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A Major Paper

Submitted to the Faculty of Environmental Studies

In partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master in Environmental Studies

York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

July 30, 2019

ABSTRACT

The founding of a formal education system in Canada was influenced by religious, racial and classist biases and bigotry that continues to perpetuate within and throughout our institutional systems today; creating barriers of access, practices of othering and underrepresentation in areas that economic, social and academic advancement of specific populations within Canadian society. This final research paper will explore the history of education in Canada, identify whom are identified as underrepresented student populations and explore early Postsecondary education (PSE) intervention access initiatives for underrepresented populations offered in publicly funded colleges such as Centennial College, George Brown College, Humber College and Seneca College, which are located in Toronto. This paper will explore the complex intersectionality amongst underrepresented groups, barriers to accessing and navigating PSI systems, explore intersectoral partnerships that encourage and support early PSE intervention planning as well identify and critique social capital gains through early PSE intervention initiatives.

This paper will argue that throughout Canada's history the explicit and implicit practice of exclusion has created a systemic system of underrepresentation of Indigenous, marginalized (including Black, 2SLGBTQ+, first- generation and females), French speaking and economically disenfranchised student populations within the PSE system. This underrepresentation has resulted in the call for early access intervention initiatives that support equitable PSE accessibility that acknowledges the intersectionality of individuals identified within these underrepresented populations as well as eliminating the legacy of institutional bigotry and exclusive practices within the fabric of the Canadian education system.

FOREWORD

I have always been enamored with learning and learning environments within the context of social justice and equality. I recall questioning my education through classroom discussions and my mother's inclusion of me in progress school meetings fueled my desire to further understand the larger educational process and my place in it. My decision to research equitable access to PSE for underrepresented populations was not by chance. The three Area of Concentration and Learning Objectives outline in my Plan (PSIs); history of higher education: government priorities and education in Ontario; Postsecondary Education (PSE) planning: Early PSE initiatives for underrepresented populations. My identified learning objectives included: 1) analyze the impact of systemic barriers on underrepresented populations in order to increase an understanding of inequities within the Ontario's PSE system; 2) develop an working knowledge of the experience of underrepresented populations within the PSE system; 3) analyze the role of government policies and planning that perpetuate systemic barriers and social inequities for underrepresented populations; and 4) explore different types early intervention initiatives to identify their strengths and limitations. Stated components and objectives were explored and some achieved through my enrollment in courses, seminars, field placement and literature reviews. Through my research in this area, with compiled data and analysis, my hope was to uncover early access intervention initiatives that address the inequity of PSE access and contribute to the growing research surrounding equitable access for underrepresented populations within the city of Toronto.

I have gained tremendous knowledge through this research, acknowledging that the history of education in this country is complex and varied. Collaborative approaches

involving educational systems, levels of governments, educational advocates and members from underrepresented groups are needed to address the systemic and fundamental issues perpetuating the continued underrepresentation of identified groups within the Canadian population. This paper highlights the benefits of PSE inclusion while acknowledging the legacy of exclusion of underrepresented populations and initiatives intended to increase of stated populations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This paper is centered in the continued work of anti-oppression, I acknowledge that York University is situated on the traditional territories, the area known as Tkaronto, which has been care taken by the Anishinabek Nation, Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Huron-Wendat, and the Métis. I acknowledge the current treaty holders, the Mississaugas of the Credit River First Nation, who confirm this territory is subject to the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement to peaceably share and care for the Great Lakes region. This land acknowledgement is more than just a reminder of history but an urgent reminder of a past history and present understanding of shared responsibilities and responsiveness to equity. As a black woman of Caribbean heritage whose people have been enslaved and colonized, I acknowledge my status as a visitor on this land.

I acknowledge that this paper is in duty and responsibility anchored in human rights and my intentionality of standing within and against oppression of underrepresented populations (including Indigenous, Black, First Generation and other marginalized populations). Over the course of completing this research paper, I have discovered many troubling truths regarding my history as an individual born on this land, uncovered facts that have disrupted my status quo as well as reinforced my resolve to continue working for equitable and equal human rights practices including access to education, health services, housing and employment.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

B2S	Bridge to Success
CET	Council of Educators Toronto
CMEC	Council of Ministers of Education, Canada
CRT	Critical Race Theory
CPO	Community Partnership Office
ESE	Elementary Secondary Education
GBC	George Brown College
GTA	Greater Toronto Area
HYPE	Helping Youth Pursue Education
IEP	International Educated Professional
K-PSE	Kindergarten to Postsecondary Education
LAWS	Law in Action Within Schools
NIA	Neighbourhood Improvement Area
OEDC	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSSD	Ontario Secondary School Diploma
OYAP	Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program
PS	Postsecondary
PSE	Postsecondary Education
PSI	Postsecondary Institution
RUN	Ryerson University Now
SCT	Social Capital Theory
SDOH	Social Determinants of Health
SMA	Strategic Mandate Agreement
START	Successful Transition: Advocacy, Resources and Training

SWAC	School Within A College
TCDSB	Toronto Catholic District School Board
TDSB	Toronto District School Board
2SLGBTQ+	Two-Spirited, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Questioning, Plus
TYP	Transitional Year Program
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
W.H.O	World Health Organization
Y2P	Youth to Postsecondary
YEAH	Youth Enrichment at Humber
YITS	Youth in Transition Survey

“If I could teach one thing to the next generation it would be that no one should accept the status quo”- Daurene Lewis

Higher education continues to be a significant determinant of how different people can access the SDOH. The W.H.O confirms that levels of education attainment have proven to be firmly linked to job security, economic capital, improved living conditions and physical health (Project, 2003). Jones (2013) argues that the attainment of a PSE is strongly associated with a wide range of social returns, which include a healthier population, greater civic engagement and self-determination (Jones, 2013). Statistically, those with more education live longer; as there is a linear relationship between the years of education and life expectancy, such that mortality rates are highest for those with least education (Miner, 2011). PSE as a pathway to economic opportunity is not a new idea, with a substantial amount of research showing that the two are closely connected. However, this is an avenue that is being stressed in the current discourse around improving the life chances of marginalized individuals (Anisef, 2015).

There is significant research that indicates PSE participation in Canada is steadily increasing. The 2008 Marshalling Resources for Change report states that PSE participation in Canada is amongst the highest in the world. The report suggests that problems related to PSE accessibility are not the overall rate of participation, but rather the disparities and inequities of participation rates amongst underrepresented populations (Jones et al., 2008; Norrie & Zhao, 2011).

Increasing access to PSE requires a comprehensive approach regarding an educational system that has historically excluded non-traditional (underrepresented) learners. It has long been recognized that innovative policies and programs can help to ameliorate inequitable opportunities to accessing PSE, and with an aging population, Canada must devote attention to increasing the educational attainment levels of disadvantaged and underrepresented populations (Kirby, 2009). By improving social and academic integration through sustained support and community involvement, community-based access programs can contribute to the widening of traditionally underrepresented populations in PSE participation (access, retention and graduation) (Jones et al., 2008).

An example of such early PSE intervention initiatives are programs being offered in partnership with publicly funded English PSIs, located within the GTA urban centre; includes a (Miner, 2011) Humber Colleges' three day residential camp for students in grade 7 and 8 from all over Ontario, designed to provide exposure to residential college and program offerings (Miner, 2011). Centennial College also offers a program called HYPE which stands for Helping Youth Pursue Education, Hype is classified as an early PSE intervention initiative which this paper will describe and explore further. Following an examination of the complex intersectionality amongst groups underrepresented in PSEs, barriers to accessing knowledge, support and navigation of PS institutions, I will explore intersectoral partnerships that encourage and support early PSE intervention planning, while identifying and critiquing social capital effects of early PSE intervention initiatives. The overall goal of my study is to explore how certain underrepresented student groups have been disadvantaged within the PSE system, whether and how PSI access initiatives acknowledge intersectionality amongst traditionally underrepresented groups, and the

benefits of early PSE intervention initiatives geared towards these underrepresented groups.

