for ITI’s helped them achieve academic success and engagement. These programs, for instance, included bridging curriculum that respected the knowledge and skills that RIAS have gained in their prior studies and work experience as depicted in this excerpt:

My overall experience in the program [has] been extraordinarily exceptional. As a newcomer and maybe for the fact that [the program is] catered for [an] internationally educated person, I feel my

time was worthwhile and the professors went beyond their actual daily duties to make sure that I understood and I'm really taught what I need to learn at the time. (Ms. T, Focus Group CB)

One or two RIAS spoke about the course textbook and software that were quite helpful. A few RIAS, though, indicated that the scheduling of exams was quite challenging and affected their academic performance as seen in these two comments:

The exam [was from] three to six...[at] the Metro Convention Centre and then I got exam six to nine at Ryerson. So, how to travel. (Mr. D, Focus Group UB)

The exam schedule itself is like an exam. You prepare how to work under pressure. (Mr. K, Focus Group UB)

Learning and Group Work

In addition to program design, RIAS felt that learning and group work were an integral part of their student experience. While the focus group sessions and survey did not provide insights to individual ways of learning, some best practices did emerge through some of the discussion. In particular, RIAS indicated that they learned best in group discussion and study, some through lectures, a few in a quiet library and others through self-guided learning, books and assignments. It is quite interesting to note that even though most RIAS learned primarily through lectures in their source country, some learned to not only adapt but also to appreciate the new more experiential learning as seen here:

I find if I have a study group [or] discussion group, [and] I verbalize things, it helps me better to remember and comprehend. I could read all week but if I spend an hour [discussing] what I read, it becomes better for me. I want to hear myself say it. If you verbalize it, that means you're seeing it in the way you understand it. It helps me remember in laymen's terms not professor's terms but on my own level. It helps me better to understand so I [am interacting] in the discussion group and the study group helps me more. (Mr. A, Focus Group UA)

Speaking up in class, though, was quite difficult for some RIAS. In order to build on their learning during and after classes, reflective journals were a creative option especially for the RIAS who were not compelled to participate in class as found in this quote:

One thing that I find helpful, in many of our classes we have a reflective journal. So, for students who do not want to speak in class, we just write our thoughts about what was taught that day or that's another way to participate and show that we are thinking of what is being said. (Ms. D, Focus Group UB)

A few of the RIAS took advantage of the Learning Centre on their campus. There were conflicting feelings on how helpful it was to RIAS. RIAS indicated that academic activities outside the class were few.

In the focus group sessions, discussion kept returning to classroom involvement and how critical it was to learning. Many of the RIAS grappled with being more involved in classes. Some felt that the only way to motivate them to participate more was when the professor gave out participation marks. Not only did the classroom involvement increase learning about the subject matter, it also helped RIAS communicate better in English as this RIAS identified:

Discussion in class... and interaction with classmates and the professors is a better way to develop [and] give us our communication skills. A couple of projects we...[completed in] groups. We discussed together and we exchanged our ideas and finally summarized our report. I think independent study is good but we also need this kind of discussion or interaction, cause it can help us develop our communication and teamwork skills. (Mr. L, Focus Group CA)

This led to likely the most important discussion on learning for RIAS and that was group work. One RIAS identified that group discussion and learning would be better if they were working in smaller groups. RIAS indicated some positive aspects of group work such as the group work helped them choose courses, allowed them to do better academically and made learning stronger especially when they were grouped together with students born in Canada. There seemed to be even more negative discussion concerning team work that: could help them improve if people only knew how to work in teams, hindered their learning, made RIAS do all of the work, lumped all of the RIAS together in one group and was difficult because different students had different mark expectations. To highlight the strong differences, here are two contrasting RIAS viewpoints, first positive and then negative:

Actually, the group activities and interactions in the classroom has been very helpful since day one. I understand more when I brainstorm and share ideas with the group. It's mixed, all background, all ages. (Ms. T, Focus Group CB)

The problem is team work. Team working is one of the things that those who cannot speak English or cannot write very well [need] to improve themselves. The problem is in those who are in the team. They cannot work together sometime[s] because we are not in the same level. If we were in the same level, in the same knowledge of English, maybe that would be different. (Mr. M, Focus Group UC)

One RIAS spoke directly about the value of learning Canadian collaborative team work in their particular field of study:

But in terms of group work, I would say that, because I was working all with second, third or fourth generation Canadians...I learned from them a lot last year actually because...Canadian mentality is collaborative. They're taught how to work in group, how to compromise...how to say something negative in a nicer way. (Ms. C, Focus Group CB)

Student Clubs

In addition to learning and group work within the class, RIAS also discussed student activities outside the classroom such as student clubs. The focus group members did not have very much experience with student clubs as they were torn in so many directions. They were so involved in their studies, trying to work a part-time job to pay for their studies, looking after their children and often taking care of their parents that they had little time for anything else. Yet, a few RIAS indicated that they went on a field trip, attended a student-run religious association, joined a cultural club, went to a student party or were involved in a few activities outside of school as seen in this comment: “It’s good to [go to a] club once a week. I am [trying] to find one. If you only study you become sleepy” (Ms. M, Focus Group UC). Some RIAS also indicated that the only activities that they would make time for outside of class were those related to getting a job or volunteering to eventually gain employment as identified this sentiment: “I do activities related to my course, like for hands on experience. I visit hospitals that are related to my course which is beneficial as a career point of view” (Mr. N, Focus Group CA).

Sports and Recreation

RIAS also found little time to participate in sports and recreation on campus. For some RIAS, though, the difficulties were more than just time. Some complained that they had to pay every time they used the campus recreation facilities with some of the sports amenities being quite expensive and quite a few said that the sports services were downright poor in quality:

For [the] gym you have to pay every single time. Other universities are like free...Last year I registered in [a] Tai Kwon Do class. It was cheap but I went there only a few times because I [had to] use my time to study. (Mr. O, Focus Group UC)

Student Services

Many of these issues faced by RIAS are not unique to RIAS but nonetheless are rather challenging given the compounded difficulties they face. The quotes also are RIAS impressions and not necessarily based on fact. In many of the focus group sessions, there was some debate about what services were available on campus and where they were located. It became quite clear that there was little knowledge of the type, location and purpose of student services. This back-and-forth debate is highlighted in this section:

Male: Student Centre here?

Moderator: You have a Student Centre here?
Male: Yeah, I don't know if it's here.
Female: Oh, I know, yeah.
Mr. P: This would be the Student Centre, but it's only a bookshelf there - nothing else.
Mr. N: No, there is [an] office also in [the] Counseling Centre.
Mr. P: Oh, there's a Counseling Centre. Ok. I don't know.
Ms. I: Beside[s] Tim Horton, I think.
Mr. P: No, no, no... I never heard of that.
Mr. N: I've been there once. (Focus Group CA)

Some RIAS indicated that because services were not covered in orientation, they were not aware of them.

Others did not recall a service because they never used it. There seemed to be consensus that if the student services were visibly advertised, they could know about and make use of the services.

Of the services on campus, RIAS indicated that they made considerable use of the writing centre, peer tutoring service and access centre. One RIAS stated that her professor encouraged students to attend writing workshops by giving bonus marks for just attending. This type of plan not only advertised the service but gave some motivation to use the service. Some RIAS began to rely on the services to the point of becoming dependent on the service, which was arguably not necessarily the best for a student's long-term prospects in improving their skills as seen here:

I feel this [writing centre] has really helped me for all my essays. Usually I finish it. I bring [it] to [the] writing center or the ESL and let them fix [it] for me - for my grammar. Basically my structure's good. Then my essay will usually get a good mark. It is really helpful. I usually get the mark just like the student who grew up here because [of] the writing centre. If at one time I couldn't get it, I would go six times because I work hard. I finish first and then I go two times, three times. That's how I survive. (Ms. M, Focus Group UC)

While the writing centre helped this student achieve academic success in terms of high marks, it is highly debatable whether this RIAS was learning how to write English well over time. When this RIAS obtains employment and has to write her first report, she will no longer be able to use the school's writing centre. So in providing the editing service, perhaps the institution was not necessarily helping skill development.

For some RIAS, the access centre provided valuable assistance to balance or organize their studies as seen in this excerpt:

I had a quitting problem. I did chemistry very long ago and I was very bad at it and I just didn't know anything at all. So, the first semester I had Chemistry and Engineering and I was doing very bad[ly]. I failed the first midterm test and I just felt so terrible. I was thinking, Oh my god, I have to drop this course and that's really bad and I'm going to fall behind." I went to the Access Centre where they give you time management and writing [help] and a consultation on how to arrange your academic life and how to run your time. They just told me, "just drop Chemistry. It's ok.

You'll take it next semester." And I was so relieved. It helped me so much. I dropped it and I got an A next semester. (Mr. K, Focus Group UB)

RIAS also used other student services on campus such as the career centre, computer services and library services. Many of the comments about these services were quite favourable:

Here, I find that they have some beneficial student services and some supporting service like different computer facilities...medical and [other] supports. These are very [good] things... Canadian institutions are better than [those from] my back home country. (Mr. B, Focus Group CA)

I've used the student centre for proofreading in my essays because I'm taking social work and I do lots of essays. And I've also made use of ELS [English Language Services]. ELS is good and the student centre is good. The library is ok. They are good and every one of them does their jobs well. For me, I'm ok with the services. (Ms. O, Focus Group UC)

The library, though, seemed to receive quite strong criticism. It in fact was not so much a problem with the staff or customer service but in the amount of space. Most RIAS indicated that their library was overcrowded to the point where one RIAS compared it to Wal-Mart (Mr. A, Focus Group UA). Often the computer services were also located within the library, which seemed to add to the crowding effect:

[Our] library is like a circus. It's a zoo. (Mr. Q, Focus Group UA)

[In the] school library...the computer is not working very well. The printing takes time and they're too many students. Too noisy...I try to avoid to study in the school library. (Mr. I, Focus Group UA)

In discussing student services, some of the other negative comments by RIAS were about the cafeteria service and microwaves. While some students found the cafeteria service helpful, most said that the food was much more expensive than off-campus food, the service was poor, there were not many food choices and often had long lines. RIAS made good use of the on-campus food bank and the microwaves but felt there were too few microwaves and that they were terribly dirty too. Some RIAS argued that it was all of the students' responsibility to clean the microwaves but that required educating the students. One would not think that microwaves would create such strong feelings but given the expensive food offerings on campus, bringing food from home to eat on campus really helped RIAS stretch their limited resources:

We are in summer now but in the winter [the cafeteria] will be packed. I literally have to stand in line just to heat your food in the microwave. (Ms. T, Focus Group CB)

One bad thing about the quality of [this school] is the microwaves. The microwave that I used before [in] the basement, it's filthy. They had to throw it out and then they didn't bring a new one

in. So now if you bring food from home, you can't even warm up your food. (Ms. O, Focus Group UC)

A few RIAS spoke about health insurance and not having money to attend to their medical needs.

There was limited debate about counseling services as some RIAS felt that there was a stigma in their culture to use any form of counseling. The service, though, to this RIAS did not help to motivate her:

There's too much to pamper students for basic things and it's confusing to me. For example, in the counseling services they will tell you how you can improve but you're not motivated. You don't need to go to a counseling service. I mean, lots of them seem to me too basic... just how to keep people in the school - not motivating people in the school. (Ms. C, Focus Group CB)

Table Q – How Survey RIAS Found Out About Services

Type	Frequency	Percent
Classmates	273	62.9%
Internet	270	62.2%
Professor	192	44.2%
Orientation	153	35.3%
Calendar	152	35.0%
Counseling Centre	59	13.6%
Advising Service	52	12.0%
Other	48	11.1%

Given that many RIAS did not know about services in their school, it is helpful to know how RIAS found out about the services that they used. This question was not addressed in the focus group sessions but the RIAS survey participants answered this question and the results are found in Table Q. In the survey question, RIAS could indicate one or more ways of discovering the services on their campus. There was a total of 434 RIAS answering this question. The majority of survey respondents found out about student services through their classmates (62.9%) and the internet (62.2%). Just under half of RIAS (44.2%) learned about services from their professor. Just over a third of RIAS discovered about student services from orientation (35.3%) and the full-time calendar (35%). A small number of RIAS found out about services from the counseling centre (13.6%) and the advising service (12%). RIAS also learned of services by seeing email, flyers, billboards, letters, campus signs, class presentations or other school leaders such as TAs or the student union. Just like advertising a product, it takes multiple methods of advertising student services to be noticed by students but the most effective for RIAS seem to be word of mouth (classmates, professor, counseling centre, advising service, class presentations and school leaders) and administrative action (internet, orientation, calendar, email, flyer, billboard, letter and campus signs).

In summary, there were positive aspects of student services that arose from the focus groups. While there were issues with service awareness and finding time to use the services, generally when RIAS used the services, they were found to be helpful. There was a desire to improve services specifically for immigrant students and to perhaps create a one-stop or first-stop service model so that they were not bounced from one department to another:

They have to improve their customer service. When I tried to find some information, I go to the Student Service and they send me to another office and that office they send me to another person and that person send me back to the other person. They have bureaucracy there. They send me to three different offices. They offer me a program [not] related with my career, so I decide [that] I have to go to another institution. (Mr. R, Focus Group CC)

Therefore, if RIAS can find out about student services then they may be able to use them and perhaps benefit from them. One key is to better advertise the services as seen here:

In [my] course we had to do a survey and the issue of my survey was blackboard [blackboard is the student website portal]. In the survey we found that there [are] so many things about student service[s] which many students don't know. We gave the recommendation to advertise more and to advertise the diversified service which [they] provide. (Mr. B, Focus Group CA)

Persistence and Completion Barriers Experienced by RIAS

RIAS experienced numerous barriers to persistence and completion while in PSE. The main persistence and completion barriers that RIAS identified in the focus groups include English language, age and cultural differences, family obligations, feelings of stress and being overwhelmed, academic, social and aspects of student life. According to Pascarella & Terenzini (1991) and Tinto (1993), adult students should be disengaged, high-risk, marginalized and academically unsuccessful yet studies indicate that they have the same or higher grades and are more satisfied with PSE than traditional students (Kasworm, 2003). RIAS similarly face numerous barriers and should be disengaged, high-risk, marginalized and academically unsuccessful but similar to adult students they obtain good grades and generally persist in PSE.

English Barriers

In all of the focus groups, RIAS spoke of difficulties with their English language skills and how this made it difficult to persist to completion in PSE. These issues included spoken and written English that affected their lives inside and their social life outside the classroom as well as after PSE:

Actually the English skills somehow is even more important than the academic studies because...we study here just for find job, right? But a lot of person I know...they can't find job just because their English is poor. (Ms. I, Focus Group CA)

Language is obviously the [strongest] barrier that prevent immigrants from involving in this society. It's a lifelong learning process. I will keep improving this language skills in the future. (Mr. L, Focus Group CA)

Specifically with spoken English, RIAS talked about their accent being a barrier to participation, where they were embarrassed and sometimes ridiculed in class. Some stated that a professor mocked them or would not encourage them to participate because of their lack of English abilities. RIAS also felt that they could not express themselves well enough in the class. The next two quotes exemplify these barriers:

We are not so good at [discussion but] understanding is always much better. I have to think twice before I say something and I have much more rich thoughts that I can express...sometimes I feel really stupid because I cannot express what I think and what I [want to] say. (Ms. C, Focus Group CB)

Some professors, they do understand what you [say] but they just want you to use the Canadian way of speaking. It is not fair to us immigrants. I'd like to say that if you can hear us, why don't you just say it instead of making us to talk like Canadians when you know that we're not Canadians. (Ms. O, Focus Group UC)

Comprehending verbal English was also difficult for RIAS. A few RIAS indicated that their English speaking and listening improved with social interaction outside of class. Some of the difficulties in comprehending verbal English also involved understanding Canadian terms, cultural values and slang used inside and outside the classroom. They suggested that perhaps the professors and administrators should try to explain terms so they would fully understand what was meant:

At the beginning it was really difficult to understand some terms. I know what discussion is but now they're going to do Focus Group. I have no idea what it is, to be honest. And, it would be good for teacher [to understand that not] everybody comes with Canadian experience [and] educational experience. I know brainstorm but I have no idea how it works. (Ms. P, Focus Group CB)

Other RIAS articulated that their reading of English was poor especially in a new field of study. RIAS expressed deep feelings of isolation, alienation and frustration stemming from their difficulties with English as indicated by the following quote:

I still have these language barrier problems. I don't [have] many friends; I probably have two or three friends in five years [but] not very close friends as back home. I don't know anybody here who speaks my language and... I have the same problem with teachers. Sometimes they ask me why I never participate; my participation marks are very low and even with my assignments I have to get somebody always to edit my work and I feel very limited with that. I don't feel very

comfortable speaking with people here because... I just feel we are completely different. (Ms. Q, Focus Group UB)

As most of the grading involved evaluation of their written work, many RIAS felt stress from their inability to write English. Some RIAS stated their writing improved with help from a teaching assistant, a tutor or the writing centre. They found that both written and spoken English improved only through very hard individual work:

For me personally, the bigger challenge in English language is writing. I can communicate and I can listen, I can read but my writing's still way beyond where it should be... but the thing is [that] I wanted to challenge myself because eventually you end up working. Nobody's [going to] check my writing, so I would say it's up to me to develop and I couldn't find a better opportunity for me to learn the language. Even though the one task might take me 16 hours to finish, [compared] to four or five [for] somebody with better writing skills, but I find that by doing so, I did improve my English, my writing, my sentence form and my spelling as well. (Ms. T, Focus Group CB)

One RIAS lamented the fact that they were not required to take an English course in order to finish the program. While this is not a persistence barrier, it could be a barrier to future employment. This RIAS believed that he would improve his English proficiency if he were required to pass an English course:

I'm taking engineering. They don't give us any English course. We only have one communication course in third year. I have a friend who is [at another school]...Every semester they have to pass a English course. They have to talk to each other, they have to practice writing and reading. We don't have to talk in engineering. We don't take any English course so this makes us to not improve our language. (Mr. E, Focus Group UC)

RIAS did not seem to be advocating for more stringent admissions requirements but rather for the ability, time and opportunity to improve their verbal and written English as well as their verbal comprehension.

Age and Cultural Differences Barriers

In addition to English barriers, RIAS also spoke about age and cultural issues. Next to difficulties with English, age and cultural differences were some of the most common barriers experienced by RIAS. Being adult students, RIAS felt very disconnected inside and outside the classroom with their much younger peers. RIAS expressed problems in understanding the professor, in ability to quickly process information and frankly in the motivation for being in PSE:

I'm 29, the other person was 60 [and] the other one was 18. It's so bad. When someone is 60, oh my god, we had a lot of problem[s] because it was so hard for her. The teacher had to repeat one thing several times and she couldn't get it. And, [that] was a big problem for us. (Ms. R, Focus Group CC)

[They are] more concerned [about] partying than [us] adults. Our concern [is] actually studying, because we have seen how hard it is back home and we have seen how hard it is here if you don't study. However, many young people don't. This is why it's hard to socialize for us with all the other young people. (Mr. K, Focus Group UB)

Some RIAS felt that faculty members were not sensitive to adult students, diversity and the age differences in the classroom. Some professors were not able to bridge the student age gap as indicated by this RIAS:

One thing that I didn't like is one of [our] professors didn't understand the difference between an adult student and a regular student, and the way the teaching and even communicating was demeaning and diminishing somehow. (Ms. T, Focus Group CB)

Many of the student activities and clubs seemed geared towards younger full-time students. As a result, RIAS did not feel socially connected with the rest of the class but sometimes felt more connected age-wise with faculty members as indicated by the following two statements:

In terms of engaging with the students, I'm an extrovert, so everybody gravitates to me...but I feel like I don't belong in a sense because they're kids and I'm mature. All the activities within the school are geared for younger students. It's not for mature students and, what are we [going to] talk about? Clubbing? No, it's not my thing...excuse me, I'll have a good rapport in school and probably call every now and then to see what they're doing but that's as far as it goes (Ms. B, Focus Group CB)

I have more to talk [about] with my professors than with the students. I would meet them in the hall and we would talk or go to their office or email but with the student, I don't feel like I fit in at all. The students said, "Oh, we're [going to] do this party." I wouldn't miss that at all! I wouldn't feel like I fit in anyways. I don't feel like I'm a part of anything that is going on here. I feel that this has a great impact also on my academic abilities. (Ms. D, Focus Group UB)

RIAS also spoke about cultural differences in the classroom and in their social lives in PSE. They felt isolated because of their background, how they dressed, their values, religion and outlook on life:

In one of my classes, no one wanted her in their group because she wore the Hijab and the teacher, he couldn't do anything about it and she did not have a group. (Ms. D, Focus Group UB)

As a result, most RIAS either congregated together in the classroom or were segregated together in one group for team activities as indicated in the following statement:

When we do group work, there's a tendency that immigrants go to one group, and other people go in another group. And sometimes we have to deal with all these cultural issues. We need a lot of time...to [get] used to each other. Everybody has [their] own experience and background from back home. It takes so much time to deal with all these issues that lead to real group work and performing and tasks. A lot of the teachers really don't understand that. (Ms. P, Focus Group CB)

Family Responsibilities

Many RIAS indicated that they were not just students but also caring for their children who were in school and caring for their parents too. These multiple and often conflicting responsibilities involved trying to find time to go to class and study, work a part-time job to support their studies and family, helping their children with homework and many more tasks. As a result, engagement in PSE did not seem a priority for RIAS and could be potentially quite difficult to achieve. All of these activities took time, money and energy so that there was little room for anything else:

You are trying to settle in the community [and] settle in the institution. I have family [with] my wife back home [in] Africa [and am] like a single parent. I found it very challenging. [I had] an assignment I couldn't catch up with because I have a lot of other subjects and hard assignments. I was there by myself, I had to take care of the children, cooking for them [and] organizing them. Is education [my] priority or my family? [Because] I have children, sometimes they need help with their homework. But [I] also [have] homework and I need help! So now, what should be the priority? Is it my study, my children's homework or my homework? So, I find it very challenging. (Mr. C, Focus Group UB)

I had to be in school at least 4 days a week from 8:30 to 4:30. I have to commute to Scarborough to pick up my kids, [be]cause the daycare closes at 6 and they open at 7. I found it very hard. I went to [the] classroom. I can't study. I tried to finish some of my assignments by lunch time, but that's not enough. So I need to go back home, pick up my kids, do what every Mom does for her kids. Then put them to bed, study for two hours and wake up the morning at 6. I find it very tiring and I was sick most of the time because it was so stressful. I'm not just a student. I have children that I need to take care of, and I have my assignment too. And for me personally, I found it takes longer than others. Maybe because I'm perfectionist or I have 20 things that I have to be doing, but I found it very time consuming and sometimes the balance is thrown off. I was always thinking the time that I would cater to my kids I can't sacrifice all the time to spend with my studies. (Ms. T, Focus Group CB)

Academic and Social Barriers

Academic and social integration issues arose in all of the focus groups. Academic integration issues primarily included being confident enough to participate in class and adapting to the different ways of learning, studying and participating. RIAS came up with some solutions to academic barriers including using group study, hiring a tutor, using the learning centre and just studying harder. Over time, generally the participants indicated that they integrated better:

I think I'm improving. The first semester it was really bad. [In my source country] they give you this and you go study and come and write the test. But here, its papers and research but I think I'm improving. I'm doing better. (Ms. H, Focus Group UB)

Social integration issues included communication, cultural barriers, behavioural obstacles and not always knowing the Canadian way of thinking, acting, reacting and being involved:

I feel that Canadian [students] ignore us. Even if you go the cafeteria, anywhere, their way is different. I talk to the people because I have different friends from everywhere. I can talk to them and they [are] always say the same. We just feel ignorance from [Canadian students]. They don't want to talk to us – like they discriminate because we don't know English. That's why we're afraid to go and talk to them. If you want to talk to somebody [and] if this person [looks] at you and the way that you [are made to] feel – how we can talk to them? It's very difficult. (Mr. F, Focus Group CC)

Lack of Time, Money, etc.

In addition to the above issues, RIAS felt deficient in the following: quality of prior education, transfer credit, transferability of college English to university and lack of time and money. RIAS' lack of time restricted them from participating in many activities on campus further augmenting social barriers. Money was not only an access issue but also a significant persistence and completion barrier. Money was scarce for RIAS as they needed to pay for their studies, support their family in Canada and in their source country and support their extended family such as parents and grandparents:

I think the biggest challenge is money. Our English is not good enough to get a job, and we are investing this time in [a] full-time program but at the same time we have to pay bills. We have to pay a lot of things. Even if you are [on] social assistance, it's not enough. I don't give up in the school but I know many people that they just quit the school because they have to add more money. (Mr. R, Focus Group CC)

Feelings of Stress and Being Overwhelmed

Due to frustrations with English language skills, age, cultural differences, academic issues and social difficulties, RIAS felt considerable stress and were often overwhelmed. While feeling stress may perhaps not be a definable barrier, it was arguably a byproduct of the layered barriers faced by RIAS. Most RIAS experienced strong feelings of stress. For some, the stress was caused by barriers but for others the stress intensified the barriers. For instance with regards to English, the more a RIAS was stressed the more self-conscious they were about their English speaking ability and so their English got even worse when participating in class. Making presentations in class also brought considerable stress to RIAS:

I can't sleep very well – the heart is palpating. I still feel very stressed. I still [am] very stressed because I have a big problem with my language and communication is [difficult]. Different professor. Different way of teaching...I feel not very well. I'm gradually [adapting] to the society. The first year I feel excited [as] everything is different and everything [is] new and the second

year I feel very depressed. I want to go back [home] everyday. I can't focus on the things I'm doing. I can't focus on the study and [have] a lot of confusion. I don't know how I need to work. (Ms. F, Focus Group UD)

Faculty Involvement in RIAS Activities

Some RIAS noted that faculty members had positive impacts on their learning, a few had criticisms of professors' contributions and others gave ideas to help instructors assist RIAS in learning.

Positive Faculty Involvement

The majority of focus group attendees indicated that faculty had a significant role in academically engaging them in PSE. Positive faculty involvement included sufficient faculty office hours, using varied teaching methods to meet the various ways they learned and professors own research that helped to enhance their teaching of the subject matter. RIAS discussed how specific faculty members prepared well for each class and at times heightened their learning through focusing on a specific subject area. Some RIAS also mentioned that tutorials in specific courses helped their individual studying:

My overall experience in the program [has] been extraordinarily exceptional. Maybe for the fact that it's catered [to an] internationally educated person, I feel that my time was [well spent] and the professors went beyond their daily duties to make sure that I understood and I'm really taught what I need to learn. I was fortunate to be taught by one of the elite personnel in the field; she [has] a lot of years of experience [and] a lot of knowledge to share and the way that she shared it was [in] plain and simple English but not in a demeaning way. (Ms. T, Focus Group CB)

Negative Faculty Involvement

There were numerous discussions about how professors did not help their learning and in some cases almost seemed to work against engaging RIAS. Noting that these statements are RIAS' impressions and not necessarily based on fact, some of these criticisms include that faculty did not: try different teaching methods, reply to email, focus on helping students, have enough office hours, update their PowerPoint slides, have much training and have good oral English. RIAS found that at times professors made uncomfortable political statements, chose and favoured research assistants from their own country of origin, seemed to almost discriminate based on a student's English ability, were boring, were not very good at being a professor, were too busy to help students, wanted an unpaid volunteer research or teaching assistant and even fell asleep during class. The lack of availability of professors was a significant issue for RIAS. Many spoke about how difficult it was to get a hold of faculty members by email or by phone. They

even tried to meet with professors during their posted office hours but those times were quite limited and some faculty members were also not very approachable before or after class:

I went to [the professor] to check my mark for my final exam. He didn't even know the answer – which one is correct. We did that survey [on the professor at the end of the course] and he's still teaching and nobody can do anything. And half of the class [dropped] the course. I'm not going to drop any course because I don't want to take it again. (Mr. E, Focus Group UC)

Some RIAS also commented that once a faculty member got in touch with them, they did not feel respect:

Some Professors when I email them and I say “oh Madam or Sir, I do not understand what you meant.” And the Professor would write back to me and [say]: “well you have to understand. If you don't understand, find another student to make you understand.” (Ms. O, Focus Group UC)

RIAS demonstrated understanding of the many demands on a faculty member's time including research, teaching and their own family responsibilities as demonstrated in this quote:

Universities are not really a school. It's a research facility where the professors are here to do their research and teach you something during that little time that they have in the lecture. When you go afterwards for their office hours, it's very very helpful – the questions you didn't understand – to ask them and this is a very effective one-on-one experience regardless of your background, regardless whether you can [or if] you think your English is good or you think your English is bad. This is the time where you go to the professor and he will explain the things to you the way you understand. (Mr. K, Focus Group UB)

RIAS Outputs in PSE: Academic, Social and Student Service Involvement

There are a growing number of quantitative studies that include a factor analysis of engagement. Elffers (2013) conducted a factor analysis of the engagement of Dutch students in vocational education. Using multilevel regression analyses, Elffers (2013) viewed the demographic student characteristics and perceived fit with the institutional environment to determine predictors of engagement. The academic engagement construct consisted of student perceived difficulty of the program and interest in the field of study. The social engagement construct included perceived fit with other students, support by faculty and staff and fit within the school culture. Elffers (2013) found that students in larger urban areas demonstrated significantly less engagement and students who had more autonomous work were more socially engaged. Jensen (2011) compiled a summary of studies on student engagement. These studies confirm that both academic and social engagement are factors that influence persistence and completion in PSE. Jensen (2011) found that the following contribute to academic engagement: “undergraduate research activities, university size, [and] opportunities to join clubs” (p. 2). Jensen (2011) also found that the following

contribute to social engagement: “faculty and staff support, family support, familiar and authentic cultural environment, sense of belonging and community, [and] mattering or sense of importance” (p. 2).

Asrat (2007) conducted a quantitative analysis of engagement of first-generation students as well as students with one or more parents who have PSE. The study used regression analysis of the five factors of engagement as used in NSSE. The findings include that “first-generation students tend to be older, live off-campus, likely to start their post secondary education elsewhere before coming to a four-year institution, most likely to be working and tend to earn somewhat lower grades” (Asrat, 2007, p. 20). First generation students, though, did not differ from students with parent(s) who have PSE in their commitment to complete PSE or in their academic and social engagement (Asrat, 2007). LaNasa, Cabrera and Trangsrud (2009) conducted a quantitative study of the various attributes that comprise student engagement. Using NSSE as a model, they developed a five factor and eight factor analysis but with limited results. Their study, though, was restricted to one institution that likely negatively impacted the validity and applicability of their results. Their recommendations were to study a number of institutions with a larger sample and very careful analysis of the data. LaNasa, Cabrera and Trangsrud (2009) concluded that even though student engagement appears to be a simple construct it is in fact a very complex notion.

Therefore, the literature supports quantitative research and specifically factor analysis of academic and social engagement including the predictors of engagement. There is also support for quantitative study of the outcomes of PSE including attributes of a liberal education. If RIAS persist in PSE towards convocation, they begin to experience specific outputs in higher education. These outputs essentially involve academic and social involvement in PSE.

Academic Involvement

When RIAS put more effort into their studies and developed friendships, their student experience was improved. They also discussed, though, how at times the administrative or faculty run-around made their academic experience more negative as demonstrated in this example:

One of my Profs said “when you write your appeal letter, give it to the TA. If the TA is satisfied with it, your mark stays that way. If you say you’re not satisfied with the mark, go back to the TA before you come to me.” So how many times do I have go to the TA [before] I can get to you the Professor? Why can’t I just go to [the Professor] straight? So that is one of the reasons why I don’t [talk to the Professor]. It is too much of a process. (Ms. O, Focus Group UC)

In their academic work, RIAS spoke about how they put in so much time and effort into their group work to only have a member of the team claim the work as their own. They spoke strongly about how Canadian students tended not to collaborate well in teams and while they seemed to be nice on the surface, they did not try to work together.

Even though the focus group members faced significant barriers within PSE, most RIAS stated that they had fairly good marks in their courses. Considering that most RIAS also stated that they experienced significant problems with English, it is difficult to understand how they could obtain good marks in PSE. They spoke about how far they progressed over the course of their studies both in terms of learning how to communicate better in English as well as being trained in their subject matter. Many RIAS benefited from more applied learning that could connect them directly with employment through coop or internship placements as seen here:

It was more hands-on [and] more practical. When I'm out there, I'm with the children, not with books. It's more important how I behave rather than knowing the theory. (Ms. D, Focus Group UB)

As RIAS faced many access, persistence and completion barriers yet self-reported strong grades in PSE, it is important to analyze survey data in order to determine the level of academic engagement of RIAS and if there are specific predictors of academic engagement for RIAS. In the survey, academic engagement was measured in two ways. In the first measure of academic engagement (Academic Engagement – Development or AE-D), RIAS were asked if they agree or disagree with three questions: I have developed intellectually this year; I have increased knowledge this year; and overall I am satisfied with my academic program. These questions used a reversed order five-point Likert scale with 1 meaning strongly agree and 5 indicating strongly disagree (see Appendix I). In the second measure of academic engagement (Academic Engagement – Time on Task or AE-TOT), RIAS were asked how many hours they spend in a typical 7-day week preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work and other academic activities). Response options in groups of 5 hours ranged from 0 to greater than 30 hours (see Appendix I). A review of the literature supports these measures of academic engagement as they assess academic identification and participation inside the classroom and in preparing for academic work (Stermac et al., 2012). These academic engagement calculations include RIAS “assignment completion, involvement with

school work, as well as variables asking students to rate their attitudes towards learning, the usefulness of school work and their relationships with teachers” (Stermac et al., 2012, p. 317).

Analyzing the responses to the first measure of academic engagement (AE-D), 15.7% of RIAS strongly agreed to all three academic engagement questions. The mean for this construct was 6.4 indicating that RIAS agreed somewhat that they were academically engaged. Similarly for this measure, the median was 6 showing that RIAS agreed somewhat that they were academically engaged. Analyzing the responses to the second measure of academic engagement, 17.4% of RIAS spent greater than 30 hours per week on academic activities outside of class. The mean for this measure was 5 indicating that RIAS spent on average 16-20 hours per week outside of class on academic activities. The median was also 5.

I conducted factor analysis on the first measure of academic engagement (AE-D). Factor analysis or principal components analysis is important to conduct as it helps to reduce or summarize the data into a smaller set of factors or components. This analysis helps to reduce the data and finds intercorrelations from a number of items into a smaller subscale (Pallant, 2005). This exploratory factor analysis assists one in finding the underlying structure from a set of variables and the resultant factors or components can be used in multiple regression and/or multivariate analysis (Pallant, 2005). For AE-D, principal components or factor analysis revealed the presence of one component with an eigenvalue exceeding 1 and that explains 68% of the variance (see Appendix J). In determining the reliability of the factor, Cronbach’s alpha of these three items is .763 that is above the .7 reliability threshold.

In order to determine if there are any predictors of academic engagement for RIAS, I then conducted a regression analysis on this first academic engagement factor (AE-D). In the regression, I used seven demographic variables and in instances where the variables were nominal such as birth country, level of education and income, I created dummy variables for the analysis. The ANOVA results and reference group details are listed in Appendix J. Overall about 6% in the variability of academic engagement – development (AE-D) is explained by country of origin ($F(5,18)=2.905, p=0.006$). Therefore, country of origin is a very significant predictor of academic engagement – development (AE-D). No other predictors are significant. Table R lists the coefficients from this regression. In reviewing the individual coefficients, Africa is a very significant predictor of AE-D in comparison with the East Asia reference group. Also the

Caribbean and Central and South America is a significant predictor of AE-D in comparison with the East Asia reference group. Both Africa and the Caribbean, Central and South America findings are negative. Given that the scale used in the survey questions is reversed from a common scale, RIAs from Africa have stronger AE-D than the RIAs from East Asia and this finding is very significant ($p=.004$). Similarly, RIAs from the Caribbean, Central and South America have much stronger academic engagement – development than students from East Asia and this finding is significant ($p=.024$).

Table R – Regression Analysis for Academic Engagement – Development Factor (AE-D)

Category	Subcategory	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)		6.855	0.820		8.357	0
age		-0.008	0.022	-0.025	-0.371	0.711
length of time landed in Canada		0.039	0.047	0.049	0.824	0.411
Gender	male	0.269	0.252	0.055	1.067	0.286
Birth country	West, South & North Europe	-0.016	0.728	-0.001	-0.022	0.983
	East Europe & Central Asia	-0.426	0.444	-0.057	-0.958	0.339
	Caribbean, Central & South America	-1.019	0.450	-0.129	-2.264	0.024
	Africa	-1.314	0.458	-0.177	-2.867	0.004
	South-East Asia	-0.537	0.418	-0.078	-1.287	0.199
	South Asia & West Asia	0.401	0.342	0.071	1.173	0.241
	Other	0.103	1.406	0.004	0.073	0.942
Annual household income	11k-20k	-0.149	0.375	-0.023	-0.398	0.691
	21k-40k	0.043	0.363	0.007	0.119	0.906
	41k-60k	-0.339	0.416	-0.049	-0.816	0.415
	61k-80k	-0.722	0.501	-0.081	-1.441	0.150
	81k-100k	-0.585	0.828	-0.039	-0.706	0.480
	>100k	-0.379	0.390	-0.058	-0.973	0.331
Highest level of Schooling	Some PSE	0.251	0.484	0.032	0.519	0.604
	Post-secondary below bachelor	-0.024	0.406	-0.004	-0.059	0.953
	Bachelor degree	-0.288	0.418	-0.054	-0.690	0.491
	Post-secondary above bachelor	-0.169	0.486	-0.027	-0.348	0.728
	Incomplete Secondary School	-0.108	0.649	-0.010	-0.167	0.867
Institution type	University	0.110	0.295	0.023	0.373	0.709

Next I ran regression analysis of the second academic engagement factor (AE-TOT) to determine if there are any predictors. Similarly with the previous regression, I used seven demographic predictor variables and in instances where the variables were nominal, I created dummy variables. In order to help analysis (see Appendix I), I aggregated the ranges for academic engagement – time on task (AE-TOT) into low (0-10 hours), medium (11-20 hours), moderate (21-30 hours) and high (>30 hours). Due to the ordinal nature of the dependent variable AE-TOT, ordinal logistic regression is used (see Appendix J for greater detail). All predictors against AE-TOT are very significant ($p=.001$). Controlling for the other predictors in the model (see Appendix J), birth country has a significant effect on AE-TOT ($\Delta(-2\log \text{likelihood})=15.546$,

d.f.=6,p=0.0164), highest level of educational attainment does not have a significant effect on AE-TOT ($\Delta(-2\log \text{likelihood})=1.713, \text{d.f.}=5, \text{p}=.8873$) and household income has a significant effect in predicting AE-TOT ($\Delta(-2\log \text{likelihood})=15.441, \text{d.f.}=6, \text{p}=.0171$).

Table S – Regression Analysis for Academic Engagement – Time on Task Factor (AE-TOT)

Category	Subcategory	Estimate	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp_B.	95% Confidence Interval	
								Lower Bound	Upper Bound
AE-TOT	Low	-.849	.693	1.501	1	.220	.428	-2.208	.509
	Medium	.700	.692	1.023	1	.312	2.015	-.657	2.057
	Moderate	1.863	.699	7.103	1	.008	6.443	.493	3.233
Age		.008	.018	.198	1	.656	1.008	-.027	.044
Length of time landed in Canada		.032	.039	.682	1	.409	1.032	-.044	.108
Birth country	West, South & North Europe	-.454	.639	.505	1	.477	.635	-1.706	.798
	East Europe & Central Asia	.259	.367	.498	1	.480	1.295	-.460	.978
	Caribbean, Central & South America	-.850	.367	5.380	1	.020	.427	-1.569	-.132
	Africa	-.286	.386	.548	1	.459	.751	-1.043	.471
	South-East Asia	-.491	.340	2.090	1	.148	.612	-1.157	.175
	South Asia & West Asia	-.940	.285	10.856	1	.001	.391	-1.499	-.381
Highest level of schooling	Some PSE	.408	.418	.955	1	.329	1.504	-.411	1.227
	Post-secondary below bachelor	.184	.346	.281	1	.596	1.202	-.495	.863
	Bachelor degree	.268	.357	.563	1	.453	1.307	-.432	.968
	Post-secondary above bachelor	.732	.410	3.194	1	.074	2.079	-.071	1.535
	Incomplete Secondary School	-.080	.565	.020	1	.887	.923	-1.188	1.027
Annual household income	11k-20k	.204	.327	.389	1	.533	1.226	-.437	.845
	21k-40k	-.175	.314	.311	1	.577	.839	-.790	.440
	41k-60k	-.571	.365	2.448	1	.118	.565	-1.286	.144
	61k-80k	-.335	.418	.642	1	.423	.716	-1.153	.484
	81k-100k	-.948	.673	1.989	1	.158	.387	-2.267	.370
	>100k	-1.119	.342	10.727	1	.001	.327	-1.788	-.449
Gender	Male	.224	.211	1.130	1	.288	1.251	-.189	.638
Institution type	University	.275	.239	1.324	1	.250	1.316	-.193	.742

The findings as listed in Table S indicate that South & West Asia is a very significant predictor of AE-TOT ($\text{p}=.001$). Also Caribbean, Central and South America is a significant predictor of AE-TOT ($\text{p}=.020$). Given the odds ratio of .391 and .427 for these regions, this means that these two regions have lower odds of higher scores of AE-TOT than RIAS from East Asia and this finding is statistically significant. Holding all other variables in the model constant, we expect a decrease in odds of AE-TOT for RIAS from South & West Asia by a factor of .391 and a decrease in odds of AE-TOT for RIAS from Caribbean, Central and South America by a factor of .427 in comparison with RIAS from East Asia. As

academic engagement – time on task (AE-TOT) is the number of hours RIAS spend in a week preparing for class and is a good indicator of academic engagement, it is reasonable to state that for this sample the RIAS from East Asia are more academically engaged than the students from South & West Asia and also RIAS from Caribbean, Central and South America.

Those RIAS who have a household income of greater than \$100,000 are also found to be a significant predictor of AE-TOT ($p=.001$). Holding all other variables in the model constant, we expect a decrease in odds of AE-TOT for RIAS who have a household income of greater than \$100,000 by a factor of .327 in comparison with RIAS who have less than \$10,000 household income and this finding is statistically significant (see Appendix J for more detailed discussion of this analysis).

Social Involvement

RIAS identified in the focus groups that they really wanted to make friends on campus. They gravitated to friendships with other immigrant students, adult students and largely with people from their source country. Some RIAS were very deliberate in developing friendships that would help improve their skills such as making friends with Canadian students to learn Canadian culture and improve their English. RIAS felt that they academically integrated well but not as well socially as seen in this statement:

In class [my friends] help each other out but then, outside [class] we rarely talk to each other. I live here by myself and struggle [with] my living too. After class I have to go home and I don't have time for partying with them. In class we [are friends] and then outside we [are] not [friends] anymore. (Ms. J, Focus Group UB)

Given statements like these, it is notable how widespread this lack of socialization is for RIAS. The focus group data, though, did not drill deeper into more explicit information on the specific details of RIAS lack of socialization in PSE but the survey results did probe these questions.

RIAS in the larger survey were asked specifically how many hours in a typical 7-day week that they spent in non-academic and co-curricular activities. The responses are listed in Table T. The majority (41%) only spent one to five hours a week relaxing and socializing. That is less than an hour a day socializing. Overall, nearly half (49%) of RIAS spent zero, 1 to 5 or not applicable hours a week relaxing. Only 12% of RIAS spent 16 or more hours per week relaxing and socializing. Similarly, 70% of RIAS did not participate in co-curricular activities or found it not applicable. Only 20% of RIAS spent one to five

hours a week in recreational activities. This is a concern both for the physical and mental health of RIAs as well as the lack of free time for RIAs to relax in campus non-academic activities. Also 77% of RIAs did not spend any time volunteering or found this question not applicable. Only 18% of RIAs spent one to five hours a week being involved in volunteer work. This likely is a function of the lack of time and money of RIAs, where they spent the majority of their time in academic activities, work for pay and looking after their family. The majority (62%) of RIAs did not spend any time in religious activities or found this question not applicable. Just a little over a quarter of RIAs (28%) spent one to five hours a week in religious activities. Again this lack of time spent in religious activities is likely a function of lack of time and/or a lower priority to the religious activities. Similarly, the majority of RIAs (69%) did not spend any time attending cultural functions or found this question to be inapplicable. Only a quarter of RIAs (25%) spent one to five hours a week in cultural activities. This again could be a function of a lack of time and priority to devote to cultural functions. Likewise, the majority of RIAs (69%) were not involved in the community or found this inapplicable to them. Only a quarter of RIAs spent one to five hours a week in community activities. This again highlights the lack of free time and low priority community involvement was to RIAs.

