ACCOMMODATING THE ETHNO-CULTURAL DIFFERENCES OF STUDENTS:
AN ANALYSIS OF ONTARIO COMMUNITY COLLEGES

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
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Abstract

This study relies on qualitative research: open-ended, semi-structured interviews were used to gain insight into the experiences of students of ethnically diverse backgrounds from three Greater Toronto Area (GTA) community colleges. Additional data were collected from college websites and meetings with college student services directors to gain a broader understanding of the context in which the ethnically diverse student is engaged.

This research is guided by the psychosocial theories of student development of Chickering (1969), and Chickering & Reisser, (1993) including a brief overview of the cognitive-structural theory of student development; and the typology theory of student development. Student development theory provides insight into how life experiences shape one’s ability to learn and interact with others.

An expert panel assisted with the refining of the interview questions and provided feedback on the overall study findings. In the interest of accountability, members of the expert panel were recruited based on their experience with issues around the diversity that exists within our GTA community colleges. Interviews were conducted with 25 students of ethnically diverse backgrounds to explore their overall college experience and their perceptions of the provision of student services at their college.
The conclusions drawn from this study suggest that the colleges participating in the study have met the participants’ expectations in the areas of overall college experience and the services each provides. In addition, it was found that the colleges have had a positive impact on student experience resulting in success. The findings also indicate that these colleges have done little to facilitate quiet learning spaces and are not providing for the religious requirements of students.

This study contributes to a better understanding of the challenges students from diverse backgrounds may face when seeking out services at their college and it offers recommendations to enhance these colleges’ efforts in this area along with recommendations for further research.
Acknowledgements

This work could not have been completed without the support of many people. Of course, first on my list of who to thank is my family. My parents, Wayne and Donna Ryder are the driving force behind all of my achievements and they have been supportive of me throughout a lifetime of learning.

I want to thank my husband Shaun Glass for his love and support and for putting up with my “crabby” moments when trying to meet deadlines, as well as my crazy all nighters trying to research a given question.

I also had the joy of experiencing the arrival of two miracles while embarking on this educational journey: our beautiful boys Liam (4yrs) and Keegan (3yrs). You are and always will be my inspiration. Thank you for keeping me focused on what is truly important in life.

On the academic side I must first and foremost thank Dr. Charles Pascal, my thesis supervisor, whose guidance, and support have guided me to the completion of this goal and for reminding me that life’s little miracles sometimes take priority over thesis deadlines.

I would like to thank my thesis committee members, Dr. Peter Deitsche and Dr. Roy Giroux for their guidance. Dr. Deitsche’s insightful comments and outstanding research were pivotal in directing my research. I thank Dr. Giroux for his sense of humour and for keeping me on track towards my ultimate goal of completion: just get it done.

To my external advisors Dr. Katherine Janzen and Dr. Lesley Andres, I thank you for participating in my oral presentation and for being supportive in my research ambitions.
To my CCL colleagues, Alvina Cassiani, Pam Hanft and Valerie Lopes, I thank you for sharing with me the ups and downs of countless hours researching, editing and writing this work. And to the three participating GTA colleges and their staff who opened their doors to me and were of great help in identifying potential participants for this study.

A special thank you to Deb McCarthy for being my cheerleader and for always being in my corner when I’ve needed it the most. To Madam Justice Juanita Westmorland-Traore I thank you for your comments and advice which were most helpful in shaping this research.

Finally, my sincere thanks to all those individuals who agreed to be interviewed. The experiences you have shared demonstrate your strength, courage, and optimism and are an inspiration to all.
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CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

The Researcher’s Lens

I am a teacher, a lawyer, a lifelong student, a partner and most importantly to me, a mom. In these roles, I feel I have a great responsibility to be aware of the community within which I work, study and live. I have witnessed a change in the face of these communities over time; the changing face that is diversity. I embrace this and am very excited about this.

As a child, I grew up in Windsor Ontario, a very multicultural industrial town, situated on the U.S. border. Little Italy had the best bike races each year, and there was nothing better than visiting Mexican or Greek town in Detroit. But more importantly, growing up I didn’t see colour, race, religion or ability as defining characteristics of people. Some suggest I lived in a bubble, but when I reflect on my childhood, this is what I see. My friends were my friends – not black, white, yellow or brown. They were people, not colours. I question when in our stages of growing up, we begin to see differences in people based on race, ethnicity and ability. I wonder when the world started teaching me to see differences I hadn’t noticed before. And in this context, why people treat others with a lack of respect just because someone is ‘different’ than they are in race, ethnicity or ability, is a constant preoccupation for me.

As a mom, each day I drop off my boys at their daycare. Of the 34 children in their combined classrooms, they are two of only three white children. I have an even greater responsibility to ensure that they appreciate the environment they are growing up in. And it is interesting, when I ask them to describe a friend – Johnny (not real name) isn’t black, white, yellow or brown – he’s just good at building airplanes. As a researcher, I am aware of the
intricacies of a white woman being taken in a trustful manner when interviewing people ethno-culturally different from me.