PSE planning through early intervention preparation plays a major role for learners by framing their future decisions about PSE. Early and proactive efforts are essential to expand horizons and introduce young people to future career opportunities and training requirements. Cassidy (2014) identifies early intervention initiatives such as elementary school engagement, self-esteem, academic preparation, career and PS awareness and financial planning, as appropriate methods of introducing the concept of PSE to young learners. The introduction of PS language and terminology can foster an environment of curiosity and learning amongst underrepresented populations. Access to PSE is a key priority for the province of Ontario (Norrie and Zhao, 2011), and can be facilitated through early intervention initiatives in collaboration with PSIs that implement accessibility strategies in accordance with their SMAs¹ to engage underrepresented populations.

Toronto is fortunate to have four colleges and three universities in its jurisdiction. All colleges (School-College Work) and universities in the GTA have implemented access initiatives to some extent (Miner, 2011), and they are generally facilitated through campus offices and staffing resources. These access initiatives include:

- Community Outreach Office (Centennial College); Story Arts Summer Camp for Kids and START Smart
- GBC CPO; OYAP and SWAC

¹ Strategic Mandate Agreements- each of Ontario's 45 publicly funded universities and colleges has an agreement highlighting institutional priorities for a 3-year period. The agreements help promote student success and institutional excellence.

- Community Outreach and Workforce Development Office (Humber College); Youth Transition Program and YEAH
- Yorkgate Campus (Seneca College); Y2P and Academic Upgrading Yorkgate
- Spanning the Gaps to Post-Secondary Education (Ryerson University); Transition Foundation Program and RUN
- TYP (University of Toronto); Steps to University and LAWS
- York University- TD Community Engagement Centre (CEC); Bridging Program for IEPs and TYP at York University (Miner, 2011)

These programs and departments are meant to serve as access points and information hubs for prospective students, including traditionally underrepresented populations, as they are to function as early PSE intervention initiatives. However, we must ask the question, is possible to begin even earlier with early PSE programming in primary and secondary schools?

Early PSE intervention initiatives, when facilitated in partnership with PSI's, ESE partners and community-based access programs, can address immediate social and academic needs of students and enhance community-institution relationships (Jones, 2008). They offer lasting improvements in opportunities to pursue PSE for community members and underrepresented populations. B2S, a school-community partnership, was a pilot program that run from 2006-2011 through a partnership linking the United Way Toronto (funder), the Community MicroSkills Development Centre and the Boys and Girls Club (community agency), the TDSB (Research and Information Services) and North Albion Collegiate Institute (NACI) (host school). NACI, identified as having a high

population of newcomer students living in transition within one of Toronto's NIAs, was selected to host B2S; the program components included student nutrition, student tutoring and community engagement (through Boys and Girls Club located in north Etobicoke), one-to-one tutoring support (provided by peer and postsecondary student volunteers) and an annual bursary towards PSE applications and/or tuition.

The B2S program evaluation identified improved academic study skills, self-confidence and newcomer integration, resulting in long term outcomes of increased secondary school graduation and employment readiness; participants' progression to PSE was also improved over the course of the pilot, with 88% of B2S students who graduated enrolled in PSE, nearly the same as the 89% of TDSB graduates who are normally enrolled in PSE (Taylor Newberry Consulting Inc., 2011). PSE research acknowledges intersectoral partnerships that introduce PSE as a viable pathway for traditionally underrepresented populations as a critical step towards addressing systemic barriers to PSE access (Jones et al., 2008). Although noted in this paper such initiatives will not be examined extensively.

This paper defines traditionally underrepresented populations, identifies early intervention initiatives facilitated by Toronto's publicly funded PSI's, and describes the use of community collaboration to promote socio-economic capital for individuals, communities and the larger society. Following the introduction, chapter two will present the methodology and research questions, where a critical analysis of PSE literature will be used to explore the benefits and barriers of equitable PSE access for underrepresented populations. Chapter three is a review of Canada's publicly funded educational history, acknowledging the legacy of access and attainment barriers for historically

underrepresented populations. I will also introduce the intersectionality of underrepresented student populations and scholarly understanding of underrepresented groups. Chapter four explores the benefits of early PSE intervention initiatives throughout ESE, examining the various categories of early PSE intervention initiative programs. Chapter six will describe access initiatives offered at publicly funded colleges in Toronto, this chapter will also explore SMAs as a tool to drive higher-quality education improvement, student success and support institutional strengths. Chapter seven will conclude my qualitative research paper where I will discuss my findings of early PSE access intervention initiatives offered at Toronto colleges, limitations of access initiatives for underrepresented student populations and my recommendations for future developments of early PSE access intervention initiatives for underrepresented populations.

1.1 ACCESS TO PSE

Equity discourses in education are an attempt to address the needs, interests, aspirations, and issues of diverse populations of (traditionally underrepresented) students (Grant & Lei, 2008). Inequity was built into the foundation of the Canadian education system from the start, creating a system of well-represented and underrepresented students, from the earliest days of colonial settlement. Henry & Tator (2009) note that the higher education system was created and controlled largely by white males of Anglo-Saxon ethnicity and reflected their European origins and experiences. Universities (PSI's) in Canada were founded by and integrated with the ruling apparatus of imperial powers and were implicated in the genocidal treatment of people native to territory we now call Canada, along with institutions of slavery and the subjugation of other civilizations. Skin

colour became the present sign of membership to formerly subjugate people in the context of intellectual and cultural traditions founded in imperialism (Henry & Tator, 2009). PSE access and attainment are associated with tools to enhance ‘social capital’² for formerly excluded groups, as ‘social capital’ is closely associated with many positive outcomes for individuals, communities, and nations (health, life expectancy rate, economic development) (Cassidy, 2014).

PSIs have not always viewed the diversity of their community members as either a valued resource or an asset for enhancing the climate of the campus. Only within the past few decades have Canadian PSIs demonstrated a growing commitment to understanding diversity and working towards equity and inclusion on campuses (McGrath, 2010). Underrepresented students are valuable contributors to the sustainability of communities; it is incumbent on all stakeholders (governments, PSI’s, labour markets, NGOs) to address societal inequities including accessibility to PSE through the ‘social capital’ lens. Social capital implies investment in social relations (Lin, 1999) resulting in returns impacting social inequities. Equitable access to PSE is critical to reducing poverty and creating a more just society where there are opportunities for everyone to benefit from higher education (College Student Alliance, 2011).

1.2 TRADITIONALLY UNDERREPRESENTED STUDENT POPULATIONS

Identifying who are traditionally underrepresented groups within Ontario’s PSE system is critical to addressing inequities with PSE access and early intervention initiatives. The Canadian Council on Learning classifies underrepresented groups as Indigenous

² Networks of relationships within a social group including interpersonal relationships, shared sense of identity, understanding, values and cooperation

learners, learners from low-income families, first-generation PSE students, males and females in a limited number of program areas and some newcomer groups; students from northern and rural communities, individuals with dependents, and those with learning exceptionalities and disabilities (Canadian Councils on Learning, 2010). Underrepresented student populations whose representation in PSIs have been significantly lower than the proportion of their respective populations in Ontario (Anisef et al., 2018) include racialized and marginalized (2SLGBTQ+) and Francophone students. This paper recognizes the previously mentioned as traditionally underrepresented populations within the PSE system and acknowledges the multiple intersects (historical and present) represented within these identities (prescribed and ascribed). For the purpose of this research, I will use the term Indigenous rather than “Aboriginal”; the Indigenous Corporate Training Inc website states the use of “Aboriginal” as an outdated understanding (and use of the word) that fails to recognize Indigenous Peoples in Canada as a distinct and separate nation (Indigenous Corporate Training Inc., 2014). The history between Indigenous Peoples and Canada’s education system is discussed further in chapter 3 of this paper.