Table T – Survey RIAs Hours Per Week in Non-Academic & Co-curricular Activities

Type Hrs Per Week	Relaxing & Socializing		Participating in Co-curricular Activities		Volunteer Work		Religious Activities		Cultural Activities		Involvement in the Community	
	Freq	Percent	Freq	Percent	Freq	Percent	Freq	Percent	Freq	Percent	Freq	Percent
0	31	7%	250	59%	273	64%	221	52%	246	58%	253	59%
1 to 5	174	41%	84	20%	78	18%	121	28%	107	25%	108	25%
6 to 10	114	27%	26	6%	12	3%	30	7%	16	4%	12	3%
11 to 15	51	12%	12	3%	5	1%	6	1%	2	0%	6	1%
16 to 20	29	7%	1	0%	3	1%	5	1%	1	0%	1	0%
21 to 25	13	3%	2	0%	0	0%	1	0%	1	0%	1	0%
26 to 30	4	1%	0	0%	0	0%	1	0%	0	0%	0	0%
>30	6	1%	1	0%	2	0%	3	1%	3	1%	1	0%
N/A	5	1%	48	11%	54	13%	41	10%	47	11%	44	10%
TOTAL	427	100%	424	100%	427	100%	429	100%	423	100%	426	100%

To summarize the RIAs survey findings, most RIAs spent little to no time per week in non-academic, unpaid, co-curricular, volunteer, religious, cultural and/or community activities. Nearly half of RIAs stated that they did not take part in any other type of activities. To suffice, RIAs generally were not

involved socially on and off campus. This is likely because RIAS did not feel the need to be involved in social activities and also did not have spare time for this type of involvement.

Therefore, social involvement generally only happened inside the classroom for RIAS but not outside the classroom. RIAS further argued that social involvement was difficult in Ontario PSE because classes generally were not in a cohort and also because of their own English language deficiencies. They felt that they only really valued friendships that benefited their studies, as well as those that helped them find a job or improve their job prospects. This RIAS comment demonstrates her struggle:

If you don't go to college and expect gradually to grow in your job, you feel pretty alone. You don't make the acquaintances that you want to make. I spent the first two years with people that I had nothing in common with. Just, nice people, but you cannot build a friendship. They're too different – too different interests and you just feel alone. You're close in your immigrant community and that's not good for immigrants at all. They have to be somehow, more open to interact. (Ms. C, Focus Group CB)

RIAS ultimately found it difficult to integrate socially into Canadian society and felt that this lack of social integration was continued in PSE:

[School] is a mirror image of Toronto in two regards. For one, I find Toronto to be a cluttered society. People from ethnic groups tend to band together and it's almost impossible to break into such groups or have study groups amongst other people. (Mr. A, Focus Group UA)

The above focus group and survey data highlight the lack of social engagement of RIAS in PSE. It is important to analyze survey data in order to determine the level of social engagement of RIAS and if there are specific predictors of social engagement for RIAS. In the survey, social engagement was measured in two ways. In the first measure of social engagement (Social Engagement – Conversations or SE-C), RIAS were asked how often they completed each of three questions: discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others, outside of class students, family members, co-workers, etc.; had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own; and had serious conversations with students who are very different from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values. These questions used a four-point Likert scale with 1 meaning never and 4 indicating very often (see Appendix I). In the second measure of social engagement (Social Engagement – Relationships or SE-R), RIAS were asked to rate the quality of their relationships with people at their institution. Response options were on a reversed order 7-point scale with 1 indicating a friendly, supportive, available, helpful

and considerate relationship and 7 being an unfriendly, unsupportive, unavailable, unhelpful and inconsiderate relationship (see Appendix I). A review of the literature supports these measures of social engagement as they assess RIAS sense of belonging, relations with teachers and peers, involvement in conversations outside of class and valuing others (Sweet et al., 2012; Stebleton, 2010; Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008; Lipps et al. (2003).

Analyzing the responses to the first measure of social engagement (SE-C), 3.9% of RIAS strongly agreed to all three social engagement questions. The mean for this construct was 6.9 indicating that RIAS sometimes felt socially engaged. Similarly for this measure, the median was 6 showing that RIAS sometimes were socially engaged. Analyzing the responses to the second measure of social engagement (SE-R), 5.6% of RIAS experienced very strong relationships in PSE. The mean for this construct was 8.8 and the median was also nearly 9. In other words, RIAS felt only slightly more socially engaged (SE-R) than not socially engaged in PSE.

I conducted factor analysis on the first measure of social engagement (Social Engagement – Conversations or SE-C). For SE-C, principal components or factor analysis revealed the presence of one component with an eigenvalue exceeding 1 and that explains 67% of the variance (see Appendix J). In determining the reliability of the factor, Cronbach's alpha of these three items is .745 that is above the .7 reliability threshold. In order to determine if there are any predictors of social engagement for RIAS, I then conducted a regression analysis on the social engagement – conversations factor (SE-C). In the regression, I used seven demographic variables and in instances where the variables were nominal such as birth country, level of education and income, I created dummy variables for the analysis. The ANOVA results and reference group details are listed in Appendix J.

There is a statistically very significant overall country effect ($F(5,18)=5.572, p<.001$) in predicting SE-C when controlling for other variables (see Appendix J). No other predictors are significant. In reviewing Table U, West, North & South Europe is significant and East Europe & Central Asia, Caribbean, Central & South America, Africa, South-East Asia and South & West Asia are very significant predictors of social engagement (SE-C) in relation to the East Asia reference group. Controlling for the other variables, West, North & South Europe, East Europe & Central Asia, Caribbean, Central & South America,

Africa, South-East Asia and South & West Asia experience higher SE-C in relation to RIAs from East Asia and these findings are very significant for all these regions except West, North & South Europe that is significant. Age, Length of Time in Canada, Gender, Education, Current Institution and Household Income were not found to be significant predictors of SE-C.

Table U – Regression Analysis for Social Engagement – Conversations Factor (SE-C)

Category	Subcategory	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)		7.038	0.827		8.505	0.000
age		-0.031	0.022	-0.094	-1.429	0.154
length of time landed in Canada		0.024	0.047	0.029	0.506	0.613
Gender	male	0.191	0.257	0.037	0.744	0.457
Birth country	West, South & North Europe	1.426	0.726	0.102	1.965	0.050
	East Europe & Central Asia	1.610	0.466	0.199	3.459	0.001
	Caribbean, Central & South America	1.833	0.452	0.224	4.057	0.000
	Africa	2.440	0.461	0.315	5.288	0.000
	South-East Asia	1.561	0.434	0.213	3.598	0.000
	South Asia & West Asia	1.079	0.344	0.183	3.138	0.002
	Other	1.918	1.401	0.069	1.369	0.172
Annual household income	11k-20k	0.360	0.385	0.052	0.936	0.350
	21k-40k	-0.489	0.362	-0.076	-1.350	0.178
	41k-60k	-0.309	0.421	-0.042	-0.733	0.464
	61k-80k	0.753	0.521	0.078	1.447	0.149
	81k-100k	0.315	0.877	0.020	0.359	0.720
	>100k	0.287	0.387	0.042	0.741	0.459
Highest level of Schooling	Some PSE	-0.122	0.483	-0.015	-0.252	0.801
	Post-secondary below bachelor	-0.356	0.403	-0.062	-0.883	0.378
	Bachelor degree	-0.667	0.419	-0.120	-1.592	0.112
	Post-secondary above bachelor	-0.450	0.489	-0.067	-0.920	0.358
	Incomplete Secondary School	0.352	0.682	0.030	0.516	0.606
Institution type	University	-0.225	0.298	-0.045	-0.754	0.451

I conducted factor analysis on the second measure of social engagement (Social Engagement – Relationships or SE-R). For SE-R, principal components or factor analysis revealed the presence of one component with an eigenvalue exceeding 1 and that explains 66% of the variance (see Appendix J). In determining the reliability of the factor, Cronbach’s alpha of these three items is .737 that is above the .7 reliability threshold. In order to determine if there are any predictors of social engagement for RIAs, I then conducted a regression analysis on this second social engagement factor (SE-R). In the regression, I used seven demographic variables and in instances where the variables were nominal such as birth country, level

of education and income, I created dummy variables for the analysis. Controlling for all other predictor variables, country of birth is a significant predictor of SE-R ($p=.018$). No other predictors are significant. For reference group details and the ANOVA results, please see Appendix J.

In Table V, East Europe & Central Asia and Africa are both significant predictors of SE-R relative to the East Asia reference group. Similar to AE-D, SE-R uses a reversed-order 7-point scale. A low SE-R is positive (friendly, supportive and belonging) and a high SE-R is negative (unfriendly, unsupportive and alienated). Controlling for the other variables, RIAs from East Europe & Central Asia have more friendly relationships (negative SE-R) in PSE than the East Asia comparator group and this is very significant. Similarly controlling for the other variables, RIAs from Africa have more friendly relationships (negative SE-R) in PSE than the East Asia comparator group and this is significant.

Table V – Regression Analysis for Social Engagement – Relationships Factor (SE-R)

Category	Subcategory	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)		9.832	1.199		8.197	0.000
age		-0.043	0.031	-0.091	-1.364	0.174
length of time landed in Canada		0.100	0.068	0.085	1.471	0.142
Gender	male	0.431	0.369	0.059	1.168	0.244
Birth country	West, South & North Europe	-2.008	1.068	-0.098	-1.881	0.061
	East Europe & Central Asia	-2.322	0.650	-0.206	-3.573	0.000
	Caribbean, Central & South America	-0.417	0.653	-0.035	-0.639	0.524
	Africa	-1.462	0.671	-0.131	-2.179	0.030
	South-East Asia	-1.010	0.612	-0.098	-1.649	0.100
	South Asia & West Asia	-0.557	0.501	-0.066	-1.113	0.266
Annual household income	Other	-3.245	2.063	-0.080	-1.573	0.117
	11k-20k	0.385	0.554	0.040	0.695	0.488
	21k-40k	0.388	0.528	0.042	0.736	0.462
	41k-60k	0.046	0.608	0.004	0.076	0.940
	61k-80k	0.770	0.734	0.057	1.049	0.295
	81k-100k	-0.141	1.210	-0.006	-0.117	0.907
Highest level of Schooling	>100k	0.243	0.567	0.025	0.429	0.668
	Some PSE	0.730	0.702	0.064	1.040	0.299
	Post-secondary below bachelor	0.284	0.589	0.034	0.482	0.630
	Bachelor degree	-0.184	0.608	-0.023	-0.302	0.762
	Post-secondary above bachelor	-1.270	0.711	-0.133	-1.785	0.075
Institution type	Incomplete Secondary School	-0.396	0.951	-0.025	-0.416	0.678
	University	0.672	0.432	0.094	1.557	0.120

RIAS Context in PSE: Social, Political, Cultural, Economic, Symbolic, Structural, Campus and Human Resource Environment

Surrounding all aspects of the student activities inside and outside the classroom in PSE is the student context in which RIAS study, interact, socialize and learn. This context involves the social, political, cultural, economic, symbolic (including institutional policies and procedures), structural, campus and human resource environment on each campus, which could also help to engage RIAS. While there are many aspects to the institutional context, RIAS spoke specifically about a few areas.

School and Class Size

While some RIAS mentioned that class sizes in their country of origin were larger than here in Canada, most RIAS stated that they felt that their current institution and specifically class sizes were too immense. They felt that in larger classes, they had less involvement. In a number of cases, RIAS commented that they experienced overcrowding in classes and in most commonly shared spaces such as cafeterias, libraries and study lounges that made for a negative student experience:

I feel some disadvantage because the classroom environment is so big for us and especially my voice is low and my language barrier compared to children born here [is] hard for the professor [to understand] my words. (Ms. J, Focus Group UB)

Also RIAS argued that there was overcrowding in registration to the point where they could not even register for the classes in order to complete their studies as this quote points out:

[I] have an issue when you've paid for the course [and you can't] get into the class - it's overcrowded. Last semester...they opened picking classes [at] 3 o'clock. [At 1] o'clock, the whole hallway was packed. So once 3 o'clock hit [I had] to wait like 5 minutes [and 4 of the] courses that I needed to pick for my semester weren't there and the other ones that were there, they were packed. I had to go to the office and it's 3:15 and they're telling me [that] they can't see me. I'm sorry, I didn't stay calm. I'm like, "No, you cannot tell me you can't see me because I paid my student fees. I paid you everything and its only 15 minutes after you opened the line." The overcrowding is ridiculous. (Ms. B, Focus Group CB)

Campus Safety

Ten times in the focus group sessions, RIAS spoke about feeling unsafe on campus. Some of these feelings had to do with the campus being located in an unsafe area of Toronto, which affects not only RIAS. They referred to not enough lighting, random acts of stealing or sexual assaults that happened recently and regularly on campus that made for a negative student experience:

I feel that when I'm in the campus, especially in the evening or night, I feel not safe because of the violence. [There is] always some news regarding the violence, so I feel not safe. (Mr. I, Focus Group UA)

I go to clinics with two other ladies and they [are] always [talking] about [how] unsafe they feel, how uncomfortable they feel, how much they have to rush back to their house every time they're done with school. They don't want to be caught out there and attacked. If they see two people approach them, they get very nervous [and] uncomfortable. It's a passionate issue for them and it's [something] they focus on and they're very worried about it. (Mr. A, Focus Group UA)

Once I saw these two kids. They were playing computer games and these bunch of people, they just stole his laptop right in front of [them] and they ran and the security didn't do anything too. They knew it but they were like "we're sorry we can't do anything." (Mr. S, Focus Group UA)

Student Residence, On-Campus Housing and On-Campus Jobs

There was some discussion concerning student residence and on-campus housing. RIAS felt in general that student housing was quite expensive but the residence was quite good. The few students who lived on campus enjoyed being more connected with the school. Most RIAS, though, seemed to live off campus because of their family obligations.

RIAS found it difficult to get any job but even on-campus jobs were quite hard to acquire. There were a number of instances where RIAS felt that Canadian-born students got on-campus jobs much easier than RIAS. Some of these jobs, even though promised to RIAS, later went to the student who was willing to volunteer rather than be paid as seen in this quote:

I talked to my Prof. and he told me at this time [to] come to work. And then I went to him two days before starting work [and] he said, "sorry I don't have money." I said "you told me to come here and you said 100% sure you got a job." And then I saw the guy who's working with him and he said that he is [a] volunteer. I won't be able to do the [work as a] volunteer as I've got one kid. (Mr. E, Focus Group UC)

General Commendations and Complaints

RIAS had numerous complaints about specific faculty members. While RIAS gave honest and at times rather negative feedback on faculty evaluations, it did not seem to have any direct impact as they noticed for instance a poorly-rated professor was teaching the same class in subsequent terms. They felt that they had little voice to express their concerns and even that small feedback was not acted upon by the specific Dean or administrator. Some RIAS even resorted to sending letters to the Dean to complain but

there still was no change. This rather impressionistic feedback demonstrates the RIAS lack of understanding of Ontario PSE procedures. One concern is reflected in the following comment:

We had a Prof. who, in my opinion, had no knowledge at all about that course and that was the worst mark I got in two years. I talked to half of our class. They did a survey for that guy and they all [gave him failing comments]. And after, he's still teaching. (Mr. E, Focus Group UC)

RIAS spoke about how the institutional website was not very helpful and they had difficulty understanding the content. Transportation, both public and private, to the campus was slow, difficult and time consuming. These aspects of the context of RIAS education did not help them become involved in their academic and social lives.

RIAS, though, also had some more positive experiences in the PSE context. They spoke about how the religious freedom on campus was quite good. They also spoke about their settlement experiences in Canada and how the Canadian culture shaped educational culture. Ultimately, RIAS expressed a desire for the institution to help RIAS in their academic and social involvement in PSE.

RIAS Outcomes in PSE: Student Learning, Retention, Student Experience and the Hallmarks of a Liberal Education

As RIAS overcame access barriers, entered PSE, were involved in numerous activities inside and outside the classroom, interacted with faculty, studied, learned and made friends in the PSE context and overcame persistence and completion barriers, they persevered to convocation.

Positive Student Experience and Involvement

While RIAS indicated their apprehension in participating in class and relative fear in making presentations, they stated that this involvement helped them become more academically engaged in their studies. The more that they were involved in classroom discussions the more that they felt academically and socially involved. RIAS appreciated faculty members virtually forcing them, through participation marks, to be much more involved. This is reflected in this quote: "In classroom discussion, it's good and very beneficial. Most of the teachers encourage discussion and...because of this discussion, we can explore [diverse ideas]" (Mr. B, Focus Group CA).

A number of RIAS spoke of their positive involvement and experience in PSE in Ontario. They reflected on how pleased they were with faculty members, classmates, learning and the school at large:

I'm very satisfied with [this school]. I realize that my English is so much better now. I'm very satisfied with teachers, the organization [and] my classmates. You have the opportunity to know more about the world cause the people [are] from around the world. (Mr. R, Focus Group CC)

RIAS Reflections on Involvement

RIAS tended to work very hard on their academic studies. They gravitated to shorter more accelerated programs in order to finish quickly and promptly be employed. Academic engagement, though, did not necessarily help an immigrant student get a job as this RIAS stated:

I can get a high mark in the exam, but I don't know how to find a job and when I go to find a job, maybe do an interview, I don't know how to show that I know what I have learned. (Ms. A, Focus Group CA)

Some RIAS discussed the inherent conflict between social and academic integration. They felt that in order to do well academically, they could not socialize. If they spent more time making friends and joining clubs, their marks suffered. While RIAS understood the importance of balance between studies and friends, they also had the added pressure of family responsibilities, lack of money and time and needing to work part-time as seen here: "I know sometimes you need to take [a] break like the psychologists who suggest 'two hours, take a break and then come back fresh.' But everyone [is] busy" (Ms. M, Focus Group UC). The following RIAS remark reflects that they could have integrated better academically if they felt more socially integrated:

For the fit, I have some problem in [this school]. I have a bad experience. The professor ask me [to] finish [one job] before the limit time. I need a computer but there are no [computers] in the lab, so I go to a classroom. I want to finish my job quick and send. But the student and the teacher [are] not very kind to me. They [are] born in Canada. They talk with each other and they laugh at me. They want me to [be] upset. So I think it's very unpolite. Maybe we can start well, but we cannot communicate with the other students. We go to eat lunch. We talk only with immigrant student. When I [compare myself] to other student born in Canada, I cannot fit in I think. I just finished my program, cannot fit in and I'm afraid to go [get a] job. (Ms. A, Focus Group CA)

Hallmarks of a Liberal Education

In addition to retention and a quality student experience, one of the fundamental outcomes for RIAS in PSE is the attributes of a liberal education. In order to determine the quality of liberal education experienced by RIAS, it is necessary to analyze survey data as well as to determine if there are any specific predictors of these hallmarks of a liberal education for RIAS. According to the literature and the

development of the student engagement model, academic and social engagement can result in RIAS experiencing the traits of a liberal education. In the survey, liberal education (LE) was measured by asking RIAS how often they fulfilled each of three questions: examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue; tried to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from his/her perspective; and learned something that changed the way you understand an issue. These questions used a four-point Likert scale with 1 meaning never and 4 indicating very often (see Appendix I). The literature review supports these measures of the attributes of a liberal education as they assess RIAS deeper learning, civic awareness, civilized discourse, embracing of diversity, critical thinking, development of life skills and personal and intellectual transformation (Coté and Allahar, 2011; Coté and Allahar, 2007; Axelrod, Anisef & Lin, 2001).

Analyzing the responses to the hallmarks of a liberal education (LE), 3.2% of RIAS strongly agreed to all three liberal education questions. The mean for this construct was 7.6 indicating that RIAS sometimes felt these indicators of a liberal education. Similarly for this measure, the median was 8 showing that RIAS sometimes were experiencing attributes of a liberal education. I conducted factor analysis on this measure of liberal educational attainment (LE). For LE, principal components or factor analysis revealed the presence of one component with an eigenvalue exceeding 1 and that explains 68% of the variance (see Appendix J). In determining the reliability of the factor, Cronbach's alpha of these three items is .762 that is above the .7 reliability threshold.

The literature supports the notion of academic and social engagement being outputs from PSE and therefore predictors of student outcomes and in particular the traits of a liberal education. Pascarella & Terenzini (2005) in describing their conceptual framework aimed to address the question "what are the long-term effects of college?" (p. 9). These include the "durability or permanence of the collegiate experience, or differences in that experience, on students' postcollege activities, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 9). Kuh (2003) also stipulates that one of the best predictors of personal development and learning is student engagement. In other words, social and academic engagement are strong predictors of the traits of a liberal education. Shulman (2002) further argues that the

very act of being engaged also adds to the foundation of skills and dispositions that is essential to live a productive and satisfying life after college. That is, students who are involved in educationally productive activities in college are developing habits of the mind and heart that enlarge their capacity for continuous learning and personal development. (Carinini, Kuh & Klein, 2006, p. 2-3)

As I developed two measures of academic engagement (AE-D and AE-TOT) for RIAS, I used regression analysis to determine if either or both of these measures predict the hallmarks of a liberal education.

Using the academic engagement – development (AE-D) and academic engagement – time on task (AE-TOT) factors, I ran regression analysis against the indicators of a Liberal Education (LE) to see if there are significant correlations. The Model Summary, ANOVA and Coefficients tables for both analyses are listed in Appendix J. Table W notes that AE-D is a very significant predictor of LE. It is an important reminder that the scale for AE-D is reversed such that positive AE-D is a low number and negative AE-D is a higher number. As the B Coefficient is negative, this means that RIAS with stronger academic engagement (negative AE-D) will likely more strongly demonstrate the traits of a liberal education (LE) and this finding is very significant. Likewise, AE-TOT is a very significant predictor of LE. Given the positive Beta numbers, RIAS who are more academically engaged (AE-TOT) would then exhibit stronger indicators of a liberal education (LE).

Table W – Regression Analysis for Engagement as Predictors of a Liberal Education (LE)

Subcategory	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	8.583	0.321		26.707	0
Academic Engagement – Development	-0.147	0.047	-0.154	-3.091	0.002
(Constant)	6.736	0.283		23.843	0
Academic Engagement – Time on Task	0.185	0.053	0.173	3.513	0.000
(Constant)	5.569	0.314		17.716	0
Social Engagement – Conversations	0.300	0.043	0.331	6.927	0.000
(Constant)	8.502	0.294		28.92	0
Social Engagement – Relationships	-0.099	0.031	-0.157	-3.184	0.002

Similarly using the social engagement – conversations and social engagement – relationships factors (SE-C and SE-R), I ran regression analysis against the indicators of a Liberal Education (LE) to see if there are significant correlations. The Model Summary, ANOVA and Coefficients tables for both analyses are listed in Appendix J. Table W notes that SE-C is a very significant predictor of LE. As the Beta number is positive, RIAS who are more socially engaged in PSE (SE-C) would thus more strongly show hallmarks of a liberal education (LE) and this finding is very significant. The reverse is also true in

that RIAS who are less socially engaged in PSE (SE-C) would demonstrate fewer indicators of a liberal education (LE). Likewise using the social engagement – relationships factor (SE-R), I wanted to see if it was a predictor of the characteristics of a liberal education (LE) so regression analysis was run. The model summary, ANOVA and Coefficients tables are in Appendix J. Table W states that SE-R is a very significant predictor of LE. The scale for the SE-R factor is reversed meaning that a lower SE-R indicates more supportive social engagement. Given the negative Beta value, RIAS who demonstrate more supportive relationships (negative SE-R) should display stronger traits of a liberal education (positive LE) and this finding is very significant.

Table X – Regression Analysis by Institution Type for Engagement as Predictors of LE

Institution	Engagement Factor	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
University	(Constant)	9.186	0.411		22.351	0
	AE-D	-0.218	0.060	-0.230	-3.630	0.000
College	(Constant)	7.658	0.516		14.833	0
	AE-D	-0.032	0.078	-0.033	-0.412	0.681
University	(Constant)	6.963	0.379		18.350	0
	AE-TOT	0.171	0.071	0.155	2.415	0.016
College	(Constant)	6.390	0.425		15.042	0
	AE-TOT	0.212	0.079	0.208	2.665	0.009
University	(Constant)	5.817	0.401		14.514	0
	SE-C	0.281	0.053	0.327	5.247	0.000
College	(Constant)	5.236	0.524		9.999	0
	SE-C	0.326	0.076	0.329	4.313	0.000
University	(Constant)	8.991	0.394		22.838	0
	SE-R	-0.133	0.040	-0.209	-3.292	0.001
College	(Constant)	7.916	0.447		17.695	0
	SE-R	-0.060	0.050	-0.095	-1.194	0.234

This study is a multi-institutional and multi-sectoral study. As outlined in Appendix A, colleges and universities in Ontario still have quite different academic mandates and therefore students may also have different expectations and involvement with these two types of institutions. University education traditionally has been involved in creating the well-rounded renaissance person with a focus towards developing the traits of a liberal education and college education has been traditionally focused on developing students for a particular line of work. While these lines are blurring in Ontario, the researcher is concerned that there may be differences in effects of academic and social engagement for RIAS in the two different sectors. Seeing that all four measures of academic engagement and social engagement are

significant predictors of the attributes of a liberal education, it is important to see if there are differences in the strength of these predictors between RIAS who currently attend university from those who attend college. Thus, I ran the regression analysis specifically for each institutional type. For each of these analyses, the model summary, ANOVA and Coefficients tables are in Appendix J. Table X shows that AE-D is a very significant predictor of LE for RIAS who attend university. Seeing the B Coefficient is negative, RIAS who attend university with stronger academic engagement (negative AE-D) will likely more strongly demonstrate the identifiers of a Liberal Education (LE) and this finding is very significant. AE-D is not a significant predictor of LE for RIAS who attend college. Running the regression analysis for the academic engagement – time on task factor (AE-TOT) by institution, Table X notes that AE-TOT is a very significant predictor of LE for RIAS who attend college and those who attend university. The finding is slightly more significant for college RIAS and given the higher Beta, AE-TOT is a somewhat stronger predictor of LE for college RIAS than for university RIAS and this finding is very significant.

I used similar analysis for both measures of social engagement as predictors of LE by institutional type. As shown in Table X, SE-C is a very significant predictor of LE for both RIAS who attend university and those who attend college. This finding is slightly more significant for University RIAS than College RIAS. The amount of effect, though, is a little stronger for University RIAS. This means that University RIAS who have stronger SE-C will exhibit a bit stronger attributes of a liberal education (LE) than College RIAS. Running the regression analysis for the social engagement – relationships factor (SE-R) by institution, Table X notes that SE-R is a very significant predictor of LE for RIAS who attend University but not a significant predictor of LE for RIAS who attend College. Once again, as the scale for SE-R is reversed, the negative Beta indicates that RIAS who attend University who are more strongly socially engaged in PSE (negative SE-R) demonstrate stronger traits of a liberal education (positive LE) and this finding is very significant. While RIAS who attend College who are socially engaged in PSE also demonstrate similar but less strong attributes of a liberal education but this finding is not significant.

In order to determine if there are any demographic predictors of the hallmarks of a liberal education for RIAS, I then conducted a regression analysis on the liberal education factor (LE). In the regression, I used seven demographic variables and in instances where the variables were nominal such as

birth country, level of education and income, I created dummy variables for the analysis. The model summary and ANOVA results are listed in Appendix J. As reported in Table Y, there are no significant demographic predictors of the traits of a liberal education (LE). Even controlling for the other predictor variables, there are no demographic predictor variables that significantly predict liberal education (LE). This and the above statistical reports will be analyzed fully in Chapter VII.

Table Y – Regression Analysis for Predictors of a Liberal Education (LE)

Category	Subcategory	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)		7.618	0.821		9.281	0
age		-0.008	0.021	-0.026	-0.362	0.717
length of time landed in Canada		-0.040	0.051	-0.046	-0.782	0.435
Gender	male	0.174	0.252	0.038	0.691	0.490
Birth country	West, South & North Europe	0.368	0.704	0.029	0.523	0.601
	East Europe & Central Asia	0.783	0.439	0.112	1.786	0.075
	Caribbean, Central & South America	0.378	0.443	0.051	0.853	0.394
	Africa	0.856	0.453	0.123	1.889	0.060
	South-East Asia	0.306	0.416	0.048	0.736	0.462
	South Asia & West Asia	0.198	0.344	0.037	0.575	0.565
	Other	2.149	1.353	0.087	1.589	0.113
Annual household income	11k-20k	0.104	0.380	0.017	0.273	0.785
	21k-40k	-0.296	0.355	-0.051	-0.835	0.405
	41k-60k	-0.319	0.406	-0.049	-0.785	0.433
	61k-80k	0.833	0.499	0.098	1.671	0.096
	81k-100k	-0.432	0.812	-0.030	-0.532	0.595
	>100k	-0.219	0.383	-0.036	-0.572	0.568
Highest level of Schooling	Some PSE	-0.500	0.465	-0.071	-1.076	0.283
	Post-secondary below bachelor	-0.120	0.397	-0.023	-0.302	0.763
	Bachelor degree	-0.015	0.413	-0.003	-0.036	0.971
	Post-secondary above bachelor	0.557	0.483	0.092	1.153	0.250
	Incomplete Secondary School	-0.240	0.638	-0.023	-0.376	0.707
Institution type	University	0.262	0.293	0.058	0.894	0.372

SUMMARY OF RIAS ENGAGEMENT IN PSE RESULTS

As discussed above, this chapter consisted of a portrayal of the results of the study of RIAS engagement in PSE. Firstly, I conducted an analysis of the demographic inquiry that was administered at the beginning of each focus group session. Secondly I presented the findings from the focus group sessions. The organization of this section followed the Student Engagement Model: student inputs, access barriers,

student activities and learning inside and outside the classroom, persistence and completion barriers, faculty involvement, student outputs, student context in PSE and finally student outcomes. Specifically within the student outputs and student outcomes sections, I presented the findings from the survey of RIAS concerning academic engagement, social engagement and the hallmarks of a liberal education.

In summary, this chapter described the many barriers RIAS face and their lack of academic and social involvement in PSE. Many of the barriers identified are experienced by traditional or adult students but these obstacles seem to compound for RIAS. Difficulties with reading, writing, speaking and understanding English were very pronounced and seemed to negatively affect RIAS social and academic engagement. Yet, RIAS obtain relatively good marks and generally persist to convocation much attributable to immigrant optimism and some supports within PSE as well as family encouragement. RIAS also expressed a lack of ability and motivation to be academically and socially engaged in PSE likely attributable to their lack of time, money and involvement. Lack of fit for RIAS, though, seemed to be strongly tied to cultural and language differences.

The survey results clearly showed that country of birth was a very strong predictor of both measures of academic engagement as well as both measures of social engagement. While this will be analyzed further in Chapter VII, there is a strong parallel between the survey and focus group results concerning ethnic, language and cultural background and engagement in PSE. The survey results also confirmed that RIAS more strongly experienced academic engagement (15.7% and 17.4%) than social engagement (3.9% and 5.6%). Of all factors analyzed from the survey, RIAS least experienced the indicators of a liberal education (3.2%). The survey results, though, confirm that for RIAS, both measures of academic engagement and both measures of social engagement are predictors of the hallmarks of a liberal education. Within these results, all four predictors of the traits of a liberal education are very significant for RIAS attending university but only academic engagement – time on task (AE-TOT) and social engagement – conversations (SE-C) are very significant for RIAS attending college. No demographic predictors of a liberal education were found from the survey results. A discussion of the responsiveness of PSE to RIAS will follow this chapter. Chapter VII is a synthesis of the literature review and findings from both the institutional responsiveness to RIAS and RIAS engagement in PSE.

Chapter VI – Research Findings: Responsiveness of PSE to RIAS

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I will present the research findings to begin to answer one of the key objectives of this dissertation, which include the following:

1. Evaluating the manner in which Ontario post-secondary institutions are responding to recent immigrant adult students (RIAS).
 - a. Determining the extent of institutional awareness of RIAS on campus, efforts to eliminate barriers to entry, persistence and completion and activities and services that engage RIAS.

In order to fulfill these research objectives, this chapter will include findings related to the responsiveness of post-secondary institutions to RIAS. In this segment, I will present the historical and artifact review as well as the key informant interview findings from York University, the University of Toronto, Ryerson University, George Brown College and Centennial College. This multifaceted gathering and analyzing of data from various institutions brings triangulation of methods and sources to this study. This dissertation uses the data from the 18 key informant interviews, history and policies as gathered originally for the CCL. In the CCL grant, I analyzed the data using the social inclusion framework and summarized the data and analysis in a brief few pages in order to further the economic adjustment of immigrants. In this chapter, I use and supplement this data and conduct a richer and more extensive analysis using the student engagement framework in order to understand the engagement of RIAS in PSE.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIVENESS TO RIAS DESCRIPTION

The dimensions of institutional responsiveness of each institution employed in this chapter is as follows: history and mission, school background data, RIAS access, institutional awareness of RIAS, institutional responsiveness including RIAS programs, services and strategy, work placement of RIAS followed by a summary of the institutional responsiveness to RIAS in relation to the student engagement framework. These dimensions were chosen as they provide triangulation in identifying and verifying the institutional responsiveness to RIAS.

York University

History and Mission

York University (York) is Canada's third largest university and is located on the northwest corner of Keele St. and Finch Ave. in the Greater Toronto Area. In its undergraduate and graduate programs, York educates over 50,000 students yearly. York was founded in 1959 and was one of the first modern universities in Ontario that did not have a religious affiliation when it began. York's mission statement is:

the pursuit, preservation, and dissemination of knowledge. We promise excellence in research and teaching in pure, applied and professional fields. We test the boundaries and structures of knowledge. We cultivate the critical intellect. York University is part of Toronto: we are dynamic, metropolitan and multi-cultural. York University is part of Canada: we encourage bilingual study, we value tolerance and diversity. York University is open to the world: we explore global concerns. A community of faculty, students and staff committed to academic freedom, social justice, accessible education, and collegial self-governance, York University makes innovation its tradition. *Tentanda Via*: the way must be tried. (York University Mission Statement, 2007)

This mission statement refers to diversity, multi-culturalism, social justice and accessible education but does not make specific reference to student engagement.

York University Background Data

In its multi-year agreement with the provincial government¹⁰, York University notes that qualified Ontario students can attend and have access to the resources that they need to purchase books and pay mandatory fees (York Multi-year Agreement, 2006). While York's multi-year action plan identified under-represented groups including racial minority groups on campus, it did not identify RIAS. York University's Vision 2020 document states that York has a disproportionate number of mature and non-traditional students and that its future growth will likely have a high number of disadvantaged students. This was confirmed by York University's Academic Plan that spoke clearly about preparing for a surge of enrollment starting in 2010 coming from "mature applicants, immigrant and diasporic communities, CAAT graduates and non-degree students" (2005, p. 7). York therefore states that it will increase access for these diverse students through new delivery systems, including "outreach programs, distance education, interactive video, work-study and cooperative education" (York University Vision 2020, 1992).

¹⁰ Moving away from receiving fluctuating annual funding, the 2005 Ontario Provincial Budget presented a funding plan referred to as the Multi-Year Agreement, which provided "a cumulative investment of \$6.2B in Ontario's post-secondary education and training system by 2009-10" (York Multi-year agreement, 2006, p. 1). The provincial government argued that this agreement provided more stable funding for Ontario post-secondary institutions and allowed for longer-term planning for individual institutions.

While there was no mention of RIAS in York's multi-year action plan, there were explicit statements regarding student engagement and satisfaction. While the strategy does not list specific NSSE or CGPSS benchmark scores or goals, it states that "institutions may wish to use their NSSE and CGPSS results as their indicators of quality" (York University, 2006, p. 15). This was also confirmed by the Ontario Ministry's Multi-Year Accountability Agreement Report Back (2008), which stated that

enhancing the student experience is a priority for York. York University has and will continue to participate in several student experience surveys including the National Student Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and if applicable, the Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey (CGPSS). The survey data retained will assist us in identifying areas requiring future improvement. (p.2)

York University also lists student success as a priority and specifically identifies student retention and graduation rates as being critical indicators of student achievement (York University, 2006).

In the 2005 Canadian Undergraduate Survey Consortium, York's international students' satisfaction with special services was slightly lower than other groups on campus and slightly lower than the same representative group at other participating Canadian universities (2005). According to NSSE institutional research and in comparison with similar institutions, generally York University students were

more likely to study part-time, live at home, commute to campus using public transit [and] work and work more hours than the average student in Ontario. This is not really a causation but a correlation. (Mr. A, personal communication, May 7, 2007)

York is largely a commuter school with over 1000 buses that service the campus daily and this service is expanding in 2015 with direct subway access. Outside of class, most York students spend less than 10 hours a week on campus and York's older mature students tend to work part-time. While these student characteristics are generally applicable to all York students, it helps to set the context and framework for the RIAS' experience within York's student population.

RIAS Access

The admissions process and credential recognition for RIAS at York U is a rather complex process. In the admissions application, York does not ask about visible minority status as some students are reluctant to self-identify for fear of discrimination in the admissions process. In the informant interviews, there was considerable discussion about the higher tuition charged to international students in comparison with domestic students. In 1976 under a Liberal majority government, Pierre Elliot Trudeau made changes

to the federal transfer payments to the provinces, recommending differential tuition fees for international students as a way for universities to generate additional revenue (Canadian Federation of Students, 2005). By 1982, most provinces followed Trudeau's directive and thus, universities charged international students considerably higher tuition rates than domestic students.¹¹ While this policy did not directly affect RIAS, immigration laws have changed in Canada allowing international students to become landed immigrants. Canadian RIAS often pay the domestic tuition rates once they receive a SIN number or their landed immigrant file number.

In evaluating foreign credentials, York's admission department employs a large credential resource library. If the credential is deemed not authentic or not an original document, the Admissions Office gives the applicant a conditional offer of admission, which will be waived after they provide an official transcript. Next, the admission department checks the institutional accreditation to make sure that it is a recognized institution. Sometimes this even involves looking at the degree level, as some institutions, including York, offer non-degree programs. Next, the admissions department looks at the grading scale, creates an equivalency to York's scale, determines the student's grade point average and then decides if the student meets the minimum admission average. With some foreign transcripts, the admission department needs to closely examine the institutionally-prepared course description. If it was in a foreign language, the applicant has to arrange for it to be translated and notarized in order to determine his/her eligibility for advanced standing¹² in a degree program at York. The student then receives an offer of admission and possibly a statement of transfer credit or advanced standing. There currently is no province-wide or country-wide transfer credit system, so the method of determining transfer credit may not seem very transparent or consistent to applicants. York makes the application process somewhat more transparent by allowing applicants to view the stage of their application process on the internet (Ms. B, personal communication, June 29, 2007).

One of the largest barriers for RIAS is credential recognition as Mr. C indicates:

¹¹ There is considerable irony noting that a Prime Minister who is credited with bringing multiculturalism to Canada is responsible for encouraging tuition discrimination for international students.

¹² In some Ontario universities, students are not able to transfer into a program with credit given for previous studies. Instead of offering transfer credit, some universities such as York University offer advanced standing. This gives the student credit for a course taken at another accredited university where there is an 80% overlap in course content and method of instruction. This advanced standing then shortens the length of degree, as the course does not need to be repeated at York University in order to obtain the degree.

There was a study in the 1990's that talked about the issues recognizing foreign credentials and that issue has not gone away. Adult immigrants spend so much time and energy getting these credentials and then they come here and they are not recognized. That is very painful. (Mr. C, personal communication, August 13, 2007)

Credential recognition is gaining stronger public attention and funding with the aim to find solutions to the difficulties students face in having their credentials assessed and in obtaining transfer credit. To summarize, York's admission department conducts a detailed analysis of RIAS transcripts for admission and course by course review for advanced standing. These processes take some time and could not seem very transparent, straightforward or equitable to all foreign-trained students including RIAS.

Institutional Awareness of RIAS

At York University, interviews were carried out with Mr. A, Ms. B and Mr. C who are three senior administrators with responsibilities for a variety of aspects of the student experience. York does not generally know the number of RIAS on campus. The university records the country of origin, nationality and citizenship but do not report the number of RIAS on campus. York notes a decrease in the number of mature and part-time students over the past decade as the number of students coming directly out of high school increased. The university felt, though, that the number of RIAS and those with foreign credentials remained relatively high throughout the past decade. Anecdotally, the key informants stated that some RIAS first attend college and then later come to university. The York Fact Book¹³ identifies visa students and has considerable statistical information on this population. York Institutional Research had difficulty identifying RIAS. At York, immigrant student data was at times grouped with domestic students and at other times grouped with international students. Collapsing the two groups masks differences in the individual needs of each student and also makes gathering data on RIAS rather difficult.

Institutional Responsiveness to RIAS

Programs and Services for RIAS

RIAS often held part-time or full-time jobs while attending York and therefore they reduced their course load. There was quite a bit of adjustment for RIAS in their interaction with faculty because of their

¹³ The York University Fact Book is published annually since 1994 and essentially summarizes institutional data to help inform the York U community.

varying cultural background. RIAS often had to reinvent themselves, as they were usually an older segment and did not “fit in” with the general student body. These were just some of the comments from the key informants. York created the Red Zone in 2006, which had returning students help new students in their orientation into the York community. While this initiative assists all students, it is also available to RIAS.

Two programs specifically helped the academic experience of RIAS at York. York’s leadership developed a bridging program for internationally-trained nurses, where these students work on English language skills and a few specific courses so they can become accredited by the provincial body of nurses (Mr. A, personal communication, May 7, 2007). York also developed the York U English Language Institute (YUELI), which assists RIAS and international students upgrade their English language skills. Notably none of these programs are specifically directed at RIAS. RIAS are seemingly rendered invisible while the institution assumes that they are being amalgamated into the international student group.

York U’s Strategy with RIAS

York does not have any conclusive data on whether RIAS are engaged (Mr. C, personal communication, August 13, 2007). Engagement issues at York affect all students such as the size of campus, sense of community, age and maturity, and the different communities (Ms. B, personal communication, June 29, 2007). York approaches student engagement through their involvement in smaller communities such as a specific faculty or college. York’s leadership hopes to engage RIAS through their pan-university focus on first generation students and mature students. In other words, York U views that helping all students be engaged will benefit RIAS too.

York’s key informants argued that differing religious beliefs can cause a barrier between students. York Student Services noted some issues of conservatism among RIAS religious groups with some that lack tolerance of other cultures or beliefs. York states in its calendar that it promotes freedom of expression in the classroom and that the university experience will lead to a challenge of intellectual ideas and thoughts. Similar to immigrants settling in communities in Toronto, the fastest growing student clubs at York were the religious-based clubs. York’s leadership believes that this likely gives RIAS a place to belong but also can serve to isolate students socially.

Work Placement of RIAS

At York, there is no specific assistance to RIAS in their search for employment. York's career services provides assistance to all students including RIAS in finding a summer job, but offers little support to students after they graduate (Mr. C, personal communication, August 13, 2007). York is looking into contracting an outside search firm that would charge students to help them find employment. This would be a fee-based service that would be available to students from the beginning of their studies until they have found a job. York is also looking at developing peer-mentoring activities to help engage students (Ibid.). Only a few applied York programs provide students with coop or internship opportunities.