While I have come to appreciate that there is a history that needs to be told, and one that must be embraced and absorbed, and one that can serve as a jumping off point to move forward, it is through this organic lens that I view the world.

**Introduction Overview**

Our community colleges continue to grow in both student programming and student body. Our students represent an ever-changing landscape of ethnicity, religion, and culture. Given this reality of growth and change, serious consideration must be given to the ways in which colleges respond. The purpose of the study is to gain insight into the ethnically diverse student’s overall college experience and engagement with student services to determine how well GTA colleges are meeting the challenges and opportunities of diversity to facilitate success for all students.

The study was designed to elicit stories from a sample of students from three GTA community colleges informed by the themes highlighted in the research. The context for this study is the history of immigration, student services, and demographic trends in GTA community colleges. Student development theory is also examined in the literature review to gain a better theoretical understanding of students from ethnically diverse backgrounds and the environment in which they choose to learn.

Themes that arise from accounts of the experiences of the ethnically diverse student include (but are not limited to) the following:
1. Eurocentric curriculum and delivery;
2. School structure / organization;
3. Socio-economic status;
4. Social integration; and
5. Diversity of faculty / administration (availability of role models).

Given that this study examines the experience of the ethnically diverse student, the terms “ethnic” and “diversity” are defined in the context of research examined for this work.

“Ethnic” refers to students of minority cultural backgrounds and religions. Although there are different theoretical approaches to ethnicity and race, both concepts are products of people travelling/migrating and coming into contact with others under specific conditions. The first conception of ethnicity emphasizes the ethnic group’s self-definition, generally based on common ancestry. According to Weber (1968), ethnicity is based on a common identity, which is in turn based on descent, language, religion, tradition, and other shared experiences. According to Van den Berghe (1987), ethnicity forms a special basis for sociality, irreducible to any other, and is an extension of kinship in that it is based on a putative shared ancestry. An ethnic group is characterized by held-in-common behaviours and cultural traits that are constructed as different and originate in a different country from where they are observed (Tastsoglou, 2001, p. 4).

Tastsoglou (2001) defines ethnic identity as a manner in which persons, on account of their ethnic origin, locate themselves psychologically in relation to one or more social systems and in which they perceive others as locating them in relation to those systems. It is also explained as a social phenomenon that is expressed in speaking an ethnic language; practising ethnic traditions; and participating in ethnic personal networks (e.g., family and friendships), in ethnic institutional organizations (e.g., churches, schools, and businesses), in voluntary ethnic
associations (e.g., clubs or “societies”), and in functions (e.g., picnics, rallies, and dances) (Tastsoglou, 2001, p. 6).

The student participants in this study come from different cultural and religious backgrounds. As such, they identify with those who speak a similar language, practice similar traditions, or engage in similar cultural specific activities, religious or otherwise.

“Diversity” is defined as a complex set of practices, aspirations, and lived experiences that defy simple categories (Chan, 2007 p. i). In keeping with the relevant human rights legislation, it is defined broadly to include race, gender, class, sexual orientation, religion, and ability, a plurality of identities (Loden & Rosener, 1991, as cited in Chan, 2007, p. 3).

Chan (2007) strongly emphasizes that post-secondary institutions exist in a political environment. They reflect societal views of diversity and difference, and are influenced by social relationships, social meaning, and social identity. Diversity needs to be considered within the wider culture and within broader social contexts, such as the history of immigration (p. 21).

Human rights legislation emphasizes the protection of individuals against discrimination on 13 grounds: race, ancestry, colour, religion, political belief, age, place of origin, sexual orientation, sex, criminal conviction unrelated to employment, marital status, physical or mental disability, and family status. Every educational institution has been encouraged through policy papers such as the Vision 2000 Steering Committee Report (1990) to provide a means for dealing with human rights complaints (Chan, 2007, p. 27), and the institutions in this study have done so.

In the areas of research that relate to the ethnically diverse student, the recent term “racialized” is frequently used. The process of racialization involves the identification of people
on the basis of skin colour alone. As expressed by Salojee (2003), “members of racialized minority communities are individuals who because of the colour of their skin encounter barriers and discrimination resulting in social inequality and unequal access to valued goods and services” (p. 19). For the purposes of this study, the ethnically diverse student includes those also defined as visible minority, Aboriginal, immigrant, international, or disabled.

Community colleges in Ontario were created in 1965 to address the need for skilled labour. Included in this development process was a commitment to equity. As the Vision 2000 Steering Committee document (1990) states, the community college was created to: “Help the government fulfill its promise to provide, through education and training, equality of opportunity for all and the fullest possible development of each individual’s potential” (p. 6).

As Patrick Kelly (2007), in his thesis *An Evaluation of the Role of One Community College on Settlement* explains, the provincial government’s Basic Documents (provincial documents establishing the parameters of community colleges) make it clear that colleges are to be, “designed to meet the needs of the local community” (Vision 2000 Steering Committee, 1990, p. 6). Obviously, this community focus not only affects program offerings but also the manner in which each college goes about meeting the goals of the student population they serve and the broader needs to the community (Kelly, 2007).