Egbo (2012) argues that there is an acknowledgement by scholars that education includes political and intellectual components, as well as practical activities that occur within complex historical, economic, and social context. Gillborn (2005) uses CRT to suggest that race inequity is fundamental to the education system. Meanwhile, Moore & Lasky (1999) identify that the historical relationship between marginalized groups and the school system has been marred by distrust and, at times, political conflict. The interplay between underrepresented groups and systemic barriers to PSE access is complex, as

different groups, identities (prescribed or ascribed to) within underrepresented groups and locations, including social, economic, religious and political, meet at varying intersections (College Student Alliance, 2011). Hardy Cox and Strange (2016) state that although they are institutions that catered primarily to the elite and privileged of society, Canada's PSIs today reflect an increasingly diverse array of student groups, whose participation in postsecondary learning is challenging educators to respond more creatively to the differences they represent.

Traditionally underrepresented groups are not homogenous, nor can they individually or collectively be separated from their historical experience and/or inequitable practices found in the creation of barriers to PSE access. An intersectionality perspective argues that identities of race, class, and gender in varying combinations give individuals unique positions and experiences (Ainsef, et al, 2015). Identification of traditionally underrepresented populations shows how social factors, beyond the realm of education, play a very important role in PSE access and success. PSE literature (Looker & Low, 2001; Miner, 2011) indicates that there is limited Canadian research on access to PSE initiatives for traditionally underrepresented student populations. The current research pertaining to underrepresented PSE student accessibility is founded mainly in research and initiatives from the United States.

1.3 EARLY PSE INTERVENTION INITIATIVES

Canada is often portrayed in film, stories and historical accounts as the safe and friendly haven for runaway slaves. Canada's narrative as the land of the free beside the slaveholding United States of America is a narrative filled with holes, misguided truths and hundreds of years of untold stories (Henry and Tator, 2009).

Canada has a history of barriers to free access to social institutions, which has placed disadvantaged and underrepresented populations at a deficit to access educational spaces, employment and immigration.

There is a legacy of residential schools, Chinese head taxes, Japanese internment camps (Hardy Cox & Strange, 2010) and practiced educational segregation. Canada was founded on divisive principles of power, privilege and class. Residential schools were places of trauma for Indigenous children and young adults, segregated education systems (although not official or legally enforced) were poorly underfunded; the focus of the education system for Indigenous, Black and marginalized groups was never to prepare them for PSE (Benjamin, 2014). The education system as part of the broader Canadian government system failed to equitably or adequately provide for the academic rights of all its citizens.

Public education is deemed as a strong equalizing force in Canadian society, working to close disparities where more children expect to continue their education beyond secondary school; however a recent UNICEF report on Canada stated that school is not a place of opportunity for every child, and there are growing threats to the fairness of Canadian education systems (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, 2018). Students (Hardy Cox & Strange, 2010) who come from traditionally underrepresented communities encounter barriers to success and educational attainment; these barriers often manifest as social isolation and alienation; racial, sexual and/or other discriminations (Hardy Cox & Strange, 2010); active or passive curricular limitations, underscoring the need for institutional responses to inequity.

Many of Canada's campus accessibility initiatives are rooted in the work of student activities during the 1960s; during that era, college and university students gave birth to the movement towards greater equity in Canadian PSE. Students on many campuses organized themselves as smaller communities in order to establish a stronger presence of historically underrepresented groups (McGrath, 2010). The TYP (Transitional Year Program) at the University of Toronto is an initiative that emerged from the advocacy of African Canadian community groups in Toronto to remove impediments to achievement for students, and increased access to post-secondary education. Originally conceived to assist African Canadians wanting to pursue higher education but who lacked the prerequisite courses, the program expanded in 1970 to aid Indigenous and other underrepresented students of all backgrounds (Benjamin and Bernard, 2010). The TYP at Dalhousie University was also initiated in Nova Scotia to reduce historically educational disadvantaged Mi'kmaq and Black Nova Scotian communities.

There are various approaches to early intervention programs; however, this research focuses on early PSE Intervention initiatives offered at GTA Colleges that are designed to increase PSE accessibility and awareness for underrepresented populations. A published report by College Student Alliance (2011), states that early intervention programs are one of the most valuable strategies for improving participation rates in PSE along with engagement and dialogue about the benefits and opportunities of higher education. Early outreach is vital, given that nearly half of youth decide to attend PSE before Grade 9 (College Student Alliance, 2011). De Broucker & Mortimer (2005), argues the most efficient way of offering equal opportunities to achieve potential access to PSE is early intervention, it is believed that from the time children start to build up the

intellectual capacity that will ultimately allow them to move on to PSE. To increase equitable access to university and college, historical inequalities need to be addressed by institutions, by practicing early interventions to offer low-income (underrepresented) children, educational, health and social programs to encourage development that will ultimately allows them to move on to PSE (de Broucker & Mortimer, 2005).

1.4 IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL ACCESS PROGRAMS

Access and early intervention programs are defined by the CET (2015) as initiatives that focus on educational attainment for populations that do not traditionally and or have difficulty pursuing PSE (Council of Educators Toronto 2014 Stakeholders Report, 2015). Jones & Field (2013) suggest access is a complex issue, “access to higher education” means more than simply increasing aggregated participation rates, access is also about which populations are participating or more accurately, which populations are not accessing and what students have access. The issue in Canada lies primarily in the disparities and inequalities to access (Jones & Field, 2013). There is a shift in PSE participation initiatives and programs, promoting equal access to PSE rather than simply increasing student enrollment (Stol et el, 2016).

Barriers to participation in PSE fall across a range of challenges including individual motivation, academic inspirations, parental / family context or broader systemic and institutional barriers including the legacy of educational bias (implicit and explicit), racism and discrimination and practice of exclusion from social and economic processes (Stol et el, 2016). Early intervention program design and offerings should acknowledge the multiple intersects of underrepresented populations, as there are over eighty distinct Indigenous peoples, languages and cultures (Hardy Cox & Strange,2016). 2SLGBTQ+

students with other marginalized identities (e.g. gender non-conforming, newcomer, racialized) and racial visibility whose backgrounds span a full range of context and characteristics (Hardy Cox & Strange, 2016). Early intervention planning and engagement of underrepresented students' populations that does not recognize the need for a diverse approach is not only inequitable, it reinforces systemic barriers associated with education accessibility gaps and underrepresentation. Stol et al (2016), states that early intervention initiatives geared to increase PSE access for underrepresented populations should be in response to and understanding of the complex interplay of (institutional) barriers that underrepresented groups face (Stol et al, 2016).

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY & RESEARCH QUESTIONS

"The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character, that is the goal of true education"- Martin Luther King Jr.

The findings in this research project are based on information gathered through reviews of scholarly literature which included journals, reports and publicly accessible websites. Using standard qualitative research methods.

2.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The intent of this research is to critically analyze literature pertaining to early access initiatives offered at publicly founded colleges in the GTA with a focus of increasing PSE accessibility for underrepresented populations. My research questions are centered in the areas of early PSE intervention initiatives and equitable access initiatives within GTA Colleges.

This research seeks to explore and answer the following questions:

1. How have certain underrepresented student groups been disadvantaged within the PSE system?
2. What are the benefits of early PSE intervention initiatives geared towards these underrepresented groups?
3. How do PSIs access initiatives acknowledge intersectionality amongst traditionally underrepresented groups?

2.2 METHODS

This qualitative research paper uses a critical analysis³ to explore the current literature (journals, electronic and educational websites) pertaining to early intervention initiatives to PSE geared toward traditionally underrepresented student populations. It explores the nature, benefits and barriers by using the conceptual framework of SCT and the role it plays in equitable intervention initiatives in the engagement of traditionally underrepresented groups. The aim of this research to expand on the existing theory and knowledge in relation to PSE access initiatives among colleges for underrepresented groups, through literature review I have used SCT as the principal theoretical framework in data analysis.