Summary of York U's Response to RIAS

In reviewing these findings through the student engagement framework, York U's history and mission demonstrates that it is an academic community that values diversity and understands that the student experience is vital to student success. Access, though, is a rather complex and non-transparent issue for RIAS. It is clear that York has not identified the RIAS population on campus. At present, York attempts to remove some barriers for RIAS through a limited number of programs geared towards international students and adult students. As RIAS needs are often dissimilar to traditional, international and adult student issues as identified in the literature, York's current services, structures and policies may not be able to mitigate many barriers for RIAS. Access, socialization and work placement barriers abound for RIAS at York. According to the literature, student engagement involves overcoming academic, social, physical and economic gaps separating people. York University indicates an increased focus on improving the student experience and engagement on campus but the key informants could not identify any specific directives to help the engagement and experience of RIAS. This effort is further exacerbated by the problem that the number and identification of RIAS on campus are unknown to York. Given this framework, it appears that York does not have many specific supports to help engage RIAS on campus.

University of Toronto

History and Mission

The University of Toronto (U of T) was chartered in 1827 as King's College and had strong religious and political ties with England (Friedland, 2002). By 1849, it was reconfigured as the non-denominational University of Toronto (McKillop, 1994) with religious denominations able to affiliate in the form of divinity colleges (Wallace, 1927). U of T is now Canada's largest university and has three campuses: downtown St. George, Scarborough and Mississauga. Its mission statement states that U of T is "committed to being an internationally significant research university, with undergraduate, graduate and professional programs of excellent quality" (U of T Mission Statement, 2007).

University of Toronto Background Data

In its Statement on Human Rights, the University of Toronto acknowledges the diversity of its student body and acts to prevent discrimination (U of T Statement on Human Rights, 2007). Its Statement of Institutional Purpose does not mention RIAS specifically but enforces its value of life-long learning and aims to improve policies, practices and programs. In its Stepping Up document for Academic Planning (2004-2010), U of T determines to recruit and retain a diverse faculty, staff and student body. It values equity and diversity and strives to improve this throughout the institution. It identifies access barriers and aims to mitigate these obstacles and eliminate discrimination. In financial accessibility, U of T guarantees, "no admitted student will be unable to attend because of financial need" (U of T Stepping Up, 2004).

U of T's Measuring Up document (2007) identifies a primary student experience goal stating that "we strive to provide every student with the opportunity for an outstanding and unique experience at the University of Toronto" (University of Toronto, 2007, p. 2). In the report, U of T describes improving the student experience by focusing on the linkages between teaching and research, promoting interdisciplinary collaborations, engagement in public policy and promoting and ensuring diversity and equity (Ibid.). There is also recognition that student contact with faculty members provides for a strengthened student experience. The school's aim is to have a small classroom experience, co-curricular activities, research initiatives with students as well as international and study abroad opportunities (Ibid.).

U of T's Housing New Canadians Project directly works to help RIAS find accommodation. This project is "a research partnership focused on housing access and discrimination in the Toronto area, where almost half of all newcomers to Canada settle" (U of T Housing New Canadians Project, 2007). U of T is a founding member of the World University Service of Canada (WUSC) that serves to sponsor and support refugees since the 1970s (U of T Equity Statement, 2007). Via the Maytree Foundation, U of T's Admissions and Awards gives financial support every year to a few local refugees to attend U of T before they become immigrants (<http://www.utoronto.ca/plan2003/equity.pdf>). Through its School of Continuing Studies, U of T focuses on mature adult students and even offers some business courses in Cantonese. U of T currently is casting the vision of its future in a series of reports entitled Towards 2030 that started development in 2007 and is currently in Phase 3 of its metamorphosis.

RIAS Access

Concerning the admissions process, Ms. E stated, "when students apply with international credentials, we assess them (regardless of age or immigration status) on the basis of our extensive knowledge of the education system(s) in which they studied" (September 17, 2007). U of T offers a wide range of supports for both curricular/co-curricular engagement and success but these do not seem to be developed or targeted to RIAS. While U of T does not want to restrict highly skilled people from further education, it does not want to diminish its requirements for English, as U of T is located in an English-speaking country (Mr. D, personal communication, September 21, 2007). Further, Mr. D stated:

someone needs to unpack how the lack of articulation of transfer credits from the colleges to the universities can be resolved and how this impacts immigrants with high skills. We need a codified articulation agreement even at a provincial level between colleges and universities and some way to assess equitably the transfer of work skills. (September 21, 2007)

While it appears that RIAS has good interaction with faculty, some key informants note that RIAS experience cultural obstacles and difficulty integrating into communities at U of T. There are services for all students for learning and serving in communities but not settling in them. This can affect the length of time that it takes for RIAS to integrate into the university community, but Mr. D stated that it is unclear if it affects their performance at the university (September 21, 2007).

Institutional Awareness of RIAS

At the University of Toronto, an interview was conducted with Mr. D. Also, Ms. E provided a brief written institutional response to the survey instrument with input from colleagues. Both key informants were respected members of the senior administration with responsibility for admissions, registration and the student experience. Like York University, U of T does not track immigrant status or the ethnicity of its students. They do not collect any data on RIAS. They only have statistics on whether or not a student is international (Mr. D, personal communication, September 21, 2007). In reviewing statistics from 2004, international students made up 8.8 per cent of the total student body, 7.8 per cent of the undergraduate student body and 13.5 per cent of the graduate student body (Zaky, 2005). More recent statistics from 2008/09 indicate that international students constitute 9.4 per cent of the total student body, 10.7 per cent of undergraduate students and 8.7 per cent of graduate students (University of Toronto, 2009). Therefore, total international students are increasing but international graduate students are decreasing.

U of T collects information on a students' region of origin. Anecdotally, Mr. D believes that the number of RIAS slightly increased over the past decade (personal communication, September 21, 2007). In 2006, 54 per cent of U of T's students claimed to be visible minorities (U of T Annual Report on Student Financial Support, 2007) and 55 per cent claimed to speak another language other than English as their first language (Mr. D, personal communication, September 21, 2007). Therefore, one suspects at U of T that the RIAS population is quite large but this is not certain.

Institutional Responsiveness to RIAS

Programs, Services and Strategy

One of the top priorities of U of T is the student experience. In the latest NSSE survey, international students at U of T were not as engaged as domestic students according to the five benchmarks. While U of T does not track RIAS, U of T's key informants assume that RIAS have similar engagement issues as international students. Mr. D argued that perhaps it was not that RIAS do not want to be engaged but that they perhaps find it harder to be engaged on campus. This is a complex problem, as RIAS come from so many different backgrounds, languages and cultures as Mr. D noted:

strangely enough, the literature says that the strongest understanding and deepening of these intercultural relationships happens through informal interaction. We can say that it is diverse because it looks diverse but is that student's experience really taking advantage of that structural diversity? (September 21, 2007)

Ms. E stated that U of T has a number of professional faculties that offer programs specifically designed to enable foreign-trained professionals to enter their profession in Canada (personal communication, September 17, 2007). In addition, one U of T professor is developing a learning community in Biology that is based on the University of Texas model (Mr. C, personal communication, August 13, 2007). Learning villages coalesce on areas of interest and have peer mentoring built into them. While these units are not focused specifically on RIAS, they may assist some RIAS in settlement.

Another international student program at the University of Toronto Scarborough (UTSC), is a unique 12-week summer program that is:

designed to smooth the transition for students from Mainland China who are starting four-year degrees in September. It offers those just out of high school a menu of intense language training with a large side order of Canadian culture. (Girard, 2007, p. 1)

This program helps new international students who leave home to feel comfortable in a new country and aids their transition into UTSC. While these few programs assist international students, administrators at U of T felt that it could have some benefit to RIAS or they could create something specifically for RIAS.

Work Placement of RIAS

In reviewing the programs offered at U of T, many degrees provide broad study across various disciplines. Coop and/or work placements are not provided in the majority of these programs. U of T has a few degrees that are applied in nature such as business and engineering that provide limited opportunities for students to have internship placements. U of T does not have resources that specifically help RIAS find jobs upon graduation.

Summary of U of T's Responsiveness to RIAS

Assessing this information within the student engagement framework, U of T's history and mission articulates that it is a strong research-intensive university, where the student experience is paramount. Access to U of T is rather challenging for RIAS as credential recognition and obtaining advanced standing is quite expensive and time consuming. It is also clear that U of T does not identify

RIAS on campus. Further, U of T provides a limited number of programs and no identifiable services specifically for RIAS. As few programs are applied, there is little opportunity for RIAS to gain chances for work placement. U of T's leadership essentially equates RIAS with international students. Therefore, U of T's key informants believe that it is engaging RIAS by providing a stronger experience for all students and mitigating some barriers for international students. Given that international students are not as engaged as domestic students, as per the most recent NSSE survey at U of T, U of T assumes that RIAS are similarly disengaged. At U of T, this conflation of immigrant and international students is significant in its lack of responsiveness to RIAS.

This lack of identification of RIAS and deficiency in providing supports virtually renders RIAS invisible. London, Downey and Mace (2007) argue about the importance of visibility for students as it is fundamental to respect and legitimacy and helps them become engaged in PSE. London et al. (2007) continue that especially for minority students "who may already feel invisible (in terms of their value, contributions and worth), respect and legitimacy become even more important" (p. 473). Hence, the invisibility of RIAS at U of T makes it quite difficult for the institution to study engagement, experience and success as well as see the effects of services on RIAS. The inability of U of T to identify barriers experienced by RIAS likely precludes U of T from mitigating these barriers and therefore likely causes the institution to be ineffectual in engaging RIAS. Rendering immigrants invisible may promote the further disengagement of RIAS. As indicated through these interviews, policies and supporting documents, U of T does not include RIAS in U of T's society, culture and social networks. U of T's lack of responsiveness to RIAS will likely not help engage RIAS on campus.

Ryerson University

History and Mission

Ryerson University (RU) was founded in 1948 as Ryerson Institute of Technology and was named after Egerton Ryerson, one of the founders of public education in Ontario. As RU evolved, it offered its first degree in 1972 and gained full university status in 1993, giving it a fully funded research role and the ability to grant graduate degrees (Ryerson University History, 2007). Ryerson's academic mission is:

the advancement of applied knowledge and research to address societal need, and the provision of programs of study that provide a balance between theory and application and that prepare students for careers in professional and quasi-professional fields. As a leading centre for applied education, Ryerson is recognized for the excellence of its teaching, the relevance of its curriculum, the success of its students in achieving their academic and career objectives, the quality of its scholarship, research, and creative activity and its commitment to accessibility, lifelong learning, and involvement in the broader community. (Ryerson University Mission, 2007)

Ryerson University Background Data

In its Master Plan, RU states that its urban campus strengthens its diverse cultural life (Ryerson University Master Plan, 2007). Being downtown, it aims to have the student body reflect the diversity of its surrounding community. Largely because of its historical roots, RU's Academic Plan uniquely articulates the direct application of learning to the career choices of its graduates. RU offers career-oriented, applied education. It also highlights the unique cosmopolitan aspect of its student body, which affects and shapes learning styles and familiarity with the English language (Ryerson University Academic Plan, 2007).

With regards to student engagement, Ryerson's President Levy commissioned a report on both student engagement and experience. This commission had a dual mandate:

first, to determine from student responses the highest priorities for improving student life at Ryerson; and second, to make recommendations designed to take these priorities into consideration in campus development and the allocation of University resources. (Ryerson University, 2006, p. 2)

The report generated seven recommendations towards improving student engagement and experience on campus and President Levy responded with actions to each recommendation (Ibid.).

RIAS Access

RU does not recruit immigrants from overseas, as the leadership does not want to drain professionals from their home country. Rather RU tries to help potential immigrants obtain information earlier so that they settle in Canada more quickly. For the Internationally Educated Professional program, RIAs do not apply through central admissions but submit their academic qualifications and English proficiency directly to the program area. These applicants do not receive transfer credit, as RU recognizes that the foreign-trained professionals have strong knowledge in their field. RU customizes the required courses for each individual. RIAs typically have a heavy course load but RU is currently creating a hybrid model combining internet and classroom delivery for these courses to reduce their time on campus. In

addition, leadership at RU feels that some of the content is best delivered on the internet because, as in nursing, it allows students to listen, practice and recognize. So when RIAS see the patient, they can apply existing knowledge rather than trying to build knowledge. This program delivery increases RIAS's access to RU's courses as RIAS time is quite limited and they often need to work to support their family here and in their source country. RU is also modifying their programming for people who are still in the immigration process (Mr. F, personal communication, October 26, 2007).

Institutional Awareness of RIAS

While RU does not recruit RIAS, it collects data on them. It tracks them particularly in the bridging programs and finds that RU retains about 80 per cent of their original student group. RIAS' success for gainful employment in their field is also quite high.

Institutional Responsiveness to RIAS

Programs, Services and Strategy for RIAS

At RU, interviews were conducted with two program leaders, Mr. F and Ms. G. Both key informants have strategic responsibilities for programs directly involving RIAS. Specifically, RU's Chang School of Continuing Education is focused primarily on education for adults and new Canadians. RU's Chang School states that it "is a recognized leader in helping New Canadians access the education that enables them to thrive in this country" (Ryerson University Chang School, 2007). Their programs are directly career related. RU also provides detailed information for foreign-trained professionals, on Ontario's regulated professions and on foreign credential assessment (Ryerson University International Credentials, 2007).

RU developed programming specifically for Internationally Educated Professionals (IEPs). Since 2001, RU offered bridging programs for midwifery, dietetics and nutrition, social work and nursing. In fall 2007, RU launched IEP programs in business (accounting, financial services and talent development for organizational effectiveness) and engineering. This programming was designed specifically for RIAS with foreign work experience and the average student in the program is approximately 30 years old. Mr. F believes that this program is possible at RU because it is a very intimate institution with a small footprint.

He stated, “if I were at U of T, the level of intimacy in one faculty is less than the level of intimacy in the university as a whole here. It would not be possible to do what I am doing at U of T” (October 26, 2007).

Tri-Mentoring Program

One unique program that benefits RIAS at RU is the Tri-Mentoring Program. It:

strives to assist Ryerson's culturally diverse student body in their pursuit of personal goals, academic achievements and career success. The Tri-Mentoring Program aims to assist students at all levels of study in successful achievement of goals. Through meaningful relationships with fellow students, industry professionals and the community at large, Tri-Mentoring supports the unique needs of Ryerson's culturally diverse student body. All participants will benefit from the opportunities to grow as a student and a person through guidance, communication, leadership and a supportive community. (Ryerson University Tri-Mentoring Program, 2007)

There are three stages in the Tri-Mentoring Program. A student begins as a mentee, with training becomes a student leader and mentor and with further preparation develops into a career mentor. While this program is not specifically targeted at RIAS, numerous new Canadians and first generation students use the program. Many students in the Tri-Mentoring Program are ESL students and have been in Canada for only about two years (Ms. G, personal communication, October 26, 2007). The program has on-going monthly events centered on race, gender, ethnicity or other areas of interest. As such, there is no expert in this program, as all participants are in the learning mode (Ms. G, personal communication, October 26, 2007). Leaders note that international students normally feel free to discuss their backgrounds, whereas RIAS do not. The program aids all students including RIAS to connect with their peers, discuss and find solutions to issues as well as help them feel that they fit in.

At RU so far, 1700 students and 800 volunteers have been through this program. RU found that the mentees who had been through the program are more engaged with their studies (Ms. G, personal communication, October 26, 2007). Since the Tri-Mentoring Program has been so successful at RU, the school also started a Career Mentoring Program and a First Generation Project. The Career Mentoring Program helps third and fourth year students progress to develop networks in order to obtain a job. The First Generation Project essentially assists first generation students obtain information and supports before they attend. After first generation students start attending RU, this project continues to help them be successful in their academic and social life.

Work Placement of RIAS

Many of the programs offered at RU are applied in nature, likely because of its historical roots. As a result, RIAS have numerous opportunities for coop, work and/or internship placements. These help RIAS gain much-needed and employer-valued Canadian work experience. RU has pan-university programming called professional communications for employment. This program helps RIAS gain the soft skills, interpersonal communications and culturally-based data. It involves language testing, support and acquisition. This program centers on experiential learning involving interactive programming to prepare RIAS for the Canadian workplace (Ryerson University IEP Program, 2007). Over the past six years, all of the IEP programs at RU received just over \$13 million in support from the Government of Ontario and Government of Canada (Mr. F, personal communication, April 23, 2008).

RU developed their programming around the flash points or problem areas that foreign-trained immigrants encounter when entering a Canadian profession. This likely stems from RU's mission advancing more applied knowledge and linking students with employers and employment. In order to constantly improve their training of RIAS, Mr. F asks employers who recently hired RIAS "about the times when expectations were not met" (personal communication, October 26, 2007). Employers and RU ascertain that RIAS need competencies that involve aim-based, interpersonal, group-process, analytical thinking and critical thinking skills. Essentially these all relate to RIAS ability to communicate. RU's leadership is looking to find the behavioural base for success for RIAS. In shaping RIAS learning, RU addresses experience, not values or beliefs, so they are not "changing" an immigrant's culture. This program does not give all people the same broad skills, but evaluates what skills RIAS currently have and lack, and then what skills they need for a specific job. RU then helps fill in their skill gaps. The final piece of the program was to help RIAS find employment. With the Maytree Foundation, RU developed "programming targeted at employers to really help employers build their own competency to identify, recruit, hire and induct immigrant professionals" (Mr. F, personal communication, October 26, 2007).

In each of these special programs, the class sizes are small giving RIAS significant interaction with faculty. RU recognizes that the "face" of immigration changed from "importing labour to importing intellectual capital, yet our systems are still oriented towards importing labour" (Mr. F, personal

communication, October 26, 2007). Therefore, immigrants arrived with intellectual capital, but they are treated like labour. Mr. F recalls:

I can't tell you how many people I talk to say 'I go to career counseling that is set up for me [an immigrant] and they say scrub this out of your resume because you've got to start at the bottom.' Well that is crap! I'm sorry. Immigrants immigrate in order to improve their quality of life. They don't come to take a hit. And so the whole orientation of our programming is to help people move laterally so they don't have to start at the bottom. (October 26, 2007)

RU's historical roots and applied degrees help them connect RIAS directly into the labour force. As a result, RU believes it is becoming a destination for a diverse group of RIAS.

Summary of RU's Responsiveness to RIAS

In summarizing these findings from RU within the student engagement framework, Ryerson's history and mission identify that it has its roots firmly in more applied training that continues to link RIAS with employment skills and opportunities. Recently RU has a more concerted effort to improve the student experience. It is fundamentally important to note that while RU does not recruit immigrants, it knows how many RIAS are on campus and actively works to help engage RIAS. RU has sought funding from government and foundations such as Maytree for programs and services geared to RIAS. Many of these programs are delivered in RU's continuing education school. RU also helps RIAS bypass the traditional admissions process. RU is working to eliminate many access barriers making RIAS access quite unique. RU also attempts to remove many of the barriers to engagement for RIAS and attempts to provide supports, policies and services to engage RIAS. RU's applied learning provides RIAS with numerous work placement choices. While there may be more barriers to mitigate, RU is continuing to improve its responsiveness to RIAS and integrating RIAS into RU's society, culture and social networks.

George Brown College

History and Mission

George Brown College (GBC) opened in 1967 in downtown Toronto (George Brown College History, 2007). It continually expanded so that at present it has three campuses, all in downtown Toronto. As of 2011, GBC has over 20,000 full-time students, 38,000 continuing education students and 2070 international students (George Brown College Fast Facts, 2011). GBC's mission statement is to: "provide

high-quality education that meets the evolving social and economic development needs of the communities we serve, enabling students to succeed in achieving their individual career and life goals” (2006).

George Brown College Background Data

The vision, mission and values of GBC includes an articulated path to leadership stating that:

we will set the benchmark to which all colleges will aspire, and be recognized as a key resource in shaping the future of Toronto as a leading global city. We will build a seamless bridge between learners and employment as we develop dynamic programs, and workplace-ready graduates who will be the candidates of choice for employers. We will create a community of life-long learners, grounded in the principles of access, diversity, mutual respect and accountability. (GBC, 2011)

GBC is a learning and accountable community, providing excellence and showing respect of diversity.

GBC aspires to provide high quality programs, promote access, foster a learning culture and be responsible in its programs, services and practices. GBC has a clear race and ethnic relations policy. According to a fall 1999 study, the percentage of non-native English speakers at GBC was 43 per cent. This expanded to 50 per cent in fall 2000 and 76 per cent in 2001 (Kilbride, 2002).

RIAS Access

GBC has very detailed and transparent admissions policies. GBC specifies what it considers as equivalent secondary school credentials from various regions of the world (George Brown College Academic Policies, 2007). When students apply to attend any Ontario college, they apply through the Ontario College Application Services (OCAS) website. For many years, OCAS was linked to the International Credential Assessment Service (ICAS) that evaluated a foreign transcript for a set fee before it even arrived at the college. In November 2010 there was a change in the partnership between ICAS and OCAS, as essentially ICAS was finding credential assessment to be much more expensive and time consuming than their original agreement with OCAS.

OCAS now sends the applicant’s transcripts to ICAS or World Education Services (WES) as directed by the applicant. If RIAS have an international transcript, they must pay \$120 (ICAS) or \$115 (WES) to have a basic assessment done on the transcript and this assessment determines if the applicant’s education is equivalent to Canadian high school standards. If the applicant wants further evaluation that is generally needed when requesting advanced standing and/or transfer credit, they can pay ICAS or WES to

get a more detailed course-by-course assessment of their transcript. For high school transcripts, this costs an additional \$30 (ICAS) or for post-secondary transcripts costs \$110 (ICAS) or \$125 (WES). Therefore a comprehensive report costs from \$230 (ICAS) to \$240 (WES). This process is generally the standard operating admissions procedure at most Ontario colleges for immigrant applicants with foreign credentials. While these services provide consistent assessment of foreign credentials, the significant cost of these services is a barrier to RIAS applying to GBC and other Ontario colleges. Interestingly, international students applying to most Ontario colleges do not have to send their foreign credentials to ICAS or WES and therefore do not have the burden of extra assessment costs. International applicant credential assessments are completed at no additional cost by the respective college's international admissions office.

Currently most Ontario colleges have this differing evaluation of foreign transcripts. It was not possible to obtain an explanation as to why international students have their credentials assessed for free in-house while immigrant applicants have their credentials assessed by ICAS or WES at a significant cost. It is possible that the higher tuition paid by international students to the college could off-set the extra effort in assessing their credentials. As RIAS pay the same tuition as domestic applicants, the outsourcing of the credential evaluation of foreign-trained RIAS could be considered necessary by the college but RIAS could deem it inequitable. As these credentials are also assessed by different organizations, it is unlikely that the various assessments by the college, WES or ICAS have the same result for the students. Therefore this appears to be a financial and credential assessment barrier for RIAS at Ontario colleges.

GBC created an access centre for all students who experience barriers. This unit helps with ESL, literacy and basic skills. Around 2005, GBC created a working strategy document with thirty recommendations to improve the RIAS experience. These suggestions came through student feedback and experience in bridging programs. Then through Ms. H's leadership and work in the Colleges Integrating Immigrants to Education (CIITE) project¹⁴, GBC's leadership decided to implement some of these recommendations. GBC started by changing ESL as employers suggested that speaking and listening in

¹⁴ The CIITE project was developed by all Ontario colleges to help identify and alleviate the issues that RIAS face such as credential recognition. CIITE created the Internationally Trained Immigrant (ITI) Training Services and piloted the My Record/Record of Education and Experience (REE) section on the Ontario College Application Services (OCAS) system (CIITE, 2011). While funding for the CIITE project has now stopped, many of the services still continue at the colleges. CIITE's work is being continued by the College Sector Immigrant Programs and Services (CSIPS) committee. CSIPS includes all Ontario colleges, has articulated its mandate and is looking for sustainable funding.

English is one of the largest barriers for RIAS in obtaining employment (Ms. H, personal communication, October 26, 2007). This pilot project created an adjunct model for language acquisition so that students have extra English added to their regular program. Therefore, students are learning the exact English words that they need to understand the new curriculum. GBC also assesses what language skills students need to have in different professions and are benchmarking these findings. Through this benchmarking to date, they found that their courses develop lower speaking skills and higher reading competence than they thought but this is not what students need in the workplace, so they are changing the curriculum (Ms. H, personal communication, October 26, 2007). GBC is also using the Canadian English Language Benchmark Assessment for Nurses. This helps RIAS to have their English skills assessed when they apply for licensing in the nursing profession in Canada. GBC was quite careful to uncouple country of origin with barriers. GBC's leadership believed that it was more useful to think of a student's specific challenges independent of ethnicity.

At the same time, GBC's leadership merged the international and immigrant divisions. GBC saw that there was an issue overlap between the two groups and worked on the delivery of services to both groups, including advising, information, language training and program delivery options. The changes in government policy that allowed international students to work outside of their educational institution as well as apply for immigration while on a student visa also blurred the distinction between the groups. Yet, collapsing the two distinct groups seems inconsistent with the findings of the engagement literature. GBC also has a lead role in the CIIP Project that is sponsored by the Association of Canadian Community Colleges and the Federal Government. Essentially, CIIP provides services to immigrants prior to them arriving in Canada. This pilot project has centres in India, China and the Philippines. The CIIP Project provides advising, PSE information and coaching to potential immigrants before they come to Canada to help them have a better transition to life and study here. GBC acts as a referral partner and provides online advising. This allows immigrants to have access to information at an earlier point with the hope that they would have a better transition to life in Canada (Ms. H, personal communication, October 26, 2007).

Institutional Awareness of RIAS

GBC collects data on full-time RIAS that it educates but not on their continuing education or part-time students. GBC estimates that roughly 45 to 50 per cent of its student population was not born in Canada (Ms. H, personal communication, October 26, 2007). Approximately one-third of GBC's students are in ESL. Ms. H stated that GBC has the second largest number of international students in Ontario (personal communication, October 26, 2007).

Institutional Responsiveness to RIAS

At GBC, interviews were conducted with Ms. H, an academic leader with responsibility in student life and education as well as Ms. I, a professor who instructs RIAS in a number of courses. Ms. H served on the CIITE team and participated on behalf of GBC in the Creating Access to Regulated Employment (CARE) group. Through participation in CIITE/CSIPS and CARE, GBC helps RIAS mitigate barriers such as credential assessment and recognition, modified program content and English language training (George Brown Annual Business Report, 2005). In order to best accommodate RIAS, GBC articulates that it:

recognizes Toronto's changing demographic profile and is a leader in responding to immigrant needs. Immigrant Education at George Brown College serves to facilitate the seamless integration of immigrants into the social, educational, and economic structures of Ontario and to act as an advocate for immigrant issues within the college and external bodies through their programs and services. (George Brown College Immigrant Education, 2007)

GBC indicates a strong link between education and employment and aims to help RIAS make a smooth transition into both. Hence virtually all programs at GBC are applied in nature and many have work and/or coop placement opportunities.

GBC Programs, Services and Strategy

GBC has one-on-one advising for potential applicants known as the College Advising Service to help them understand their academic pathway. This service is available by phone, online and in person (George Brown College Advising Service, 2007). It helps students know about and receive Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR), which is credit for work experience and previous learning. This is “an evaluative process where life experiences are measured against course outcomes” (George Brown College PLAR, 2007). In terms of course load, GBC aims to support all students including RIAS.

GBC does not formally analyze the engagement of RIAS. Ms. H speculates that if a RIAS has a strong relationship with a faculty member and their program is strongly tied to their goals, then they will experience stronger engagement (personal communication, October 26, 2007). It is important to note in terms of academic in-class engagement, college class sizes tend to be much smaller than at most universities, with generally 40 students in a class and about 20 students in an ESL class. Student life at a downtown college is difficult to achieve, as GBC does not have a residence and little space for networking. Many GBC students are adults, take public transit and have children, so they attend GBC solely with the expectation of employment afterward. Ms. H states, “it is difficult to engage students in things that are not directly related to their goals” (October 26, 2007). While GBC wants to engage all students, GBC’s leadership focuses on what helps RIAS be employed.

Ms. I is a professor in the community and social worker programs at GBC. These unique programs have about 120 students enter the program and generally graduate approximately 80 students each year. Within the entering class, about 25 per cent are RIAS. One of the larger barriers for RIAS is financial resources and this causes the GBC program to lose about a third of its students. RIAS love the program, receive 600 hours of volunteer placement and make amazing progress through the two-year diploma (Ms. I, personal communication, November 8, 2007). The students have informal mentorship with faculty and alumni and are fully engaged in the program. Ms. I finds that RIAS are looking for nurturing and dignity and they receive both in the program (November 8, 2007).

Work Placement of RIAS

GBC has a number of other programs that help RIAS, including many bridging programs with specialized focus on ESL and job placement. Here RIAS spend substantial time with faculty and receive additional career transition advice. GBC’s career centre focuses on getting students into their career program and out into the workplace and this was what RIAS want too. As GBC’s programs are applied, many have coop or work placement opportunities that help RIAS gain Canadian employment experience.

Summary of GBC's Responsiveness to RIAS

Evaluating GBC's responsiveness within the student engagement framework, GBC's history and mission as an applied learning community college directly facilitates RIAS connection with employment. Access to GBC is relatively transparent and straightforward but the perceived inequitable credential assessment barrier is difficult for RIAS. GBC continually removes barriers to access, programs and services for RIAS. GBC knows how many full-time RIAS are on campus and proactively aims to improve engagement of RIAS through the focused work of the Assistant Vice President's International and Immigrant Education Office. GBC's leadership, though, recognizes that it is difficult to engage RIAS in anything unrelated to their goals, which often is solely focused on employment. GBC has numerous programs and services for RIAS and has strong involvement in the CIITE/CSIPS Project. It continually evaluates the RIAS experience and provides many links with employers through its coop programs. Through the amalgamation of GBC's international and immigrant divisions, though, GBC could be less able to respond quickly and thoroughly to RIAS through the mixed mandate. While GBC closes many physical and social barriers for RIAS, the fusion of these two diverse departments could inhibit improvements to the social and academic engagement of RIAS.

Centennial College

History and Mission

Centennial College (Centennial) was established in 1966 as Ontario's first community college. Over the years, it has grown to five campuses and two additional satellite centres with its main campus in Scarborough. It has over 16,000 full-time students, 28,000 continuing education students and mission is to educate students for career success. We make every decision to support the career and personal development of our learners. Our curriculum, teaching and services demonstrate that we value the diverse profiles of our learners. (Centennial College Mission Statement, 2007)

Centennial reaches out to RIAS to help them obtain Canadian work experience, start or continue work as a professional in Canada and learn how to function in a global economy (Centennial College Fast Track, 2007). Centennial identifies a number of guiding principles that impact RIAS and diversity such as:

a safe, secure, inclusive and accessible environment for learning, teaching and working;
Curriculum and instruction that reflect diversity and promote equity and inclusion; Equitable and

accessible opportunities for student success; Building knowledge and evaluating effectiveness; Human Resource Management systems, policies and practices that reflect diversity and promote equity and inclusion; Training and staff development in equity and diversity; Accessible and inclusive college communication; Strategic engagement with diverse communities; Relationships and partnerships that align with our mission, vision and values; and Committing financial and human resources to promote diversity, equity and inclusion. (Centennial College, 2011)

Centennial College Background Data

Like GBC, Centennial has a lead role in the CIITE and CSIPS projects and uses the Canadian English Language Benchmark Assessment for Nurses or TOEFL/IELTS for students whose first language is not English. Centennial offers advising to all prospective students and is acutely aware of RIAS' needs. Centennial provides a number of bridging programs, ESL training, apprenticeship programs and enhanced English training for business project management. With funding by the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, Centennial has a project designed for first generation students that attempts to increase access to its programming for all students (Centennial College Annual Report, 2006-2007). One of Centennial's strategic goals in carrying out its mission and vision is to "provide opportunities for new immigrants to progress through college programs and enter the labour market" (Centennial College Multi-year Agreement, 2007, p. 2). As a result, Centennial offers largely applied programs with many internship and placement opportunities for RIAS.

Centennial's leadership is working to increase the number of under-represented mature students. Centennial's catchment area in Scarborough has a large number of students from low-income families, immigrant families and communities that are at risk (Centennial College Multi-year Agreement, 2007). By tracking the participation of these student groups, it hopes to improve the services to and student experience of these students. Centennial also recognizes that RIAS face problems with credential recognition in Canada. In response, it has developed "more articulation agreements with independent certification agencies to effect certification through CE courses" (Centennial College Business Plan, 2007). Centennial's leadership created a Fast Track to Technology Occupations program in collaboration with Sheridan College and the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration to further support RIAS.

RIAS Access

Centennial does not conduct any evaluation of foreign transcripts for admission or transfer credit but, similar to GBC, requests RIAS to use ICAS or WES. Centennial has a pre-admission assessment tool to help immigrant applicants through the admissions process. While in the application stage, this tool helps build the initial relationship with immigrants. Through providing more information at an earlier point to the pre-applicants, Centennial's leadership attempts to mitigate some of their access barriers (Centennial College Group, personal communication, November 6, 2007). Centennial is reviewing a product called Compass to help pre-assess immigrant applicants. In April 2007, Centennial created a one-stop advising office to provide support to students for their critical first semester and to improve their student experience. This office provides information to many internationally-trained immigrants who have not yet applied.

Institutional Awareness of RIAS

At Centennial, I conducted a large focus group with nine people (Ms. J, Mr. K, Ms. L, Ms. M, Mr. N, Ms. O, Ms. P, Ms. Q and Ms. R) responsible for all aspects of admissions, student life and the student experience. Further research was conducted with Mr. S, a faculty member who extensively researched Centennial's role in immigrant settlement. Centennial keeps record of RIAS status but not ethnicity. Centennial does not collect statistics on ethnicity because their American database software does not store this data. Anecdotally, Centennial states that the proportion of RIAS has grown on campus. Centennial finds that most RIAS at their institution originated from China, India and the Philippines.

Institutional Responsiveness to RIAS

Centennial identified reoccurring RIAS financial issues, including the cost of paying for external evaluation services, admissions and the translation of documents (Centennial College Group, personal communication, November 6, 2007). Centennial's key informants agree that financial barriers are significant for RIAS. Many RIAS are working while studying and supporting a family. As a result, they may need more access points than a college or university traditionally gives them. OSAP funding is only available if RIAS study full-time, but this may not be in their best interests. RIAS tend to be apprehensive in applying for OSAP funding because they do not understand all of the rules and regulations and there is

a stigma in borrowing money (as confirmed in Finnie, Childs and Wismer 2010 study). The key informant group interviewees identify other barriers that RIAs face including a lack of Canadian experience and poor English proficiency.

All brochures and teaching at Centennial are in English. Yet, English is a large barrier for RIAs and even for some domestic students (Centennial College Group, personal communication, November 6, 2007). Instead of denying an immigrant admission to a program due to English requirements, Centennial often gives an alternate offer to the student and suggests a program with lower English demands. Centennial may also accept the immigrant into their program of choice but reduce their course load to help them succeed. By doing this, the student can more slowly track through the courses but is unable to finish the program with the initial cohort of students.

Centennial Programs, Services and Strategy

Anecdotally, Centennial felt that constructing the student experience at a college is much more difficult than at a university. Students attend college on average for two years but at a university often for four years. College students do not have very much extra time to interact as many are working, studying, raising a family and looking after their parents. It is very difficult to create a peer-mentoring program if students attend for only two years. Centennial recently piloted a general course on life and understanding in a global culture to help integrate all students into this global village. Having more immigrant and international students on campus also increases the number of religions to be respected. To accommodate the different religions on campus, Centennial created a neutral prayer room with a storage space for the symbols of various religions.

Both GBC and Centennial (and 11 other Ontario colleges) offer Occupation Specific Language Training (OSLT). An Ontario Colleges' study concluded in 2007 that OSLT should be started in the majority of colleges in Ontario. According to Aschaeik (2010), OSLT provides "skilled immigrants with in-depth language training that allows them to develop the communication skills and cultural knowledge required to excel at their jobs and in their sector" (p. 3). OSLT therefore provides communication and workplace culture training within 28 occupations from six identified high-demand employment sectors. Currently GBC and Centennial offer OSLT in two of these sectors (business and health).

Work Placement of RIAS

Some students came to Centennial to get a diploma or certificate but RIAS study with the end goal of employment. This is possible at Centennial as the programs are applied with many options for students to gain connections with employment. Yet, attrition statistics are difficult to analyze. Mr. N states that

if you see that an immigrant is leaving it does not mean that they are unsatisfied or unsuccessful. It may mean that they got exactly what they wanted – a job! If so, there is no reason to come back and finish that second year of the two-year bridging program. (Centennial College Group, personal communication, November 6, 2007)

As a result, Centennial revamped their withdrawal process to get better information on why students leave.

Summary of Centennial's Responsiveness to RIAS

Examining the responsiveness of Centennial to RIAS using the student engagement framework, Centennial's history and mission emphatically state that one of their strategic goals is to provide opportunities for immigrants to gain employment. Similar to GBC, access to Centennial is also quite transparent with advising being offered in the immigrant's source country to help facilitate their smooth transition to college. Centennial also clearly knows the number of RIAS on campus but does not know their ethnicity. Centennial removes many of the barriers between RIAS and the rest of the student body. It has many applied programs directly helping RIAS gain work placement options. A number of the senior leaders and middle managers have a good understanding of RIAS. Centennial is attempting to socially and academically include RIAS, but the leadership is not finished improving the RIAS experience. Centennial is continuing to improve the responsiveness to RIAS and is working at closing additional physical and social distances between RIAS and the rest of the student body.

SUMMARY OF RESPONSIVENESS OF PSE TO RIAS FINDINGS

Cross-institutional Comparisons

Cross-institutional Comparison of History and Mission

In summary, all post-secondary institutions remained close to their history and mission in their responsiveness to RIAS (see Table Z). Both the University of Toronto and York University began as universities and their focus remains on theoretical and less applied education. While this does not preclude an attempt to respond to RIAS, it does explain why there are few programs for RIAS and not many work

placements. Proximity to the labour market has an effect on responsiveness such that some professions may address barriers better than less applied programs. Ryerson's origins as a polytechnic institute explain its many applied programs. It also is considerably more focused on providing internships, programs and services for RIAS. Both colleges also began as polytechnic colleges and therefore still offer applied programs and numerous services for RIAS that prepare them directly for vocational employment.

Cross-institutional Comparison of RIAS Access

York and U of T generally conduct transcript and credential assessment in their Admissions Departments (see Table Z). While there is considerable expertise in these areas, the admissions assessments and decisions can appear to RIAS to be different and at times inequitable between universities. Ryerson University gives relatively more information to RIAS on their assessment of foreign credentials and therefore the admissions process appears to be more transparent to RIAS. Colleges, on the other hand, do not assess foreign transcripts and credentials for RIAS. Instead, RIAS send their transcripts to an external credential evaluation service such as ICAS or WES. While this may give a more consistent and somewhat more transparent credential assessment for RIAS, it comes at a considerable price, which can be an access barrier for RIAS.

Cross-institutional Comparison of Institutional Awareness of RIAS

To summarize, both York and U of T are not aware of the number of RIAS on campus and therefore do not have the ability in general to help RIAS (see Table Z). The exception, though, is Ryerson University that demonstrates institutional awareness of RIAS and therefore tracks how well RIAS are doing on campus. Both colleges have a good knowledge of the number of full-time RIAS on campus and can track their academic progress. Colleges, though, are limited in their knowledge as both do not have statistics on the part-time RIAS on campus and Centennial is not aware of the ethnicity of its RIAS.

Cross-institutional Comparison of Programs, Services & Strategy for RIAS

To sum-up, all three universities have professional programs for internationally trained immigrants (see Table Z). In particular, York and U of T have a select few bridging programs specifically for RIAS, which is somewhat contradictory considering the institutional lack of awareness of RIAS.

Table Z – Summary of Individual Institutional Responsiveness to RIAS

	York University	University of Toronto	Ryerson University	George Brown College	Centennial College
History & Mission	Started as a university in 1959 and therefore is focused mostly on university-type (theoretical not applied) education	Chartered in 1827 as King’s College and by 1849 was a non-denominational university and remains focused primarily on non-applied education	Founded in 1948 as a polytechnic and gained full university status in 1993. Offers mostly applied degrees and is quite focused on applied education.	Opened in 1967 as a college in downtown Toronto and has expanded so by 2002 it spanned 3 campuses. It therefore has always offered applied courses leading directly to employment.	Opened in 1966 as Ontario’s first community college. It has grown to include 4 campuses and 7 satellite centres. It continues to offer applied courses leading directly to employment.
RIAS Access	Complex in-house evaluation of foreign transcripts for admission. Students apply through OUAC.	Complex in-house evaluation of foreign transcripts for admission. Students apply through OUAC.	Provides detailed information to RIAS on foreign credential assessment. Students apply through OUAC.	Very detailed and transparent admissions policies showing global secondary school graduation equivalents. Students apply through OCAS and use ICAS or WES to evaluate transcripts for a fee.	Does not complete any in-house evaluation but has students apply through OCAS and use ICAS or WES for fee-based foreign transcript evaluation.
Institutional Awareness of RIAS	Does not count RIAS but records country of origin, nationality & citizenship and identifies & tracks visa students	Does not track immigrant status or ethnicity of students – only knows if they are international or not	Records and tracks RIAS.	Has tracked RIAS for the past number of years. Approximately 50% of GBC’s students were not born in Canada.	Keeps a record of immigrant status but not ethnicity largely because of software limitations.
Programs, Services and Strategy	A few programs geared for IEPs (nurses) & YUELI (English language institute)	Some professional faculties have programs designed to help IEPs	Most of its School of Continuing Education is centered on adults and new Canadians. It has numerous programs designed specifically for IEPs.	Has access centre, bridging programs, involved in CSIPS, advising service even for non-applicants and is making substantive changes to ESL programs but merged immigrant and international services.	Offers bridging programs, ESL training, apprenticeship programs and enhanced English training. Also offers pre-admission assessment. Involved in CSIPS.
Work Placement of RIAS	Some internships in applied programs	Only placement comes through internships in applied programs	Many of its programs help directly connect RIAS to employment.	GBC programs specifically help students get a job.	Aims to help immigrants graduate and enter the labour market.
Institutional Responsiveness to RIAS	Generally does not track the RIAS student experience so does not know RIAS engagement	As a whole is quite focused on the student experience but not specifically for RIAS	They measure, track & try to improve RIAS experience.	Created 30 recommendations to improve the RIAS experience but they have not specifically analyzed the engagement of RIAS.	Difficult to engage RIAS as they have so many commitments outside of PSE.

Ryerson University has considerably more programs geared specifically to assist RIAS in gaining skills towards employment most often through its School of Continuing Education. Similarly with services, both U of T and York U have little to no services specifically to help RIAS except that York has an English Language Institute to help RIAS improve their English. Both Centennial and GBC possess numerous bridging programs for RIAS. Similarly, both colleges include numerous services for RIAS such as an access centre, English Language Institute and even pre-admissions advising.

Cross-institutional Comparison of Work Placement of RIAS

In summary, both York U and U of T offer limited coop placement opportunities for RIAS (see Table Z). These are generally available only in their applied programs. In contrast, at the colleges and RU virtually all programs have a coop or internship option to help connect RIAS to employers and give them the much-needed Canadian work experience opportunities.

Cross-institutional Comparison of Institutional Responsiveness to RIAS

While York and U of T wish to improve the experience of students on campus, there is virtually no specific focus on improving the experience and engagement of RIAS (see Table Z). Ryerson U works hard at improving the engagement of RIAS especially in their bridging programs designed for RIAS. In contrast, both colleges express concern that they do not specifically analyze the engagement of RIAS on their campuses and wish to know how to engage RIAS given the complex lives RIAS live. Therefore, while some of the post-secondary institutions are attempting to improve the experience of RIAS on their campuses, they do not know how to engage RIAS and/or how to motivate RIAS to be engaged.

SUMMARY OF BROAD UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE FINDINGS

Given the findings from numerous institutional policies, procedures and artifacts as well as from individual and group key informant interviews, post-secondary institutions in Ontario vary widely in their response to RIAS. This is not unexpected. Firstly, some of these differences in institutional responsiveness can be linked to the historical roots of the institutions (see Table AA). All institutions tend to stay close to their founding missions. For the most part, applied schools have greater responsiveness to all student needs

including RIAS. Universities tend to focus on the broader education of all students with a smaller focus on the employability, experience and engagement of RIAS.