When examining the connection of SCT and its relation to PSI, the primary function of SCT is described as a way to enable a student to gain access to human, culture, and other forms of capital, as well as to institutional resources and supports (Perna, & Titus, 2005; Coleman, 1998; Hofferth, Boisjoly, & Duncan, 1998; Lin, 2001; Marrow, 1999; Portes, 1998; Stanton-Salazar, & Dornbusch, 1995). Social capital is defined as the

³ Critical analysis, subjective evaluation of literature, expressing the researcher's opinion and or the evaluation of text.

“wisdom born of experience that gain membership to exclusive club requires inside contacts, which close competition gaps and access to PSE” (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000)

Carol Mutch’s (2017) analysis framework supports the data analysis process. This approach promotes conceptual and empirical categorizing of data to allow room for research to give support to theory development. Mutch explains that, at each phase of data collection, early patterns are to be documented that will produce further detailed definitions and concepts (Mutch, 2017). Canadian colleges and universities do not formally collect data relative to race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or religion of their students, and there is limited public data on the enrolment, attrition, engagement, and graduation rates of students from traditionally underrepresented populations. This presents challenges in the assessment and reporting the state of diversity on PSE campuses across Canadian PSEs (Hardy-Cox & Strange, 2010).

2.3 RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

After the collection of academic literature related to PSE accessibility and review of related online education websites including publicly funded PSIs and GTA school boards, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the Council of Educators Toronto. I read the selected academic literature and other collected written data from an exploratory and evaluative approach. I also made notes and analysed the obtained literature while maintaining a critical analysis lens that will be grounded in SCT. Data was collected, browsed, highlighted, grouped and categorized to identify themes. Important components of this model I read with an open mind, identifying the various access initiatives offered by GTA colleges.

I identify previous knowledge of PSE through professional attainment. I have received my tri-council ethics training certificate as a requirement for course study (EDUC 5455 Student Experience and Education Outcome in College and University) no interviews were conducted for this research paper.

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

“We’re still not graduating the numbers we should be. We could have more doctors, more lawyers, more MBAs. And we need them desperately. We know from experience that when our people serve our people, we have incredible success”- Roberta Jamieson

PSE access is a broad and complex matter which encompasses a history of public (secular) and private (religious) institutions, shaped by imperialism and influenced by entrenched systems bias resulting in a legacy of implicit and explicit institutional exclusion. PSE research acknowledges the various barriers to increased representation within education access and attainment of historically underrepresented populations citing financial (limited financial resources, debt aversion and high sensitivity to increased cost of PSE), informational (lack of PSE knowledge including financial, academic and professional pathways and reduced motivation due to misconceptions) and geographical obstacles. Those living in the Canada’s northern territories (North West Territories, Nunavut and Yukon) face numerous challenges to PSE access including transportation (geographic distance to institutions), sparse populations and limited economic advancements. Indigenous (Council of Ministers of Education, 2012) youth living in remote communities are often forced to relocate to distant and larger communities to attend secondary and transition to PS institutions.

Literature pertaining to access to PSE initiatives for underrepresented students indicates; there is significant personal, social, institutional and economic benefits associated with early PSE intervention initiatives and accessibility. Miner (2011), states that not only do those with higher educational achievement live longer and earn more money, they also live healthier lives (Miner, 2011). Education (Rae, 2004) is a public policy that clearly links both our (province of Ontario) economic and social values. Participation in PSE enhances the quality of life and wellbeing of individuals, communities and society overall (Rae, 2004). In today's competitive labor market, a high school diploma is not enough to open doors to gainful employment opportunities (Stol et al 2016) not all Canadian youth have the benefit of equitable PSE access. Social engagement and civic responsibility also increase through educational access and attainment. Canadian literature pertaining to PSE access and early intervention programs is generally limited compared to that coming out of the United States, literature is generally further advanced than in Canada; likely due to the availability of data (collection) in the US (Mueller, 2007).

The literature surrounding the status of early access initiative indicates that these initiatives are not financially sustainable as these programs are loosely tied to government funding initiatives of the day and not tightly linked to long term strategic educational development plans. Miner (2011) argues that serious concerns regarding how access programs are funded; short duration and shifting priorities of most initiatives, the reliance on "soft money" in program funding and changes in personnel makes the establishment of long-term commitments and planning cycles difficult. Many PSE early access initiatives are provided in part due to a mix of multi-year funding from various departments,

government bodies and / or corporate investment. Stol et al. (2016), identifies that many access initiatives are underfunded and lack the capacity to undertake long-term program evaluations adding that the evidence in favor of bridging programs are still preliminary. Jones et al. (2008) indicates that there are several important gaps in the research of funding policy instruments and their impact on PSE accessibility going on to say, Canadian studies on access focus on university participation rather than college participation.

Research indicates that there is also limited data on early PSE access initiatives including evaluation and overall benefits. Bridging (Stol et al., 2016) (access) programs could greatly benefit from research assessing their outcomes and impacts; noting that that there has been little systemic research on either the processes or outcomes of PSE access initiatives in part due to the lack of funding and the complexity of the issues these programs address, and the range of services they offer (Stol et al., 2016). Robson (2018) states that students are impacted by factors of income, gender and race; the combination of these identities undoubtedly shape how students experience and access education and other types of social mobility (Robson, 2018).

3.1 UNDERREPRESENTED STUDENT GROUPS

Governments, (PS) institutions, programs and research-based responses aimed at improving accessibility to PSE, Stol et al., suggests have failed to adequately consider the unique context and needs of underrepresented groups; not taking into account the complex range of barriers affecting a young person's participation rate in PSE (Stol et al, 2016). Access to PSE initiatives focus primarily on one identified barrier (e.g. first-generation student) that presents as an obstacle to PSE access and often does not

recognize the intersectionality's that exist in the circumstance of young person's life (e.g. first-generation student from a low-income family). Stol et al (2016) also argues that majority of research analyses are based on student experience according to single characteristics; while multi-characteristics disaggregation is complex, recognizing that one student from an underrepresented group may experience diverse and overlapping issues that shape their access to and participation in PSE (2016). Examining income alone overlooks the many important ways that inequities in education are not simply an issue of economics (Robson, 2018).

There are several variations / characteristics that are considered to identify underrepresented groups within Canada's PSIs, this impart is due to Canada's decentralization educational system and differentiation amongst provincial demographics; however it is generally understood that Indigenous peoples across the country have been disenfranchised from Canada's institutional systems since the arrival of the European settlers. The focus placed on provincial governments to identify underrepresented groups can represent the historical and present disenfranchisement of specific groups. For instance, Nova Scotia is the only Canadian province that has an Acadian and Francophonie along with an African Nova Scotia Affairs Office that supports and connects these identified underrepresented groups to services and resources that preserve the culture and encourages further development including higher education connectivity.

The YITS a national institutional survey undertaken jointly by Statistics Canada and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada examined pattern and influence that impact major transitions in the lives of Canadian young people with a focus on education,

training and employment. Providing policy relevant information about school- work transitions and factors influencing educational pathways the YITS identifies that those from the following groups may be disadvantaged in terms of accessing PSE (Youth in Transition Survey Project Overview,2000):

- Students from low-income families
- First-Generation student~ no family history of attending PS
- Students living in rural areas and others who live far from PSI campuses
- Students whose first language is French
- First and second-generation newcomers
- Students from single-parent (or other “non-traditional”) families
- Indigenous students
- Students with disabilities (including physical, cognitive and mental)
(*Finnie et al, 2011*)

Not recognized in this national overview of populations having traditionally low representation in PSE are Black (racialized), 2SLGBTQ+, crown wards and female students, just to name a few. This paper when referring to underrepresented groups considers the YITS identification along with previously identified underrepresented groups.