Table AA – Summary of University and College Responsiveness to RIAS

	Universities	Colleges
History and Mission	Universities do not move far from their roots. If they began as universities, they continue university-type programming. If they began with applied studies, they continue offering applied studies.	Colleges began with applied studies and continue to offer applied courses.
RIAS Access	Generally provide in-house evaluation of foreign transcript for admission – complex and varied assessment that is not very transparent or consistent across institutions. RIAS apply through OUAC.	RIAS apply through OCAS and have to pay ICAS or WES for assessment of transcripts. Generally more consistent process but costly and time consuming.
Institutional Awareness of RIAS	Do not count or track RIAS.	Generally count and track RIAS.
Persistence & Completion Barriers	Generally does little to mitigate persistence and completion barriers such as working part-time but some keep smaller class size. Universities generally have smaller communities of learning with socializing and this benefits RIAS.	Few services identified to mitigate these barriers for RIAS except some give alternate admissions offers if lack of English proficiency.
Services for RIAS	Services are mainly for all students that hopefully will benefit RIAS too. No identified services specifically for RIAS.	Services mainly for all students but a few specifically for RIAS.
Programs for RIAS	For the most part, no programs for RIAS with the exception of a limited number of programs in professional faculties for ITIs.	Generally have numerous programs specifically for RIAS including bridging programs, ESL programs, apprenticeship programs, etc.
Work Placement of RIAS	Very few placement opportunities with the exception of limited internships in applied programs.	Most programs help RIAS specifically find employment.
Adult Students and RIAS Needs	Generally help adult students and hope same services will help RIAS	Separate adult student needs from RIAS needs and help separately when needed
Institutional Responsiveness to RIAS	Generally tend to treat RIAS as international students. For the most part, respond to all students equally with the exception of specific programs designed for IEPs. Generally do not know the engagement of RIAS.	Respond specifically to RIAS' needs and experience and are continuing to improve the RIAS experience.

Secondly, universities and colleges in Ontario vary extensively in their approach to access barriers for RIAS (see Table AA). For the most part, universities, namely York U and U of T, do not have any differing admissions process for immigrant applicants. In many ways the application, foreign transcript and credential assessment process is quite complex and oftentimes appears opaque to applicants. Each

university evaluates foreign credentials with its own institutionally developed assessment standards and this process is not transparent to immigrant applicants. While foreign-trained international applicants would face these same barriers, Canadian educated applicants face more equitable access. It could be argued that the process is not consistent in evaluation and process between universities. Ryerson University, though, circumnavigates its regular admissions process for RIAS applying to specific bridging programs. Ryerson gives a comparatively detailed transcript evaluation to RIAS and focuses on recognizing as much learning abroad as possible. The Ontario colleges, though, outsource their transcript and credential assessment to ICAS and WES but at a considerable cost to RIAS. Yet these same Ontario colleges evaluate foreign transcripts and credentials in-house for international applicants at no cost to the students. This means that two students, one international and one RIAS, who may have gone to the same post-secondary institution abroad, are treated differently. The international student has her or his transcript evaluated internally free of charge and the immigrant applicant has his or her credential assessed by ICAS or WES at a considerable charge. This difference appeared to be quite inconsistent and incongruous and ironically no key informant identified this issue. So while Ontario colleges provide an admissions process that is “comparatively more consistent and streamlined than the individual university method, its increased cost to RIAS provides an additional barrier” (Anisef et al., 2009, p. 30). Other access barriers such as financial need are not generally serviced differently by Ontario colleges and universities for RIAS in comparison with traditional students.

Thirdly, universities and colleges diverge in the individual institutional awareness of RIAS on campus (see Table AA). In general, York U and U of T (excluding Ryerson University), do not record statistics on RIAS. Conversely, colleges in Ontario generally know how many full-time RIAS are on each campus. Obviously if a post-secondary institution does not ask students if they are an immigrant, then the school cannot measure or track RIAS issues and service levels let alone work to directly improve RIAS experience and engagement. However, all three universities do offer some specific bridging programs that respond to the needs of RIAS. Unfortunately, part-time RIAS are not known or tracked at any Ontario post-secondary campus included in this study. Not knowing the RIAS on campus in essence renders the students invisible. Coulter and Mandell (2012) state that adult students have been invisible for many years but this is improving. Yet, they argue that

within the brick and mortar walls of the first-tier universities, adult students are still not welcome. Elite liberal arts colleges and top-ranked research institutions are in such high demand that they have no incentive to respond to the changing demographics, much less to question the 'great tradition' of university education. (p. 40-41)

Similarly, Ontario PSE has varying understanding of the RIAS attending their institution. While not having statistics on RIAS means that educational institutions and namely universities cannot have a concrete measure of the experience and engagement of RIAS, it does not necessarily mean that there are no services, policies, procedures, structures or mitigation of barriers for RIAS. This lack of tracking of RIAS only means that it is much more difficult to understand the affect of these supports on RIAS.

Fourthly, Ontario post-secondary institutions have some differing approaches to persistence and completion barriers that RIAS face (see Table AA). From the background document review and interviews, universities address few persistence and completion barriers for RIAS. While York U's key informants acknowledge that many of their RIAS work part-time during their studies and that York is largely a commuter campus, there are no identified resources or services to mitigate these barriers. Ryerson, though, aims to have smaller class sizes for RIAS to help academically engage the students. The colleges also have few strategies in helping with these barriers. Only early in the admissions process, Centennial would give an alternate offer if a RIAS shows difficulty with their English proficiency. Through this and possibly reducing the course load, RIAS may have a better experience. There was little mention of structure, policies and procedures that specifically help engage RIAS on Ontario campuses. York University uses smaller communities similar to U of T's college system. While this helps all students, the smaller groups can assist RIAS to integrate socially. U of T specifically has the Housing New Canadians project, which assists RIAS in finding housing as well as the learning villages' project that also helps build social engagement. York University also has some policies that are designed for mature and first generation students that can help RIAS.

Fifthly, one university and two colleges identified a few services that help RIAS (see Table AA). York's Red Zone helps all students including RIAS in socially integrating in their first year of study. Both colleges, though, have numerous services that help all students, such as a one-stop advising office and neutral prayer room. They also have services that specifically target RIAS including an access centre for

ESL, an Academic Strategy Initiative to help ESL students and CIIP that assists immigrants before they come to Canada.

Sixthly, all of the institutions have programs that are specifically designed for RIAS (see Table AA). All three universities have professional programs for internationally trained immigrants. York also possesses a strong English Language Institute in YUELI. Ryerson's Chang School of Continuing Education has numerous programs specifically developed to help RIAS. RU also boasts the Tri-Mentoring Program. Both colleges similarly have numerous programs to help internationally trained immigrant (ITI) students including a number of bridging programs and English training programs. Both colleges and universities seem to be supportive of RIAS through specific programs.

Seventhly, most of the key informants identified that their institutions have a number of work placement opportunities for students (see Table AA). In general, universities possess fewer coop or internship opportunities than colleges but those identified are in professional and/or more applied programs. Work placement opportunities benefit RIAS in helping them obtain Canadian work experience. This is a critical component for RIAS to be able to integrate into the social and work networks in Ontario.

Differences also were found in how institutions respond to adult students and RIAS (see Table AA). Universities and colleges both have specific areas and services that benefit adult students including extended service hours. Colleges, though, went a bit further in separating adult student needs from RIAS and offer services tailored for RIAS whereas university administrators assume that adult services could in turn benefit RIAS. A significant portion of the early student assessment, experience, involvement and engagement literature similarly develops a single model of engagement for all students. This is arguably not ideal.

Kuh et al. (2010) states that there is "no single blueprint for student success" (p. 20). In their study, each of the 20 institutional leaders discovered their own unique way to most effectively engage students given their institutional type, student body composition, historical factors and mission. They found that all schools honed "a unique combination of external and internal factors [that] worked together to crystallize and support an institution-wide focus on student success" (p. 21). In another report, Kuh (2009a) discussed the misunderstood concept of engagement involving a one-size-fits-all methodology. He argues

that engagement is critically important but also too complicated to use this approach. Kuh (2009a) states that

engagement tends to have conditional effects, with students with certain characteristics benefiting from some types of activities more so than other students. We must be ever vigilant to be sure we are interpreting and using engagement data appropriately and continue to learn more about what forms of engagement work best under what circumstances for different groups of students. (p. 15)

Manning, Kinzie & Schuh (2006) wrote an entire book titled *One Size Does Not Fit All* that further argues that in order for PSE to maximize student engagement and outcomes, institutions need to develop a more customized practice. They state that differing institutional types, albeit a college or university, generally require varying approaches to engage students.

In summary, institutional responsiveness to RIAS vary between colleges and universities (see Table AA). Universities generally tend to focus attention on international students and adult students and hope that these activities and services would benefit RIAS. Colleges, though, have specific responses designed to help RIAS. Universities do not know the extent of RIAS engagement on campus while colleges work to improve RIAS engagement. The colleges' closer proximity to the labour market has a positive effect on responsiveness such that some professions may address barriers better than less applied programs.

Ontario colleges and universities, therefore, vary widely in the manner in which they respond to RIAS. In general, universities do not know the number of RIAS on campus and this does not help the schools respond to, support and engage RIAS. Ontario colleges seem to have better knowledge of the RIAS on campus and therefore have somewhat stronger responsiveness to RIAS. Notably none of the key informants identified the paradoxical relationship between RIAS academic success and persistence in PSE and yet them not being academically and socially engaged in PSE. There was, though, a fundamental belief that institutions should respond to RIAS, eliminate barriers and attempt to engage RIAS in PSE. In order to further inform this study and determine the factors that contribute to the engagement of RIAS in PSE, it is important to analyze and synthesize the literature review, RIAS engagement in Ontario PSE and the institutional responsiveness to RIAS. This analysis and synthesis will be discussed in Chapter VII.

Chapter VII – Analysis and Synthesis of Research Findings

INTRODUCTION

The synthesis of the research findings discussed in this chapter is used to fill the literature gap that was identified in Chapter II. Using the literature review, the student engagement conceptual framework and methodology detailed in earlier chapters, this chapter will address the final two questions:

- What factors contribute to the engagement of recent immigrant adult students in Ontario post-secondary institutions?
- What are the differing barriers to engagement of recent immigrant adult students in Ontario in comparison with barriers traditional students experience as identified in the literature?

In this chapter, I will interpret the research findings as identified in Chapters V and VI and also answer the key objectives of this dissertation.

I will begin by reemphasizing the indicators of effective engagement as identified in the literature. Secondly, I will review the key access, persistence and completion barriers experienced by RIAS as well as the differences between barriers faced by RIAS and traditional students. Thirdly, I will evaluate the institutional strategies if any that factor into shaping the experience of RIAS in PSE involving a deeper look into student services, RIAS involvement in the student context, if and how faculty can assist in facilitating RIAS learning outcomes and the consistency between RIAS needs and the institutional response to those needs. Fourthly, I will identify and analyze the factors that may contribute to the engagement of RIAS in PSE by reviewing the student inputs, student activities, student outputs and student outcomes in higher education. In all of the synthesis of research findings, I will include a review of the pertinent literature as well as present the suggestions RIAS offered for improving their experience in PSE. At the end of this chapter, I will conclude with a brief summary of the synthesis of the findings. Chapter VIII will outline conclusions based on these synthesized findings, an examination of the strengths, weaknesses and limitations of this study and recommendations for future research.

INDICATORS OF EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Before conclusions can be made concerning the strategies that can effectively engage RIAS, one needs to determine the indicators of effective engagement. Given the definitions of engagement and

effective engagement in Appendix A, the indicators of effective engagement of RIAS include the quality of effort on learning both inside and outside of the classroom towards desired outcomes such as skill development, persistence to graduation and student satisfaction. Effective engagement includes all of the outcomes that are derived from the full engagement of students. It also includes overcoming access to PSE including barriers students experience trying to enter PSE, the admissions process, choosing programs and institutions and the prior experience and personal biographies of students entering PSE.

While there is no comprehensive list or agreed upon set of factors that contribute to engagement, some of the key indicators of effective engagement are as follows: cognitive, psychosocial, moral, ethical and skill development, learning, retention and persistence to graduation, a quality and positive student experience and socialization or fit in the PSE community. Ultimately these factors are what constitute the Student Engagement Model outlined in Figure 7. It is important to note that marks or passing a course do not equate with academic engagement. Rather, the development of skills through effective learning comprises effective engagement that in turn adds to the hallmarks of a liberal education. Effective engagement from a student perspective likely involves their own personal development (cognitive, psychosocial, moral, ethical and skill development), learning, a positive student experience, many close friends, a feeling of belonging within the institution and being able to successfully complete the credential. Effective engagement from the institutional perspective is being able to create the conditions for a student to develop numerous skills, improving the student experience through removing barriers and providing the structure for clubs and services, helping student's socialize and fit into PSE and giving supports to students in order to persist to graduation.

DIFFERING BARRIERS EXPERIENCED BY RIAS IN ONTARIO PSE

Numerous barriers to access, persistence and completion were presented in Chapter V. In this section, I will examine and analyze the key barriers faced by RIAS arising from the focus group discussions. In this context, the term 'key' refers to those barriers that were discussed most often in the focus group sessions as well as the impediments experienced by RIAS that could cause them to be less able

to continue in PSE. I will also discuss the differences between the barriers faced by RIAS and those experienced by traditional students as identified in the literature.

Key Access, Persistence and Completion Barriers

Access Barriers

Even though the majority of focus group attendees and specifically 61%, did not have significant issues in applying to PSE in Ontario as reported in the demographic survey, 39% still had access barriers that they felt needed to be addressed.

Uniqueness of Canadian Educational System

Some RIAS spoke about their lack of knowledge of the Canadian educational system before applying, after applying and even after starting post-secondary classes. RIAS noted, though, the many and distinct differences between Canadian services, policies, standards, teaching, learning and practices in comparison with their source country. Prior to entering Canada and even in embarking in PSE, RIAS did not understand the differences between a university and a college in Canada. They also did not comprehend how their prior study and work experience would be assessed by PSE and employers and how to obtain the qualifications necessary for their intended profession. They further did not understand the employment prospects of their field of study. Chambers et al. (2008) identified the choice of a field of study that is irrelevant to student needs, skills and prior learning as a significant PSE access barrier. There is scarce literature on RIAS pre-arrival access to PSE. Only ACCC (2008) identifies the exemplar of the CIIP project that aims to help RIAS by providing information to RIAS while they are still in their source country.

Admissions

Most literature that discusses admissions refers to admissions criteria being essential to admit students who will academically perform well (Lauren, 2008). Grayson (2004) cites considerable research that demonstrates that high school GPA is a strong predictor of first year post-secondary GPA. Yet, there is virtually no research that discusses admissions as a barrier for RIAS. There are some studies (Gray, Rolph and Melamid, 1996; Erisman & Looney, 2007) that identified English as an access barrier to PSE as all students who do not have English as their primary language must score well on a standardized English

proficiency test for admissions. Some literature also noted that English proficiency was a tangible barrier (Erisman & Looney, 2007) as RIAS may not be sufficiently prepared for post-secondary study. Other literature demonstrated that English was an intangible barrier (Stebbleton, 2010; Gildersleeve, 2010; Kim, 2009; Erisman & Looney, 2007).

In the focus groups, RIAS indicated that they found the admissions process to be long, expensive and complicated. RIAS articulated that they did not understand, at times, the application process and specifically the terms used in the application. RIAS also noted the varied levels of spoken English in the classroom the low level of which surprisingly passed through the admissions screening process. Notably, RIAS did not state that the admissions criterion was too stringent. RIAS were advocating for stronger English admissions requirements as they felt English was fundamental to success in PSE and employment.

Evaluation of Transcripts

RIAS are quite dissimilar to international students, as discussed in the literature review. International students tend to be wealthier and come to Canada just to study and then return to their home country. RIAS, though, come to Canada to seek a better life and job. They tend to be highly educated but the more credentials they possess, the more apt they are to be returning to higher education in Canada (Anisef et al., 2009).

With regards to admissions, one of the larger access barriers for college-bound RIAS is the evaluation of their foreign transcripts. The only literature that speaks to the evaluation of transcripts refers to how to evaluate properly rather than barrier-free or more equitable transcript evaluation. The international and RIAS admissions processes are quite unlike. In Ontario universities, international students usually pay a considerably higher application fee than domestic students likely because of the additional work in assessing foreign transcripts in-house. Immigrant students, though, pay the same application fee as domestic students but often have foreign transcripts that need to be assessed by the university. At Ontario colleges, an international student generally pays an application fee directly to the school and the admissions department evaluates the transcripts in-house with no additional fee. In many cases the application fee may be even somewhat lower than a domestic or immigrant applicant may pay but it is not materially significant.

On the other hand at Ontario colleges, the foreign-trained immigrant must pay WES or ICAS between \$110 and \$240 for an external evaluation of their transcript. Why? While WES and ICAS may give a more standardized evaluation of the transcript, this becomes a considerable financial and time barrier for RIAS as observed by Erisman & Looney (2007) because it can add months to the application process. Perhaps the answer lies in the rate of tuition charged by PSE. International students pay a considerably higher international tuition rate than do domestic and immigrant students. So perhaps the college makes a financial decision to take on more responsibility for the internal evaluation of foreign transcripts at no additional cost to the international student in order to later reap a higher financial gain. As immigrants also have international transcripts but pay the lower domestic tuition rate, colleges have immigrant applicants bear the financial burden of external transcript evaluation. Regardless of the rationale behind the practice, this is an access barrier for RIAS.

Recognition of Prior Learning and Work Experience and Advanced Standing

The most discussed access barrier faced by RIAS was the lack of recognition of prior education and work experience. While much of this was a barrier to employment, it also was an educational access barrier for RIAS. When RIAS applied to PSE in Ontario, they often initially intended to continue in the field of their expertise. Sometimes RIAS changed fields because of their concerns over language fluency. Many RIAS changed their career path because of the lack of recognition of their prior learning and experience. However it occurred, RIAS were highly discontent with the lack of foreign credential recognition as demonstrated in this focus group excerpt:

[Some Canadians would say] they recognize my education because I came as a skilled worker and I have all the papers but actually they don't. I had to start up from zero like some high school student. And, I don't feel like I fit in college because I have much more knowledge and experience of things that I cannot use. I understand that we have to make additional studies here, but maybe just a part of it. Not all of it. (Ms. C, Focus Group CB)

In response to this student's comment, a focus group colleague chimed in that "it's degrading" (Ms. B, Focus Group CB). Aydemir & Skuterud (2004), Ferrer & Riddell (2003) and Thompson (2000) spoke about the discounting of foreign credentials in Canada. Also Anisef et al. (2009), Brouwer (1999), Cumming et al. (1989) and the Access Task Force (1989) examined the difficulty RIAS had in accessing PSE because of inconsistent and/or inequitable credential assessment.

Advanced standing is not addressed significantly in the literature. It is often part of the admissions process and can be a deciding factor for RIAS in choosing to attend a particular institution as well as a specific program. RIAS shared frustration with the lack of advanced standing that they received and the length of time it took to get a decision on advanced standing. Similar with the evaluation of foreign transcripts, advanced standing is evaluated internally in Ontario universities by a central admissions office and at times by faculty in a department. On the other hand, advanced standing is highly decentralized in Ontario colleges. RIAS are often encouraged to complete a course-by-course external ICAS evaluation of their foreign transcripts. While this is expensive, it often does not help RIAS obtain advanced standing as the immigrant's transcript and full course descriptions are still fully reviewed by individual faculty members for the advanced standing request. Therefore the money RIAS spent on an ICAS full assessment was unnecessarily spent.

Most colleges indicated that there is no central database tracking advanced standing given by the school. As individual faculty members give credit for prior experience, credentials and completed courses, this can result in inequitable assessments of RIAS learning. Hence RIAS spend additional funds for external evaluations that provide little help in obtaining more advanced credit. If RIAS receive little to no advanced standing, they may have to repeat significant amounts of their prior learning that likely discourages their engagement in PSE. Further, if RIAS receive little to no advanced standing, they are often compelled to choose another program that is completely unrelated to their prior education. This resultant change in program can be discouraging to RIAS.

Persistence and Completion Barriers

In addition to access barriers, there are a number of significant persistence and completion barriers that could be mitigated as identified by RIAS and the literature. The key persistence and completion barriers that RIAS identified in the focus group sessions are English language proficiency, lack of money and time, family obligations, age and culture/settlement. In essence, many of these barriers RIAS experience involve balancing many other commitments with PSE. While these issues are confirmed by the literature, academic and social barriers are a dominant theme specifically in the student engagement literature.

Academic and Social Barriers

As identified in the literature, a lack of academic integration and not fitting in PSE were notable persistence and completion barriers for traditional students. Barr-Telford et al. (2003), Kilbride & D'Arcangelo (2002) and Tinto (1992) all indicated that academic and social integration are motivation factors that are fundamental to persistence. Even though RIAS faced numerous access, persistence and completion barriers, the focus group and survey participants indicated that they received relatively high academic marks. So the traditional model of students facing barriers, achieving lower marks and therefore leaving PSE does not seem to apply to RIAS. Skadberg's (2005) research on RIAS supported the "hypothesis that immigrants' expectations and their belief in the rewards of the educational system explain their higher academic achievement" (p. 126). Further, the optimism of RIAS and their motivation to obtain the Canadian credential despite facing numerous barriers seemingly helps RIAS persist to completion. While engagement literature refers to persistence as an outcome of engagement, it does not state that persistence equates full academic and social involvement and engagement in PSE. These findings are perhaps an indication that the traditional student engagement literature does not adequately explain RIAS engagement in PSE. While the traditional student engagement literature supports the commonly used student engagement model at most post-secondary institutions, the adult student literature is more comparable to the RIAS experience.

Adult student engagement literature can help one understand the persistence of RIAS and their obtaining good marks in PSE even though there seems to be little to no social and academic involvement outside of class (Wyatt, 2011; Capps, 2010; MacFadgen, 2008; Kasworm, 2003; Graham & Long, 1998). In order to explain this contradictory finding, Price and Baker (2012) argued that adult students may engage differently than traditional students in PSE. Adult students use the connecting classroom as the central focus of their academic and social involvement and through this outlook they experience higher education (Kasworm, 2003). Kuh et al. (2010) and Pascarella & Terenzini (1991) argue that motivation and academic preparation are some of the best predictors of student persistence in PSE. Many RIAS have finished prior PSE and are highly motivated. Ogbu (1991) and Gibson & Ogbu (1991) note the different psychosocial orientation of immigrant and non-immigrant minorities and that their bicultural outlook supports their

educational accomplishment. The focus group members' outlook on social involvement and educational attainment matched these literature findings. Ogbu (1991) found that immigrant minority students saw social and at times academic difficulties as temporary and that they could overcome through hard work as they compared this with the more difficult circumstances that they faced in their source country. Non-immigrant minorities did not have this temporary difficulty outlook and therefore were not as resilient. Thus, immigrant optimism is a significant factor in keeping RIAS motivated through PSE (Cruz, 2008; Perez, 2007; Gibson & Ogbu, 1991). Even though RIAS may have had this stronger sense of agency as defined by Ogbu (1991), it does not mean that RIAS would have an easier time obtaining employment than non-immigrant minorities upon graduation. This was only a psychosocial orientation and did not necessarily translate into an easier time finding employment. Maramba (2008) and Huang & Chang (2004) found that socialization increased engagement and specifically that students needed to find a 'safe space'. This, they defined, was a safe cultural, political and social space in PSE. Ashar and Skenes (1993) argue that adult students persist because of their social involvement in PSE and in particular learning within small cohorts. Taylor et al. (2011) similarly state that it is critical to develop social capital of adult students.

Stebleton (2010) found that RIAS felt that they fit less (lower sense of belonging and social involvement) and were less satisfied than their non-immigrant peers. Focus group attendees also commented that while they may have achieved comparably good grades, they did not feel like they socially fit into PSE in Ontario. Most of the university key informants do not even know who the RIAS are on campus and so they likely cannot help RIAS fit into university. College key informants, such as GBC and Centennial with the CIIP project and one university, Ryerson, try to help RIAS with pre-PSE advising. This pre-PSE advising helps RIAS choose the best-fit program so that RIAS may not have to switch programs and careers. Social integration, though, is a very difficult barrier to overcome for RIAS because of their perceived lack of time and money. In order to socially fit into PSE in the current model of student service delivery, traditional engagement literature argues that RIAS need to spend social time with their colleagues (Tinto, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). This does not seem feasible as RIAS only come to campus for class and then leave in order to look after their children, work their part-time job or study. As found in the focus groups, RIAS only socialized if they saw that it would help them obtain employment. Kasworm

(2003) also indicated that adult learners made less use of the majority of services than traditional students and really only used services and activities that they perceived as having a direct impact on their academic success. Again, this could also account for their ability to achieve good grades against many obstacles.

The RIAS survey results also show that the majority of RIAS do not spend any time in social, co-curricular and recreational activities either by choice, a lack of time or a lower priority given to these activities. According to the literature, RIAS needed to be socially integrated in order to be motivated (Stebbleton, 2010; Huesman, 2009; Maramba, 2008; Rayle, 2007; Guiffrida, 2006; Umbach, 2005; Huang & Chang, 2004; McKinney, 2004; Kasworm, 2003; Tinto, 1993; Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Yet, even though RIAS do not seem to be interested in social integration on the surface or set a low priority for socialization, the traditional engagement literature still supports it as being a motivational and persistence issue. This apparent contradiction is likely due to the literature being focused on traditional students and RIAS being motivated to mostly achieve high marks to obtain a Canadian credential. According to the focus group attendees and the survey participants, RIAS were very motivated to do well in their studies and were obtaining good grades. They were motivated to finish PSE because they must do so in order to obtain a Canadian credential and a job. By definition, RIAS are adult students and many focus group members stated that they did not wish to socialize with the much younger traditional students as they had very little in common. RIAS did not see the value in such relationships and did not seem to view social involvement as relevant. They were not at the stage of life where they would sacrifice earning money and/or spending time with their family in order to develop friendships in PSE or to go to parties.

The social capital literature informs these findings. Using data from the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada, Kunz (2005) discovered that family and friends are one of the convincing reasons for immigrants to migrate to Canada and influence where they should reside too. Qadeer (2005) and Qadeer & Sandeep (2006) spoke about immigrants settling in 'ethnic enclaves' and how these communities meet the cultural, religious and social needs of immigrants that in turn helps immigrants settle in Canada. These cultural and social communities give a support network to RIAS as they study in PSE as well as help them become employed but arguably not in the broader employment network. The ethnic enclaves are

especially vital in meeting the needs of RIAS who are not very proficient in English (Qadeer, 2005; Omidvar & Richmond, 2003). In a study of Vietnamese youth, Zhou and Bankston (1994) argued that

ethnic social integration creates a form of social capital that enables an immigrant family to receive ongoing support and direction from other families and from the religious and social associations of the ethnic group. Consequently, community standards are established and reinforced among group members, especially among younger members We thus conclude that social capital is crucial and, under certain conditions, more important than traditional human capital for the successful adaptation of younger-generation immigrants. (p.842)

While these findings are for immigrant youth, they also likely apply to RIAS. This literature supports the notion that while RIAS may not be socially integrated in PSE, many have a social and cultural network in their own cultural community. This argument is supported by Tracy's (2004) observation that involving RIAS' families and friends in on-campus activities such as orientation strengthened the support networks for RIAS. Donaldson and Graham (1999) support socially engaging adult students in the 'connecting classroom' that links adults with faculty members and other students. Connecting RIAS socially in the classroom and encouraging their building of social capital with family and friends may in fact help RIAS socially engage in PSE. Further, if RIAS seem to obtain good marks and persist in PSE, there must be a motivation for post-secondary institutions to socially engage these self-motivated and quite academically engaged RIAS. This will be discussed later in this chapter.

English Language Proficiency Barrier

For RIAS, English language proficiency is not only a significant barrier to enter PSE but it is a heavily discussed persistence and completion barrier in the focus group sessions. English language ability involves reading, writing, speaking and listening to English. Focus group members spoke about how their verbal English skills and namely their accent affects their academic and social integration as peers criticize, make fun of and even ostracize RIAS. RIAS did not speak about removing or lowering English proficiency access requirements. They seemed to recognize the importance of having strong verbal, written and comprehension skills in English.

An immigrant student's English accent is a barrier to classroom participation. Some RIAS identified that they had difficulty expressing their ideas and so they chose not to participate in class.

Andrade (2006) and De Leon (2005) both spoke about how ESL students retreated in class because of fear

of participating and being too timid to ask for clarity regarding projects. While a few RIAS felt that their classroom practice helped them build confidence so that their spoken English was improving, many felt that their English was generally not improving. Even though GBC and Centennial have OSLT for RIAS, no RIAS spoke about taking this training. RIAS articulated that their lack of ability to converse in English negatively affected their marks and ability to make friends. They were most concerned, though, about it affecting their ability to get a job. In most of the focus groups, RIAS talked about their negative feelings surrounding their lack of English abilities to the point of sheer frustration, anxiety, being overwhelmed and even depressed. In many ways this turned the lack of English proficiency into a psychological barrier for RIAS and could trigger serious anxiety, depression and mental exhaustion. If not adequately addressed, English proficiency could cause RIAS to leave PSE. While no RIAS indicated this in the focus groups and survey, it is important to note that only RIAS who were in PSE were consulted and not those who may have succumbed to barriers and left.

The literature highlights the difficulty RIAS have with English and identifies that many RIAS enter PSE in order to improve their English ability. Interestingly, Adamuti-Trache & Sweet (2007) and a Statistics Canada report (2003) found that the higher the level of English proficiency, the more likely an immigrant is to pursue PSE in Canada. There appeared to be a significant gap in the literature regarding English proficiency and engagement in PSE. Grayson (2008) found that “the linguistic capital of foreign-born ESL students increased over 4 years of university study; however, this increase in linguistic capital was not paralleled by an increase in academic achievement” (p. 127). While Grayson’s finding informs this study, he focused on both immigrant and international students. Given the limits of Grayson’s study, it is unclear what impact improvements to linguistic capital could have on employment and if these findings could apply fully to RIAS. Another study by Grayson (2009) also focused on English communication skills of university students but looked specifically at the children of immigrants. In this inquiry, he found that the “university GPAs of immigrant and non-European origin groups are generally lower than those of native-born Canadians” (Grayson, 2009, p. 33). Again, the focus of that study was not on RIAS yet it is clear in the study that the language spoken at home had a direct affect on the academic success of students. Grayson’s finding informs this study with regards to the linkages between English as a Second Language

students and academic success in PSE. There still remains a gap in the literature concerning the English ability of RIAs and their academic and social integration and engagement in PSE.

Key informants indicated that their individual institutions are working on improving English proficiency services on campus and most colleges and universities in Ontario had significant ESL resources and programs. The York University Academic Plan (2005) articulates this goal as “improving support for students in need of additional support, and students for whom English and French are second languages” (p. 8). Similarly, Ryerson’s Academic Plan (2007) states that “there may be many implications for program design and delivery, particularly related to factors such as learning styles and English language familiarity” (p. 1). A recent OECD (2011) report highlights the importance of English literacy skills as they “present a lower boundary on how well problem solving skills can be measured, since individuals must be able to understand how a problem is defined in order to solve it” (p. 173).

Also, the HRDC (2005) found that immigrants who had higher levels of English literacy were more likely to find employment. Regardless of the literature gap, English proficiency, according to the focus group attendees, is a noteworthy barrier to persistence and completion in PSE as well as a factor in engagement as seen in these quotes:

I think the most important [challenge] is language and the second thing is money. [This school] already provides the writing centre. It is very practical for my writing [of an] academic paper. I want to improve my speaking and that’s very annoying. (Ms. F, Focus Group UD)

[In] engineering, we don’t have anything to do with English. Since I came here my speaking decreasing. (Mr. E, Focus Group UC)

I consider the greatest challenge is still language skill. I’ve achieved a lot but I think this is lifelong process. In the first week after I studied at this college, I only can understand half of the content the professors said in class. So, I’m thinking about [how] to try to improve it. So after class I spend much time on reading materials, textbooks. I prepared some recording devices. I took them with me when I [am] attending class and I recorded our professor and when I got home I listen again, again and again. That’s the way I’m improving my language skills, but I don’t think it’s enough because this is an ongoing process. (Mr. L, Focus Group CA)

The focus group and survey data indicated that RIAs received relatively good grades in PSE and yet they indicate concern about their lack of English proficiency. In conducting the focus group sessions, it was quite noticeable that RIAs spoken English was at times poor and this was most evident in the colleges. Ontario colleges and universities have some services that assist with English writing such as the writing

centre. This service, though, generally helps to correct RIAS essays but it is debatable if it helps RIAS learn to write in English. It is possible but unproven that RIAS who are least proficient in English and avail themselves of these services improve only slightly while the more proficient improve more rapidly. RIAS indicated in the focus groups that the service helped them achieve better marks but it was unclear if it helped them improve in their English skills. Through PSE, RIAS actually continued relying on the service:

I feel this [writing centre] has really helped me for all my essays. I bring [it] to [the] writing center and let them fix my grammar. I usually get the mark just like the student who grew up here because [of] the writing centre. If at one time I couldn't get it, I would go six times because I work hard. That's how I survive. (Ms. M, Focus Group UC)

This remark begs the question of how RIAS would cope when they must write a report in a new job. If the RIAS did not obtain strong English writing skills in PSE, it could be difficult to obtain a job or remain employed. In this way, colleges and universities services may actually be providing a disservice to students. The writing centre could become a crutch that RIAS needs to rely on through their studies and into employment. There also remains the question of how RIAS, whose English proficiency is generally not as strong as non-ESL students, obtain similar marks as their fellow students. Bourdieu & Passeron (1990) and Bernstein (1964) contend that linguistic capital is linked with cultural capital. Specifically they stated that students with lower linguistic capital in PSE have less ability to understand the more elaborate and complicated language employed by their professors. This difficulty, Grayson (2008) argued would be quite pronounced for ESL students.

If RIAS are doing as well academically as non-RIAS but self-report that they are not nearly as strong in their English abilities, there must be another reason for their marks showing academic success. RIAS stated in the focus groups that they had difficulty understanding their professor and fellow classmates and a number also stated that they had to read the textbook numerous times in order to comprehend it. These are not the hallmarks of an academically integrated student. Numerous times in the focus groups RIAS noted a strong desire to improve their English proficiency while in PSE. Perhaps it could be argued that most PSE evaluation of students was based on their written work. Given that most assignments were not completed in class, perhaps many RIAS are employing the services of a writing centre, were working very hard, were spending considerable amount of time and were also consulting with English-speaking

peers to improve the quality of their assignments. Perhaps post-secondary policies and supports are not ultimately helping RIAS develop skills but rather help them obtain marks strong enough to pass individual courses. Grade inflation could also be as large an issue in PSE as in high schools (Axelrod, 2008; Day, 2008). It is possible that RIAS have learned over time how to obtain good marks despite their self-reported lack of English proficiency. Perhaps our post-secondary educational system is not quite as strong in developing English skills as we hope.

The only rationalization for RIAS academically performing as well as non-RIAS despite RIAS' difficulties with English was presented by Fox. Fox (2005) found that ESL students who had to pass an English proficiency test to obtain admission to PSE did better academically than ESL students with 3 to 5 years of experience in a Canadian high school. Fox (2005) attributed this to the former being able to tap into the university or college English language support services. Once again, the English support service may literally support RIAS but may not help improve their learning.

Lack of Money and Time Barriers

When RIAS spoke about the main difficulties that they faced in PSE, they most often spoke about English difficulties followed closely by a lack of money and time. While not having a supply of funds is an access barrier for RIAS, it also is a very difficult persistence and completion barrier for RIAS. A lack of time barrier is also closely linked with money. If RIAS have money, then they would not have to work in addition to their studies and so they would have more time. Likewise, if RIAS have sufficient funds, they would be able to pay for babysitting or daycare and therefore have more time to study. The data did not clearly indicate if this is a more significant issue for female RIAS than male. In many ways for RIAS, a lack of money tended to also cause a lack of time. On 23 occasions in the focus group sessions, RIAS spoke about a lack of time and nearly as many times about a lack of money. In the demographic survey, 11 of 14 students identified their problems with money. These were therefore very serious issues for RIAS.

The literature clearly identifies the issues that immigrants have in trying to integrate into the Canadian labour market (Shan, 2011; Adamuti-Trache, 2010; Anisef et. al, 2009). With regards to a lack of money, the literature indicates that even though international students tend to have significant funds to study, RIAS simply do not (Gildersleeve, 2010; Erisman & Looney, 2007). There are numerous articles

describing issues traditional students have with money in PSE (HEQCO, 2008; Berger, 2007; Junor & Usher, 2004; Cavanagh, 2004) as well as adult students (McGivney, 2004; Kasworm, 2003). In particular detail, Junor and Usher (2004) demonstrate that students have money problems in three areas: price constraints, cash restrictions and debt aversion. In the focus groups, RIAS also confirmed that money problems are one of the largest barriers to finishing their studies as shown by this excerpt:

I think the biggest challenge that [we] have is money. Our English is not good enough to get a job and we are investing this time in [a] full-time program but at the same time we have to pay bills. Even if you are [on] social assistance, it's not enough, right? And you have to be very creative in order to manage your economical situation. I don't give up in school but I know many people that just quit the school because they have to add more money. (Mr. R, Focus Group CC)

RIAS also spoke about the significant pressure they feel in not only trying to learn but trying to finish their courses well. They do not wish to repeat courses they took in their source country but only want to take the courses necessary to fill in the gaps in their prior study. Yet, they found that they had to repeat many courses as Canadian PSE did not fully recognize their prior learning. This felt like a waste of money and time to RIAS. They also felt financial pressure to pass every course that they took as they simply did not have money to repeat a course if they failed. Some of this stress is expressed in these two brief quotes:

I'm working only on Saturday, a couple hours a week. But since I'm [an] engineering student, all my spare time is on study. I will continue to look for [a] part-time job [as] just [the] weekend is not enough....very stressed. (Ms. U, Focus Group UC)

I don't want to fail. It's \$6000 tuition a year. I don't want to take it again and pay again. I just want to get it done. (Ms. M, Focus Group UC)

While all Canadian post-secondary institutions have financial aid offices, many RIAS did not want to obtain loans. Some of this is the debt aversion identified by Junor and Usher (2004) but there are also a number of RIAS cultural heritages, as confirmed by Finnie, Childs and Wismer (2010), where there is a stigma to taking out loans or what they felt were money hand-outs. While some of this may be due to social class differences, Finnie et al. (2010) also argued that it could be due to RIAS concern about their ability to repay their debt due to the lack of confidence in their "future labour market outcomes" (p. 10). For RIAS, most of the money barrier is due to their family obligations where they need to support children, parents, grandparents and extended family here and/or overseas. RIAS therefore try to take on part-time employment in addition to their studies that in turn makes their time resources quite stretched.

Chickering & Gamson (1987) included a time on task emphasis as one of their principles for good practice or engagement indicators in PSE. Kuh (1991) similarly discussed the importance of time spent on campus for learning and social activities. Astin (1993), though, argued that when students worked off-campus, they had less persistence and engagement. Kasworm (2003) found that adult students, who were relatively less involved in PSE than traditional students, did not demonstrate lower persistence, grades and engagement. Guiffrida (2006) acknowledged that immigrant students had little time on campus but connected socially with their “home social systems” (p. 457).

RIAS spoke about their lack of time in the focus group sessions. They expressed feelings of stress, anxiety and depression given their lack of sleep and working, studying and caring for their loved ones. Due to their severe lack of time, RIAS complained about time that they perceived as being wasted in classroom activities. A few discussed the difficulties they faced in prioritizing their time. The following two quotes highlight the difficulties RIAS have with lack of time:

We have kids, the family, so many things to do... we have no time. (Ms. I, Focus Group CA)

Life is so fast. You [leave] this lecture [and] you're supposed to run to another lecture [and then] to run to another one. So there is no time to mix with people, to socialize together and there is a difficulty to connect to each other cause you are on the run all the time. (Mr. C, Focus Group UB)

Literature indicates that adult students, like RIAS, usually live off campus, study part-time, have little time outside of class, have little money, do not join clubs, take evening and weekend courses, have significant family responsibilities and have off-campus employment (McGivney, 2004; Kasworm, 2003).

Family Responsibilities Barriers and Balancing Studies with Other Commitments

Interestingly the literature reviewed does not make mention of family responsibilities as a barrier for traditional students. Upon reflection this could likely be because traditional students are young and often come to PSE directly out of high school. Immigrant students, though, are adults often with children of their own and the added responsibility of parents, grandparents and extended family both here and in their source country. For RIAS, the demands and needs of family members are often a barrier to persistence and completion of PSE because of the added stress and the multiplicity of foci in balancing the many needs of their family members with their own need to finish school, find employment and obtain money.

R.A. Malatest and Associates, Ltd. (2004) wrote about the difficulties Aboriginal students have in completing PSE because of family situations. These Aboriginal students are most often adult students. Minner (1995) similarly argued that Native American students deal with insensitive and indifferent family members as well as family obligations. Gildersleeve (2010) and Kasworm (2003) also briefly discussed the difficulties RIAS have with family involvement while they are in PSE. Conversely, Capps (2010) noted low persistence rates for adult students when they have a family, job and other obligations.

In the focus groups, RIAS discussed their family responsibilities numerous times. In the demographic survey, 8 of 14 RIAS stated that they experienced difficulties balancing studies with family commitments. Also in the demographic survey, just slightly under half (48%) indicated that they had children. RIAS spoke specifically about feeling stretched between their family commitments and their study obligations. They had little time to work, make friends, and/or attend social events or network to find a good job. Some of their family obligations involved sending money back to their country of origin to support their children, parents or grandparents. There were no distinct differences in academic performance but some differences in lack of time and money for RIAS with family responsibilities in comparison with those who do not have family obligations. RIAS often faced conflicting priorities with the necessity to help their children with their homework but also the need to finish their own PSE projects as highlighted here:

I have colleagues of mine [say], "Do you want to go out this evening?" And I have to think suddenly that I need a babysitter. I don't have this money to pay 50 dollars for a babysitter, and 50 dollars to go out. [It's] just out of my budget. (Ms. C, Focus Group CB)

I'm not a student only. I am a student as well as a family man. I need to manage everything starting first off with family and sometimes all these things conflict. When I was a full time student young bachelor, then I used to participate in many things in my back home country, but not here because I have family. I have other responsibilities. (Mr. B, Focus Group CA)

The survey findings showed that RIAS had significant difficulty balancing a multitude of commitments with their academic studies including family responsibilities, financial problems, work commitments, health issues and as seen next, age barriers.

Age Barriers

Being adult students, RIAS tend to be considerably older than traditional students. According to the literature, traditional post-secondary students are generally 18 to 24 years old while RIAS are usually

25 years old and older. In some ways this could be likened to parents in the same classroom with their children. This imagery conjures up notions of communication gaps, misunderstandings, different frames of reference, opposing work ethics, differing use of language and numerous other perceived differentiations.

There are copious writings about adult students. Adults tend to be less involved in PSE. While some seminal theorists (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1993) argued that adult students should demonstrate lower grades, persistence and engagement, Kasworm (2003) found that the opposite was true. Kasworm (2003) ascertained that adult students approached PSE differently from traditional students and therefore were only involved in the student services that impact their academic success. With regards to diversity, Kuh et al. (2006) wrote that culturally diverse students were more likely to succumb to persistence barriers and leave PSE than traditional students. Alfred (2009) stated that this was due to the opposing institutional orientation and culture in comparison with the RIAS country of origin. Current thought is that minority students should be involved in their own native environment as well as their new institutional culture and that students are most successful when the institution supports the student's native traditions (Hurtado, 1997; Skadberg, 2005; Guiffrida, 2006).