3.2 HISTORY OF EDUCATION SYSTEM IN CANADA

The Canadian (Johnson,1968) education system has been conditioned by two basic factors of heredity and environment. Early North American colonies sought to perpetuate on this continent the “civilization” of European settlers. The Gradual Civilization Act of 1857 and one of its mechanisms was the system of Residential Schools

by the late 1800s, where attendance in residential schools for Indigenous children aged 7-15 was compulsory (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). Maynard (2018) states that education is one of the bedrocks of Canadian society, which was legislated as “a fundamental social good”, however Canadian history has proven that education has been used as a tool of white supremacy and is the legacy of settler colonialism. The violent dehumanization forced assimilation and genocide enacted mass disparities on Indigenous children and their families and communities by means of residential schools until the late 1990s, and cannot be seen separate from the development of publicly funded education (Maynard, 2018).

Canadian (McKayue, 1992) common and civic laws have influenced the fabric of Canada’s public and private institutions that has impacted the economic, social and academic advancement of underrepresented populations for centuries. The refusal of service, entry and access was built into the common institutional practices and reinforced by government legislations and legal practices (McKayue, 1992). The Indian Act of 1876 (Florence & Lorimer, 2016) limited social mobility requiring Indigenous persons to be granted “permission” by an “Indian agent” (government employee) to leave a reservations and placed restrictions on the education of Indigenous children. The Canadian education system was used as a tool to assimilate Indigenous communities and restrict economic development of marginalized people (Florence & Lorimer, 2016). The imposition of European-style education by colonial governments is reflective of and entrenched in policies of assimilation and cultural destruction systems (The Canadian Encyclopedia, 2019), building barriers into the Canadian (political, educational, economical and judicial).

Canada's higher education system dates to 1788 with the establishment of Kings College (Halifax, Nova Scotia), Queens University (1841) and College Bytown (now the University of Ottawa) in 1848 followed by the University of Western Ontario (formerly Western University of London) in 1878. There are now hundreds of PSIs operating across the country; in Ontario, there are nineteen (19) publicly funded universities and twenty-four (24) publicly funded Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology, 3 Agricultural Colleges affiliated to universities, one School of Horticulture, one Health and Science Institute, seventeen (17) privately funded institutions with restricted degree/ granting authority, and one federally funded Royal Military College (founded in 1874). There are approximately 570 registered private career colleges and many more non-degree-granting private institutions offering PSE or training opportunities that do not have regulatory oversight in the province of Ontario (Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials, 2019).

The current education system in Canada like many countries, is comprised of elementary, secondary and postsecondary schooling. School attendance is mandatory until the age of sixteen (16) in all provinces except for in the provinces of Manitoba, Ontario, and New Brunswick where ESE is enrollment required until eighteen (18) years old. Children in Ontario and Quebec begin kindergarten at four (4) while children in other provinces begin their education at the age of five (5) (Jaaskelainen, 2019). There is no federal oversight of education in Canada, each province has authority and accountability for ESE through to PSE. Educational institutions however receive funding from all three levels of governments municipal, provincial and federal. Within Ontario there are two Provincial Ministers responsible for the education system, the Ministry of Education (ESE) and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (PSE).

Toronto is home to three of Canada's universities (Ryerson University, University of Toronto and York University) and four colleges (Centennial, George Brown, Humber and Seneca College); residents of Toronto are cited as having higher levels of education than other Canadians (City of Toronto, 2017). As of 2018, Ontario had a full-time enrollment of over 600,000 PSE students just shy of the total population of Durham Region (a suburb east of Toronto). With soaring PSE enrollment, the questions some scholars are asking is who (Miner) is accessing PSE in Canada and what do we know from a Canadian perspective about PSE access (Usher, 2011)

The 2004 Rae Task Force, identifies a number of specific groups that are still experiencing PSE attainment gap and requires particular attention: low- income families, Indigenous Peoples, Francophone, new comer populations, persons with disabilities (physical, cognitive and learning) and first-generation (first-gen) students (Norrie & Zhao, 2011). Underrepresented student populations not specifically identified in the report are racialized (e.g. Black) and marginalized (e.g. women and 2SLGBTQ+) populations however through intersectionality perspective these populations are reflected for example a person living with a disability may identify as a Black transgendered woman who is raising a child as a sole parent.

With no national education strategy and common PSE language pertaining to underrepresented populations, provinces and territories have the responsibility of overseeing and monitoring the implementation and practices of the education systems. The decentralized approach to education presents challenges for curriculum development, the implementation and execution of admission requirements, and standardization of the education systems across the country (Council of Ministers of

Education Canada, 2008). While education falls under provincial jurisdiction the federal government provides direct operating grants and plays a major role in providing student financial assistance in the form of the Canada Student Loan Program which formerly known as the Dominion-Provincial Student Aid Program that was launched in 1939 (Jones, 2014). The CMEC in 2008 identifies that there are similarities in the provincial and territorial education systems across English Canada, there are also significant differences in curriculum, assessment, and accountability policies among the jurisdictions that express the geography, history, language, culture, and corresponding specialized needs of the population served (Council of Ministers of Education Canada, 2008) .

In 2011, the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology report indicated that the federal government has an important role to play in coordinating the efforts of the provinces, territories and PSIs in order to improve access to PSE. The committee noted that there was no shared commitment with clear targets amongst the various levels of governments to increase the participation of underrepresented groups across Canada in PSE. Provinces, territories, federal governments and PSIs need to develop a coordinated strategic plan to increase equitable access to PSE and standardize practices across the jurisdictions that includes ESE engagement.

Overcoming systemic barriers (economic, social and geographic) and deterrents to PSE participation for underrepresented groups requires expanding the capacities of PSI partnerships with early intervention education initiatives (ESE partnerships), government funding (provincial and federal) and collaborative partnerships with community-based organizations, local businesses and families. In theory the Canadian

education system is open to “all” yet in practice the system is closed to many. Canada ranks amongst the highest of education attainment of OECD countries; this ranking however masks the fact that certain populations are not represented at the PSE level (Torjman, 2010).

CHAPTER FOUR: PURPOSE OF EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAM

“People are very resilient, children are resilient, and support for children makes a massive difference”- Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond

4.1 A CASE FOR EARLY PSE INTERVENTION INITIATIVES

Early and proactive efforts are essential to expand horizons and introduce young people to future careers and training requirements. Early PSE intervention initiatives are critical to help support the educational path of Canadian students. Both ESE engagement, self esteem, academic preparation, career and post-secondary awareness and financial planning are identified as appropriate methods to introducing PSE concepts and language of PSE to young learners. The introduction of PS language and terminology can foster an environment of curiosity and learning amongst traditionally underrepresented populations within higher education (Cassidy,2014). Previous PSE research acknowledges intersectoral partnerships that introduce PSE as viable pathways for traditionally underrepresented populations as a critical step towards addressing systemic barriers to PSE access (Jones, Shanahan, Padure, Lamoureux, & Gregor, 2008).

Participation in learning beyond the school-leaving age should be a significant public policy objective for Ontario, outreach initiative should be better encouraged and supported. PSE is essential to the realization of social equity and is equally important for

economic and utilitarian reasons. The importance of education as a domestic economic investment has been consistently articulated by government and non-government organizations alike. There is general public policy consensus on the vast body of evidence that supports the contention that public and private investment in PSE yield high returns of increased labour market participation, productivity, economic development and innovation (Kirby, 2009). Recognizing that inequities, biases and inequalities are built into our institutional systems, the goal of making PSE access more equitable. De Broucker, (2005) states educators, academics and Education Ministries needs to address inequalities as they build up from early childhood by intervening timely; throughout ESE experience; access initiative design must acknowledge the multiple (historic, social and individual) intersects of underrepresented groups and / or memberships (de Broucker, 2015). Researchers Stol et al., (2016) tend to place students into groups according to single characteristics, i.e.; low income, Indigenous or first-generation students, as it is more effective to consider group characteristics in combination instead of focusing on a single characteristic, Stol et al., (2016) suggests that accounting for the multiple intersects impacting PSE access for underrepresented populations. The intersectionality (Doran et al., 2015) of underrepresented groups and reliance on self-identification pose challenges for PSIs in providing access and in being able to accurately evaluate the impact of access initiatives (Doran et al., 2015). The combination of ascribed characteristics (including race, ethno-racial group, disability, social class) combined to influence individual opportunities, these combinations of characteristics rather than traits considered in singularity, must be considered when making recommendations for advancement in social mobility, including the transition to PSE (Robson, et al., 2015). Jones et al. (2008),

argues that access cannot be understood in terms of a single factor, PSE access involves the interplay of a complex range of factors (Jones et al., 2008). Early access intervention initiative design must incorporate the intersectionality of underrepresented groups including the historical and institutional barriers that have prevented full representation of the student body.

PSE access initiatives are designed to decrease (Doran et al., 2015) barriers including academic preparation, knowledge of PSE benefits (e.g. academic and career pathways) and financial resources (e.g. scholarships, student loans and grant processes), early pse access initiatives can reduce these barriers (Doran et al., 2015). the Ontario- a leader in learning report in 2019 indicates that the province (Ontario) together with school boards, schools and PSIS, should develop strategies that involve early outreach (initiatives) to students (Rae, 2005). PSIS, governments (all three levels), school boards are in positions to develop educational polices and collaborative partnerships to lead in change for equitable educational practices that can lead to equitable access initiatives. community (jones et al., 2008) involvement is also important in terms of influencing a student's expectation of PSE and improving engagement and retention; alleviating concerns related to through the support of inter-sectoral partnerships and community-based outreach programs; promote PS access and success for underrepresented populations.

The Canadian Council on Learning report (2011), "What is the Future of Learning in Canada?", emphasized the need for schools (PSIs) to become hubs for community learning, through integration of needs of children from formal education and needs of

adults for informal or non-formal learning opportunities. Improving social and academic integration through sustained support and community involvement, community-based access programs can contribute to improved PSE access (Jones et al., 2008). The 2017 Toronto Youth Equity Strategy (TYES) identified 28 issues that further marginalizes most vulnerable population (MVP) and underrepresented youth including inequitable access to education. The report recommended twelve actions to increase equitable educational access for underrepresented youth: the City of Toronto increase free and affordable community spaces for groups offering educational attainment services; Review and amendment of the Toronto Community Housing Scholarship criteria to attract and support a broader candidate pool; collaboration of the City of Toronto Social Development, Finance and Administrative department, government of Ontario and the Council of Educators to target supports for PSE access initiatives, scholarship and networking development. There is an increased call of action for inter-sectoral partnerships to advance equitable PSE access for underrepresented populations.

Since (Looke & Lowe, 2001) education is a provincial jurisdiction, the province of origin its likely to have an impact on both educational plans and attainments. Research shows the important connection to participation rates, PSE access and information about PSIs, PSE requirements and procedures. Those with less access to relevant information are less likely to apply and less likely to be accepted into programs at the PSE levels. Curling and McMurtry (2008) lead contributors to the Roots of Youth Violence Report, demand that the province (of Ontario) must remove the barriers and disincentives to education that exist for many children and youth including the development of racially and culturally exclusive curriculum, address continued concerns related to safe school

provisions, improving school to family and community relations and providing ongoing educational and mentoring supports in schools that engage student learning and seek to promote the furtherance of (PS) education.

The CET formed in 2011 impart to the 2008 Roots of Youth Violence Report, identifies the need to clarify educational pathways for underrepresented youth in society. There is (Miner, 2011) relatively little primary research on the effectiveness of PSE access programs in Canada. The CET is the first educational attainment initiative of its kind in Canada; facilitating collaboration among Toronto's six colleges (four English and two French Language institutions), three universities, Toronto District and Toronto Catholic School Boards, Mon Avenir Conseil Scolaire Catholique and Conseil Scolaire de district Catholique Centre-Sud and the United Way Toronto and York Region; to improve access to PSE outcomes for underrepresented and marginalized young people (Council of Educators of Toronto, 2014). The former Director of the CET Eric Mezin, states, access programs are like a toolbox, offering a wide range of options including courses, mentorship, skill development, academic support, networking opportunities and transition programs (Numate, 2016) for youth and those seeking to enter PSE. Research has demonstrated that; ensuring access to PSE for all qualified individuals is a key component of Ontario's future competitiveness at both the national and international level (HEQCO, 2011). CET has emerged as an inter-sectoral coordinator providing an online platform providing underrepresented populations with educational information in a central location.

Early intervention initiatives are able to bridge information gaps that may exists amongst families, communities, underrepresented and disadvantaged groups including young people. Research shows the connection between PSE participation rates and

access to PSE information including program offerings, admission requirements and application processes. Information (De Broucker, 2005) barrier can lead to a general assumption that higher education is out of the reach, and a vicious circle of low aspiration, low motivation and low academic performance, ensuring that PSE is not an option when the time comes.

De Broucker (2005), argues there is no better place than school to ensure that all students have access to the appropriate information and guidance services. It is important that schools dedicate sufficient resources to this, focusing particularly on assisting those most at risk of not getting such information at home. De Broucker also suggests that, youth from low-income, less-educated families are particularly likely to be at a disadvantage when it comes to having access to and understanding information sources along with the wide range of opportunities, they (PSIs) may offer.

4.2 TYPES OF EARLY PSE INTERVENTION INITIATIVES

We are all stakeholders to the elimination of barriers to PSE and developing equitable educational processes. Jones et al. (2008), states that students, community members and local industry all have a vested interest in expanding access to PSE; early access initiatives can assist in the understanding and inclusion of underrepresented populations in PSE. There are many initiatives that aim to promote PSE (benefits) and or PSIs (benefits); it is important to understand that not all early PSE access initiatives are the same.

The CET defines Access and Outreach Programs as initiatives that focus on educational attainment for populations that do not traditionally and / or have difficulty

pursuing PSE. Access programs (initiatives) are offered by PSIs and / or school boards and are often affiliated with community organizations.

CHAPTER FIVE: GTA ACCESS AND OUTREACH INITIATIVES

“While Indigenous children were being mistreated in residential schools by being told they were heathens, savages and pagans and inferior people- that same message was being delivered in the public school of this country” Justice Murray Sinclair, TRC Chairperson

There are different forms of early intervention programs offered to engage Underrepresented groups. Table 1 lists and describes access programs offered at GTA colleges, according to the categories identified on the CET website.