RIAS noted that age differences made them feel like they did not belong, did not fit in the classroom and could not make friends. Other students would not join with them in group work and often all of the RIAS would be relegated into one team as expounded below:

We do not call friends that much because of our age and the language issue. At this age if you [have] to finish the four-year's degree in five years, it doesn't worth it for us. We don't have that much time. (Mr. E, Focus Group UC)

And in terms of engaging with the students, I feel like I don't belong because they're kids and I'm mature. The things that they like and all the activities within the school are geared for younger students. It's not for mature students and what are we gonna talk about? Clubbing? No, it's not my thing. (Ms. B, Focus Group CB)

Back home [I was] more engaged but here it is really hard for me just to get the group. The age difference is a factor. Some people don't want to be in [my] group. (Mr. G, Focus Group UC)

It would seem that given RIAS age barriers that it would be difficult to engage RIAS in PSE. Existing models of engagement do not seem to account for the family responsibilities, lack of time, lack of money, age and life stage of RIAS. Perhaps the model of engagement needs to be modified in order to better engage RIAS in PSE.

Cultural and Settlement Barriers

When you couple age barriers with diverse and even at times misunderstood cultural, ethnic, religious and moral differences, this could make for difficult persistence and completion barriers for RIAS. Similar with age barriers, Kuh et al. (2006) noted that diverse students persist less in PSE than traditional students likely because of their inability to negotiate the different institutional culture. In order to help retain diverse students, Hurtado (1997) proposed that they join clubs, network outside PSE and take racial courses. Yet, focus group and survey data does not indicate a lack of persistence of RIAS in PSE.

RIAS found that professors misunderstood not just their English but also their outlook on study and work. Ironically, this is contrary to MacFadgen's (2008) research that noted adult student satisfaction with faculty relationships. RIAS felt that faculty members and fellow students did not try to comprehend their varying diversity and RIAS felt at times discriminated against as noted in the cultural barriers below:

When we do group work, there's a tendency that immigrants go to one group, and other people go in another group and sometimes we have to deal with all these cultural issues. Everybody has [their] own experience and background from back home. We need a lot of time to get used to each other and to deal with all these issues that lead to real group work and performing and tasks. I'm surprised that a lot of the teachers really don't understand that. (Ms. P, Focus Group CB)

Canadians are not so open to interact: they're very nice, very polite, they will not offend you openly and will not critique you negatively and aggressively. (Ms. C, Focus Group CB)

[Along with] differences in cultures, language and behavior, people interpret it differently; nothing the way that I meant. So there were problems with that. (Ms. D, Focus Group UB)

I don't feel very comfortable speaking with people here. I just feel we are completely different. It has been very hard for me to make friends here. I just got [a] war with these things in my head. I know that I don't talk too much but I just feel we are different. (Ms. Q, Focus Group UB)

In terms of bridging this barrier, post-secondary institutions were not able to very easily bridge these gaps. Casner-Lotto (2011) advocates for a "comprehensive and culturally sensitive assessment of immigrant student needs" (p. 3). MacFadgen (2008) notes that faculty being flexible in assignment deadlines and encouraging classroom discussions help bridge some of these gaps. Grayson (1997a) argues that more research is needed to understand how adult learners are academically successful when they experience little to no social engagement in PSE. In addition to the differing barriers to engagement experienced by RIAS including access, persistence and completion barriers, there also are some differences between barriers faced by RIAS and more traditional students.

Differences between Barriers Faced by RIAS and Traditional Students

The literature lists a multitude of access and persistence barriers faced by traditional students:

family income, parental education, family type, age, race/ethnicity, gender, geographic location, immigration status, language, experiences in high school, academic achievement, extra-curricular involvement, part-time work, attitudes toward school, existence of postsecondary educated role models; parents' attitudes toward PSE, parents' savings for education, parents' intentions for their children, sources of financial aid available for postsecondary study, information about financing, access to student supports, attitudes toward borrowing and debt, knowledge of the benefits of PSE, and others. (HEQCO, 2008, p. 4)

There is considerably less written about barriers faced by RIAS. Of the small literature about RIAS, most cover access barriers such as the following: credential recognition (Reitz, 2001), English proficiency (Erisman & Looney, 2007) and credential evaluation (Erisman & Looney, 2007; Brouwer, 1999; Cumming et al., 1989). Other writings discussed a lack of information about PSE education and financial aid, work responsibilities, financial barriers, academic preparation, achievement issues, limited reading, writing, speaking and understanding English, advising services, admission practices and policies, and family involvement (Gildersleeve, 2010; Stebleton, 2010; Adamuti-Trache, 2010; Erisman & Looney, 2007). Persistence and completion barriers experienced by RIAS that are identified in the literature include the following: social involvement or fit (Educational Policy Institute, 2008), academic and social issues (Erisman & Looney, 2007), financial need, academic assistance and dissatisfaction with faculty (Kilbride & D'Arcangelo, 2002). Gildersleeve (2010) also identified the following: English language barriers, family responsibilities, differences in cultural understandings, ethnic sensitivities and many others.

In examining the barriers experienced by traditional students, RIAS experience virtually all of these. Likely some of the unique barriers that RIAS face are English language proficiency (which could also be an issue for some traditional students), foreign credential recognition, foreign transcript evaluation, settlement and integration issues. Aside from these, barriers experienced by RIAS are virtually the same as those faced by traditional students. This appears to be too simple of an answer. Better yet, perhaps the question needs to be refined. If the barriers experienced by RIAS are quite similar to those faced by traditional students, why then are the various services and support structures set up for traditional students not helping RIAS with these same barriers? Maybe the answer lies not in the specific barriers faced by RIAS but more so in the sheer number of barriers and the layering of barriers experienced regularly by

RIAS. Also, perhaps the various services and support structures may not help all traditional students with every barrier. Further, while the barriers may be the same for both groups, perhaps they are experienced differently by RIAS because they are demographically unique compared with traditional students.

Differences between Barriers Faced by RIAS and Adult Students

This rephrasing of the research question also affects the choice of comparison group. What are the differences in barriers faced by RIAS in comparison with adult students? The literature review identifies numerous barriers that adult students face in PSE including the following: lack of confidence re-entering PSE, lack of time, age, changing careers, family responsibilities, off-campus employment, academic and social barriers such as the social network being outside of PSE, making less use of many student services but heavier use of services that are perceived as having a stronger impact on academic success and lack of money (MacFadgen, 2008; McGivney, 2004; Kasworm, 2003). Two studies on adults have contradictory results. Capps (2010) showed low persistence rates for adults but Kasworm (2003) found adults had higher grades and stronger satisfaction than traditional students.

As a whole, virtually all RIAS in the focus groups and survey experience the following barriers on a regular basis: the uniqueness of the Canadian educational system, admissions, evaluation of transcripts, recognition of prior learning and work experience, academic and social issues, changing careers, lack of Canadian credentials, lack of Canadian work experience, English language proficiency, lack of money and time, family responsibilities, balancing studies with other commitments and age and cultural barriers. Of these barriers, RIAS identified the most difficult barriers being their English proficiency, lack of money and time and family obligations. Once again, RIAS seem to face virtually all of the same barriers as adults plus settlement and integration issues, English proficiency, lack of Canadian work experience and lack of Canadian credentials.

To generalize for a moment, traditional students, as a whole, likely experience one, two or perhaps occasionally three barriers at one time. There is no set pattern for the traditional student, meaning that there are no typical sets of barriers experienced by all traditional students. Non-traditional students also face many of the same barriers as traditional students. Some non-traditional students may face a more defined set of barriers based on their ethnic backgrounds or, in the case of adult students, based on their age and

family responsibilities in comparison with traditional students but this is still, in general, relatively limited. On the other hand, as seen in the focus groups and survey, there is a distinct and definite grouping of access, persistence and completion barriers experienced regularly by virtually all RIAS. It is more than likely the stratum of barriers that are superimposed on each other that make it so much more difficult to assist RIAS in overcoming these issues. This layering and compounding of barriers experienced by RIAS likely makes the problems quite overwhelming. Also, because the barriers are stacked, RIAS tend to have difficulty even trying to get help as they likely do not even know which barrier needs the most attention.

Still the compounding of these barriers in many ways should increase the effect of the obstacles faced by RIAS. In other words, RIAS lack of money impacts not only their studies but also compounds their already limited time. On top of this, their family responsibilities further exacerbate the problem. In addition, RIAS lack of English proficiency causes them to have difficulties in group work, where they need to read the textbook multiple times and have to spend much more time writing up the assignments in English. Because RIAS have little spare time and priorities in other areas such as family responsibilities, work and academics, they have little chance to socialize in PSE.

If these findings were for traditional students, the literature argues that they would perform poorly, disrupt classes, be socially uninvolved, be academically uninvolved, become disengaged and drop out of PSE. Yet, RIAS persist in PSE in Ontario. RIAS identified that they achieved good grades and continue to persist despite a lack of social and academic involvement and a lack of engagement in PSE. Many barriers stem from demographic characteristics of RIAS and are not possible to ease such as age, family responsibilities, lack of money and time, cultural, admissions, the evaluation of transcripts and even the recognition of prior learning and work experience. Other barriers may be eased but there is no quantitative evidence that this would help academically and socially engage RIAS in PSE. RIAS clearly have different experiences than traditional and adult students and so it would stand to reason that they also have different needs. They also may respond differently to some of the same barriers experienced by adult and traditional students. Academic and social engagement in PSE may help RIAS integrate into the labour market. The literature, though, supports academic and social engagement as helping shape the traits of a liberal education and thus helps students integrate into society (Carinini, Kuh & Klein, 2006; Pascarella &

Terenzini, 2005; Kuh, 2003; Shulman, 2002). The issues that RIAS experience in settlement while still in PSE are quite unique in comparison with adult and traditional students. If PSE can help integrate RIAS into society through academic and social engagement in turn developing the hallmarks of a liberal education, this would be a critical issue to solve for RIAS, PSE and Canadian society. This premise is supported by Kezar's (2005) book *Education for the Public Good*. Kezar (2005) argues that PSE's fundamental priority is public engagement. He further states that PSE is a "vehicle for achieving a broader set of social and economic purposes" (Kezar, 2005, p. 264). Later in this chapter, analysis of the survey data will attempt to prove this concept.

INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIES THAT FACTOR INTO THE EXPERIENCE OF RIAS IN PSE

Student Inputs – Setting the Stage for RIAS to enter PSE

RIAS bring a multitude of knowledge, skills, prior study and work experience with them to PSE. They also have a particular language proficiency, cultural background, expectations and of course gender, age and family obligations. Donaldson and Graham (1999) refer to these student inputs as "prior experience and personal biographies" (p. 28). Adamuti-Trache & Sweet (2007) note that in particular, economic immigrants are selected to enter Canada by meeting or surpassing minimum English proficiency, education level and work experience. The Federal Government of Canada has recently altered immigration requirements, which has had some impact on the type and characteristics of immigrants. Nonetheless, RIAS characteristics that assist them in immigrating to Canada are the same characteristics that are discounted by employers. In fact, many of these characteristics are even discounted by post-secondary educational institutions. Ontario colleges and universities often do not recognize immigrant's foreign work experience, educational credentials and level of English proficiency. The CIIP project is one college strategy that helps RIAS understand the Canadian educational and work environment prior to arriving in Canada.

Institutions in this study have various admission requirements based on the academic rigor of the program of study that influence who is admitted to the specific institution. In many ways, the admissions requirements set a minimum standard of prior learning, English proficiency and experience that are required for a particular program. Only for a few select programs, institutions would interview applicants in

order to clearly determine English proficiency levels and/or fit with the program. This, though, is a very time consuming subjective activity that may not help determine fit with the institution or program or level of socialization in the school. Pascarella and Terenzini (1991), though, argued that reviewing applicants “personal, attitudinal, and behavioral characteristics” (p. 649) and adhering to non-academic standards may actually further increase retention. By determining and posting online the characteristics that would help RIAS to be successful in a program, department and institution, the school could then help RIAS to understand even before entering Canada what they need to enter the institution. As immigration policies are rapidly changing in Canada, this too affects the immigrants entering into PSE in Ontario.

Surmounting Barriers to Improve the Experience of RIAS

Overcoming Access Barriers

All post-secondary institutions have standards of admission yet the literature makes little mention of specifically how admission requirements affect the engagement of RIAS. Anisef (1985) articulated that changes to admission requirements directly affect Type II (who attends) access to PSE. A few of the major theorists argued that admissions activities and criteria help increase student retention (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Hossler, Bean and Associates, 1990; Tinto, 1987; Tinto & Wallace, 1986). Chemers, Hu and Garcia (2001) found that the higher an applicant’s high school GPA the stronger their post-secondary academic performance. Simply lowering or removing perceived admissions barriers would not necessarily help to engage RIAS. It is unclear what research supports specific admissions requirements at the participating institutions. Yet, as incoming GPA is a strong indicator of academic performance in PSE, allowing RIAS to be admitted with lower GPA could effectively hinder RIAS academically in PSE.

The institutional response to RIAS with regards to admissions was quite varied in this study. While the college evaluation process was comparatively more consistent and streamlined than the individual university method, its increased cost to RIAS provided an additional barrier. Credential evaluation, admissions requirements and English proficiency minimums are arguably a necessary barrier to PSE as these requirements arguably ensure student persistence and academic success. Yet there may be some access barriers that institutions can help RIAS overcome. Similarly with access barriers, institutions

responding to RIAS persistence and completion barriers as identified above could increase the academic and social involvement of RIAS and therefore their persistence in PSE. Financial aid is a significant way for institutions to respond to RIAS lack of money access, persistence and completion barriers.

Strategic Financial Aid

The literature is quite rich in discussing the financial barriers faced by all students including RIAS (HEQCO, 2008; Berger, 2007; Junor & Usher, 2004; Cavanagh, 2004). One query Tinto (1987) researched includes the difficult decisions faced by students in weighing the costs of education (tuition and loss of earned income) against the potential return on this investment (a better paying and more attractive employment). Cavanagh (2004) and Zarate & Pachon (2006) identified that students lack financial planning and information and this arguably could be provided by institutions. Literature discussing what aspects of financial aid should be provided by PSE from an institutional perspective, though, was relatively scarce.

In fact, the findings from different studies are quite contradictory with regards to the effect of financial aid on persistence. In reviewing the literature, Pascarella & Terenzini (1991) found that receiving various forms of financial aid during PSE was “positively associated with persistence, bachelor’s degree completion, and graduate or professional school attendance” (p. 405). On the other hand, studies using similar controls for academic abilities showed that “the receipt of general financial aid had only a trivial or at best a small and marginally significant influence on persistence and degree completion” (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, p. 405).

The key informant interviews identified that RIAS often cannot apply for bank loans until they have accumulated a minimum of one year of credit history in Canada. Kilbride and D’Arcangelo (2002) argued that financial problems for RIAS exist not only in a lack of financial aid but also in the inability to find adequate work in Ontario. Focus group attendees also noted that if they had a significant amount of money in their bank account, they then did not qualify for student loans and assistance. The difficulty for RIAS, though, is that they need an adequate amount of money in order to pay tuition and also support their dependents (children, parents and other relatives) but having these funds then disqualifies them for student loans, bursaries and other financial assistance. While the literature is quite inconclusive on how much financial aid could benefit a student in persisting through PSE, the literature still generally argues and RIAS

agree that meeting a student's financial need could give them a stronger opportunity to complete PSE. While focus group and survey RIAS did persist, RIAS who left PSE were not included in the study and therefore there is no data on the effect lack of money had on the persistence of RIAS in PSE. It stands to reason, though, that providing strategic financial aid for RIAS could help improve the experience of RIAS in PSE. In addition to overcoming barriers, institutions can also address orientations provided for RIAS.

Improving Student Activities & Services to Help the RIAS Experience

Orientation

One of the first activities RIAS experienced on campus is orientation. Numerous researchers discussed the value, content and importance of orientation (Maken, 2009, Tracy, 2004; Kasworm, 2003). Tinto (1987) went a bit further and detailed the need for institutions to provide a full disclosure of necessary information including the much needed undocumented and unofficial information such as the “informal character of the social and intellectual communities which exist on campus” (p. 146). Tinto (1987) also underscored the importance of new students developing relationships with those who provide advising, counseling and library services. Schonfeld (2003) argued that orientation activities provide students with a safe transition into PSE and are very conducive to student persistence and engagement. Tracy (2004) also specifically recommended that institutions involve RIAS' friends and in particular their family members during orientation and other on-campus activities in order to strengthen the personal support networks for RIAS.

Most of the researched institutions provide orientations for full-time students but many of the RIAS focus group participants did not even attend orientation. A few RIAS did not attend because they were unaware of the orientation sessions and others did not attend because they felt that it would not be very helpful. This underscores a communication issue but also a content issue. Most institutions did not provide orientation for part-time students, which excluded a few more RIAS. Of those who attended orientation, many indicated that the information was very general. RIAS were looking for information that was not in the calendar, website or handouts. They desired more informal knowledge that is garnered after being a student for a year or two. RIAS noted that orientation was mostly to the campus and sometimes to

the program. RIAS indicated interest in orientation to their specific job, career or profession. Orientation was likely designed in PSE on the premise that most students are transitioning from high school to PSE. Similar to the traditional student experience, orientation was predicated on a human development model. Most RIAS, though, already have post-secondary experience and their transition to PSE is cultural, social, economic and political. Orientation, therefore, is quite critical for RIAS as it could create Tinto's (1987) notion of the start of integration in PSE. While helping RIAS attend a need-based orientation may not engage RIAS, it could help improve their experience especially at the start of PSE.

Programs for RIAS

A small segment of the literature examines specific programs for immigrant students. Alfred (2009) stated that RIAS tend to focus on a variety of educational programs ranging from basic applied study to more advanced professional degrees. According to Alfred (2009), virtually all immigrant students, contingent on their country of origin, also concentrated on English literacy programs. The majority of the program foci is applied in nature and tends to help RIAS more quickly obtain employment. Tinto (1992) argued that the stronger a student's fit with a particular program the more they would persist to completion in PSE. Similarly Chambers et al. (2008) discussed the relevance of a program of study with a student's need as well as the context, location and timing of program delivery being fundamental to help a student persist. Schonfeld (2003) specifically noted that institutions should develop degree completion programs including work placements, coop learning as well as a variety of course delivery options such as off-campus, online, weekend and evening courses for RIAS.

The key informants contended that York and U of T have a few programs designed for RIAS. Some programs are intended to prepare RIAS specifically for work in Canada. York also has an English Language Institute to assist all students whose first language is not English. Ryerson, GBC and Centennial have numerous programs, centres and services specifically designed to help RIAS. York and U of T generally have limited placement prospects for RIAS with some internship opportunities in a few applied programs. Ryerson and both colleges generally link RIAS education to the labour market.

Many RIAS indicated in the focus group sessions that they sought to study in PSE in Ontario because they could not find employment in their field of expertise and/or could not obtain adequate

employment. This was consistent with the literature findings where credentialism use is “increasingly prevalent in the Canadian labour market” (Anisef et al, 1992, p. 79). RIAS said that their relatives often encouraged them to study at a university (as opposed to a college) as they could have increased graduate study opportunities. One could argue that “credentialism acts as a form of discrimination for college graduates, artificially constraining their career advancement relative to university graduates” (Anisef et al, 1992, p. 79). The key informants indicated that Ontario colleges help RIAS develop skills that are directly linked to a specific occupation and consequently these colleges quickly help them find employment.

RIAS discussed the frustration they felt when their prior learning and work experience was not fully recognized by employers and educational institutions. This frustration increased when they had to start their studies in Ontario at a basic entry level study even if they remained in their field of study. Some were so frustrated with the Ontario educational system that they decided to shift into a completely unrelated field of study where perhaps they could more quickly obtain employment or may not need to speak English so much. Some of this frustration was also because of the lack of advanced standing credit given for their prior studies. This is consistent with Lo et al.’s (2010) finding that RIAS generally came to Canada with a Bachelor or higher degree and that “those with foreign credentials are less likely to be working in their field of study compared to those with Canadian credentials” (p. 1).

Student Services to Improve the RIAS Experience in PSE

The literature indicates numerous services that improve the student experience in PSE. Conversely, a lack of student services can negatively affect persistence and completion (Huesman, 2009; Maramba, 2008; Berger, 2007; Rayle, 2007; McKinney, 2004). Financial aid services are critical for RIAS and childcare services can help RIAS to focus on their post-secondary studies (HEQCO, 2008; Malatest, 2004). Advising services are also quite important in helping RIAS continue in their programs (Gildersleeve, 2010; Stebleton, 2010; Adamuti-Trache, 2010; Erisman & Looney, 2007). Szelényi and Chang (2002) found that RIAS need access to counseling, tutorial programs and ESL instruction. In addition to being informed about support services, service providers need to be sensitive to the various cultural barriers of RIAS in using these services and not treat immigrant students as a homogenous group as they have many varying needs.

Stableton (2010) found that RIAs tend to bypass traditional student services and rather use their own personal friend networks for help. Maramba (2008) argued that RIAs were involved mostly in cultural groups on campus. Maken (2009) discovered that RIAs were engaged mostly through orientation strategies, the integration of support service information into faculty lectures and specific study skill seminars. RIAs in the focus groups had limited knowledge of the student services on campus. Even when they were aware of the services, they made limited use of them because of their lack of time and, in the case of athletic services where they had to pay for use, lack of money. Kasworm (2003) noted that adult students make stronger use of more individual services that they perceive as having a direct impact on their academic success such as the library, registrar, admissions and tutorial services.

In the survey results, the top two ways that RIAs found out about student services was through their classmates and the internet. Over a third of RIAs heard about services through their professor, orientation or the calendar. Overall, the most effective ways for RIAs to discover student services was through word of mouth (classmates, professor, counseling centre, advising service, class presentations and school leaders) and administrative action (internet, orientation, calendar, email, flyer, billboard, letter and campus signs). RIAs central focus, similar to Kasworm's (2003) findings, was the classroom and their only involvement in services outside of the classroom was in those that had a positive effect on their academic success. RIAs also requested access to labs outside of classroom hours as they at times needed to use the equipment in order to help them complete their assignments but they were only allowed access during class time. Given the desire of RIAs to use their friendship networks rather than services, institutions may need to leverage RIAs friends and family networks to better support RIAs.

Faculty's Role in Facilitating RIAs Learning Outcomes

Much has been written about faculty involvement in PSE and the linkages with student learning and engagement. A few decades ago, Chickering & Gamson (1987) argued the importance of strong contact between faculty and students. In review of Chickering & Gamson's (1987) findings, Umbach (2005) noted that most of them deal with faculty duties, expectations and actions. Pascarella & Terenzini (1991) and Kuh (1991) also urged institutions to focus on course involvement, interactions with faculty both inside and outside the classroom and an emphasis on high quality teaching. MacFadgen (2008) noted

that for adult students the “most influential contributor to students’ successful integration into university-college life was their relationship with professors” (p.6). Bourdieu (1990) argued that it would be very difficult for ESL students to understand the complex sentence structure and word usage of professors and this would negatively affect their grades and academic performance (Grayson, 2008). Astin (1993) found that students tend to be more engaged when they are involved in team projects, problem-based learning and cooperative learning. Both Astin (1993) and Maken (2009) noted that when faculty members use various forms of teaching, students are more effectively engaged in learning. Levine (2005) concurred that while students prefer active learning they often have faculty who lecture in a more passive and abstract way. Umbach (2005) also reasoned that educational practices indirectly correlate with student outcomes in PSE.

Pascarella & Terenzini (1991) discussed the importance of faculty role model involvement with students outside of the classroom, which often yields stronger social integration and persistence. Tinto (1993) also argued that student interactions with faculty and staff help social integration. Matthews (2011) and Umbach (2005) further asserted that student-faculty contact produces stronger student outcomes. Yet, Pascarella & Terenzini (1991) also found that faculty are often quite involved in research and therefore do not have significant time to spend with students. They recommended changing the hiring and reward systems in order to “reflect an institution’s serious interest in student learning in all areas” (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, p. 649).

The key informants, though, articulated the differences between faculty involvement in colleges and universities. In general colleges in Ontario tend to focus on teaching while universities center on teaching and research. It stands to reason that faculty in colleges may have more interactions on average with students than in universities as faculty are more often in the classroom and not as involved in research¹⁵. This difference could have a significant impact on RIAS but this area has not been adequately researched in order to draw conclusions. Yet, college teachers have a significantly higher teaching load than university professors and therefore may similarly have little time for interaction outside of the classroom. A lack of diverse faculty also tended to be a significant issue in PSE (Huesman, 2009;

¹⁵ As Ontario colleges offer more degree programs, there is a drive to hiring professors with doctoral degrees and a push for more research and grant monies. This will likely shift some professors from primarily teaching responsibilities to research and teaching.

Maramba, 2008; Berger, 2007; Rayle, 2007; McKinney, 2004). Minner (1995) highlighted rather insensitive faculty members in dealing with Native American students. Valiente (2008) concurs that while many professors give marks for student class participation, Confucian and Aboriginal cultures emphasize the importance and wisdom of silence. In response to a diverse student body, Villegas & Lucas (2002) and Alfred (2009) realized that a culturally responsive curriculum would assist in bridging the cultural divide.

RIAS Suggestions for Faculty

RIAS in the focus group sessions spoke at length about their interactions with faculty. Some accounts demonstrated quite favourable communication and contact with faculty members. Positive interactions included clear and regular office hours, respect, answering email communication, discussing exam and paper marks and diverse methods of conducting classes. A number of RIAS, though, articulated frustration and feelings of being quite upset in dealing with their professors. These negative contacts involved little to no office hours, not responding to email communications, not being available after class, not being able to explain marking of tests, not being willing to help the student understand the course content, lack of respect, not appearing to try to understand their English and even blatant belittling. Frankly both the positive and negative lists are ironically similar and may be student impressions rather than factual accounts. Axelrod (2008) identified seven qualities that are hallmarks of good professors: accessibility and approachability, fairness, open-mindedness, mastery and delivery of academic material, enthusiasm, humour and the imparting of knowledge and inspiration (p. 23-24).

RIAS brought additional diversity to the classroom. They felt, though, that professors were not always sensitive to RIAS diverse cultural backgrounds, traditions and customs. RIAS suggested 22 times in the focus group sessions that faculty members would benefit from some intercultural sensitivity training as discussed in these two excerpts:

In their teachings, they should incorporate the fact that there are mature students here and cultural barriers. It's so surprising that you would have teachers who are supposed to teach you to be objective and less discriminative and in practice, it's something else. (Ms. B, Focus Group CB)

[Faculty members] should have training. You [got to] make the distinction that these are mature students. They're immigrants. The school environment should be a welcoming environment and, as part of their job, they should be more engaging or more understanding, and not be critical. Be aware of their tone of voice and the way they may come across to the students. I'm Caribbean [and] we're loud. If I'm not checking myself as a student, somebody else may be intimidated by

me. So, [if] the professor [doesn't] understand where I'm coming from and [is] not dealing with it effectively. I mean, that puts a damper on the whole experience. (Ms. B, Focus Group CB)

RIAS spoke about their desire to have better quality instruction, faculty from diverse backgrounds, faculty who were sensitive to the different ethnicities of their students and instructors who explained Canadian slang and terminology. RIAS placed a high value on their relationship with faculty members both inside and outside the classroom. This is congruent with the adult student engagement literature (MacFadgen, 2008; McGivney, 2004). RIAS respected their professor's knowledge and experience. Many of the individual frustrations felt by RIAS are similar to those experienced by traditional and adult students. Likely the critical differences for RIAS are their apprehensions participating in English inside the classroom, their unfamiliarity with Canadian cultural norms in dealing with faculty and faculty not always understanding or being sensitive to RIAS culture, obligations, responsibilities and the numerous barriers that they face. RIAS came up with a few suggestions for faculty members that would help to better engage them academically in the classroom. As many courses involved group work, RIAS said that it would have helped if the instructors would teach students how to best work together in a team. A course describing specific Canadian terms, cultural values, ethnic differences in Canada, slang and aspects of studying, living and working in Canada would help RIAS. If not, they suggested that perhaps faculty members could refrain from using such terms or if they used these words, that they explained what was meant by them.

The traditional student and adult student literature clearly indicates that student-faculty contact increases the engagement of students. Some of that contact, according to RIAS, may not always be helpful but they value the relationship. Tracy (2004) argued that even though tensions exist in the classroom around the varied educational backgrounds and expectations of students, faculty members could attempt to mitigate them for students. Having greater consistency between RIAS needs and the institutional response to these needs could improve the RIAS experience in PSE as seen next.

Consistency between RIAS Needs and Institutional Response

In reviewing the institutional response to RIAS, individual post-secondary institutions varied considerably. For instance, both U of T and York seem to equate international and mature student issues with RIAS barriers, whereas their problems, as supported by the literature, are at times quite distinctly

different. Some of this dissimilarity in response appears to be historically based. The oldest institution, the University of Toronto has been working to improve its student experience for all students. Yet, it does not specifically respond to RIAS except in a few professional faculties dealing with foreign-trained professionals. The newer University of Toronto Scarborough campus appears to have a limited view to RIAS' needs. York University is somewhat more attentive to the barriers that RIAS face. Yet, both universities are quite decentralized and, just as it was difficult for a researcher to obtain information on the universities response to RIAS, it would likely be even more difficult for a RIAS with limited English facility to find specific services on these campuses.

Ryerson University is an exception to the typical university response. It is responding more quickly and favourably to RIAS needs, but there is much more still to be done. One could argue that the rationale for the difference in university response lies in Ryerson's history as a polytechnic and that its research and outlook is therefore more applied. Since Ryerson as a college historically focused on student's integration into the labour market, it seems to respond more quickly and more thoroughly to RIAS needs than older Ontario universities. Both George Brown and Centennial College are also quite responsive to the varied RIAS needs. While both college responses are quite similar, each has taken varied structural approaches, which could, in the case of GBC, cause the institution to be less responsive to RIAS.

Taking a more critical look at the dissimilarity between college and university responses to RIAS, one could state that it is rooted in more than just history. The University of Toronto holds a place of high prestige as a research-intensive university and York University is moving towards having a greater research focus. As a relatively newer university, Ryerson, in comparison, currently is balancing between being a teaching and research institution. Not all applicants are able to attend these more elite institutions, putting particularly U of T and York in higher positions of prestige and power. Colleges, on the other hand, have open access mandates for their less competitive programs and therefore generally hold lower positions of power and prestige. It could be contended that prominent universities as a whole, therefore, tend to "other" newer universities and colleges. From this viewpoint, esteemed universities may find it very difficult to be more responsive to RIAS, as these institutions would have to step down from their positions of power and prestige. In response, universities would need to become socially inclusive to RIAS and no longer "other"

foreign post-secondary institutions. Coulter and Mandell (2012) similarly argued that more elite institutions that are in so much demand simply do not have to respond to adult student needs and the changing demographics in our nation.

From the key informant interviews, overall, it appears that universities currently are not as prepared to help RIAS as colleges. RIAS develop support networks to help them obtain the credentials to get a job but these support networks at times direct them to universities. Ironically, at present, universities are not as equipped to help RIAS as colleges. Some key informants indicated that fewer people are directing RIAS to colleges (Centennial College Group, personal communication, November 6, 2007) that is consistent with LSIC (2003) data. This is a very difficult challenge for the RIAS and the colleges.

As found in the literature, RIAS look for employment and thus attend PSE as a way to obtain Canadian education and increase employers' recognition of their new credentials. At present, the colleges tend to help students find employment through coop programs, careers centres and direct linkages with employers and receive skills that were directly related to a specific job. If York and U of T do not become more responsive to RIAS, then the colleges will remain more responsive. As stated earlier, "credentialism acts as a form of discrimination for college graduates, artificially constraining their career advancement relative to university graduates" (Anisef et al, 1992, p. 79).

Ironically a number of RIAS who attend university in Ontario do obtain good employment. Some of this is changing in Ontario with the introduction of applied degrees in the college system and more clearly defined transfer credit agreements but these deep historical distinctions between the two educational sectors will take a long time to be bridged. In looking at different challenges faced by RIAS as found in the survey and focus group results, there seems to be "no significant difference in the experience of college and university students" (Lum and Grabke, 2012, p. 22). Similarly there were no significantly identifiable differences in engagement of RIAS on university and college campuses. It is unclear if differences were not found because of the relatively small sample size, the survey questions did not adequately address unique RIAS engagement issues or that RIAS simply were not motivated to engage regardless of the institutional type, services and responsiveness.

Much of the above discussion concerning mitigating barriers experienced by RIAS as well as institutional strategies to help improve the RIAS experience highlights the divide between institutional services and RIAS needs. Frankly all campus services are available to RIAS but they often do not avail themselves of the services. RIAS tend to obtain good grades and persist in Ontario PSE likely because of the strong motivation of these students and their significantly strong educational background. Social integration does not occur nearly as well because of the stretched lives of RIAS.

FACTORS THAT COULD CONTRIBUTE TO RIAS ENGAGEMENT IN PSE

As RIAS are demographically diametrically opposite to a traditional student, the model of PSE designed around a traditional student may not engage RIAS. Institutions have slowly changed and adapted some services, parts of the context and aspects of the delivery of education to a more diverse population but the primary model of student services is fundamentally unchanged. This method of educational delivery and services, as seen in the focus groups and surveys, does not generally engage RIAS. The adult student engagement literature in many ways is more applicable to RIAS but fundamental aspects of PSE and more elite institutions do not cater to adult students. Perhaps the foundation of post-secondary institutions could be reconsidered to help engage traditional students, adults and RIAS as well as our many other diverse student populations. The sheer size and multiplicity of hierarchical committees, commissions, councils and school senate make post-secondary institutions very slow to change and react to the more diverse constituency. Even this may need to be transformed in order to be responsive to a diverse student body. A good place to start improving RIAS engagement is to begin recognition of RIAS in Ontario PSE.

Student Outputs

Giving Voice to RIAS on Campus

In many ways, it can be said that RIAS do not yet have a considerable presence or voice in the literature. One of the major study findings by Maramba (2008) was that the Filipina American students are a minority in the predominantly white campus who did not have a voice on campus. These Filipina American students felt that their voice was not heard by professors, staff, administrators and the other students largely because of class size and unapproachable faculty. They really wanted to be “able to interact

with a professor during office hours, being comfortable speaking in class or contributing to a small group discussion” (Maramba, 2008, p. 1056). All of the institutions as part of this study did not know part-time RIAS on campus. York and U of T do not know any RIAS. It is very difficult to improve RIAS student experience and engagement if the institution does not know how many and who the immigrant students are on campus. London et al. (2007) agree on the importance of helping minority students be visible on campus. If you do not track it, you cannot fix it! Just as RIAS need to find their voice and increase visibility on campus, they also could benefit from accessible student services.

Accessible Student Services for RIAS

The traditional student engagement literature discussing student services concludes that the utilization of student services should help promote student engagement (Maken, 2009; Huesman, 2009; Baird, 2009; Maramba, 2008; Kezar & Kinzie, 2006; Winston, 2003; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1993; Astin, 1993; Kuh et al., 1991). Limited efforts have been expended by the institutions that are part of this study to extend student services to RIAS as well as part-time, international and adult students. The key informants and focus group participants described the abundance of student services available on their campuses but RIAS generally were not very aware of all of the services and rarely made use of them. Advertising and accessibility of these services seem to be an issue that if resolved could debatably help increase usage. Similarly, RIAS expressed a desire for more effective English support structures in PSE to help encourage learning and skill development.

English Supports for RIAS

The literature contains brief references to English proficiency of RIAS. Statistics Canada (2005) reported that 60% of immigrants planned to take English language courses within 6 months of arriving in Canada. Canadian employers tend to discount immigrants’ verbal and written English proficiency. This is one of the factors that cause immigrants to enter PSE in Ontario. Most immigrants need to complete an English proficiency test in order to obtain admission to PSE (Erisman & Looney, 2007). Statistics Canada (2003a) indicated that 27% of immigrants articulated that they had a language barrier entering PSE in Canada. Once in PSE, RIAS expressed issues with speaking, writing, reading and listening to English.

While RIAS persisted in PSE, they were unhappy with their lack of improvement in English proficiency through their time in PSE.

The key informants spoke about the many English supports offered to students including remedial and ESL courses, writing centres, conversation partners etc. The focus group participants stated that English matters in PSE and future employment. RIAS did not suggest a change to the English entrance requirements as they understood that it was a key to success in PSE in Ontario. Yet, virtually all RIAS spoke about the difficulties they faced in the classroom. This is a complex issue and institutions already provide quite a few English supports. At times, the supports given to some RIAS seem to help them finish and obtain good marks for their assignments but not necessarily provide long-term benefit. One RIAS (Ms. M, Focus Group UC) commented about her dependence on the writing centre. Arguably, the service is not developing her English skills but only assisting her to achieve sufficient marks to complete PSE. Perhaps this issue involves only a few limited cases but it is important that writing centres and other PSE English supports teach RIAS so that they can develop their English skills and eventually no longer need the service.

RIAS also expressed their concern over blatant discrimination in the classroom by the students and professors with regards to their perceived limited ability to speak English. They also discussed their fear of not obtaining future employment in Ontario because of their accent and/or lack of fluency in English. It is an issue if RIAS' English is not improving through their PSE as RIAS may not achieve strong enough English skills in order to obtain a job after their post-secondary studies.

RIAS Academic Involvement in PSE

Tinto (1993) advocated for diverse students assimilating into PSE culture. Rendón et al. (2000) argued that Tinto's model is based on an "assimilation/acclulturation framework" (p. 128). Building on this research, Guiffrida (2006) stipulated that diverse learners are academically successful if they are involved and engaged in their own native environment and the new institutional culture. Kuh and Hu (2001) and Umbach and Wawrzinsky (2005) found that intellectual and program-related activities enhance academic involvement and student engagement. Learning, though, takes on a different context in our global village. Villegas and Lucas (2002), Ogbu (1991), Gibson & Ogbu (1991) and Alfred (2009) discussed how a student uses their pre-existing knowledge and experiences together with the new PSE learning. Faculty,

therefore, have a large impact in student learning, academic involvement and engagement. Multiple teaching methods and mentoring roles including one-on-one communication with students help to academically involve students (Maken, 2009; Umbach, 2005; McKinney, 2004; Astin, 1993; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991). Therefore, while academic involvement and social involvement are inextricably linked, academic involvement largely occurs through interactions with faculty and students inside and outside the classroom including teaching and learning.

While some instructors were helpful, many RIAS felt that professors were often not available nor were accepting of their English proficiency and cultural competencies. RIAS also argued that group involvement is quite difficult given the lack of understanding and acceptance of their English abilities and cultural orientation. Yet RIAS felt that they were doing well academically in PSE. In the demographic survey of RIAS (see Table O), 40 (89%) of respondents self-reported that they are doing well academically in Ontario PSE. Likewise, the majority of RIAS (87%) indicated that they are doing better or the same academically than in their prior studies in their country of origin (see Table P). While grades alone may not include all aspects of academic involvement, it is a strong indicator of academic success.

The survey results clarify and further the focus group findings with regards to RIAS academic engagement. Using the mean of the academic engagement – development (AE-D) factor, RIAS agreed somewhat that they were academically engaged. Also 15.7% of RIAS strongly agreed that they were academically engaged (AE-D). Using the mean of the academic engagement – time on task (AE-TOT) factor, RIAS experienced a medium level of academic engagement in PSE and on average spent 16-20 hours a week outside of class on academic activities. Also 17.4% of RIAS were strongly academically engaged and spent more than 30 hours a week on academic activities outside of class (AE-TOT). These findings are consistent with much of the adult student literature that argues that adult students are very involved academically in PSE (Wyatt, 2011; Tweedell, 2005; Kasworm, 2003, Graham & Long, 1998). The findings, though, are contrary to the traditional student literature that predicts that RIAS should be disengaged, high-risk, marginalized and academically unsuccessful (Capps, 2010; Tinto, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Graham and Long (1998) found that adult students performed as well or better than traditional students “across all four measures of the intellectual and academic outcomes, despite different

patterns of involvement both on-campus and off-campus” (p. 30). Both academic engagement findings are consistent with Stermac et al. (2012) who constructed academic engagement from

variables assessing academic participation and identification, with higher scores indicating greater involvement. These included students’ ratings of attendance, assignment completion, involvement with school work, as well as variables asking students to rate their attitudes towards learning, the usefulness of school work and their relationships with teachers. (p. 317)

Using both measures of academic engagement, it is important to identify any predictors of academic engagement for RIAS. Country of origin is a very significant predictor of academic engagement – development (AE-D) and no other predictors were significant. Similarly, country of origin is a very significant predictor of academic engagement – time on task (AE-TOT) as well as annual household income. These findings are quite consistent with the literature. Bourdieu (1990) argued that linguistic capital constitutes a component of cultural capital and that academic success hinges on linguistic capital (Grayson, 2008). This directly points to RIAS country of origin affecting their academic performance. In fact, a couple of Grayson’s studies found that country of origin and especially students from a country where English is not spoken had an effect on GPA in PSE. In Grayson’s 2008 study, he found that “the linguistic capital of foreign-born ESL students increases over 4 years of university study; however, this increase in linguistic capital is not paralleled by an increase in academic achievement” (p. 127). In the same study, Grayson noted that length of residence in Canada had no impact on the academic performance of immigrants (Grayson, 2008, p. 128). Grayson’s 2009 study also established that university grades were affected by country of origin. As English is a second language for most RIAS and they expressed significant difficulties with speaking, reading, writing and listening to English, it is consistent that country of origin, especially for countries where English is not spoken, affects academic engagement. While Grayson’s studies did not analyze the cultural and social capital of foreign-born students, it is conceivable that this part of country of origin would affect academic engagement of RIAS in PSE.

In analyzing if the individual regions of origin for RIAS are significant in predicting academic engagement, Africa is a very significant predictor of academic engagement – development (AE-D) in comparison with East Asia. Also, the Caribbean and Central and South American region is a significant predictor of AE-D in comparison with East Asia. RIAS from Africa have stronger AE-D than the RIAS

from East Asia and this finding is very significant ($p=.004$). Similarly, RIAS from the Caribbean, Central and South America have stronger AE-D than students from East Asia and this finding is significant ($p=.024$). Likewise for academic engagement – time on task (AE-TOT), South & West Asia is a very significant predictor and Caribbean, Central and South America is a significant predictor. Given the odds ratio for AE-TOT, the RIAS from East Asia experience stronger AE-TOT than the students from South & West Asia and also students from Caribbean, Central and South America and these findings are statistically significant. Grayson's 2004a study on the relationship between grades and academic program satisfaction at York University found that students with a Chinese and South Asian origin had a relatively negative experience. Also, Grayson's 1997b study of the academic achievement of first-generation students at York University found that racial origins affect GPA. He specifically noted that students of Chinese origin had lower GPA than East Indian, black, other or European students for those with low activity involvement ($p. 671$). Also students with European origin had higher GPA than black, other or Chinese students ($p. 671$). For academic engagement – development (AE-D), many students from Africa, the Caribbean, Central and South America have English as their first or second language whereas RIAS from East Asia mostly speak Mandarin or Cantonese. Having English as a second language could make AE-D much more difficult. This could also explain the somewhat contradictory finding for academic engagement – time on task (AE-TOT). As AE-TOT measures that amount of time RIAS spend on academic activities per week outside of class, many East Asian RIAS spoke in the focus groups about having to read the textbook multiple times and having to spend so much time writing essays. This could explain why RIAS from East Asia experience more AE-TOT than students from South & West Asia and also the Caribbean, Central and South America.

Bean & Metzner's (1985) student attrition model identified finances as having an effect on attrition for nontraditional students. Grayson's 2004a study on the relationship between grades and academic program satisfaction at York University argued that there were no differences in experiences based on gender or household income ($p. 11$). Astin (1993) among others found that socioeconomic status (including household income) of a student is a positive predictor of GPA ($p. 188$). The final significant predictor of academic engagement – time on task (AE-TOT) is RIAS who have a household income of greater than \$100,000. Given the odds ratio for this finding, RIAS who have a household income of greater

than \$100,000 experience less AE-TOT than those who make less than \$10,000 and this finding is statistically significant. While this may seem to be a contradictory finding, AE-TOT measures the amount of time spent on academic activities outside of class. If RIAS make a lot of money, then perhaps they are less motivated to spend time on studies outside of class than a student who has very little money.