Table 1

Type of Access Program	Description	Educational Partner
Academic Completion	Student attrition (early leaving) initiatives that provides skills and / or credit that aim to support students to complete secondary and PSE access; including Ability Focused (targeted to increase and support PSE access, participation and retention of learners with various	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centennial College • GBC • Humber College • Seneca College • TCDSB • TDSB

	<p>physical, cognitive and learning abilities), Academic Upgrading (credit based programs to achieve OSSD and / or upgrade high school grades for PSE admission eligibility), Dual Credit (permits students still in high school to simultaneously earn a high school and college or apprenticeship credits that will go towards both OSSD and a PSE certificate, diploma, degree or an apprenticeship certificate) and Retention (reinforce learning and prevent student attrition (early school leaving)).</p>	
<p>Transition</p>	<p>Credit based programs aimed at recruiting, admitting, supporting and providing opportunities for direct admission to PSE; including Academic Bridging (prepare and transition learners for further</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centennial College • GBC • Humber College

	<p>education) and Transitional Year (full-time programs consisting of academic and non-academic courses and activities that support university access) Programs.</p>	
<p>Demographic</p>	<p>Programs that target and provide PSE access, outreach, educational support or career and employment readiness for learners historically marginalized populations including; Indigenous (culturally relevant approaches to PSE outreach, access, retention, curriculum and academic success of Indigenous students), Crown Wards (increase and / or support PSE access, participation and retention of students that are Children Aid Society (CAS) Crown Wards), First Generation (increase and / or support PSE access, participation and retention of students first in their</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centennial College • GBC • Humber College • Seneca College • TDSB • TCDSB

	<p>family to attend PSE), Mature Students (supports access to secondary (18-20 years old) and PSE (21 years old+), Language (i.e. English as a Second Language, French as a Second Language, Language Instructions for Newcomers to Canada, American Sign Language), Newcomers (geared towards students new to Canada) and initiatives geared towards women (increase and / or support PSE access, participation and retention of women and career development).</p>	
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<p>Job Training & Pre-Apprenticeship</p>	<p>Initiatives that support career development, pre-employment and job training including certificate programs (certification for further PS study in a particular field of study or career or job training) and pre-apprenticeship (practical and hands-on training that prepares students for a specific job) programs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centennial College • GBC • Seneca College • TDSB
<p>Outreach & Engagement</p>	<p>Initiatives that seek to engage the broader community to pursue PSE; including Career Exploration (initiatives that explores different career pathways), Literacy and Basic Skills (initiatives to improve literacy, numeracy and technology skills), Life Skills (foster independence, self-confidence, leadership and interpersonal skills for greater success in school and /</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GBC • Humber College • Seneca College

	<p>or work), Tutoring and Mentorship (provide one to one and / or group homework and mentorship supports) and Early Awareness (encourage children and youth to consider PSE through early exposure to fields of study, PSE students and / or PSIs) initiatives</p>	
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PSE access initiatives and programs have shifted to promote equal access to PSE rather than simply increasing the number of students enrolling into PSE (Stol et al., 2016). Disparities (Jones et al., 2008) and inequities in participation among elements of the Canadian population including those from lower economic groups and Indigenous populations have low levels of PSE participation compared with the entire population. Toronto Colleges have responded to the need to increase engagement of underrepresented groups and acknowledged through their individual SMAs, departments dedicated to PSE planning, community engagement and systems initiatives targeting underrepresented populations. The government of Ontario website confirms that each of Ontario’s 45 publicly funded PSIs have an agreement highlighting institutional priorities known as SMAs. SMAs are intended to promote student success and institutional excellence.

SMAs between the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities and publicly funded PSIs were instituted and covered a three-year period of 2014-2017 (SMA1). The

report Transitioning to Strategic Mandate Agreement 3 for Ontario Universities and Colleges published in March 2018 describes SMAs as helping the government plan for the future and supporting its efforts to deliver what Ontario's students and the provincial economy needs. SMAs help drive higher-quality education improvement, student success and support institutional strengths (2018). Upon review of the SMA1 and SMA2 for this research it is noted that the initial SMA1 did not include the following sessions that are included in the 2017-2020 SMA2, Improving Access and Equity and Innovation, Economic Development and Community Engagement which focuses on the role of PSIs as contributors to communities, economic development and stakeholder partnership building.

Of the four (4) 2017-2020 SMAs reviewed Centennial and Humber College have an expansive and clearly stated acknowledgement of underrepresented populations within their institutions and as outlined in several sections of the agreement an understanding of efforts required to improve engagement of these groups through initiatives, department resources and accountability. Among areas of improvement were civic and community engagement, focus on mentorship and equity for underrepresented populations including student wellness and faculty training. Both Centennial and Humber Colleges addressed issues of accessibility for underrepresented populations in various sections of the SMAs identifying departments (Community Outreach- Centennial College) dedicated to the facilitation of educational pathways for youth, Indigenous learners and women in non-traditional areas of work; and specified community-based partnerships (Pumped for Postsecondary-Humber College) that support PSE access for underrepresented groups. While the SMAs for George Brown and Seneca College made

reference to initiatives that support underrepresented populations access PSE they were not as expansive or detailed as the 2017-2020 SMAs of Centennial and Humber College.

5.1 TYPES OF ACCESS INITIATIVES

Accessibility and inclusion efforts in PS environments have lagged behind the evaluation of student experience; significant transition barriers into, between, and out of the levels of PSE remain for underrepresented populations (Landscape of Accessibility and Accommodation in Post-Secondary Education for Students with Disabilities, 2018). As previously mentioned, there are immeasurable social and personal returns associated with PSE attainment; however, if PSE inaccessible for traditionally underrepresented populations is not addressed fore mentioned PSE benefits and representation will continue to be elusive. Early PSE access initiatives used impart with government and PSE admission and accessibility planning can result in increased PSE pathways, awareness, preparation and accessibility. De Broucher & Mortimer (2005) argue that in theory Canada's education system is open to all, the reality is that access to higher education is not equally available to all who qualify; early intervention can address three barriers to PSE:

- Inadequate academic preparation that make the prospect of higher education difficult to conceptualize
- Lack of knowledge or misinformation about PS study program availability and cost
- Expectation PSE will be unaffordable (de Broucher & Mortimer, 2005)

This research has identified several community-based early PSE access initiatives operating at the secondary level working in collaboration with the PSIs. The Pathways to

Education Program, began in Toronto's Regent Park community (NIA) in 2002 and has since replicated in over 20 different communities across the country. The program supports students living within the Moss / Regent Park community to obtain their OSSD and successfully enter PSE; the Pathways to Education Program provides students with one to one advocacy, weekly tutoring and mentorship, immediate and deferred financial support (bus tickets / tokens for transportation to and from secondary school along with an annual bursary toward PSE costs). The original program which has been replicated to three other NIAs in Toronto (Scarborough Village, Lawrence Heights and Rexdale) has official partnerships with both the TDSB and TCDSB to support student transition into PSE.

Big Brothers Big Sisters a not for profit charitable organization facilitates several engagement initiatives in partnership with ESE schools including Game on (boys 10-13 years old), Go Girls Healthy Bodies Healthy Minds- (10-13 years old) and Big G (grandparent) one to one in school mentoring program for children grades 1 -7. Big Brothers Big Sisters Pumped for Post-Secondary is an initiative that is geared toward secondary students and operates on GTA PS campus – George Brown and Humber College, University of Toronto and York University. Program sessions focus on development assets of planning and decision making, self-esteem, sense of purpose and positive views of personal future including encouraging students to envision themselves beyond secondary schools. Operating on GTA campuses Pumped for Post-Secondary eposes students to PSE environments and encourages the successful transition to PSE.

Both the Pathways to Education and Big Brothers Big Sisters Initiatives serve as successful examples for community-based early intervention initiatives that engage

underrepresented students. Community-based (Jones et al.) access programs involve a combination of relationships between the school system, the post-secondary system and local community organizations (2008). The Pathways to Education Program eligibility is associated with socio-economic status based on geographical boundaries while Pumped for Post-Secondary not limited by a geographical boundary, participants are identified either through a partnering school staff or parent who are aware of the program offerings. The Big Brothers Big Sisters website does warn of lengthy participation waiting lists. Both programs have restricted eligibility limiting the support, advocacy, information sharing, and PSE awareness disseminated to underrepresented populations.

Dual credit (enrolment) programs allow student to simultaneously pursue secondary and PS courses, receiving credits towards OSSD and PSE credits that will be applied toward a diploma or certificate (Jones et al. 2008). Students attending both public and separate school boards in Toronto may be eligible to enroll in a dual credit program through their secondary Guidance department. Funded and approved by the Ministry of Education Dual Credit program (Miner, 2008) is aimed at students in grades 11 and 12 who may have challenges in graduating, may be disengaged and underachieving or may be early school leavers (Miner, 2008). Dual credit programs are offered in partnership with all Toronto PSIs, transforming colleges into places where student not only take courses but a centre for community development and access to learning.

OYAP is a Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities school-to-work transition program offered through Ontario secondary schools, the program aims to engage early leavers and or graduating secondary students, marginalized youth including Indigenous, newcomers, females and Francophones (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/prepare->

[apprenticeship](#)). Toronto's four colleges support student transition through the OYAP Program; Centennial College (Child and Youth Worker and Auto Service Technician), GBC (Refrigerator and Air Conditioning Technician, Electrician and Plumbing), Humber College (Cook and Baking, Electrician Technician and Plumbing) and Child Development Practitioner program at Seneca college ([http://oyaptdsb.com/UploadedFiles/files/TDBS%20ACCELERATED%20OYAP%20OPEN%20HOUSES%202018\(2\).pdf](http://oyaptdsb.com/UploadedFiles/files/TDBS%20ACCELERATED%20OYAP%20OPEN%20HOUSES%202018(2).pdf)). OYAP programs are different from other dual credit programs as there is a rigorous application and selection process that can include interviews and testing. Selected participants of the OYAP programs are eligible to earn secondary credits that go towards their OSSD while they are enrolled in courses directly related to field of study, they have been enrolled in that takes place on campus. Students in OYAP programs are working toward completion and achievement of level one training certification, completion cooperative placement and in some areas completion of up to 240 onsite training hours.

SWAC is a partnership between secondary schools and the four GTA colleges. The program aims to support disengaged and underachieving students 17-20 years old (with at least 22 credits) with the opportunity to earn secondary school credits and two college-delivered dual credits on a college campus which will count towards both their OSSD and college transcripts (<https://www.tdsb.on.ca/High-School/Going-to-High-School/Specialized-Schools-and-Programs/School-Within-a-College>). SWAC provide students who may not view PSE as a viable option the opportunity learn on campus, students registered in SWAC are provided with a student ID card which permits access to on campus services including library, tutoring, counselling and accessibility services.

Due to their enrollment in secondary school students are also supported by their school guidance counsellors and teachers who are able to provide additional encouragement.

Dual credit (including OYAP and SWAC) programs in partnerships with school boards and PSIs are initiatives that provide secondary students exposure and access to PSE however are not marketed or considered as early PSE access initiatives and are not specific to increase PSE accessibility for underrepresented groups.

Early PSE access initiatives and engagement pertaining to increased underrepresentation at the PSE level should include intentional and targeted; outreach (Doran et al., 2015) efforts intended to increase awareness about the options and benefits of PSE for school-aged children and youth; recruitment, that includes marketing and promotion to persuade potential applicants PSE (Doren et al., 2015). The access initiatives embedded in Toronto PSIs identified through their individual SMAs and sited on CET website that are targeted to engage underrepresented populations. All four colleges reviewed for this research operate a PSE access initiative that supports transition from secondary school (for student in a position to or at risk of graduating from secondary school); there is no literature pertaining to elementary or middle school early intervention initiatives at this time.

CHAPTER SEVEN: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

“Until all of us have made it, none of us have made it” - Rosemary Brown

Conclusions drawn from the data analysis of the selected access programs in Toronto indicate that there is substantial research on financial barriers to education in

Canada connected to access programs, however, there seems to be limited research recognizing the intersectionality of underrepresented populations in relationship to PS accessibility. Data shows that there is little evidence that GTA colleges are actively engaged in early PSE access interventions geared towards underrepresented populations involving intersectoral partnerships. As indicated above all colleges within the GTA operate in partnership with local school boards to provide access and transition programs for a selected group of students in their senior years of secondary school. The collected data indicates that educational partnerships that support the engagement and PSE nurturing of underrepresented populations within ESE are not active, visible and readily accessible across the city of Toronto, nor are they accessible to a broad population of underrepresented students who are at the intersection of disadvantaged and forgotten. Aside from Centennial Colleges' HYPE program which by intention is an, outreach (Miner, 2011) program designed to assist youth from under-represented neighbourhoods make the transition to PSE and is according to Bertin and Maher (2013), a comprehensive response spearheaded by the provincial government and major community agencies to design a social opportunity strategy to mobilize social capital and assets in disadvantaged communities. PSE access initiatives reviewed for this research are designed to support the intersectionality and causes of underrepresented student groups once they have entered PSE. The research also acknowledges that Centennial colleges' HYPE program does not quantify as an early PSE access initiative as the program mandate is not to engage students under the age of 16 (students in grade 11).

This research sought to explore and answer the following questions:

1. How have certain underrepresented student groups been disadvantaged within the PSE system?
2. What are the benefits of early PSE intervention initiatives geared towards these underrepresented groups?
3. How do PSIs access initiatives acknowledge intersectionality amongst traditionally underrepresented groups?

I argue that the above-mentioned questions have been answered. There were several barriers that were magnified throughout the data, including the lack of longitudinal research pertaining to the intersectionality of underrepresented populations in relation to equitable PSE accessibility. Data analysis of this research clearly indicates that PSE entry and attainment has enormous social, personal and economic returns, and moreover Ontario has one of the highest PS participation rates within the world, however if access to PSE is only viewed as a matter of intellectual and rate of access the important issue of equitable access and representation is lost. When looking at the data to address the question of how underrepresented populations have been disadvantaged from the PSI system, it strongly indicates that until educational inequity is deemed a priority across our learning systems (ESE and PSE), the disparities of underrepresented population will continue within and throughout higher education.

Research indicates that PSIs do not acknowledge the intersectionality's of underrepresented student populations. What is evident is that underrepresented student populations are often seen as homogenous with one identity experiencing the same barrier to PSE access. The inability to recognize the intersectionality of underrepresented student populations contributes to the continuation of inequitable access and

marginalization for these students. The Ministry of Education; Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities; PSIs; School Boards; and educational advocates (including members of underrepresented populations) are instrumental in addressing inequitable access of PSI for underrepresented populations. It is necessary for collaboration, as this would help with creating a deeper understanding of the legacy of underrepresentation within the PSE systems, develop a common language and begin intentional dialogue across the diverse levels of stakeholders. A dialogue between educational stakeholders can create collaboration leading to institutional policies and practices to address the specific needs of underrepresented populations. What is also evident throughout the data is that there have been several early PSE access engagements for underrepresented populations and this not a new paradox, data strongly indicated the need to expose early learners to PSI information, as this may lower their risk of becoming early leavers. Extensive research must commence across the education spectrum in Ontario that includes a common understanding of the intersects of underrepresentation and marginalization within the education systems (K - PSE).

I was able to answer all of the questions stated for this research in part; I was able to determine that underrepresented student populations have been historically disadvantaged within the educational system however very little Canadian research exists outside of the financial barriers and or parent educational attainment of underrepresented groups. The research does support the benefits of PSE attainment which will lead me to believe that there are associated benefits to early PSE access intervention however these benefits are not directly aligned with equitable access initiatives for historically underrepresented students. As I researched the topic of early PSE access intervention

initiatives for underrepresented populations, I became aware that information gathering was difficult- information was not accessible. PSE websites lacked detailed information and were not user friendly, it was not clear to me how underrepresented students (including caregivers) are informed of PSE opportunities and initiatives. PSIs mandates to increase equitable access were hidden in SMAs and wordy mission statements that in my research did not translate into accessible processes or visible plans and although I believe that PSE is a tool of social capital it is a tool that is still not accessible to all.

My research has explored various indicators, evaluation frameworks, and ideas for aspirational improvements that are available to PSE programs and activities, as well as critiques and 'best practices' for PSE programming.

Equity, Access, Underrepresentation are words that can evoke curiosity in some, conversation in others and institutional goals to be met imbedded in mission statements; as a Black woman at the intersect of underrepresentation and barriers I acknowledge that attainment of equitable access for underrepresented population requires further research, policy and practice implementation along with action that must disrupt the status quo.

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