The adult student literature clearly states that adult students focus virtually exclusively on academics and are highly motivated (Wyatt, 2011). Wyatt (2011) further argues that “there is nothing that the institution could do to engage students in the collegiate environment and campus life due to their hectic lifestyle and personal preferences” (p. 16). This seems to fully apply to RIAS. RIAS do not feel that they need to improve their marks in Ontario PSE. They seem, as a whole, to be performing at or above the average in terms of grades. Yet, they do not feel that they are involved socially in PSE. This lack of social involvement, according to the literature, could have an impact on their academic involvement inside and primarily outside of the classroom. While institutions generally do not seem to be able to fully recognize and meet the needs of RIAS and RIAS appear to be socially disengaged in PSE, they are obtaining good marks and persisting in PSE. This paradox is not explained by the traditional engagement literature. Perhaps RIAS truly have somewhat uncommon barriers than traditional students, uniquely experience these barriers and are motivated to persist against many odds. RIAS stated that they do not have time for social interactions outside of the classroom and seem to lack an understanding of the impact on their academic involvement and engagement in PSE. Academic involvement is linked with social involvement therefore RIAS social involvement in PSE will be discussed next.

RIAS Social Involvement in PSE

Many theorists indicate that social involvement is critical to academic learning and involvement as well as student engagement (Stebbleton, 2010; Alfred, 2009; Maramba, 2008; Rayle, 2007; Huang and Chang, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Mann, 2001; Tinto, 1993; Astin, 1993; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1993; Schlossberg, 1989). Bean & Metzner (1985) believe that social integration is not “positively and significantly related to the persistence of non-traditional students” (p. 520) yet they still included social integration in their attrition model (Figure 6). Extracurricular activities (Huang and Chung, 2004), having part-time on-campus work (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1993) and engaging student’s sociocultural

consciousness (Alfred, 2009) can improve a traditional student's social involvement. Conversely having off-campus part-time work detracts from social involvement (Astin, 1993). Stebleton (2010) specifically identified that RIAs have a lower perception of belonging and satisfaction in comparison with their non-immigrant peers.

Part of being socially involved in higher education is for a student to belong, fit and matter (Rosenberg and McCullough, 1981). Schlossberg (1989) underscored the importance of a student's peer group as the most important predictor of mattering and notably that female students have stronger levels of support from family and friends. Likewise, Rayle (2007) found that when students have significant support from family and friends, they then transfer that mattering to their friends in PSE. Chang (2002) also discovered that students who are socially involved in peer networks tend to have stronger academic achievement. Maramba (2008) further noted that a student's sense of belonging occurs in both their personal and PSE community. Bean and Metzner (1985) argued that for non-traditional students "social variables from the outside environment are expected to be of greater importance than college social integration variables" (p. 530).

The focus group discussions and larger survey findings are consistent with much of this literature. Focus group RIAs participants have very little time, are not significantly aware of extracurricular activities and often do not participate in socializing on-campus. While RIAs try to make on-campus friends, most of their friends consist of students from their own cultural heritage and/or other immigrant students. RIAs survey participants spend only a few hours a week in co-curricular, religious, non-academic, unpaid, cultural and/or community activities. For the most part, RIAs are not involved socially on or off campus likely because they do not have time to be socially involved and/or do not set a high priority for socialization.

The survey results clarify and further the focus group findings with regards to RIAs social engagement. Using the mean of the social engagement – conversations (SE-C) factor, RIAs sometimes felt socially engaged. Also 3.9% of RIAs strongly agreed that they were socially engaged (SE-C). Using the mean of the social engagement – relationships (SE-R) factor, RIAs felt only slightly more socially engaged (SE-R) than not socially engaged in PSE. Also 5.6% of RIAs experienced strong social engagement (SE-R)

in PSE. RIAS social engagement is considerably weaker than academic engagement when comparing all four factors of engagement, where only 3.9% to 5.6% of RIAS felt strong social engagement (SE-C and SE-R) and between 15.7% and 17.4% of RIAS experienced strong academic engagement (AE-D and AE-TOT). According to the traditional student engagement literature, if RIAS experience low social engagement they should not persist in PSE (Tinto, 1993; Astin, 1993; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1993). Yet, Stebleton et al. (2010), Bean & Metzner (1985) and the focus groups confirmed the different levels of social and academic engagement for RIAS in PSE. Stebleton et al. (2010) argued that “immigrant college students who attend research universities tend to have, on average, lower ratings/feelings of belonging than non-immigrant students” (p. 7). For adult students, Kasworm (2003) found that even though they are not socially engaged in PSE that they academically perform as well as or at times better than traditional students in both grades and in aptitude tests. Both measures of social engagement are quite consistent with Stermac et al. (2012) who based social engagement on “variables measuring students’ perceptions of their social involvement and supports” (p. 317).

Using both measures of social engagement, it is important to identify any predictors of social engagement for RIAS. Country of origin is a very significant predictor of social engagement – conversations (SE-C) and no other predictors were significant. Controlling for all other predictor variables, country of origin is also a significant factor of social engagement – relationships (SE-R) and no other predictors were significant. These findings are consistent with literature that makes the correlation between ethnicity, race, birth country or country of origin and social engagement in PSE (Finnie et al., 2010; Willms, 2009; Day, 2008; Finnie & Mueller, 2008; Willms, 2003; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Johnson et al., 2001; Bean & Metzner, 1985). Johnson et al. (2001) found in studying high school students that country of origin and specifically the ethnic composition of the school had a direct impact on a student’s social engagement and namely their sense of belonging. Willms (2003) concurred that contextual effects has an effect on the academic and social engagement of students. In particular, Willms (2003) noted that students born outside the country where they are studying experience a lower sense of belonging or social engagement than students who study in their home country. Villegas & Lucas (2002) noted that ethnicity has an impact on the way people interact. The MESA project headed by Finnie et al. (2010) shows a link

between immigrant visible minority status and immigrant persistence in PSE. Finnie & Mueller's 2008 study found that country of origin has an impact on immigrant participation rates in PSE.

In analyzing if the individual regions of origin for RIAs are significant in predicting social engagement – conversations (SE-C), West, North & South Europe is significant and East Europe & Central Asia, Caribbean, Central & South America, Africa, South-East Asia and South & West Asia are very significant predictors of SE-C in relation to the East Asia reference group. Controlling for the other variables, West, North & South Europe, East Europe & Central Asia, Caribbean, Central & South America, Africa, South-East Asia and South & West Asia experience higher SE-C in relation to RIAs from East Asia and these findings are very significant for all these regions except West, North & South Europe that is significant. Likewise for social engagement – relationships (SE-R), East Europe & Central Asia and Africa are both significant predictors of SE-R relative to the East Asia reference group. Controlling for the other variables, RIAs from East Europe & Central Asia experience stronger SE-R than the East Asia comparator group and this finding is very significant. Similarly controlling for the other variables, RIAs from Africa experience stronger SE-R than the East Asia comparator group and this finding is significant. Finnie & Mueller (2008) noted that Chinese immigrants have the highest university participation rates followed by immigrants from South Asia, the Middle East and Africa. Johnson et al. (2007) found that most visible minority students (African, Hispanic and Asian) have lower feelings of belonging in PSE in comparison with traditional Caucasian students. Likewise, Hurtado & Carter (1997) ascertained a correlation between race and socialization where for visible minority students “first-year experiences have positive effects, while perceptions of a hostile racial climate have direct negative effects on students’ sense of belonging in the third year” (p. 324).

Country of origin is a significant predictor of social engagement for RIAs as confirmed in the literature, focus group sessions and survey findings. Given how few RIAs experience strong social engagement in PSE and that RIAs from East Europe, Central Asia and Africa all experience stronger social engagement than the control group, most RIAs from East Asia therefore experience little to no social engagement in PSE. Perhaps RIAs view PSE through a task-oriented lens and their socialization locus is outside PSE. This could be a fundamental difference between RIAs and traditional students. On campus,

RIAS socialize only in the classroom. RIAS have a difficult time integrating socially in Canadian society and this seems also true on campus. Bean & Metzner (1985) noted that “the nontraditional student does not greatly change his or her social environment” (p. 489). Perhaps for RIAS, their own family and friend network is with whom they socially connect. Bean & Metzner (1985) further commented that non-traditional students experienced “less interaction in the college environment with peers or faculty members and less interaction through extracurricular activities and the use of campus services...[and] much greater interaction with the noncollegiate, external environment” (p. 489-490). Guiffrida (2006) referred to RIAS bicultural engagement with their “home social systems” (p. 457) meaning with their family and friends. Ross (2010) had similar findings with secondary school immigrant students who gain their social capital from their family units and immigrant communities. Kasworm (2003) argued that “few studies have examined students who have limited or no involvement in the campus collegiate scene” (p. 10). This seems to be true for RIAS social involvement in PSE. Frankly, most RIAS are relatively disinterested in being socially involved on campus as there does not seem to be any institutional effort that currently helps RIAS engage socially on campus.

RIAS Involvement in the Student Context

Post-secondary institutions spend sizable resources on the student context in PSE and specifically on the structural aspects of the campus, residence, administrative staff salaries, policies, procedures and environment. Yet there is very little research on the impact of these parts of the student context on student engagement. In response to this lack of research, Maken (2009) developed a “just-in-time” support services framework for first-year students including orientation strategies, integration of service information into faculty lectures and seminar series. Kuh (1991) argued that the student context enhances learning and engagement. In particular, the campus environment has a highly significant affect on student satisfaction and desire to be involved. The school’s mission, vision, core values, philosophy, purpose, culture, policies, procedures, acceptance of diversity, recreational facilities, physical ambience, convenience of campus, access to child care, parking and disability services creates the student context and has a strong influence on student engagement (Maken, 2009; Baird, 2009; Huesman, 2009; Maramba, 2008, Kezar & Kinzie,

2006; Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1993; Kuh et al., 1991). Conversely, Pascarella & Terenzini (1993) argued that students who do not live in residence experience less engagement.

Most institutions plan their policies and procedures around a traditional full-time student. Statistics Canada (2003a) LSIC data shows that 87% of RIAS enrolled in only one course with a few RIAS taking two or more courses per term. Therefore much of the traditional student context may be of little assistance to RIAS in PSE especially when they spend so little time on campus and virtually no time outside of class. Much of the desire of institutions to embrace diversity has not yet brought about changes to programs, policies and institutional culture (Kuh & Love, 2000). The focus group data and literature shows that RIAS tend to live and work off-campus (Kasworm, 2003; Rendón et al., 2000). RIAS also indicated that their off-campus work and family commitments keep them less involved in non-academic activities. Virtually all RIAS involvement is on academic activities inside the classroom. Given RIAS academic and social involvement as well as their lack of involvement in the student context, we next synthesize the outcomes for RIAS in PSE.

Student Outcomes

RIAS Engagement

The literature clearly indicates that student academic and social involvement and involvement in the student context in PSE facilitates student engagement (Tinto, 1993; Astin, 1993; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1993). The adult student literature conversely indicates that adult students persist in PSE despite their lack of social involvement (Kasworm, 2003). Similarly, even though RIAS lack social involvement and are not involved in the student context in PSE, they obtain good marks and generally persist even though they lack some academic involvement. RIAS also persist despite facing numerous barriers and not using many support services.

Hallmarks of a Liberal Education

The ultimate outcome of PSE as described in the RIAS Engagement Model (Figure 7) is the hallmarks of a liberal education. Both academic and social engagement are the student outputs that theoretically should lead to RIAS developing these traits of a liberal education. A number of theorists

support the notion of academic and social engagement being predictors of the characteristics of a liberal education (Coté and Allahar, 2011; Coté and Allahar, 2007; Carinini, Kuh & Klein, 2006; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Kuh, 2003; Shulman, 2002; Axelrod, Anisef & Lin, 2001). Unfortunately no research was located that identified academic and social engagement being predictors of liberal education specifically for RIAs. Nonetheless, it is plausible that RIAs who experience strong academic engagement and strong social engagement in PSE will show strong hallmarks of a liberal education.

The survey results inform whether academic and/or social engagement predicts the features of a liberal education. Using the mean of the measure of a liberal education (LE), RIAs sometimes demonstrated these liberal education traits. Also 3.2% of RIAs strongly experienced these features of a liberal education. According to the literature, if students experience low academic and low social engagement, then they should also experience fewer traits of a liberal education. This seems consistent with the survey findings where 3.9% to 5.6% of RIAs felt strong social engagement and 15.7% to 17.4% of RIAs experienced strong academic engagement. If the traits of a liberal education include both academic and social engagement, it would be reasonable that even fewer than 3.9% of RIAs experience liberal education.

Both academic engagement – development (AE-D) and academic engagement – time on task (AE-TOT) are very significant predictors of the hallmarks of a liberal education (LE) for RIAs. RIAs who experience strong academic engagement – development (AE-D) will likely strongly demonstrate the traits of a liberal education (LE) and this finding is very significant. Similarly, RIAs who experience strong academic engagement – time on task (AE-TOT) will also exhibit strong indicators of a liberal education (LE) and this finding is very significant. Likewise, social engagement – conversations (SE-C) and social engagement – relationships (SE-R) are very significant predictors of the measures of a liberal education (LE) for RIAs. RIAs who experience strong social engagement – conversations (SE-C) will likewise demonstrate strong liberal education traits and this finding is very significant. RIAs who also experience strong social engagement – relationships (SE-R) will also show strong characteristics of a liberal education and this finding is very significant. These RIAs survey findings are quite consistent with the academic and social engagement literature. It is interesting, though, to note that the adult and non-traditional literature

advocates for RIAS having social integration outside of PSE and yet the survey findings clearly indicate social engagement of RIAS in PSE as a very significant predictor of the hallmarks of a liberal education. In other words, creating the conditions for RIAS to be academically and socially engaged in PSE will assist RIAS in developing the traits of a liberal education.

None of the demographic traits were significant predictors of a liberal education for RIAS. In further understanding whether there are differences in engagement for RIAS by institutional type, I again analyzed all four measures of academic and social engagement. Academic engagement – development (AE-D) is a very significant predictor for LE for RIAS who attend university but AE-D is not a significant predictor of LE for RIAS who attend college. Academic engagement – relationships (AE-R) is a very significant predictor of LE for RIAS who attend university as well as those who attend college. Similarly, social engagement – conversations (SE-C) is a very significant predictor of LE for RIAS who attend university as well as those who attend college. Yet, social engagement – relationships (SE-R) is a very significant predictor of LE for RIAS who attend university but not for those who attend college.

One possible explanation of the differences between institutional type and the predictors of a liberal education comes from the fundamental differences between university and college education in Ontario. College education is traditionally predicated on filling gaps in the labour market and in providing students with skills to do a job. University education is based on theoretical education that aims to develop a person into a “renaissance” person with transferable skills that can be used in any employment position. While the lines between the types of institutions are being blurred, the traits of a liberal education have traditionally been developed arguably more by university students rather than college students. This could also be true for RIAS as supported by the survey results.

SUMMARY

Unique and Common Needs of RIAS in PSE

RIAS experience many of the same barriers that traditional and adult students face. Yet, RIAS tend to face numerous compounded barriers, which complicate the resolution of these barriers. Further, given RIAS unique demographic makeup, they may experience these barriers quite differently from

traditional students. Similarly, RIAS may have the same support structures as domestic and international students but RIAS generally do not make significant use of the services because of their lack of awareness, lack of time and relatively low priority. RIAS lack of money also causes them to have to work part-time, which also compounds the difficulty RIAS have in looking after their dependents that further impacts their lack of time. The student context in Ontario PSE and support services are tailored for traditional students. RIAS are culturally diverse, adult students who have little financial resources, no spare time and limited English proficiency. The incredible layering of RIAS needs results in a significant rise in stress, which increases the difficulty for RIAS to be socially involved in PSE. Interestingly, RIAS tend to fare well in academic achievement when measured by grades and are quite highly motivated academically. The focus groups, though, indicated that RIAS face language and cultural difficulties in the classroom that inhibit fuller academic involvement. Their lack of financial resources and family obligations deplete their time as they have to work a part-time job and spend time looking after their family. This causes RIAS to have little time left for studying and finishing quality assignments. Many RIAS used antiquated rote learning systems in their country of origin. Now RIAS seemingly have to adapt to a new style of learning and this causes stress and often more difficult academic involvement in PSE.

Many recent immigrants are the first in their family to attend PSE in Canada. Therefore they likely experience some of the same problems that first generation students face as they cannot rely on a family member's prior experience in some of the less tangible navigation of the institutional maze. Even though the majority of RIAS have studied in higher education in their source country, the institutional context is quite dissimilar. RIAS are

most likely to be unaware of and unfamiliar with the policies and procedures that tend to govern higher education, the expectations faculty and other members of the institution may hold, the nature of relationships and interactions on the campus, and the language of higher education. (Schonfeld, 2003, p. 4)

Ontario institutions could simplify the bureaucratic maze experienced by RIAS.

RIAS also do not have time for and do not place a high priority on socialization in PSE. For many RIAS who have difficulty with English proficiency, social involvement is even less desirable. RIAS generally do not feel like they "fit" in Canada and PSE. They do not consider their country of origin as their

home anymore and yet they do not think of Canada as their home. RIAS in many ways perceive that they have lost their own unique culture and distinct diversity. They experience difficulties with English and can face discrimination at work, school and in their community. In a study of adult students in the US, Wyatt (2011) ascertained that the barriers or challenges that adults experience in PSE are “exaggerated when students are unable to garner a sense of belonging or connection” (p. 11). RIAS do not feel like they fit in and feel overwhelmed by the barriers they face in PSE in Ontario. These compounded barriers and a lack of social involvement in PSE, in particular are the unique challenges that RIAS face in PSE. Likely, RIAS are also experiencing settlement issues in PSE as they are still developing a sense of belonging in Canada.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the barriers experienced by RIAS, the institutional strategies that factor into the RIAS experience, the student services that help the experience of RIAS, RIAS involvement in the student context, overcoming barriers faced by RIAS, faculty involvement in PSE, the consistency between RIAS needs and the institutional response to these needs as well as the factors that could contribute to academic and social engagement of RIAS and the hallmarks of a liberal education.

Essentially RIAS are highly academically motivated in order to obtain a Canadian credential and future employment. This is the fundamental reason RIAS enter Ontario PSE. Despite facing numerous barriers in PSE, RIAS persist, obtain good marks but are not involved socially in PSE. Simply removing barriers may not socially engage RIAS. The literature is divided on whether socially engaging RIAS could or could not improve their academic performance. It likely could improve their experience and satisfaction in PSE. For RIAS, academic and social engagement are very significant predictors of the traits of a liberal education. Therefore, increasing the academic and social engagement of RIAS can develop broad transferable and transformational skills in RIAS. There are numerous ways to help RIAS increase academic engagement but improving social engagement for RIAS is quite complex. Creating services especially for RIAS may not necessarily help RIAS as they do not have time to use any services. RIAS are focused solely on the classroom and their social support network is with family and friends outside PSE. Perhaps the key to increasing social engagement of RIAS lies in connecting RIAS socially in the classroom and also deliberately strengthening RIAS social support network outside PSE. In addition to outlining policy and

change recommendations in the next chapter, I develop an engagement model that incorporates the RIAS experience in PSE.

Chapter VIII – Conclusion

In conclusion, this dissertation is a study of the factors and institutional strategies that contribute to the engagement of RIAS in Ontario PSE. It includes an analysis of RIAS aspirations in immigrating to Canada, return to PSE, access, persistence and completion barriers they face and their classroom encounters. It also incorporates RIAS academic and social involvement, academic performance, satisfaction, persistence and development of the hallmarks of a liberal education in PSE. These aspects of the RIAS experience in PSE are analyzed in light of the student engagement literature that argues that students perform better and have robust liberal education outcomes when they are academically and socially engaged. As a result, this dissertation identifies and investigates the institutional strategies, if any, that could result in the effective engagement of RIAS who choose to study in Ontario PSE.

Chapter I is an introduction to the study that underscores definitions of key terms in Appendix A. Chapter II is a review of the pertinent literature with an in-depth focus on student engagement. Chapter III is a review of the literature that forms the theoretical framework of this dissertation and Chapter IV explains the research design and methodology employed in the study. The research findings concerning RIAS engagement in PSE are in Chapter V, the research results from the responsiveness of PSE to RIAS are in Chapter VI and the synthesis of the study results are in Chapter VII. This current chapter summarizes the institutional strategies, which contribute to the engagement of RIAS and discusses the implications for practice given these findings including recommendations for changes to policies and practices. Implications for theory and the development of a new model of engagement for RIAS will also be discussed. This chapter will conclude with suggestions for future research, the strengths, weaknesses and limitations of this dissertation and a brief summary.

INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIES TO ENGAGE RIAS

In this study, RIAS experienced numerous access, persistence and completion barriers, were not motivated to be socially involved and yet achieved relatively good grades and tended to persist in PSE. These findings are quite inconsistent with the traditional student engagement literature. The adult and nontraditional student engagement literature helps to explain some of these findings. RIAS, similar to adult

students, have limited time and money and therefore do not choose to spend time socializing on campus outside of class. They already have to choose between completing their own homework and helping their own children with their homework. RIAs have to decide between working part-time to pay for their tuition, living expenses and dependents versus spending their time socializing in PSE. Even though there are many campus support services, RIAs have little awareness, time and motivation to find and utilize them. The survey results clearly indicate that RIAs are only somewhat academically engaged, even less socially engaged and even fewer exhibit the traits of a liberal education. Therefore, RIAs are not fully engaged, are achieving good grades, are persisting in PSE in Ontario but have potential to exhibit stronger hallmarks of a liberal education.

Some of this lack of engagement is predicated on RIAs' arrival in Canada. The very attributes that help many immigrants enter Canada, such as their English language proficiency, work experience and credentials, are invariably discounted by Canadian employers and PSE. Many Canadian employers seemingly refuse to hire new immigrants because they feel that immigrants do not speak, read, comprehend and write English well enough, they do not recognize and/or value immigrant's foreign credentials and feel that their lack of Canadian work experience will hinder them in doing well in a Canadian job. Hence RIAs enter Ontario PSE to improve their English, obtain Canadian credentials and prepare for or even gain Canadian work experience while in PSE. While PSE generally does not have a significant influence on immigration policies or employer hiring practices, many RIAs expressed concern that PSE also discounts their attributes. Ontario PSE can provide RIAs with Canadian educational credentials but often at the cost of RIAs repeating courses that they completed in their source country. Sometimes because of a lack of advanced standing and/or concerns over their English language proficiency, RIAs start an entirely new career. Because of the resilience of RIAs, their strong motivation and their unwavering focus on obtaining good marks and obtaining a Canadian credential, RIAs often complete PSE despite the layering of barriers that they experience and their lack of academic and social engagement.

While the literature argues to provide supports to adult students to help them persist, RIAs do not seem to have an issue with persistence but have limited time and motivation to use supports. Even though many RIAs complete PSE, they expressed some dissatisfaction in PSE likely caused by the numerous

barriers they face. Removing some of these barriers may not dramatically improve their engagement but could help to improve their satisfaction in PSE. The adult student literature identifies some strategies that help adult students become socially involved in PSE (Price & Baker, 2012; Taylor et al., 2011; Donaldson & Graham, 1999; Ashar & Skenes, 1993; Kasworm, 1990). In an applicable study on U.S. adult students, Wyatt (2011) found that the barriers or challenges that they experience in PSE are “exaggerated when students are unable to garner a sense of belonging or connection” (p. 11). This seems true for RIAS and the reverse likely is also true. If RIAS can feel more of a sense of belonging or connection in PSE, this may decrease the exaggerating effect of barriers on RIAS. Often RIAS are not socially involved in Ontario PSE and this hinders their engagement, improvement in English proficiency, learning of Canadian customs and ways of working and conducting oneself and networking skills. Unfortunately many Ontario university programs do not have any connection with employers and do not have coop or internship possibilities and so RIAS may finish PSE and still not have any Canadian work experience that is critical to them obtaining a job after completion of Ontario PSE.

While it is clear that RIAS are not socially involved in PSE, providing opportunities outside of the classroom for RIAS to connect with faculty and students will likely not engage RIAS. RIAS are not motivated to spend time outside of the classroom. RIAS are only motivated with classroom activities and support services that are directly related to their academic success. RIAS social support structure does not quickly change (Bean & Metzner, 1985) and their bicultural engagement is with their family, friends and community (Ross, 2010; Guiffrida, 2006) and this social support network helps RIAS persist in PSE. Country of origin is a very significant predictor of social engagement for RIAS. Given that RIAS are not motivated to be socially engaged in PSE but have their support networks with family and friends outside of PSE, perhaps this is because their family and friends are from the same country of origin as themselves. They feel that they “fit” into their community more than they belong in the post-secondary community. Therefore, RIAS feel an affinity with people from their own country of origin and heritage and this heritage is a significant predictor to their being socially engaged in PSE. Perhaps if their country of origin’s culture, interactions and social networks are somewhat similar to Canada, RIAS may be more socially engaged in PSE but the reverse may also be true. While it is not possible to change the social culture and customs within

PSE, it is possible to be explicit in helping RIAS connect with family and friends outside PSE and even involve this support network in orientation and other activities within PSE. For instance, it may be possible to provide seminars for all students, faculty and administrators on the various cultures and customs that are present on campus. This will support RIAS bicultural outlook and may in fact help socially engage RIAS. Therefore, the synthesis of the results of this study identifies and supports some institutional strategies that could improve the effective engagement of RIAS in PSE.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE

Removing specific barriers that RIAS face could help improve their experience and engagement in PSE. Likely only student services that are directly related to RIAS academic success will be utilized. It is probable that only in-class solutions and networking with peers outside PSE may work to help the socialization of RIAS but given the limited literature on RIAS, it may also be an area for future research.

Immigrant-Specific Overseas Advising Services

The literature and RIAS spoke about the lack of awareness of the uniqueness and requirements of the Canadian educational system before coming to Canada. Immigrant-specific overseas advising services could help mitigate some of these access barriers experienced by RIAS. Most post-secondary institutions have recruiters traveling domestically to advise Canadian students on studying at their particular institution. While PSE often also has international recruiters to help international students enter Canadian PSE, there are few immigrant-specific advisors to help immigrants navigate the Canadian post-secondary system. This concept was discussed in part by Chambers et al. (2008) through “one-on-one or small group activities with adult mentors” (p. 14). The CIIP project, developed by Canadian colleges, primarily provides employment advising but also provides some pre-college advising helping immigrants, while still in their source country, understand what education is needed for some professions in Canada.

This could be expanded to an immigrant-specific advising service for colleges and universities that is located in the source country to help immigrants with the following: understand the English proficiency level needed to study in a particular institution; determine how the immigrant’s credential will be evaluated by employers and, if applicable, professional associations and what upgrading or courses would be

necessary to enter this field in Canada; an assessment of their work experience and how to obtain coop or work placements in PSE in order to enter the field in Canada; comprehend the Canadian educational system even prior to entering the application stage of PSE; give a clear idea of how much advanced standing would be granted from their prior studies for a particular program in a Canadian institution; explain the differences between Canadian colleges and universities so that they can have a better appreciation of which educational system will meet their personal, study and employment needs (ACCC, 2008); and explain how the Canadian educational system differs from that in their source country so that they can make more informed choices and decisions upon entering Canada. Pre-PSE immigrant advising would also help RIAS recognize what they need to bring with them for admissions such as transcripts before leaving their source country. Such pre-PSE advising could give RIAS a better grasp of the unique policies, practices, teaching, learning and academic standards of PSE in Canada. Expanding this advising to include universities as well as all colleges could help to bridge some of the access barriers experienced by RIAS prior to entering PSE in Ontario.

Streamlined Admissions and Advanced Standing

RIAS in particular spoke about facing complicated admissions processes and the discounting of their foreign credentials by institutions. Streamlined admissions and advanced standing could help RIAS overcome these access barriers and improve their satisfaction in PSE. Resolving the admissions barrier obviously cannot include eliminating admissions requirements. Even Ontario College's open access programs still have essential admissions standards that applicants must meet as incoming GPA generally correlates with GPA achieved within PSE (Grayson, 2004). RIAS meeting current admissions standards likely means that they should perform quite well in coursework and this is validated as RIAS report good marks in PSE and persist to completion. Removing slang from the admissions application, making the admissions package shorter and simpler and defining terms used in the admissions application could help make the process more accessible for RIAS. Just as many institutions have specific support staff to help international students through admission, post-secondary schools could perhaps have staff identified to help RIAS in admission (Stebbleton, 2010). Having received diversity and foreign credential training, the admission specialist could quite adequately assist RIAS.

Admissions evaluation of transcripts, particularly in Ontario colleges, is inequitable, expensive and slow for RIAS. The barrier could be removed by colleges similarly evaluating all international and immigrant transcripts. There are three possible solutions: either the colleges could evaluate foreign transcripts for all students in-house at no additional charge; or they could outsource the evaluation of foreign transcripts to WES or ICAS at an additional charge to all international and immigrant students; or they could outsource all foreign credential evaluations but at a charge to the institution and the institution could, in turn, charge a higher application fee to all international and immigrant students to cover this external credential assessment. Universities already have the first exemplar set up for all applicants (universities charge a much higher application fee to international applicants) so the model is in the marketplace. While RIAS complained somewhat about the incongruent admissions and advanced standing decisions by different universities as well as the lack of transparency in the admission decision process, the overall university admission process seems quicker, less complicated and less expensive than the equivalent college process.

Not receiving considerable advanced standing for prior study and/or not receiving any advanced standing until very late in the admission process appears to affect RIAS choice of program. RIAS even enter an entirely new field of study because of the discounting of their prior knowledge and experience and/or their own concerns about their English language proficiency. Most colleges indicate that there is no central database tracking advanced standing given by the school. At many Ontario colleges, individual faculty members give credit for prior experience, credentials and completed courses. Given this individualized advanced standing and no precedent-storing database, this approach can result in inequitable assessments of RIAS prior learning. RIAS even spend additional funds for external evaluations that provide little help in obtaining more advanced credit and could result in a very inequitable advanced standing decision. While the CIITE and CSIPS projects have attempted to address this issue, there are numerous institutional and system-wide hurdles to overcome such a massive change.

Ontario colleges and universities could explore the creation of a more centralized evaluation of advanced standing that would allow for a growth of expertise in PSE evaluating transcripts course-by-course and in helping RIAS only take the courses necessary to fill the gaps in their education. Ryerson

University accomplishes this customized programming for individual RIAS in a few of their bridging programs. While this may be a more expensive process, it could provide strong value to RIAS with less discounting of their prior study and experience as they would not be repeating courses they have already successfully completed. RIAS could build on the knowledge they have already obtained rather than entering a new field of study because of a lack of advanced standing.

Programs Designed for RIAS

RIAS identified frustration with having to repeat numerous courses in Canada or even changing their field of study as well as difficulty understanding Canadian culture. Given Canada's need for specialized workers in many jobs and the high numbers of immigrants who come to Canada with expertise, PSE can help RIAS remain in their field of study by designing appropriate bridging programs or tailored study for RIAS. Educational institutions could develop customized fast-track study for RIAS that recognizes and values their prior learning and work experience that could include: additional certificate programs and increased pathways defined for programs so RIAS can see where the program will lead once they are finished studying, the expansion of professional programs that they could enter and increased coop or internship opportunities in as many programs as possible. Coop could give RIAS the much desired Canadian work experience that employers often say they lack. It could also help RIAS develop networks with employers so that they can be more gainfully employed upon completing PSE.

At the same time, these programs for RIAS could teach the more intangible lessons such as the Canadian way of working, how to conduct one-self in Canada, socialization skills used in a particular field and specific Canadian technical knowledge. Developing these highly refined programs may take significantly more time and money but is supported by the findings of this dissertation and the literature (Stebleton, 2010; Girard, 2010; Birrell & McIsaac, 2006). Using government funding, Ryerson has piloted a few of these uniquely tailored programs in their continuing education department. Essentially the program advisors and/or faculty members could construct an individualized study path for RIAS. This would create a much stronger fit for RIAS with their course of study building on their prior learning and work experience but also giving them the critical skills to quickly obtain employment in Ontario. This could significantly decrease RIAS' time, frustration and expense spent in PSE.

RIAS-Specific Orientation with Mentors

RIAS identified problems in knowing where services were located, what services were available and general questions about the institution. Orientation to PSE is one critical stage in helping bridge many barriers for students. General orientation for traditional students did not significantly help the few RIAS who attended orientation. PSE could create RIAS-specific orientation, have second or third-year RIAS invite new RIAS to orientation, more broadly advertise orientation for RIAS and invite RIAS family and friends to join them in the orientation. Given RIAS limited time, it is unclear if they would be motivated to attend orientation. Perhaps by being personally invited to attend by mentors and having their family and friends join them, RIAS may be motivated to attend orientation. These RIAS-specific orientation sessions could use immigrant alumni or experienced RIAS to talk about the more informal aspects of studying at the institution. Maken (2009) developed numerous ideas for institutions to help improve orientation such as the following:

Social/networking opportunities: formal, informal, inside and outside the classroom, peer and academic; senior student support: opportunities to engage with senior students; learning: roles and responsibilities, expectations and requirements, learning styles and strategies; systems, spaces, support: learning environments (online, rooms and buildings) library, student support facilities; organisation: time management, study strategies, communication strategies; study skills development: introduction to referencing, plagiarism, language, assessment strategies; course/units/career direction: confirming choices in career direction and unit choices (and supporting change where appropriate); attendance: follow up with students who miss orientation activities and early tutorials; refresh (week 3): social and academic focus, readdressing key information, informal faculty events, support services promotion. (p. 15)

Many of the above ideas could help RIAS if they actually attended orientation. In order to improve attendance and the communication of the informal aspects of attending the institution, it would be ideal for second or third year students to attend orientation with the first year RIAS, who could act as a mentor for RIAS in their first few semesters in the school. This could provide the first school friendship for many RIAS and begin to transfer information such as the uniqueness of Canadian PSE and the particular institution to RIAS as well as details on registrarial services, financial aid, faculty expectations and student services. In the focus groups, RIAS recommended that institutions advertise orientation through the school newspaper, social media, initial campus tour, admit package flyers, website, campus posters and the classroom. Having RIAS friends, family and especially their partner attend orientation with them, as

outlined by Tracy (2004), would also help encourage them to attend and to develop the support networks while in PSE as well as mitigate any tensions that could arise between their family and the PSE context. RIAS-specific orientation sessions could help create Tinto's (1987) notion of the beginnings of integration.

Strategic Financial Aid for RIAS

RIAS noted that lack of money is the foundation of many of the access and persistence barriers they face. Freeing up RIAS financially so that they do not have to seek off-campus employment to pay for their studies could also help alleviate some of the time barriers that they face. Financial aid workshops designed for RIAS could help RIAS with their aversion to loans and debt, realize how loans in the Canadian context could help alleviate stress while studying and understand the scholarships that are available to them. Clear and slang-free documentation that is widely disseminated on loans, scholarships and bursaries could also benefit RIAS. Earmarking specific scholarships and aid for RIAS would also help them possibly receive more aid as well as feel like the institution is trying to directly service their needs.

Other potential recommendations to solve this complex issue include reviewing and altering the Ontario Student Assistance Plan (OSAP). The current Ontario Student Access Guarantee states that “no qualified Ontario student will be prevented from pursuing a postsecondary education due to lack of financial support” (Government of Ontario, 2011). The OSAP system is quite complex for RIAS to determine eligibility. If a RIAS tries to work while studying and their course load drops to below 60%, they cannot get OSAP support. Similarly, if their spouse is making some money, RIAS then may not receive a student loan. Given that many immigrants already are culturally averse to taking out loans and are worried about their ability to repay the debt, this stringent criteria complicates their ability to gain aid.

Most faculty and administrators in PSE hire part-time and summer students as their research or teaching assistant. RIAS spoke about their need to work and literature argues that on-campus work can help increase social engagement (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1993). The Human Resource department and/or career services could develop a database of potential RIAS seeking employment on campus that administrators could access in hiring throughout the year. This could benefit the campus by having good work completed often at a lower cost than full-time staff while providing RIAS with much needed part-time and on-campus Canadian work experience. These steps could help to mitigate the financial barriers

experienced by RIAS and through on-campus employment, as supported by Astin (1993), also help RIAS be more involved in PSE.

Helping RIAS Overcome English Barriers

Grayson (2008) concluded, in studying second generation immigrant students, that Canadian higher education institutions are actually perpetuating the disadvantage of ESL and non-European students. This appears to also be true for RIAS. Supported by Grayson (2008), one recommendation is for PSE to develop significant support structures to improve the linguistic capital of RIAS. These structures could begin with a strong system of English assessment at the point of entering PSE that would place RIAS in the appropriate level of English instruction to help their verbal, writing, reading and listening comprehension skills. Regardless of program of study, having RIAS take a minimum of one English course could help improve their English abilities. Given that country of origin is a predictor of academic and social engagement in PSE for RIAS, some of this influence on engagement could be in fact due to the inherent English skills of RIAS from particular regions in the world. While this was not researched in-depth in this dissertation, supporting the English skills of RIAS may help them better engage in PSE.

Occupation Specific Language Training (OSLT) is offered to RIAS in a limited number of programs only at a few colleges. Another recommendation is to expand OSLT to as many vocational programs at Ontario colleges and universities as stated in the ACCC (2007) report. Verbal English is especially important for RIAS to do well in future employment interviews. Improving verbal proficiency could occur through one-on-one verbal training with staff and even through the aforementioned mentorship activities. These approaches are supported by Casner-Lotto's (2011) research that demonstrates how colleges, in particular, are redesigning ESL programs by "breaking down 'ESL silos' and encouraging greater collaboration among ESL, academic, workforce development, and student services departments" (p. 3-4). The key is to provide English supports for RIAS that will help improve English abilities so that post-PSE, RIAS will no longer need these support structures.

Easing Age, Culture, Time and Childcare Barriers

Even though the average age and diversity of students in PSE in Canada is slowly increasing, PSE

has not yet bridged this gap in particular for RIAS. RIAS felt a general lack of recognition of the age and cultural barriers that they face in PSE. Some institutions begin each year with diversity training during orientation sessions for all students. This type of diversity training could be expanded to include mandatory experiential instruction for all students, staff and faculty including age, culture, ethnicity, language, religion, work ethic and even personality and programmatic differences. The sessions could focus on understanding and respecting diversity and specifically RIAS' bicultural outlook. It could work towards educating new Canadians about the specific institutional culture so that they can learn how to best function in PSE but not to lose their own personal and cultural identity. Bridging this cultural gap is critical as country of origin is a very significant predictor of academic and social engagement. Perhaps involving RIAS friends, family and especially partners in these sessions could help socially support RIAS in PSE.

In addition to a lack of money, RIAS have very little time. Maken (2009) ascertained that incorporating time management seminars, student services information and also first assignment feedback into lectures could help benefit students. In some schools, the information would be so detailed that the institution could consider offering a first year for-credit fundamentals course that would give information to all students including RIAS that would ensure they receive these critical institutional details.

On-Campus Childcare

One practical way PSE can help ease family responsibilities, time and financial barriers is through having on-campus childcare with extended hours to accommodate RIAS so that they wouldn't have so much difficulty in attending classes because of their parental responsibilities. This could assist RIAS with some of their lack of time issues and allow them to spend more time on campus.

Accessible Faculty

One clear factor of engagement for students and particularly RIAS is their interaction with faculty. Many RIAS expressed sincere appreciation for their professors and a desire to strengthen the learning relationship. This finding runs contrary to Bean & Metzner's (1985) argument that nontraditional students have less interaction in PSE with faculty (p. 489). In order to further improve the experience and learning of RIAS, there are a few recommendations to help strengthen RIAS-faculty relations: have faculty keep

regular posted office hours; create training sessions for faculty on the various ethnic, cultural, gender, orientation, religions, learning styles etc. of RIAS so that they can be sensitive, celebrate differences and offer a culturally-responsive curriculum; flexibility in assignment deadlines to accommodate RIAS work and life commitments as supported by MacFadgen (2008); speak more slowly and try to either avoid slang or explain colloquial terms that are not in a dictionary; be aware of the services on campus and suggest these services when RIAS demonstrate a need; continue to offer participation marks to encourage RIAS to be verbally involved in class; perhaps create RIAS ownership of their learning through having more RIAS-directed study as discussed by MacFadgen (2008) and/or service learning that is supported by Sherman (2008); encourage broad diversity in composition of groups so that RIAS can learn from their Canadian classmates and this diverse interaction could help the social inclusion of RIAS; and vary the style and delivery of lectures and classes (at times more interactive, experiential and collaborative) to help reach the varied educational backgrounds, expectations, learning styles and experiences of RIAS.

Increasing Visibility of and Giving Voice to RIAS

Very few Ontario post-secondary institutions know the number of RIAS on campus. Only a few colleges record immigration status of its full-time students. Gray et al. (1996) found that only 8 of the 14 colleges researched “were able or willing to provide the research team with any statistical data about immigrant student (permanent resident or refugee) enrollments, and only two routinely reviewed enrollment data about immigrant students” (p. 30). Generally PSE could ask the immigration status of its students in order to know who and how many RIAS are attending the school. Only at that point can the institution start to better understand the barriers RIAS face and how to help RIAS overcome barriers as well as track and improve the level of RIAS satisfaction and engagement in PSE.

Institutions, therefore, could add the following to their survey of first-year registered students (full-time and part-time): country of citizenship; Canadian citizen or landed immigrant (yes or no); if yes to the previous question, when did you become a Canadian citizen (at birth or year of citizenship); and country of birth. Generally it is not advisable to add these criteria to the admissions application as some applicants could be concerned that ethnicity, ethnic heritage and/or citizenship could have a bearing on their admissibility. Recording these statistics, though, could help institutions to understand how many

RIAS are on campus, what programs they are attending and their use of the student services. By identifying RIAS on campus, the institution can also work to increase awareness of RIAS and to help RIAS who are at risk or who need additional English or financial supports. It could also be the beginnings of increasing visibility of RIAS and giving RIAS a voice on campus. It would be equitable for RIAS to be recognized on campus in much the same way as international students. As post-secondary institutions start to recognize the presence of RIAS on their campus, then they can begin to track and improve their experience and engagement.

Summary of Recommendations

The above strategies, if implemented in PSE, may help RIAS overcome numerous barriers, improve the experience of and further the engagement of RIAS in PSE. Virtually all student engagement literature supports the removal of or assistance overcoming barriers in order to improve student persistence and their experience. For RIAS, these strategies could help improve the academic and/or social engagement of RIAS in Ontario PSE but this notion could also be an area for further research.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ENGAGEMENT THEORY

There are many attributes of the traditional engagement model that apply to RIAS. Similarly, much of the adult and nontraditional engagement theory is pertinent to RIAS. That being said, these theoretical models could be expanded somewhat to include the barriers RIAS face in PSE and some strategies that could help RIAS overcome these barriers. Traditional engagement theory argues that students who face many barriers and are not involved in PSE academically perform poorly and do not persist in PSE. Yet, RIAS face many barriers and despite not being socially involved in PSE still academically perform well and generally persist to completion in PSE. RIAS have a unique resilience in PSE largely due to their parental and/or family belief in the importance of PSE, their strong motivation to obtain a Canadian credential and related Canadian work experience, their family and friends support network and their belief that even though PSE will be difficult, they will persist and thusly create a better life in Canada for themselves and their family.

RIAS face many of the same barriers as traditional and adult students but experience these barriers differently. RIAS face the layering and compounding of barriers that makes it very difficult for RIAS to be involved in PSE beyond what is in the classroom. Unlike many adult and traditional students, most RIAS face strong English proficiency barriers, have very little financial resources, lack time and are still experiencing settlement issues. This unique situation calls for PSE to take rather creative approaches in dealing with RIAS issues such as providing immigrant-specific overseas advising, streamlined admissions, programs designed for RIAS, a RIAS-specific orientation, strategic financial aid and English supports in order to help mitigate the multitude of barriers confronting RIAS.

The survey results clearly indicate that approximately 15% of RIAS experience strong academic engagement, about 5% experience strong social engagement and about 3% strongly exhibit the hallmarks of a liberal education. Because academic and social engagement are both predictors of the traits of a liberal education, then if post-secondary institutions increase academic and social engagement RIAS in turn should more strongly exhibit the characteristics of a liberal education. Ultimately one of the most important recommendations to increase RIAS engagement in PSE is to help RIAS become more socially involved on campus. The lack of socialization of RIAS, according to Wyatt (2011), can also exaggerate the nature of barriers. By overcoming barriers, this may compensate for some of the lack of socialization of RIAS and help improve their experience in PSE. Literature, key informants and RIAS agree that finding a place to fit into PSE is critical to RIAS satisfaction and engagement in PSE. RIAS experience numerous barriers keeping them from socialization but likely the strongest barrier is motivation. RIAS generally do not have time for, do not see the value in and as a whole do not place a high priority on socialization in PSE. A byproduct of increasing RIAS fit into PSE could help offset Wyatt's (2011) notion of the exaggeration of barriers experienced by students when they are not socially engaged in PSE. Socialization of RIAS, if not properly framed and implemented, could seem akin to colonization. Frankly, all students in PSE need to have social interaction and the only way to help RIAS fit into PSE is to be deliberate in increasing social opportunities for all students including RIAS. The literature and RIAS agree that their primary social network is with their family, friends and community. PSE could provide a number of opportunities to connect RIAS with their important social supports both inside and outside PSE.

Price and Baker (2012) argued that “adults may utilize the classroom as the avenue for developing friendships and making meaning of their college experience” (p. 30). Similarly, Ashar and Skenes (1993) noted that adult students persist because of the classroom social environment. Kasworm (2003) recommended conducting research inside the classroom to discover what is engaging adult students even though they are socially connecting outside of PSE. Donaldson and Graham (1999) identified the connecting classroom as being critical to socially engaging adults in PSE. Engagement literature makes some references to how learning spaces in PSE help students study, socialize and be more engaged (Matthews, 2011). Kuh et al. (2007) suggested that the classroom be the “locus of community” (p. 37), where faculty members can teach the traditions and values of the institution as well as inform RIAS about campus procedures, policies, events and deadlines. Taylor et al. (2011) further argued the importance of adult students becoming more socially literate, developing social capital and increasing social learning outcomes. The authors also link human and social capital together demonstrating that there are “measurable financial outcomes of learning” (Ibid., p. 19).

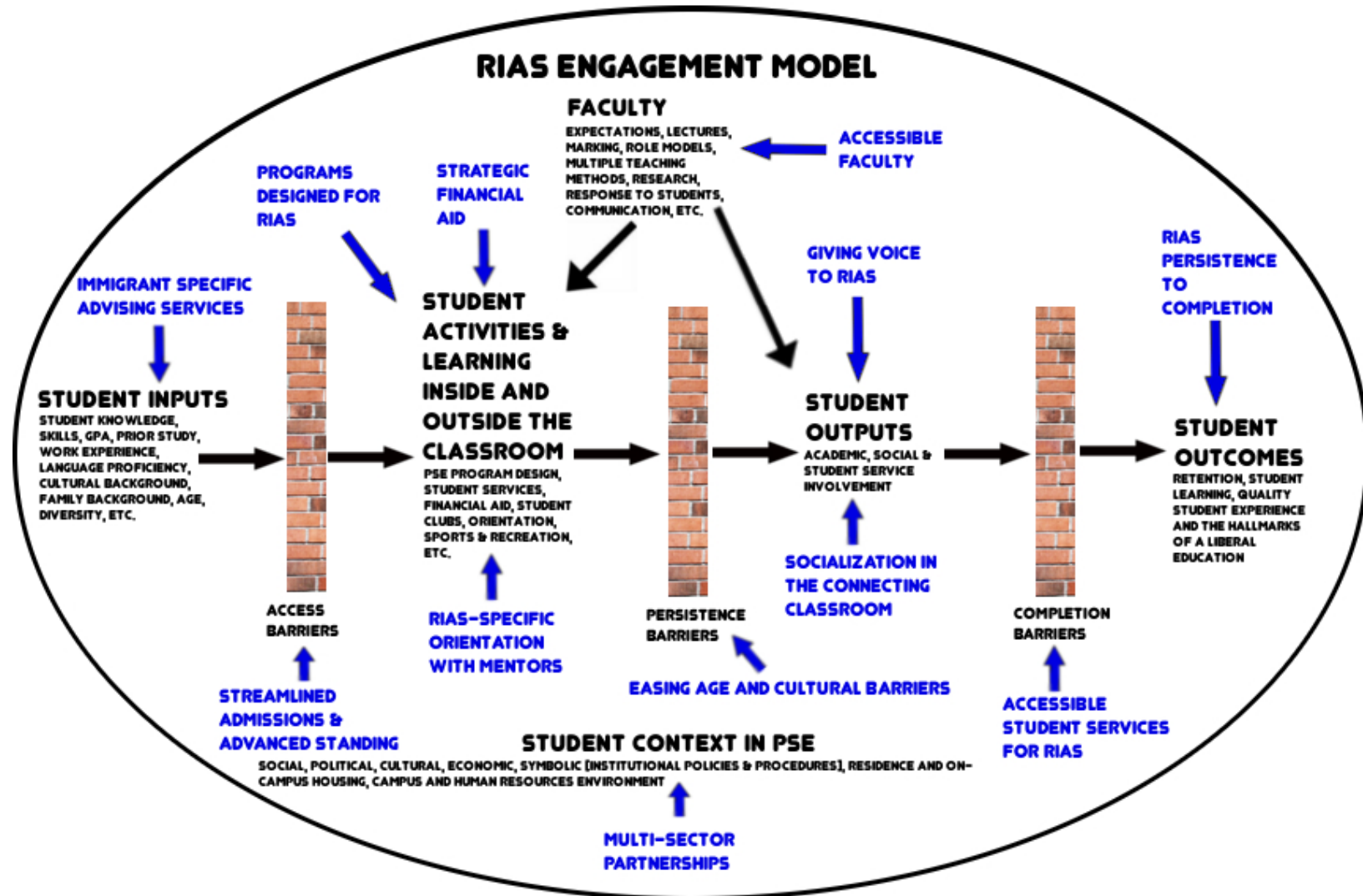
It is possible to apply this concept to RIAS who are attending PSE in order to have stronger job prospects resulting from obtaining the credential. In order to develop skills in networking with Canadians, it is also important for RIAS to practice developing social skills in the classroom so that they can use these skills when trying to network to obtain better employment opportunities. Institutions could bring together services, courses and constructs that will socially integrate RIAS right inside the classroom and/or link social activities with the academic mission. MacFadgen (2008) discussed creating social spaces within departmental areas in order to increase RIAS-faculty interactions and space to accommodate the socialization of RIAS. This strategy seems to be congruent with RIAS motivation to be academically involved in PSE especially in relation to classroom activities.

Another recommendation, therefore, is whether a system similar to participation marks given by faculty members could help increase RIAS socialization. This could be similar to what Adelman (2007) referred to as a “contract for participation” (p. 51). It could involve faculty giving socialization marks to students who attend a relevant on-campus event such as a social event, athletic competition, art show, concert, research presentation, culture crawl and pub night on campus as articulated by MacFadgen (2008).

Kuh et al. (2007) similarly supported this activity and referred to increasing interactions with “agents of socialization” (p. 4) such as staff, faculty and other students. Finding a common free time is difficult for students but some of this activity could be supported if there is one lunch hour a week where there are no classes on campus so that all students including RIAS would be able to join together in a social activity. If RIAS see that they should participate in, for instance, diverse group projects or cultural crawls in order to obtain a participation mark for their class, they could then be compelled to be involved socially. This can help PSE tap into immigrant optimism, where they believe that PSE is a “means of social and economic mobility” (p. 46), as described by Sweet et al. (2010). RIAS could also invite family or friends to these activities to strengthen their support network and the connection between their social network and PSE. Parental and family expectations of RIAS, as discussed by Sweet et al. (2010), not only increase RIAS educational aspirations but also act as a “buffer against structural disadvantage and results in higher levels of academic achievement and school attainment” (p. 11-12). This finding could account for some of the academic success of RIAS despite them facing numerous barriers. Creating opportunities to bring parents and families of RIAS on campus, such as at orientation or an event, could help connect the family to PSE, their support of RIAS in PSE and the socialization of RIAS in PSE.

RIAS demonstrated concern about obtaining employment upon graduation. A suggestion would be to have a seminar as part of orientation that demonstrates clearly to RIAS that they could perform even better academically and possibly obtain a job more quickly if they attempt to integrate socially on campus. Leaders could compile and present statistics that a lack of social integration negatively influences employment. Acquiring social capital, as discussed by Anisef et al. (2009), helps RIAS in their search for a job and increases opportunities for career development. Another recommendation is for immigrant alumni to return to campus and speak to RIAS about how socializing in PSE helped them to develop their English communication skills and networking skills and that these together helped them tap into the hidden job market. Anisef et al. (2008) agree that “efforts to improve the student experience for immigrants will help provide an enabling environment for effectively integrating them into the Canadian labour market” (p. i). Reitz (2007) and Taylor et al. (2011) argue that education helps RIAS develop human and social capital. Once RIAS are regularly involved in social activities and can see the direct correlation between social

Figure 8 – RIAS Engagement Model



involvement, academic achievement and building networks for career success, they could start to seek out additional opportunities to socially integrate in PSE and society.

Developing a New Model of Engagement for RIAS

The Student Engagement Model that was developed from the literature review (Chapter II) is located in Figure 7 of Chapter III. A new RIAS Engagement Model, as seen in Figure 8, builds on the more traditional Student Engagement Model and incorporates the findings from this study, the recommendations to mitigate barriers experienced by RIAS as well as the suggestions to increase academic and social engagement. This is a preliminary working model of engagement that is supported by the findings of this dissertation. This RIAS Engagement Model provides a clear, important and robust justification for developing stronger supports for RIAS as well as a foundation for further research to strengthen RIAS engagement in PSE.

Building on and furthering the traditional student, adult, non-traditional and immigrant student engagement literature, this RIAS Engagement Model takes into account the numerous findings from this dissertation including the key informant interviews, focus groups, institutional artifacts, histories, policies and practices and RIAS surveys. Specifically at each stage in the post-secondary life-cycle of RIAS, this model offers potential easing of access, persistence and completion barriers experienced by RIAS, immigrant-specific supports to existing student services, modifications to PSE policies and procedures, changes to the PSE-context, program additions, faculty supports and post-secondary enhancements to academically and socially engage RIAS in PSE so that they may demonstrate stronger traits of a liberal education.

The aim, through this model, is the following: to help assist RIAS to overcome the various barriers in PSE and through the many stages of post-secondary education and life; to provide a platform for research and discussion on ways to improve the experience of RIAS in PSE; and to begin a model outlining factors that could increase the academic and social involvement of RIAS so as to more fully engage RIAS in PSE.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

While this study has aimed to further the student engagement literature and in particular the research on RIAS student engagement, it has also identified a number of research gaps that could be studied. While there are a number of solutions above to help mitigate RIAS barriers, these are suggestions that have theoretical support in the adult engagement literature but not significant support in the limited RIAS research. Implementing these suggestions and tracking RIAS engagement in PSE before and after the changes could help to support the validity of these recommendations.

Multi-layering of Barriers, Career Changes & Program Level Study

In the literature review, there is no identified study examining the layering of barriers experienced by traditional, non-traditional and/or RIAS and the subsequent effect on the experience and engagement of RIAS in PSE. This research gap is quite important to be filled so that PSE can attempt to best address the multiplicity of barriers experienced in particular by RIAS. Likewise many RIAS, as noted in this study, feel compelled to change careers when they come to Canada. There is little research on the cause of this career shift. Bridging this research gap could assist RIAS to complete training more quickly, help RIAS be more satisfied in PSE and ultimately could benefit the Canadian economy. Also, this multi-institutional and multi-sectoral study reviewed the responsiveness of PSE to RIAS from a broad institutional level. Research is needed at the program, school or faculty level to determine the barriers experienced by RIAS and factors of RIAS engagement within a specific program.

English Proficiency Research

One can appreciate that it is considerably difficult for RIAS to learn to speak English fluently without an accent as well as read, write and comprehend English but there are some RIAS that overcome this hurdle. Ontario PSE is working hard at helping RIAS improve their English proficiency. Ironically, RIAS are obtaining good marks in PSE but it is not known if RIAS are obtaining and retaining stronger skills in English. RIAS expressed frustration with their ability and improvement in English in PSE. Grayson (2009) studied the English communication skills of university students who are children of immigrants and found that the “university GPAs of immigrant and non-European origin groups are

generally lower than those of native-born Canadians” (p. 33). There still remains a gap in the literature concerning the English ability of RIAS, finding out how RIAS best learn, how to yield consistent and regular application of the learning and the best way to markedly improve RIAS English proficiency. Given that country of origin is a significant predictor of RIAS academic and social engagement, more research is needed to determine the linkages between RIAS English proficiency, country of origin and academic and social engagement in PSE and then to identify appropriate English supports for RIAS. Additional research about the best methods to help RIAS improve their spoken and written English in particular could be completed so that PSE can close this apparent gap. A helpful study could also be fulfilled on the effect of changing the minimum English proficiency levels for admission to Ontario PSE, how this would shape RIAS academic and social engagement in PSE and how it would influence their employment.

Research to Support Definitions of Student Types

While some literature draws a distinction between international students and RIAS, many Ontario colleges and universities equate these types of students. Institutional responses to questions for this dissertation often equated adult students, international students and part-time students with RIAS. Further research could be conducted to create universally accepted definitions of RIAS, international students and mature students as well as the barriers faced by these students and the institutional services and strategies that engage these diverse students. Once educational institutions clearly understand the differences between these types of students, they can better identify and respond to the differing barriers that these students face, the individual ways they experience these barriers and the specific factors to effectively engage them.

Research on the Motivation and Persistence of RIAS

Tinto and many other researchers studied the reasons why traditional students leave PSE. Tangential to this literature is a lack of understanding the full reasons why RIAS persist in PSE against so many odds. Grayson (1997a) noted that further research is needed to understand how adult learners, who experience little or no social engagement on campus, remain successful in PSE. A study could be conducted to review the factors that bring RIAS such strong resilience in PSE similar to the immigrant optimism literature from the high school sector. Understanding these motivational factors could possibly

help PSE apply the same concepts to help motivate adult, diverse and possibly traditional students. Case (2008) suggested further research on adult students who tend to experience alienation from their own cultural backgrounds. It would be noteworthy to have research on whether this is also true for RIAS. Also Ross (2010) argued that immigrants use the social and cultural capital gained from their friends, family and community as support through their secondary studies. Further research on this notion could help to explain if this is true for RIAS and might assist in explaining RIAS persistence in PSE.

Research on Multi-Sector Partnerships

Another area for further research is on PSE creating multi-sector partnerships. RIAS could use support in integrating into PSE in much the same way as they could use assistance in settling in Canadian society. PSE may not have the required resources, expertise and capabilities to help RIAS settle. As also identified and supported by Casner-Lotto (2011) and ACCC (2007), PSE could develop meaningful partnerships with multiple agencies, faith-based groups, labour organizations, community service providers, various levels of government agencies, other educational institutions, professional associations, employers and industry sector councils. This could allow PSE to leverage existing competencies, relationships, strengths and resources to help RIAS further settle and engage in PSE and in Canadian society.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES AND LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

There are a number of strengths of this study. This is the first study of its kind into the experience of RIAS, classroom encounters, academic and social performance, motivation, success and engagement in PSE. It also is a dual sectoral study including both colleges and universities in Ontario. While it often is quite difficult to locate participants and especially RIAS in qualitative and quantitative research, this study managed to include a wide, broad and diverse group of participants. A significant number of respected key informants were part of the research and there were so many RIAS that not only were part of the quantitative survey but also wanted to be part of the interviews that the researcher changed the research study to include focus groups instead of interviews in order to handle the large response. Together these form unique strengths of this dissertation.

The study also has a number of weaknesses. Being the first study of its kind, there is no comparable PSE data on RIAS experience in PSE and very limited research on RIAS barriers. This in combination with a relatively small survey sample made it quite difficult to derive broader applications of the results to the RIAS population. There also is no agreed upon measure of student engagement, academic involvement and social involvement in PSE, which causes some difficulty in measuring these factors for RIAS. This research also is a snapshot in time that brings some challenges in ascertaining if the difficulties experienced by RIAS were a temporary issue or a broader and more systemic problem.

There also were a number of limitations of this study. Initially using personal key informant contacts and using the “snowball” technique to locate additional key informants may not have provided a random sample but did allow the researcher to obtain the needed information. While many RIAS were randomly contacted to participate in the study, the RIAS who were included in this study self-identified in particular for the focus group portion. This approach could exclude RIAS who did not have sufficient free time to join in the focus group so the selection of participants contains an element of self-selection bias. Likewise this study only included RIAS who were currently attending PSE. Therefore RIAS who did not persist in PSE were not included in the study, which limits the scope of the study. Also this dissertation analyzed barriers and factors of engagement for RIAS in various programs in PSE. There may be more subtle differences between barriers experienced by RIAS who are enrolled in specific programs. Further the predictors and factors of engagement for RIAS may be distinctly unique for RIAS based on their field of study.

SUMMARY

Canada is known as a land of immigrants. Many of the adult immigrants who arrive in Canada cannot find employment and therefore attend PSE. RIAS in this study represent an expanding student population in Ontario. This research is a unique investigation that yields vital data on RIAS barriers, institutional responses to RIAS, factors that contribute to the engagement of RIAS and institutional strategies that could help improve the experience of RIAS. This examination furthers the student engagement in PSE literature by providing an original view into RIAS experiences in PSE.

Much of the policies and practices in PSE are predicated on a traditional student. The seminal theorists' approach assumes that most students generally fit into this traditional engagement model. As established by the results of this study, the traditional model of engagement does not apply well to RIAS. While some adjustments have been made to accommodate adult and more diverse students in PSE, little research has been conducted on RIAS experiences in higher education. PSE in Ontario seems to know little of the number, type, experiences and engagement of RIAS on campus. As this study demonstrates, the traditional engagement model could be expanded in order to better understand engagement or rather the lack of engagement of RIAS in PSE.

Conclusions

Key responses to the research questions include the following: the multi-layering of barriers experienced by RIAS that compound their ability to engage in PSE, the most critical factor behind the lack of engagement for RIAS is their minimal social involvement in PSE and there are vital institutional strategies to help RIAS overcome barriers and increase engagement in PSE. While there are numerous recommendations for changes within PSE as well as to institutional policies and procedures, further researching the new RIAS model of engagement in PSE and substantiating the ability to socially involve RIAS in the classroom and motivating RIAS to be socially involved in PSE could result in the beginnings of RIAS engagement. When institutions increase the academic and social engagement of RIAS in PSE, RIAS should exhibit stronger hallmarks of a liberal education. This is a very significant reason for PSE to make an investment in the engagement of RIAS in each institution. This noble endeavour will help RIAS become more fully engaged citizens and truly assist them in their settlement experience in Ontario. This dissertation therefore expands the student engagement literature to benefit an under-researched recent immigrant adult student population.

The most important finding in this study is that RIAS are performing well academically in PSE despite the numerous barriers that they face and their lack of engagement. Their strong motivation to complete PSE and their inherent immigrant optimism is such that they seem to persist to completion. RIAS, though, seem rather dissatisfied in PSE likely due to the exaggeration of the effect of the barriers caused by RIAS lack of socialization in PSE (Wyatt, 2011). Institutions may be able to improve the experience of

RIAS by mitigating some of these barriers. The beginnings of social engagement for RIAS may be able to occur when RIAS are connected socially in the classroom. This leads to another very significant finding that RIAS country of birth is a predictor of academic and social engagement and that both forms of engagement are predictors of a liberal education. Understanding how PSE can respond to the incredible diversity of RIAS will have an impact on RIAS engagement and in them further developing the traits of a liberal education.

Likely the most important conclusion one could draw from this study is that there is not one specific way to overcome the barriers that RIAS face in PSE and not one institutional strategy to improve the experience and engagement of RIAS in PSE (Erisman, 2007). RIAS are uniquely different than international and mature students. By quickly responding to RIAS, Ontario universities and colleges could see an improved RIAS experience. Through developing creative ways to socially connect RIAS in PSE, RIAS may begin to be more engaged in PSE and more fully engaged citizens in Ontario.

Chapter IX – Appendices

APPENDIX A – GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Defining a Recent Immigrant Adult Student in Ontario Post-Secondary Education

In this dissertation, the term *recent* refers to an immigrant adult student who has come to Canada within the past 10 years or less as a permanent resident, landed immigrant or relatively new Canadian citizen. An *immigrant* is considered to be a person who enters Canada with the direct “intention of remaining here permanently” (Erisman & Looney, 2007, p. 9). Immigrants often migrate to Canada to live, work and raise a family. A *landed immigrant* is a person who “has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities” (Lo et al., 2010, p. 7). For the purposes of this study, a *recent immigrant* generally has not lived in Canada very long but does not include nonpermanent residents such as visa holders and/or refugees (Lo et al., 2010). It is important to note that immigrants are considered as those who have left their source country to settle in Canada. In this research project, the term *adult* refers to a person who is 24 years or older. A *student* in this dissertation refers to a person who is enrolled full-time or part-time in a post-secondary institution. This includes an individual enrolled for study in a college or university for an undergraduate, graduate, English as a Second Language preparation or continuing education program and, at times, the term includes the pre-student who is in the application stage.

A *Recent Immigrant Adult Student (RIAS)* is represented by two major sub-groups: post-secondary students enrolled in degree or diploma programs and internationally-educated professional students (IEPs) enrolled in bridging education programs. It can be argued that RIAS in comparison to international students, the latter possessing Canadian student visas, may be more invested in PSE education since they are in the early stages of being Canadian citizens. In this study, *post-secondary education (PSE)* and a *post-secondary educational institution* refer to a publicly-funded university and/or college within Ontario.

Defining an International Student

Faculty, institutional administrators and many involved in post-secondary education often do not distinguish between international and immigrant students largely because they are visually similar. It is critical to understand for the purposes of this study, though, what constitutes an international student. An immigrant was briefly defined above and the differences between an immigrant and an international student

are discussed in more depth in Chapter II. An *international student* generally comes to Canada for the sole purpose of obtaining a post-secondary diploma or degree (Erisman & Looney, 2007) and is temporarily away from their home country to attend PSE “with a study visa and intend to return to their country of origin” (Casner-Lotto, 2011, p. 1). While there are a number of international students who remain in Canada after their study, this likely was not their original intention. If it were, they would immigrate to Canada and be considered an immigrant and not an international student. This study, though, deals solely with immigrant students and not international students.

Definition of a Traditional and Non-Traditional Student

Much of the education and services in Ontario post-secondary institutions were originally focused on a traditional student. Current student engagement literature identifies a *traditional student* as a young person fresh out of high school (approximately 18 years old) who studies full-time, is generally from a middle-class family and is a Caucasian who lives in an on-campus residence (Kasworm, 2003).

A non-traditional student, therefore, is by and large everyone else. A *non-traditional student* is generally someone who is not coming into PSE directly from high school and therefore is an older adult student who may study part-time or with a reduced load of courses. A non-traditional student can include someone who comes from a less wealthy and/or lower class family. It also can encompass someone who is racially diverse, commutes to campus from their family home or lives in off-campus housing.

Defining Leadership and Key Informants

Leadership, in this study, refers to key administrators in post-secondary institutions often in a supervisory role. A person who is in a leadership position in a post-secondary institution is considered a key informant for this research inquiry. A *key informant* refers to a person who has obtained a wealth of knowledge from lengthy service often in a senior management position in a post-secondary institution. This knowledgeable and experienced person often is a recognized authority on a specific subject, problem and/or issue who is held in high regard by the post-secondary community because of their accumulated knowledge. They are experts in the field who can provide input and feedback for this study.

Definition of the Student Experience

The ‘student experience’ is defined in the literature and by higher education institutions in numerous ways. The student experience can range from all life-happenings for students in PSE to more

consumer-oriented activities such as administrative policies and procedures and/or campus or support services to personal development or learning events in the life of a student generally happening on and off campus (Baird, 2009).

To summarize, the term *student experience* describes “a confluence of conditions that exist in and around campus environments that impact the degree to which students engage with others, their environments and develop knowledge, skills and their own sense of selves. It encompasses learning and development both inside and outside the classroom” (OISE TPS 1820, November 21, 2006). RIAS’ experiences and engagement within the academic environment is an important component of social integration.

There are many noted variations and usages of the term the ‘student experience’. Some writers refer to all learning encounters made by a student as being the student learning experience (Pascarella et al., 2004). Other researchers suggest that the student experience encompasses all happenings in the first year of a student’s life (Baird, 2009). Baird (2009) contends that the student experience is “mainly about learning in accordance with defined conditions and much less about accommodation, car parking, sporting facilities, or even student clubs” (p. 195). Bradley et al. (2008) also argues that the student experience involves teachers who “are responsive to learners, who treat students as an individual and enter into a two-way communication about matters that pertain to academic progress, all factors that would require an educator to embrace student diversity” (p.79).

Defining Student, Academic and Social Engagement

Student engagement is equally difficult to define. The concept of engagement has only been in use since about 1984 and while its use has “proliferated, definitional clarity has been elusive” (Appleton, Christenson & Furlong, 2008, p. 370). In discussing the engagement construct, Appleton et al. (2008) note that it is multidimensional and that some researchers argue for a model with two components (behavioural and affective or emotional) or a tripartite concept (adding cognitive to the mix). Fredricks (2011), in particular, advocates the three dimensional construct. Other researchers espouse four dimensions: behavioural, psychological, cognitive and academic (Appleton et al., 2008).

Miller et al. (2011) defines *student engagement* as a

students' [*sic*] willingness to actively participate in the learning process and to persist despite obstacles and challenges. Indicators of student engagement include class attendance and participation, submission of required work, involvement in the learning environment, and participation in the extra-curricular learning opportunities provided on their campus. (p. 2)

Coates (2005) similarly argues that engagement is vitally linked to productive learning both inside and outside the classroom. Coates states that learning “depends on institutions and staff providing students with the conditions, opportunities and expectations to become involved” (2005, p. 26). Coates (2005) further argues that student engagement includes the quality of energy that students exert in educationally purposeful endeavours that together are factors to desired outcomes. George Kuh (2009b), who founded the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), extends this definition such that “student engagement represents the time and effort students devote to activities that are empirically linked to desired outcomes of college and what institutions do to induce students to participate in these activities” (p. 683). While there is no generally accepted consensus on what constitutes the outcomes of PSE, according to Kuh’s (2009b) review of the literature, these include the following: cognitive development, psychosocial development, self-esteem, locus of control, moral and ethical development and persistence (p. 684).

According to Kuh (2003), student engagement includes the time and energy that students spend studying and learning both inside and outside the classroom. It also involves the institutional policies and procedures that bring about these conditions for active learning and participation. Kuh (2003) contends that the “engagement principle is deceptively simple, even self-evident: the more students study a subject, the more they learn about it. Likewise, the more students practice and get feedback on their writing, analyzing, or problem solving, the more adept they become” (p. 25). Carini, Kuh and Klein (2006) note that “student engagement is generally considered to be among the better predictors of learning and personal development. That is, students who are involved in educationally productive activities in college are developing habits of the mind and heart that enlarge their capacity for continuous learning and personal development” (p. 2). This learning develops transferable skills that are vital in seeking employment.

Student engagement has

evolved from the studies of student involvement (Astin), quality of effort (Pace), and interaction and integration (Tinto), and is now used to describe the effort, interest, and time that students invest in meaningful educational experiences. (CCI Research Inc., 2009, p. 14-15)

Kuh et al. (2006) ascertained that student engagement is comprised of two distinct attributes. Firstly, student engagement, as also stated above, includes the quality and quantity of time and effort that students put into their educationally purposeful activities. Secondly, student engagement involves how a post-secondary institution uses its financial and human resources, creates learning opportunities, designs the curriculum and offers support services to help students become involved inside and outside the classroom towards desired outcomes like persistence, learning, student satisfaction, skill development and ultimately graduation.

There are also links between the student experience and student engagement. Generally a positive student experience can help the engagement of a student. Similarly, student satisfaction and engagement “appear to be distinguishable although intimately related, and both are currently studied extensively as part of institutional improvement efforts at the postsecondary level” (CCI Research Inc., 2009, p. 16). It could be argued that Fredricks (2011) third dimension of student engagement, namely emotional engagement, actually describes the student experience. Emotional engagement, according to Fredricks (2011), describes the student “reactions to the school, teacher, and activities” (p. 328). Carrying this argument forward, cognitive engagement is essentially equivalent to academic engagement and behavioural engagement is also quite similarly related to social engagement. Lipps et al. (2003) similarly contend that the general model of engagement consists of academic and social engagement.

Occurring both inside and outside the classroom, Lipps et al. (2003) define *academic engagement* broadly as involvement in the academic aspects of PSE that

include students’ dealings with teachers, curriculum and school governance. Identification in the academic aspect can be further subdivided into belonging and valuing. ‘Belonging’ refers to a close correspondence between students’ perceived needs and the offerings of the school. It also refers to students’ perception that they are in an environment where they are cared about and respected. ‘Valuing’ refers to students’ endorsement of the general goals of education, especially those goals associated with academic achievement. For example, valuing includes students’ interest and belief in the importance and relevance of academic achievement. (p. 27)

Sweet et al. (2012) concur that academic engagement involves students “attending to explanations given by teachers or by consistently initiating and completing homework assignments” (p. 8-9).

Social engagement, according to Sweet et al. (2012), involves “positive relations with peers and teachers, participation in extra-curricular activities, and identification with the school and its values – that

is, developing a sense of ‘school belonging’ (Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008)” (p. 8-9). Lipps et al. (2003) agree that social engagement is an

identification with and behavioural involvement in the social aspects of school: the informal, out-of-classroom interests and activities associated with school. Some examples of the social aspects of school are students’ relationships with peers, extracurricular activities, and contacts with teachers outside the classroom. Identification with the social aspects of school involves a feeling of belonging and a sense of fit between the individual and the school’s social environment. It also involves valuing, the belief that being socially involved in school and interested in the social life of the school is important. (Lipps, Norris & Pignall, 2003, p. 28)

Definition of Effective Engagement

Kuh states that “the very act of being engaged also adds to the foundation of skills and dispositions that is essential to live a productive, satisfying life after college” (2003, p. 25). Given the definition above of engagement, there is no comprehensive list of what comprises effective engagement. *Effective engagement* incorporates the quality of effort in learning both inside and outside of the classroom leading to all of the outcomes that are derived from the full engagement of students such as skill development, persistence to graduation and student satisfaction. It consists of access to PSE including the entire pre-PSE experience by students. This comprises the barriers students experience trying to enter PSE, the admissions process, choosing programs and institutions and the prior experience and personal biographies of students entering PSE.

The key indicators of effective engagement include the following: cognitive, psychosocial, moral, ethical and skill development, learning, retention and persistence to graduation, a quality and positive student experience and socialization or fit in the PSE community. When a student obtains high marks or passes their courses, this does not equate with full academic engagement. Rather, the development of skills through effective learning is a stronger indicator of academic engagement. Similarly, while a student persisting to graduation is one indicator of effective engagement it does not embody full engagement as the student also should demonstrate cognitive, psychosocial, moral, ethical and skill development, learning, a positive student experience and social engagement.

Effective engagement from a student perspective therefore involves their own personal development (cognitive, psychosocial, moral, ethical and skill development), learning, a positive student experience, many close friends, a feeling of belonging within the institution and being able to successfully

complete the credential. Effective engagement from the institutional perspective is being able to create the conditions for a student to develop numerous skills, improving the student experience through removing barriers and providing the structure for clubs and services, helping student's socialize and fit into PSE and giving supports to students in order to persist to graduation. This definition of effective engagement is applicable to RIAS and is used in this dissertation in evaluating institutional responses to RIAS.

Defining Barriers, Persistence and Retention

As this research focuses on student engagement and a positive student experience, quite a bit of discussion ensues around various forms of barriers to engagement, persistence and retention. *Barriers* in PSE can be defined as anything that impedes or obstructs a student from beginning their studies (access barriers), continuing their studies (persistence barriers) and/or finishing their education (completion barriers).

The term persistence is used often in student engagement literature as many students leave PSE in their first or second year of study. This attrition phenomenon in higher education is likely what prompted Tinto (1987) to write his influential work about students leaving college. The word *persistence* therefore refers to students, after being able to achieve their desire to attend PSE, continue without stopping in their pursuit of a diploma or degree in their particular educational institution (Adelman, 2007). Persistence can include the completion of a credential as that is the ultimate persistence of a student to convocation.

Retention essentially is one of the goals for an institution in helping a student persist in PSE. *Retention* can be defined as an institution's role in helping influence student behaviour, satisfaction and engagement to the point where the student wishes to remain in the school (Noel, Levitz & Saluri, 1985). Therefore retention and persistence are inextricably linked in that persistence is a view from the perspective of a student to remain in PSE and retention is an observation from the institution's point of view with regards to a student remaining in PSE.

Definition of Integration

Most research to date on immigrants in Canada comments on integrating immigrants into Canadian society or workforce. *Integration* in the Canadian context often refers "to the desirable way by which newcomers should become members of the receiving society" (Li, 2003, p. 315). Yet, this brief

definition assumes that becoming similar to Canadians is integration and perhaps the opposite or maintaining individual cultural identity, is disintegration. True integration, though, is not conformity but is the bringing together of people who are racially, socially or ethnically diverse in an equitable or unrestricted manner. It is quite dissimilar to assimilation, which is the amalgamating or mixing of diverse groups into a common or dominant group. Li (2003) advocates for a more inclusive definition of integration including a respect for an immigrant's differences. Integration is a "two-way street that requires accommodation on the part of both immigrants and Canadian society" (Li, 2003, p. 327). Perhaps a way to measure if true integration has occurred would be to see how immigrants have changed while in Canada and also how Canada has changed with the addition of immigrants (Li, 2003). Integration involves Canadian society accepting "newcomers as equal partners in shaping the future of the nation" (Li, 2003, p. 328).

Defining Student Success

Student success is often linked with positive student involvement and effective engagement in PSE. *Student success* or successful students in PSE are "those who persist, benefit in desired ways from their college experiences, are satisfied with college, and graduate" (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh & Whitt, 2010, p. 8). Student success includes student academic achievement (meaning finishing courses well and progressing to program completion), strong academic performance (that often includes good marks and skill development), well developed social networks and persistence to graduation. For the purposes of this study, a successful student in PSE is one who had a positive and satisfactory student experience, developed core competencies and social networks, was engaged in PSE and persisted to convocation.

Definition of Curricular, Co-Curricular and Extra-Curricular Activities

RIAS involvement in curricular and co-curricular activities can have an impact on engagement in PSE. *Curricular activities* can be defined as actions that are directly related to a program or course of study. In other words, it includes all deeds that are a function of the educational curriculum. Similarly, *co-curricular activities* are those out-of-class actions that are indirectly related to the course of study such as involvement in student government, sports teams, campus publications and other on-campus organizations. These include voluntary activities that are supervised and/or funded by the institution or student

government. Co-curricular activities generally occur during the school day. *Extra-curricular activities*, though, are quite similar to co-curricular activities as they are out-of-class activities but they occur outside of the regular school day.

Defining the Canadian Experience Class

In the 2007 Canadian Federal Government's budget, there was an announcement of the beginning of the Canadian Experience Class. This new initiative defined the *Canadian Experience Class* as a program that allows international students with Canadian work experience and Canadian credentials as well as skilled temporary foreign workers to apply for permanent residency from within Canada. This, therefore, was a new immigration stream for Canada to help attract, land and retain highly skilled and educated people to Canada. This program is further explained in Chapter II.

Definition of LSIC

LSIC stands for the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada. This is a survey conducted by Statistics Canada that examined immigrants over their first four years in Canada. Criteria for the study included that the immigrants must be age 15 years or older at the time that they landed and that they landed in Canada between October 1, 2000 and September 30, 2001 (Statistics Canada, 2003). To date, there are three waves of the LSIC with each wave including the same participants as the earlier LSIC study. The LSIC helps researchers analyze and understand how immigrants adjust to their new life in Canada and some of the factors that help or hinder their settlement experience.

Defining University Education and College Education in Canada

In the past, there was quite a distinction between university and college education in Canada. *University education* mostly involved students taking numerous courses in a particular field of study towards an undergraduate or graduate degree. *College education* largely involved students taking more applied courses that often directly relate to employment and accumulate towards the completion of a certificate or diploma. Much of these distinct lines are beginning to be blurred between these two types of institutions. Still, though, university education is comprised mostly of professors focused on research and teaching and students working towards completion of a degree that may or may not be directly related to their employment goal. College education still has professors who are focused mostly on teaching but students now can study towards the completion of a certificate, diploma, applied degree, degree and even a

graduate certificate. Many college programs still involve co-op, internship, placement or practicum opportunities but an increasing number of university programs are also including some work-related activities.

Definition of a Liberal Education

University and college education in Canada, though, is much more than just studying to receive a degree or diploma. It is arguably about developing transferable, job-related and life skills. Coté and Allahar (2011 & 2007) argue that PSE's ultimate goal should be *liberal education* that is defined as:

activities which are designed to cultivate intellectual creativity, autonomy and resilience; critical thinking; a combination of intellectual breadth and specialized knowledge; the comprehension and tolerance of diverse ideas and experiences; informed participation in community life, and effective communication skills. (Axelrod, Anisef & Lin, 2001, p. 52)

Liberal education prepares students for citizenship. Coté and Allahar (2011) argue that it encompasses personal and intellectual transformation. Axelrod, Anisef & Lin (2001) state that the hallmarks of a liberal education are “thinking originally, researching creatively, writing clearly and speaking persuasively [that] intrinsically reward the individual and serve him or her well in the world beyond the university” (p. 54). It involves learning for its own sake, where ideally the learning process “is valued irrespective of the product (a grade or a credential)” (Coté and Allahar, 2011, p. 64). A liberal education provides that “intrinsic link between ‘academic and community life’” (Axelrod, Anisef & Lin, 2001, p. 54).

APPENDIX B – KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Questions

1. Please note that we have received ethics clearance for this research project. At the beginning of the interview, please review and sign the consent form.
2. Generally, do you keep record on the ethnicity and immigrant status of your student body?
3. Can you tell us what proportion of your student body is composed of recent immigrant adult students (i.e. those above 24)? Has the proportion of recent immigrant adult students changed much over the past decade? If so, in what ways? (If there is written documentation on recent immigrant arrivals please request that this be sent to Sheldon Grabke)
4. Do you have information on the composition of this student body in terms of countries of origin and ethnicity? Do you have information on the proportion who has attained some form of postsecondary qualifications from their origin countries?
5. How does your institution evaluate credentials obtained outside Canada? Are there any country differences? (ie. Is a BA obtained for example in Sri Lanka treated as identical to a BA granted by a Canadian university?)
6. Please comment on the academic and student experiences of recent immigrant adult students at your post-secondary institution, especially with respect to:
 - 6.1. Admission
 - 6.2. Transfer credits
 - 6.3. Course load
 - 6.4. Interaction with faculty
 - 6.5. Interaction with fellow students
 - 6.6. Use of campus services (academic vs. social)
 - 6.7. Attrition and retention
7. Do you know if the new adult immigrant students are fully engaged? If not, what do you think are the factors relating to both individual characteristics and institutional policies that hinder their engagement with the institution and their studies?
8. Please tell us about any of the specific issues/challenges/problems which recent immigrant adult students experience upon entering the program at your post-secondary institution? Are there areas that particularly interfere with learning? With student life on your campus?
9. Would you say that the barriers faced by recent arrivals are unique, compared with other student groups that your office deals with? If yes, tell us what distinguishes recent immigrant arrivals from other students?
10. Does the mission statement of your post-secondary institution include specific mention of recent immigrants? If yes, when did this come about? If not, please comment on this.
11. Within the last decade has your post-secondary institution introduced policies and/or practices that seek to address the issues faced by recent immigrant arrivals? (probes: orientation programs, outreach programs to immigrant communities, special programs to suit their need, special ESL, support services by faculty and staff). Please tell us about these policies and practices, focusing on when they were introduced? What areas of student engagement (social and academic) are addressed by the policies/ practices?
12. Are there specific interventions that have proven particularly helpful in promoting the active engagement of new arrivals? Tell us about these (if there is written materials on these policies /practices please send us descriptions).
13. Does your institution provide assistance to recent arrivals to aid in their search for employment? Please describe the forms of assistance that are available.
Once new arrivals complete a program of study or set of courses at your institution, is there any follow up to identify their transition to employment? If yes, are there written materials that you can share with us?
14. Can you please identify other key informants in your institution that would help inform our research?

APPENDIX C – STUDENT ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

I. Academic Profile

1. Name of college or university you are currently attending [U and C]:

- ₁ Ryerson University ₄ Centennial College
- ₂ University of Toronto ₅ George Brown College
- ₃ York University ₆ Seneca College

II: Background Information

1. In what year were you born? _____

2. (Are you?) ₁ Male ₂ Female

3. In what country were you born?

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₀₁ China | <input type="checkbox"/> ₁₀ Italy | <input type="checkbox"/> ₁₉ Sri Lanka |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₀₂ France | <input type="checkbox"/> ₁₁ Jamaica | <input type="checkbox"/> ₂₀ Somalia |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₀₃ Germany | <input type="checkbox"/> ₁₂ Korea | <input type="checkbox"/> ₂₁ Taiwan |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₀₄ Greece | <input type="checkbox"/> ₁₃ Netherlands | <input type="checkbox"/> ₂₂ Ukraine |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₀₅ Guyana | <input type="checkbox"/> ₁₄ Pakistan | <input type="checkbox"/> ₂₃ United States |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₀₆ Hong Kong | <input type="checkbox"/> ₁₅ Philippines | <input type="checkbox"/> ₂₄ United Kingdom, England,
Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₀₇ India | <input type="checkbox"/> ₁₆ Poland | <input type="checkbox"/> ₂₅ Vietnam |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₀₈ Iran | <input type="checkbox"/> ₁₇ Portugal | <input type="checkbox"/> ₂₆ Other (<i>specify</i>) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₀₉ Israel | <input type="checkbox"/> ₁₈ Russia | |

4. In what year did you become a permanent resident? _____

III. Classroom Experiences

1. In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following? Please circle the number that comes closest.

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Uncertain
a. Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class students, family members, co-workers, etc.).....	1	2	3	4	8
b. Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own.....	1	2	3	4	8
c. Had serious conversations with students who are very different from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values.....	1	2	3	4	8

IV. Academic Involvement

1. Indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly Agree	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Disagree Somewhat	Strongly Disagree
a. I have developed intellectually this year	1	2	3	4	5
b. I have increased knowledge this year	1	2	3	4	5
c. Overall, I am satisfied with my academic program.....	1	2	3	4	5

V. Non-Academic Event Involvement

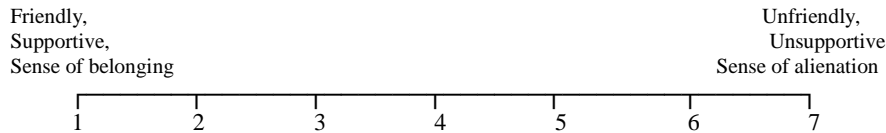
1. About how often have you done each of the following during the current school year?

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Uncertain
a. Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue.....	1	2	3	4	8
b. Tried to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from his/ her perspective.....	1	2	3	4	8
c. Learned something that changed the way you understand an issue	1	2	3	4	8

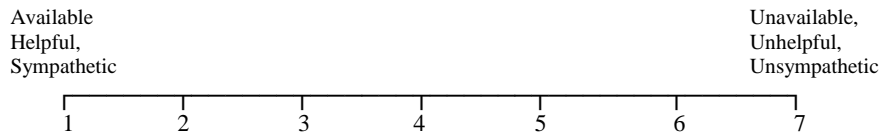
VI. Contact with Faculty, Staff, Classmates and School Friends

1. Circle the number that best represents the quality of your relationships with people at your current institution.

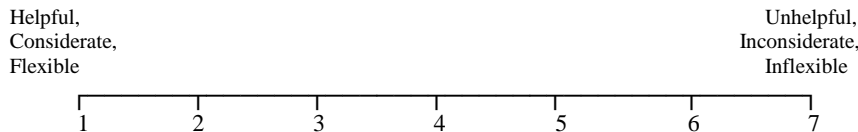
a. Relationships with **other students**



b. Relationships with **faculty members**



c. Relationships with **administrative personnel and offices**



VII. Weekly Activities

1. About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week doing each of the following?

Hours per week	0	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	>30	n/a
a. Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work and other academic activities).....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

VIII: Educational Qualifications

1. What is the highest level of schooling you completed before immigrating to Canada?

- ₀₁ High school diploma or equivalent
- ₀₂ Some trade/vocational, college, (no certificate/diploma or degree)
- ₀₃ Trade/vocational certificate
- ₀₄ Apprenticeship certificate
- ₀₅ Non-university certificate or diploma from a college, school of nursing, technical institute or other such educational institute
- ₀₆ University transfer program
- ₀₇ University certificate or diploma below bachelor's degree
- ₀₈ Bachelor's degree
- ₀₉ University certificate above the bachelor's
- ₁₀ First professional degree (medical, veterinary medicine, dental, optometry, law, divinity)
- ₁₁ Master's degree
- ₁₂ PhD
- ₁₃ Education not definable by level
- ₁₅ Don't know
- ₁₆ Other, (*specify*)

IX: Employment

1. What is your annual household income?

- ₁ Less than \$10,000
- ₂ \$11,000 to \$20,000
- ₃ \$21,000 to \$40,000
- ₅ \$41,000 to \$60,000
- ₆ \$61,000 to \$80,000
- ₇ \$81,000 to \$100,000
- ₈ More than \$100,000
- ₈ Don't know

From Lum & Grabke, 2012, Appendix A

APPENDIX D – REQUEST FOR FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

Are you willing to participate in an in-depth interview? We will pay you \$25.00 for participating in the interview.

No

Yes (*complete information below*)

Name (Please Print) _____

Address: _____

Telephone number: _____

Email address: _____

From Lum & Grabke, 2012, Appendix A.

APPENDIX E – FOCUS GROUP GUIDE & QUESTIONNAIRE

York University Student Engagement Research
Focus Group Interview-Demographic Information

Institutional Code: _____

Program Code: _____

Student I.D. _____

Date: _____

**HEQCO Student Engagement
Questionnaire**

York University

All participants will remain anonymous. Survey data will be treated in an anonymous manner. Transcriptions and reports will contain no identifying information.

Name of College/ University attending _____

Program: _____ **Full-Time** _____ **Part-time** _____

1. What is the language that you first spoke? _____
2. What is your age? _____
3. How would you describe your ethnic or racial background? You can list more than one ethnic heritage if you like _____

- African, North (e.g., Moroccan, Tunisian, Algerian, Egyptian, etc.)
- African, Northeast (e.g., Ethiopian, Somali, Djibouti, etc.)
- African, East (e.g., Kenyan, Tunisian, Madagascan, etc.)
- African, West (e.g., Ghanaian, Nigerian, Sierra Leonean, etc.)
- African, Central (e.g., Sudanese, Ugandan, Rwandan, etc.)
- African, South
- Arab
- Black
- Caribbean (e.g., Haitian, Jamaican, Trinidadian, Guyanese, Barbadian, etc.)
- Chinese
- East European (e.g., Russian, Romanian, Polish, Ukrainian, etc.) Former Yugoslavian (e.g., Bosnian, Serb, Croat, Kosovar, Slovenian, Macedonian)
- Southern Europe (e.g. Italian, Spanish, Portuguese etc.)
- Filipino
- Japanese
- Korean
- Latin American (e.g., Mexican, Cuban, Central Amer. country, South Amer. country, etc.)
- South Asian (e.g., Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani, Tamil, Sri Lankan, etc.)
- Southeast Asian (e.g., Cambodian, Indonesian, Laotian, Thai, Vietnamese, etc.)
- West Asian (e.g., Afghani, Israeli, Iranian, Iraqi, Jordanian, Kuwaiti, Lebanese, Palestinian, etc.)
- Other

4. How long have you lived in Canada? _____

5. What is your marital status (please check one)?

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| ____ Single | ____ Married |
| ____ Divorced | ____ Widowed |
| ____ Common-law | ____ Separated |

6. Do you have any children? ____ No ____ Yes If yes, how many? _____

7. Are you currently working while attending school? ____ No ____ Yes

a. If yes, what type of work are you doing? _____

b. If yes, how many hours per week are you working _____

8. Have you had any problems balancing studies with other commitments? ____ No ____ Yes
If yes, indicate if the difficulties are related to (choose one or more):

- Finances
- Immigrant status
- Family commitments
- Your ability to speak English

9. Are doing well academically in this college/university? _____ **No** _____ **Yes**
- a. In comparison with your previous school in your home country, how do you feel you are academically doing now?
- Better at this college/university*
- The same at this college/university*
- Worse at this college/university*

10. Did you have any difficulties trying to attend this college/university? _____ **No** _____ **Yes**

If yes, indicate if the difficulties are related to (choose one or more):

- Spoken English not strong enough* *Obtaining transcripts*
- Written English not strong enough* *Getting transcripts translated*
- Hard subject-related entrance test* *Prior marks not high enough*
- Other* _____

All information that you provide is confidential.

It is possible that we may want to include you in future follow up on students' experiences or in future surveys. Could we contact you again later to see if you'd be willing to participate in another survey or short interview?

If yes, please fill out future contact form.

Name: _____

University/College Email: _____

Personal Email (if different from above email): _____

Telephone (home &/or cell) _____

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE

Our goal for this focus group is to explore your overall experience at university/college. We are particularly interested in how engaged or involved you are with your academic and non academic activities and how could post-secondary student services be more effective in meeting your needs. All information gathered will be kept confidential.

Section 1: Student Engagement: For us in Canada, student engagement refers to students being actively involved in university both inside the classroom and outside the classroom. We would like to explore your ideas about student engagement.

1. Tell us about your current overall class room experiences at _____.
*Are you satisfied with your overall college/university experience? What aspects of attending this college/university do you like? What aspects do you dislike? **Probe***
2. Do you think being involved in classroom discussions, interactions with students and professors makes a difference in your college/university experience? **If no, probe why not? If yes, what types of activities do you do and how engaged are you?**
3. Do you feel that your English language skills affect your classroom engagement?

4. *How do you think professors could help you become more engaged in the classroom?*
5. *Are you more involved in the classroom in Canada than your previous educational experience in your home country? What type of classroom activities did you do in your home country? **Probe: engagement with teachers/professors; quality of education; level of difficulty of education***
6. *What other types of learning activities, other than the current ones, would improve your overall classroom experience?*
7. *What are some of the challenges you face in college/university? By challenges we mean time, money, language, work/life balance etc. **Probe. Money issues, language- speaking, reading, writing; work etc.** How do you think these challenges can be resolved?*
8. *Do you feel that you fit into your college/university? **If not.** What type of programs /services would be helpful for you to fit into this college/university? **Probe***
9. *Have you made friends with other students on campus? **If yes,** are most of them from your own country, other immigrant students, or Canadian students? **If no, probe why not.***
10. *What type of activities do you do on campus i.e. How often? How would you define your involvement in activities on campus? **Probe.***
- Section 2: Student Services In Canada, student services are offered by university/college puts in place to help students be successful in their academic career. They are a variety of services offered by post-secondary institutions. These range from the library, computing services, housing services, financial aid offices and counseling. We would like to explore your usage of student services.
11. *In your home country, what student services were available at your college or university? Did you make use of them? Which ones?*
12. *Have you used any of the student services available to students at your current college/university? **If no,** why not? **If yes,** How often have you used student services at your college or university? What do you think of the quality of service you received?*
13. *Did your program have an orientation session? If yes, did you attend it and was it helpful?*
14. *If you experience academic difficulty, that is, problems with your courses on campus, what would you do and where would you go to get help?*
15. *Do you know where your student services are located on campus?*
16. *What recommendations/suggestions do you have for your institution to improve student services on campus? How could student services in colleges/universities better advertise their services to immigrant students?*
17. *If you had any advice to give universities or colleges about helping immigrant students from your country of origin or any country in general, what would you suggest?*
18. *Is there anything else you would like the research team to know or to think about?*

Thank you very much for your time and help with this research project.
Reminder: all information will be treated confidentially.

From Lum & Grabke, 2012, Appendix C.

APPENDIX F – ETHICS APPROVAL FOR PSE RESPONSE TO RIAS



Certificate #:	2006- 134
Approval Period:	07/27/06-07/27/07

**OFFICE OF
RESEARCH
SERVICES
214 York Lanes**

Memo

4700 Keele St.
Toronto ON
Canada M3J 1P3
Tel 416 736 5055
Fax 416 736 5512
www.research.yorku.ca

To: Dr. Paul Anisef, Sociology/Arts
Room 335 York Lanes anisef@yorku.ca

From: Alison M. Collins, Manager, Research Ethics

Date: **Thursday July 27th, 2006**

Re: Ethics Approval
Economic Adjustment Of Adult Immigrants And The Role Of Educational Institutions

I am writing to inform you that the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee has reviewed and approved the above project.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at: 416-736-5914 or via email at: acollins@yorku.ca.

Yours sincerely,

Alison M. Collins-Mrakas M.Sc.
Manager, Research Ethics
Secretary, Human Participants Review Committee

APPENDIX G – ETHICS APPROVAL FOR RIAS ENGAGEMENT IN PSE

Certificate #:	2009 - 092
Approval Period:	04/22/09-04/22/10



Memo

**OFFICE OF
RESEARCH
ETHICS (ORE)
309 York Lanes**

4700 Keele St.
Toronto ON
Canada M3J 1P3
Tel 416 736 5914
Fax 416 736 5837
www.research.yorku.ca

To: Professor Lillie Lum, School of Health Policy and Management
lum@yorku.ca

From: Alison M. Collins-Mrakas, Sr. Manager and Policy Advisor,
Research Ethics
*(on behalf of Daphne Winland, Chair, Human Participants Review
Committee)*

Date: **Wednesday 22nd April, 2009**

Re: Ethics Approval

Evaluating the Effectiveness of Ontario Post-Secondary Student Services
on Academic Engagement of Recent Adult Immigrant Students

I am writing to inform you that the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee has reviewed and approved the above project.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at: 416-736-5914 or via email at: acollins@yorku.ca.

Yours sincerely,

Alison M. Collins-Mrakas M.Sc., LL.M
Sr. Manager and Policy Advisor,
Office of Research Ethics

APPENDIX H – AGGREGATED SURVEY CATEGORIES

I. Academic Profile

1. Name of college or university you are currently attending [U and C]:

Condensed school currently attending into 2 groups:

- A. University: #1 Ryerson, #2 University of Toronto & #3 York University
- B. College: #4 Centennial College, #5 George Brown College & #6 Seneca College

II: Background Information

3. In what country were you born?

Condensed birth country groups are as follows:

- 1. West, South & North Europe: #3 Germany, #24 United Kingdom & Other
- 2. East Europe & Central Asia: #16 Poland, #18 Russian & Other
- 3. Caribbean, Central & South America: #5 Guyana, #11 Jamaica & Other
- 4. Africa: Other
- 5. Eastern Asia: #1 China, #6 Hong Kong, #12 Korea, #21 Taiwan & Other
- 6. South-Eastern Asia: #15 Philippines, #22 Ukraine, #25 Vietnam & Other
- 7. South Asia & West Asia: #7 India, #8 Iran, #9 Israel, #14 Pakistan, #19 Sri Lanka & Other
- 8. Other: Other

VIII: Educational Qualifications

1. What is the highest level of schooling you completed before immigrating to Canada?

Condensed schooling levels are as follows:

- A. High School Diploma or equivalent (highest attainment): #1 high school diploma
- B. Some postsecondary education (highest with no cert., diploma or degree): #2 Some trade/vocational, college (no certificate/diploma or degree) & #6 University transfer program
- C. Post-secondary certificate or diploma below bachelor level (highest): #3 Trade/vocational certificate, #4 Apprenticeship certificate, #5 Non-university certificate or diploma from a college, school of nursing, technical institute or other such educational institute and #7 University certificate or diploma below bachelor's degree
- D. Bachelor degree (highest): #8 Bachelor degree
- E. University certificate, diploma or degree above bachelor level (highest): #9 University certificate above the bachelor's, #10 First professional degree (medical, veterinary medicine, dental, optometry, law, divinity), #11 Master's degree and #12 PhD
- F. Incomplete Secondary School: #16 Other (specify)
- G. Other and Don't Know: #13 Education not definable by level, #15 Don't know & #16 Other (specify)

APPENDIX I – ENGAGEMENT AND PREDICTOR VARIABLES IN SURVEY ANALYSIS

1. Academic engagement

Academic Engagement – Development [AE-D]:

IV. Academic Involvement

6. Indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly Agree	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Strongly Disagree	
a. I have developed intellectually this year	1	2	3	4	5
b. I have increased knowledge this year.....	1	2	3	4	5
i. Overall, I am satisfied with my academic program.....	1	2	3	4	5

Academic Engagement – Time on Task [AE-TOT]:

VIII. Weekly Activities

1. About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week doing each of the following?

Hours per week	0	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	>30	n/a
a. Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work and other academic activities).....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Aggregated hours into 4 groups:

low: 0-10 hours; medium: 11-20 hours; moderate: 21-30 hours; and high: 30+ hours.

2. Social engagement

Social Engagement –Conversations [SE-C]:

III. Classroom Experiences

1. In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following? Please circle the number that comes closest.

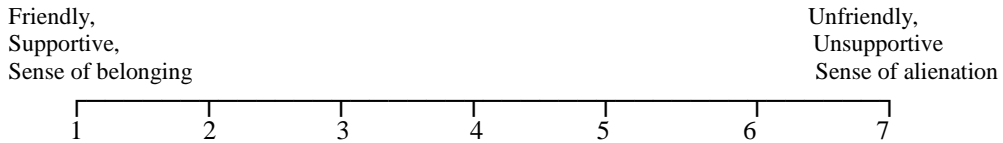
	Never	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Uncertain
q. Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class students, family members, co-workers, etc.).....	1	2	3	4	8
r. Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own.....	1	2	3	4	8
s. Had serious conversations with students who are very different from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values.....	1	2	3	4	8

Social Engagement – Relationships [SE-R]:

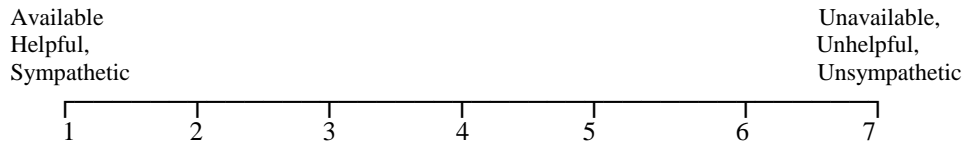
VI. Contact with Faculty, Staff, Classmates and School Friends

6. Circle the number that best represents the quality of your relationships with people at your current institution.

a. Relationships with **other students**



b. Relationships with **faculty members**



c. Relationships with **administrative personnel and offices**



3. Liberal Education

Liberal Education [LE]:

V. Non-Academic Event Involvement

1. About how often have you done each of the following during the current school year?

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Uncertain
e. Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own..... 1 views on a topic or issue	1	2	3	4	8
f. Tried to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from his/ her perspective 1	1	2	3	4	8
g. Learned something that changed the way you.....1 understand an issue	1	2	3	4	8

4. Predictor variables

I. Academic Profile

1. Name of college or university you are currently attending [U and C]:

- ₁ Ryerson University ₂ University of Toronto ₃ York University
₄ Centennial College ₅ George Brown College ₆ Seneca College

II: Background Information

1. In what year were you born? _____ (survey conducted in 2010)

2. (Are you?) ₁ Male ₂ Female

8. In what country were you born?

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₀₁ China | <input type="checkbox"/> ₁₁ Jamaica | <input type="checkbox"/> ₂₁ Taiwan |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₀₂ France | <input type="checkbox"/> ₁₂ Korea | <input type="checkbox"/> ₂₂ Ukraine |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₀₃ Germany | <input type="checkbox"/> ₁₃ Netherlands | <input type="checkbox"/> ₂₃ United States |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₀₄ Greece | <input type="checkbox"/> ₁₄ Pakistan | <input type="checkbox"/> ₂₄ United Kingdom, England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₀₅ Guyana | <input type="checkbox"/> ₁₅ Philippines | <input type="checkbox"/> ₂₅ Vietnam |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₀₆ Hong Kong | <input type="checkbox"/> ₁₆ Poland | <input type="checkbox"/> ₂₆ Other (specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₀₇ India | <input type="checkbox"/> ₁₇ Portugal | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₀₈ Iran | <input type="checkbox"/> ₁₈ Russia | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₀₉ Israel | <input type="checkbox"/> ₁₉ Sri Lanka | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₁₀ Italy | <input type="checkbox"/> ₂₀ Somalia | |

11. In what year did you become a permanent resident? _____

X: Educational Qualifications

1. What is the highest level of schooling you completed before immigrating to Canada?

- ₀₁ High school diploma or equivalent
- ₀₂ Some trade/vocational, college, (no certificate/diploma or degree)
- ₀₃ Trade/vocational certificate
- ₀₄ Apprenticeship certificate
- ₀₅ Non-university certificate or diploma from a college, school of nursing, technical institute or other such educational institute
- ₀₆ University transfer program
- ₀₇ University certificate or diploma below bachelor's degree
- ₀₈ Bachelor's degree
- ₀₉ University certificate above the bachelor's
- ₁₀ First professional degree (medical, veterinary medicine, dental, optometry, law, divinity)
- ₁₁ Master's degree
- ₁₂ PhD
- ₁₃ Education not definable by level
- ₁₅ Don't know
- ₁₆ Other, (specify)

XII: Employment

13. What is your annual household income?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₁ Less than \$10,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> ₆ \$81,000 to \$100,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₂ \$11,000 to \$20,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> ₇ More than \$100,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₃ \$21,000 to \$40,000 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₄ \$41,000 to \$60,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> ₈ Don't know |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ₅ \$61,000 to \$80,000 | |
-

APPENDIX J – SURVEY FACTOR ANALYSIS

1. Academic engagement

Academic Engagement – Development [AE-D]:

In the running of the factor analysis for Academic Engagement – Development (AE-D), the communalities, variance, component matrix, case processing summary and reliability statistics are listed below.

Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
ai6a I have developed intellectually this year	1.000	.756
ai6b I have increased knowledge this year	1.000	.742
ai6i Overall, I am satisfied with my academic program	1.000	.552

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.050	68.334	68.334	2.050	68.334	68.334
2	.614	20.452	88.787			
3	.336	11.213	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Component Matrix^a

	Component
	1
ai6a I have developed intellectually this year	.870
ai6b I have increased knowledge this year	.861
ai6i Overall, I am satisfied with my academic program	.743

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 1 components extracted.

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	426	98.2
	Excluded ^a	8	1.8
	Total	434	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.763	3

Regression analysis of AE-D

The reference group used in the multiple regression is the first category of each of the nominal predictor (i.e. East Asia for birth country, High School for highest level of schooling completed, less than \$10,000 for household income, College for institution currently attending and female for gender).

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.286 ^a	.082	.026	2.32318

a. Predictors: (Constant), university, WNS_europe, Oceania, E_61k_80k, Carib, F_81k_100k, male, E_europe, B_11k_20k, post_sec, incomplete, C_21k_40k, SW_asia, some_post, D_41k_60k, diploma, SE_asia, length_pr length of time landed in Canada, G_100K, Africa, age, bachelor

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	R Square Change
1 Subset Tests	WNS_europe, E_europe, Carib, Africa, SE_asia, SW_asia, Oceana	109.743	7	15.678	2.905	.006 ^a	.051
	some_post, post_sec, bachelor, diploma, incomplete	7.618	5	1.524	.282	.923 ^a	.004
	B_11k_20k, C_21k_40k, D_41k_60k, E_61k_80k, F_81k_100k, G_100K	18.472	6	3.079	.570	.754 ^a	.009
	age	.743	1	.743	.138	.711 ^a	.000
	university	.751	1	.751	.139	.709 ^a	.000
	length_pr length of time landed in Canada	3.661	1	3.661	.678	.411 ^a	.002
	male	6.150	1	6.150	1.140	.286 ^a	.003
Regression		175.809	22	7.991	1.481	.077 ^c	
Residual		1980.757	367	5.397			
Total		2156.567	389				

a. Tested against the full model.

b. Dependent Variable: Academic Engagement – Development (AE-D)

c. Predictors in the Full Model: (Constant), university, WNS_europe, Oceana, E_61k_80k, Carib, F_81k_100k, male, E_europe, B_11k_20k, post_sec, incomplete, C_21k_40k, SW_asia, some_post, D_41k_60k, diploma, SE_asia, length_pr length of time landed in Canada, G_100K, Africa, age, bachelor.

Academic Engagement – Time on Task [AE-TOT]:

In the second measure of Academic Engagement – Time on Task (AE-TOT), all seven demographic variables are very significant predictors of AE-TOT ($p=.001$). In this analysis, the reference categories are as follows: High for AE-TOT, East Asia for birth country, High School for highest level of schooling completed, less than \$10,000 for household income, Female for gender and College for institution currently attending. The Test of Parallel Lines is not significant meaning that the model is suitable for ordinal logistic regression. Thus the predictors are homogenous across the categories.

Model Fitting Information

Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Intercept Only	944.451			
Final	898.190	46.261	21	.001

Link function: Logit.

Goodness-of-Fit

	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Pearson	1044.236	1014	.248
Deviance	895.417	1014	.997

Link function: Logit.

Pseudo R-Square

Cox and Snell	.124
Nagelkerke	.133
McFadden	.049

Link function: Logit.

Test of Parallel Lines^a

Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Null Hypothesis	898.190			
General	867.050 ^b	31.140 ^c	42	.891

The null hypothesis states that the location parameters (slope coefficients) are the same across response categories.

a. Link function: Logit.

b. The log-likelihood value cannot be further increased after maximum number of step-halving.

c. The Chi-Square statistic is computed based on the log-likelihood value of the last iteration of the general model. Validity of the test is uncertain.

Using the Parameter Estimates from Table R, I removed the category of country to see if there is an overall effect by country on AE-TOT. As you can see in the Model Fitting chart below, country has a significant effect ($p=.0164$) on AE-TOT when controlling for the other variables. The Test of Parallel Lines again is not statistically significant that means that this model is still suitable for ordinal logistic regression and the predictors are homogenous across all categories.

Model Fitting Information

Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Intercept Only	941.678			
Final	913.736	27.942	15	.022

Link function: Logit.

Country_gp removed. Change in -2 Log Likelihood=913.736-898.19=15.546, d.f.=21-1=6, $p=0.0164$.

Goodness-of-Fit

	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Pearson	1031.423	1011	.321
Deviance	908.191	1011	.991

Link function: Logit.

Pseudo R-Square

Cox and Snell	.077
Nagelkerke	.083
McFadden	.029

Link function: Logit.

Test of Parallel Lines^a

Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Null Hypothesis	913.736			
General	879.354 ^b	34.382 ^c	30	.266

The null hypothesis states that the location parameters (slope coefficients) are the same across response categories.

a. Link function: Logit.

b. Maximum number of iterations were exceeded, and the log-likelihood value and/or the parameter estimates cannot converge.

c. The Chi-Square statistic is computed based on the log-likelihood value of the last iteration of the general model. Validity of the test is uncertain.

Then I removed education from the model to see if there is an overall effect by education on AE-TOT when controlling for other variables. As you can see in the Model Fitting chart below, education does not have a significant effect on AE-TOT when controlling for the other variables. The Test of Parallel Lines is not

statistically significant that means that this model is still suitable for ordinal logistic regression and the predictors are homogenous across all categories.

Model Fitting Information

Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Intercept Only	941.678			
Final	899.903	41.775	16	.000

Link function: Logit.

education grp removed ,change in -2log likelihood=899.903-898.19=1.713,d.f.=5,p=.8873

Goodness-of-Fit

	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Pearson	1043.287	1013	.248
Deviance	894.358	1013	.997

Link function: Logit.

Pseudo R-Square

Cox and Snell	.113
Nagelkerke	.121
McFadden	.044

Link function: Logit.

Test of Parallel Lines^a

Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Null Hypothesis	899.903			
General	865.818 ^b	34.085 ^c	32	.368

The null hypothesis states that the location parameters (slope coefficients) are the same across response categories.

a. Link function: Logit.

b. The log-likelihood value cannot be further increased after maximum number of step-halving.

c. The Chi-Square statistic is computed based on the log-likelihood value of the last iteration of the general model.

Validity of the test is uncertain.

Afterwards, I removed income from the model to see if there is an overall effect by income on AE-TOT when controlling for other variables. As you can see in the Model Fitting chart below, income has a significant effect ($p=.0171$) on AE-TOT when controlling for the other variables. The Test of Parallel Lines is not statistically significant that means that this model is still suitable for ordinal logistic regression and the predictors are homogenous across all categories.

Model Fitting Information

Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Intercept Only	941.678			
Final	913.631	28.047	15	.021

Link function: Logit.

income removed, change in -2log likelihood=913.678-898.19=15.441,d.f.=6,p=.0171

Goodness-of-Fit

	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Pearson	1030.202	1005	.284
Deviance	908.086	1005	.987

Link function: Logit.

Pseudo R-Square

Cox and Snell	.077
Nagelkerke	.083
McFadden	.030

Link function: Logit.

Test of Parallel Lines^a

Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Null Hypothesis	898.190			
General	867.050 ^b	31.140 ^c	42	.891

The null hypothesis states that the location parameters (slope coefficients) are the same across response categories.

a. Link function: Logit.

b. The log-likelihood value cannot be further increased after maximum number of step-halving.

c. The Chi-Square statistic is computed based on the log-likelihood value of the last iteration of the general model.

Validity of the test is uncertain.

Therefore controlling for the other predictors in the model, birth country has a significant effect on AE-TOT ($\Delta(-2\log \text{ likelihood})=15.546$, $d.f.=6$, $p=0.0164$), highest level of educational attainment does not have a significant effect on AE-TOT ($\Delta(-2\log \text{ likelihood})=1.713$, $d.f.=5$, $p=.8873$) and household income has a significant effect in predicting AE-TOT ($\Delta(-2\log \text{ likelihood})=15.441$, $d.f.=6$, $p=.0171$).

2. Social engagement

Social Engagement – Conversations [SE-C]:

In the running of the factor analysis for SE-C, the communalities, variance, component matrix, case processing summary and reliability statistics are listed below.

Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
ce1q Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.	1.000	.326
ce1r Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own	1.000	.847
ce1s Had serious conversations with students-different from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values	1.000	.829

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.003	66.758	66.758	2.003	66.758	66.758
2	.806	26.857	93.615			
3	.192	6.385	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Component Matrix^a

	Component
	1
ce1r Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own	.921
ce1s Had serious conversations with students-different from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values	.911
ce1q Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.	.571

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 1 components extracted.

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	412	94.9
	Excluded ^a	22	5.1
	Total	434	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.745	3

Using the Social Engagement – Conversations Factor (SE-C), a regression analysis was run of all of the predictor variables against SE-C. The results are below. In the ANOVA table below, controlling for the other predictor variables, country of origin is a strongly significant factor of SE-C.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.412 ^a	.170	.118	2.31218

a. Predictors: (Constant), university, WNS_europe, Oceana, length_pr length of time landed in Canada, E_61k_80k, E_europe, Carib, male, C_21k_40k, post_sec, B_11k_20k, SW_asia, some_post, F_81k_100k, diploma, G_100K, SE_asia, incomplete, D_41k_60k, Africa, age, bachelor

ANOVA ^b								
Model			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	R Square Change
1	Subset Tests	WNS_europe, E_europe, Carib, Africa, SE_asia, SW_asia, Oceana	208.519	7	29.788	5.572	.000 ^a	.091
		some_post, post_sec, bachelor, diploma, incomplete	19.034	5	3.807	.712	.615 ^a	.008
		B_11k_20k, C_21k_40k, D_41k_60k, E_61k_80k, F_81k_100k, G_100K	46.556	6	7.759	1.451	.194 ^a	.020
		age	10.913	1	10.913	2.041	.154 ^a	.005
		university	3.040	1	3.040	.569	.451 ^a	.001
		length_pr length of time landed in Canada	1.371	1	1.371	.256	.613 ^a	.001
		male	2.958	1	2.958	.553	.457 ^a	.001
		Regression	387.083	22	17.595	3.291	.000 ^c	
Residual	1892.545	354	5.346					
Total	2279.629	376						

a. Tested against the full model.

b. Dependent Variable: SE1 Social Engagement, classroom experiences-SE1

c. Predictors in the Full Model: (Constant), university, WNS_europe, Oceana, length_pr length of time landed in Canada, E_61k_80k, E_europe, Carib, male, C_21k_40k, post_sec, B_11k_20k, SW_asia, some_post, F_81k_100k, diploma, G_100K, SE_asia, incomplete, D_41k_60k, Africa, age, bachelor.

Social Engagement – Relationships [SE-R]:

In the running of the factor analysis for SE2, the communalities, variance, component matrix, case processing summary and reliability statistics are listed below.

Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
fsc6a Relationships with other students	1.000	.537
fsc6b Relationships with faculty members	1.000	.770
fsc6c Relationships with administrative personnel and offices	1.000	.666

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	1.973	65.763	65.763	1.973	65.763	65.763
2	.663	22.090	87.853			
3	.364	12.147	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Component Matrix^a

	Component 1
fsc6b Relationships with faculty members	.878
fsc6c Relationships with administrative personnel and offices	.816
fsc6a Relationships with other students	.733

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 1 components extracted.

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	430	99.1
	Excluded ^a	4	.9
	Total	434	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.737	3

Using the Social Engagement – Relationships Factor (SE-R), a regression analysis was run of all of the predictor variables against SE-R. In the ANOVA table below, controlling for the other predictor variables, country of origin is a significant factor of SE-R.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.334 ^a	.112	.059	3.41193

a. Predictors: (Constant), university, WNS_europe, Oceana, length_pr length of time landed in Canada, E_61k_80k, E_europe, male, Carib, C_21k_40k, post_sec, F_81k_100k, B_11k_20k, SW_asia, some_post, diploma, D_41k_60k, SE_asia, incomplete, G_100K, Africa, age, bachelor

ANOVA ^b								
Model			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	R Square Change
1	Subset Tests	WNS_europe, E_europe, Carib, Africa, SE_asia, SW_asia, Oceana	200.529	7	28.647	2.461	.018 ^a	.041
		some_post, post_sec, bachelor, diploma, incomplete	102.891	5	20.578	1.768	.119 ^a	.021
		B_11k_20k, C_21k_40k, D_41k_60k, E_61k_80k, F_81k_100k, G_100K	19.669	6	3.278	.282	.946 ^a	.004
		age	21.644	1	21.644	1.859	.174 ^a	.004
		university	28.204	1	28.204	2.423	.120 ^a	.006
		length_pr length of time landed in Canada	25.193	1	25.193	2.164	.142 ^a	.005
		male	15.871	1	15.871	1.363	.244 ^a	.003
	Regression		540.869	22	24.585	2.112	.003 ^c	
	Residual		4307.259	370	11.641			
	Total		4848.127	392				

a. Tested against the full model.

b. Dependent Variable: Social Engagement - Relationships, contact with faculty, staff, classmates & school friends-SE-R

c. Predictors in the Full Model: (Constant), university, WNS_europe, Oceana, length_pr length of time landed in Canada, E_61k_80k, E_europe, male, Carib, C_21k_40k, post_sec, F_81k_100k, B_11k_20k, SW_asia, some_post, diploma, D_41k_60k, SE_asia, incomplete, G_100K, Africa, age, bachelor.

3. Liberal Education

Liberal Education [LE]:

In the running of the factor analysis for LE, the communalities, variance, component matrix, case processing summary and reliability statistics are listed below.

Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
ei1e Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views	1.000	.570
ei1f Tried to better understand someone else's views	1.000	.779
ei1g Learned something that changed the way you understand an issue	1.000	.691

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.040	68.012	68.012	2.040	68.012	68.012
2	.617	20.576	88.588			
3	.342	11.412	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Component Matrix^a

	Component
	1
ei1f Tried to better understand someone else's views	.883
ei1g Learned something that changed the way you understand an issue	.831
ei1e Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views	.755

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 1 components extracted.

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	405	93.3
	Excluded ^a	29	6.7
	Total	434	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.762	3

4. Predictors of a Liberal Education

AE-D as a predictor of Liberal Education [LE]:

Using the Academic Engagement – Development Factor (AE-D), I ran regression analysis against the indicators of a Liberal Education (LE) to see if there is a significant correlation. As you can see in the ANOVA and Coefficients tables below, AE-D is a very significant predictor of LE.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.154 ^a	.024	.021	2.17058

a. Predictors: (Constant), Academic Engagement – Development –AE-D

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	45.024	1	45.024	9.556	.002 ^b
	Residual	1865.730	396	4.711		
	Total	1910.754	397			

a. Dependent Variable: LE Liberal Education Indicators

b. Predictors: (Constant), Academic Engagement – Development –AE-D

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	8.583	.321		26.707	.000
	Academic Engagement - Development-AE-D	-.147	.047	-.154	-3.091	.002

a. Dependent Variable: LE Liberal Education Indicators

AE-TOT as a predictor of Liberal Education [LE]:

I used the Academic Engagement – Time on Task Factor (AE-TOT) and ran regression analysis against the indicators of a Liberal Education Factor (LE) to see if there is a significant correlation. As you can see in the model summary, ANOVA and Coefficients tables below, AE-TOT is a very significant predictor of LE.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.173 ^a	.030	.028	2.15531

a. Predictors: (Constant), AE-TOT

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	57.324	1	57.324	12.340	.000 ^b
	Residual	1853.494	399	4.645		
	Total	1910.818	400			

a. Dependent Variable: LE Liberal Education Indicators

b. Predictors: (Constant), AE-TOT

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	6.736	.283		23.843	.000
	AE-TOT	.185	.053	.173	3.513	.000

a. Dependent Variable: LE1 Liberal Education Indicators

SE-C as a predictor of Liberal Education [LE]:

In order to determine if the Social Engagement – Conversations Factor (SE-C) is a predictor of the indicators of a Liberal Education (LE), I ran regression analysis. As seen in the ANOVA and Coefficients tables below, SE-C is a very significant predictor of LE.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.331 ^a	.110	.108	2.07085

a. Predictors: (Constant), Social Engagement – Conversations –SE-C

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	205.782	1	205.782	47.985	.000 ^b
	Residual	1668.197	389	4.288		
	Total	1873.980	390			

a. Dependent Variable: LE Liberal Education Indicators

b. Predictors: (Constant), Social Engagement – Conversations –SE-C

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	5.569	.314		17.716	.000
	Social Engagement – Conversations –SE-C	.300	.043	.331	6.927	.000

a. Dependent Variable: LE Liberal Education Indicators

SE-R as a predictor of Liberal Education [LE]:

Using the Social Engagement – Relationships Factor (SE-R), I ran regression analysis to see if SE-R is a predictor of the indicators of a liberal education (LE1). The ANOVA and Coefficients tables are below and exhibit that SE-R is a very significant predictor of LE.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.157 ^a	.025	.022	2.17574

a. Predictors: (Constant), Social Engagement - Relationships-SE-R

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	47.981	1	47.981	10.136	.002 ^b
	Residual	1893.531	400	4.734		
	Total	1941.512	401			

a. Dependent Variable: LE Liberal Education Indicators

b. Predictors: (Constant), Social Engagement – Relationships-SE-R

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	8.502	.294		28.920	.000
	Social Engagement - Relationships-SE-R	-.099	.031	-.157	-3.184	.002

a. Dependent Variable: LE Liberal Education Indicators

5. Predictors of a Liberal Education – University & College Analysis

AE1 as a predictor of Liberal Education [LE1] – University & College Analysis:

Using the Academic Engagement – Development Factor (AE-D), I ran regression analysis to see if there are differences between RIAs by institution as a predictor of the traits of a liberal education. As seen

in the model summary, ANOVA and Coefficient tables below, AE-D is a very significant predictor of LE for RIAS who attend university. AE-D is not a significant predictor of LE for RIAS who attend college.

Model Summary

institution		R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1.00 university	1	.230 ^a	.053	.049	2.15208
2.00 college	1	.033 ^a	.001	-.005	2.17783

a. Predictors: (Constant), Academic Engagement – Development –AE-D

ANOVA^a

institution			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1.00 university	1	Regression	61.031	1	61.031	13.178	.000 ^b
		Residual	1097.655	237	4.631		
		Total	1158.686	238			
2.00 college	1	Regression	.804	1	.804	.170	.681 ^b
		Residual	725.673	153	4.743		
		Total	726.477	154			

a. Dependent Variable: LE Liberal Education Indicators

b. Predictors: (Constant), Academic Engagement – Development –AE-D

Coefficients^a

institution			Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
			B	Std. Error	Beta		
1.00 university	1	(Constant)	9.186	.411		22.351	.000
		Academic Engagement – Development –AE-D	-.218	.060	-.230	-3.630	.000
2.00 college	1	(Constant)	7.658	.516		14.833	.000
		Academic Engagement – Development –AE-D	-.032	.078	-.033	-.412	.681

a. Dependent Variable: LE Liberal Education Indicators

AE-TOT as a predictor of Liberal Education [LE] – University & College Analysis:

Using the Academic Engagement – Time on Task Factor (AE-TOT), I ran regression analysis to see if there are differences between RIAS by institution as a predictor of the traits of a liberal education. As seen in the model summary, ANOVA and Coefficient tables below, AE-TOT is a very significant predictor of LE for RIAS who attend college and those who attend university. The finding is slightly more significant for college RIAS and given the higher Beta, AE-TOT is a somewhat stronger predictor of LE for college RIAS than for university RIAS and this finding is very significant.

Model Summary

institution		R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1.00 university	1	.155 ^a	.024	.020	2.15958
2.00 college	1	.208 ^a	.043	.037	2.14199

a. Predictors: (Constant), AE-TOT

ANOVA^a

institution			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1.00 university	1	Regression	27.209	1	27.209	5.834	.016 ^b
		Residual	1100.656	236	4.664		
		Total	1127.866	237			
2.00 college	1	Regression	32.582	1	32.582	7.101	.009 ^b
		Residual	720.336	157	4.588		
		Total	752.918	158			

a. Dependent Variable: LE Liberal Education Indicators
b. Predictors: (Constant), AE-TOT

Coefficients^a

institution			Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
			B	Std. Error	Beta		
1.00 university	1	(Constant)	6.963	.379		18.350	.000
		AE-TOT	.171	.071	.155	2.415	.016
2.00 college	1	(Constant)	6.390	.425		15.042	.000
		AE-TOT	.212	.079	.208	2.665	.009

a. Dependent Variable: LE Liberal Education Indicators

SE-C as a predictor of Liberal Education [LE] – University & College Analysis:

Using the Social Engagement – Conversations Factor (SE-C), I ran regression analysis to see if there are differences between RIAS by institution as a predictor of the traits of a liberal education. As seen in the model summary, ANOVA and Coefficient tables below, SE-C is still a very significant predictor of LE for both RIAS who attend university and those who attend college. This finding is slightly more significant for University RIAS than College RIAS. The amount of effect, though, is a little stronger for University RIAS. This means that University RIAS who have stronger SE-C will exhibit a bit stronger attributes of a liberal education (LE) than College RIAS.

Model Summary

institution		R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1.00 university	1	.327 ^a	.107	.103	2.09109
2.00 college	1	.329 ^a	.108	.103	2.04341

a. Predictors: (Constant), Social Engagement – Conversations –SE-C

ANOVA^a

institution			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1.00 university	1	Regression	120.361	1	120.361	27.526	.000 ^b
		Residual	1005.708	230	4.373		
		Total	1126.069	231			
2.00 college	1	Regression	77.685	1	77.685	18.605	.000 ^b
		Residual	638.856	153	4.176		
		Total	716.542	154			

a. Dependent Variable: LE Liberal Education Indicators
b. Predictors: (Constant), Social Engagement – Conversations –SE-C

Coefficients^a

institution			Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
			B	Std. Error	Beta		
1.00 university	1	(Constant)	5.817	.401		14.514	.000
		Social Engagement – Conversations –SE-C	.281	.053	.327	5.247	.000
2.00 college	1	(Constant)	5.236	.524		9.999	.000
		Social Engagement – Conversations –SE-C	.326	.076	.329	4.313	.000

a. Dependent Variable: LE Liberal Education Indicators

SE-R as a predictor of Liberal Education [LE] – University & College Analysis:

Using the Social Engagement – Relationships Factor (SE-R), I ran regression analysis to see if there are differences between RIAS by institution as a predictor of the traits of a liberal education. As seen in the model summary, ANOVA and Coefficient tables below, SE-R is a very significant predictor of LE for RIAS who attend University but not a significant predictor of LE for RIAS who attend College. Once again, as the scale for SE-R is reversed, the negative Beta indicates that RIAS who attend University who are more strongly socially engaged in PSE (negative SE-R) demonstrate stronger indicators of a Liberal Education (positive LE) and this finding is very significant. While RIAS who attend College also have a similar but less strong effect as the RIAS who attend University, this finding is not significant.

Model Summary

institution		R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1.00 university	1	.209 ^a	.044	.040	2.16029
2.00 college	1	.095 ^a	.009	.003	2.18646

a. Predictors: (Constant), Social Engagement – Relationships –SE-R

ANOVA^a

institution			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1.00 university	1	Regression	50.583	1	50.583	10.839	.001 ^b
		Residual	1110.713	238	4.667		
		Total	1161.296	239			
2.00 college	1	Regression	6.812	1	6.812	1.425	.234 ^b
		Residual	745.777	156	4.781		
		Total	752.589	157			

a. Dependent Variable: LE Liberal Education Indicators

b. Predictors: (Constant), Social Engagement – Relationships –SE-R

Coefficients^a

Institution			Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
			B	Std. Error	Beta		
1.00 university	1	(Constant)	8.991	.394		22.838	.000
		Social Engagement - Relationships-SE-R	-.133	.040	-.209	-3.292	.001
2.00 college	1	(Constant)	7.916	.447		17.695	.000
		Social Engagement – Relationships-SE-R	-.060	.050	-.095	-1.194	.234

a. Dependent Variable: LE Liberal Education Indicators

Demographic predictors of Liberal Education [LE]

In order to determine if there are any demographic predictors of the hallmarks of a liberal education for RIAS, I then conducted a regression analysis on the liberal education factor (LE). In order to run all seven of the predictor variables against the factor, I had to create dummy variables in instances where I am using nominal variables such as birth country, level of education, income. In cases where there is an intrinsic ordering to the variables such as with age there is no need for dummy variables. The model summary and ANOVA results are listed below. There are no significant demographic predictors of the traits of a liberal education (LE).

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.229 ^a	.053	-.008	2.23268

a. Predictors: (Constant), university, WNS_europe, Oceana, E_61k_80k, Carib, length_pr length of time landed in Canada, male, E_europe, B_11k_20k, F_81k_100k, bachelor, C_21k_40k, SW_asia, some_post, incomplete, D_41k_60k, Africa, diploma, G_100K, SE_asia, age, post_sec

ANOVA ^b								
Model			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	R Square Change
1	Subset Tests	WNS_europe, E_europe, Carib, Africa, SE_asia, SW_asia, Oceana	34.277	7	4.897	.982	.444 ^a	.019
		some_post, post_sec, bachelor, diploma, incomplete	23.233	5	4.647	.932	.460 ^a	.013
		B_11k_20k, C_21k_40k, D_41k_60k, E_61k_80k, F_81k_100k, G_100K	32.051	6	5.342	1.072	.379 ^a	.018
		age	.654	1	.654	.131	.717 ^a	.000
		university	3.980	1	3.980	.798	.372 ^a	.002
		length_pr length of time landed in Canada	3.046	1	3.046	.611	.435 ^a	.002
		male	2.382	1	2.382	.478	.490 ^a	.001
		Regression	95.434	22	4.338	.870	.635 ^c	
Residual	1719.781	345	4.985					
Total		1815.215	367					
a. Tested against the full model.								
b. Dependent Variable: LE Liberal Education Indicators								
c. Predictors in the Full Model: (Constant), university, WNS_europe, Oceana, E_61k_80k, Carib, length_pr length of time landed in Canada, male, E_europe, B_11k_20k, F_81k_100k, bachelor, C_21k_40k, SW_asia, some_post, incomplete, D_41k_60k, Africa, diploma, G_100K, SE_asia, age, post_sec.								

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