As history tells us, Canada was not always as ethnically diverse as compared to the demographic profile of today. At the time of the creation of the community college, the focus was clearly Eurocentric. “Between 1946 and 1955, over 1.2 million immigrants came to Canada ... about 87% came from Europe. Another 1.7 million immigrants arrived in Canada from 1956 to 1967, and European immigrants accounted for 80%” (Li, 2003, p. 22).
The student bodies of our community colleges today stand in stark contrast to this historical Canadian demographic make-up. In a 2007 survey of college students across Canada it was discovered that 17% were not born in Canada, 31% were ‘first generation students’ (those whose neither parent held a post secondary credential), and 45% described themselves as visible minorities (Colleges Ontario, 2008, p. 30).

Simply walking through the halls of many of these institutions, one gets a striking sense of the diverse mix of cultures that present themselves from the many conversations in multiple languages and the multitude of culturally diverse music playing in the corridors. And with the recent growth in international student enrolment, the diversity within our community colleges continues to grow. This leads to the question of whether or not our community colleges are up to the challenge of meeting the needs of such a diverse student group.

**Purpose and Rationale of the Study**

With an increase in immigration, the students attending post-secondary institutions are increasingly ethnically diverse. These students, together with increased international enrolment, and the already present first generation Canadian student population, demonstrate that the educational landscape will continue to diversify.

The colleges participating in this study are located in the GTA. According to Statistics Canada (2007a), the GTA is the fastest growing region in Ontario. It is predicted by Statistics Canada that by 2031, the GTA population will be 8.3 million.
The purpose of the study is to gain insight into the ethnically diverse student’s overall college experience and engagement with student services, to determine how well GTA colleges are meeting the challenges and opportunities of diversity to facilitate success for all students.

The context for this study is illuminated by a tracing of the history of immigration, student services, and demographic trends in GTA community colleges. This includes an examination of the issues students of an ethnically diverse population are confronted with in seeking services created to aid in their academic success offered by their colleges. This was achieved through eliciting the personal views of a relatively small sample of ethnically diverse students attending three GTA community colleges regarding their overall college experience and their engagement with student services.

It is assumed that Canadian colleges are doing an adequate job of moving towards providing a respectful and welcoming environment for all students. They are moving forward to create an environment of social cohesion. But in the absence of benchmarks, one way to measure how post-secondary education (PSE) contributes to social cohesion is to survey public perceptions. The Canadian Council on Learning’s recent poll (2006) on public attitudes toward PSE found Canadians are aware of the role their PSE institutions play in supporting community and societal values. More than half of those responding gave the sector a positive rating (p. 45). In response to the question, “And overall, are the colleges or universities in our area doing an excellent, good, fair or poor job at encouraging these sorts of values? (involvement in community; tolerance and openness to diversity; encouragement of healthy lifestyles; self reliance and independence; environmental awareness),” the results show 56% of Canadians thought colleges or universities in their areas were doing an excellent or good job, while 33% thought they were doing a fair or poor job (p. 45).
Through this study, a number of themes contributing to the issues that the ethnically diverse student faces in the educational environment were identified. The interview questions were designed to elicit student comments regarding these kinds of issues.

As these figures show, immigration is an important factor in population growth in the GTA. As outlined in Figure 1, the population of persons aged 15–29 in Ontario has been increasing since 2006, and it was predicted that the increase will continue until 2021, at which point a slight decline in the 20–29 age group was to begin.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>15-19</th>
<th>Per cent change</th>
<th>20-24</th>
<th>Per cent change</th>
<th>25-29</th>
<th>Per cent change</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Per cent change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>850,400</td>
<td></td>
<td>873,600</td>
<td></td>
<td>847,900</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,571,900</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>884,200</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>919,100</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>927,600</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>2,730,900</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>848,200</td>
<td>(4.1)</td>
<td>962,200</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>986,300</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>2,796,700</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>818,700</td>
<td>(3.5)</td>
<td>926,700</td>
<td>(3.7)</td>
<td>1,027,700</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>2,773,100</td>
<td>(0.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2026</td>
<td>853,300</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>897,100</td>
<td>(3.2)</td>
<td>990,000</td>
<td>(3.7)</td>
<td>2,740,400</td>
<td>(1.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2031</td>
<td>902,700</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>931,500</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>958,600</td>
<td>(3.2)</td>
<td>2,792,800</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 1. Projections of the population aged 15–29, Ontario 2006 to 2031.* (Colleges Ontario, 2008, p. 10)
With these data in mind, it is the purpose of this study to investigate the experience of the ethnically diverse students attending three GTA community colleges: their overall college experience and their engagement with student services.

**Research Question**

The overarching research question examined is:

Are GTA community colleges meeting the challenges and opportunities of diversity to facilitate the success of all students?

In order to answer this question, an exploratory examination will be made of the following subsidiary research questions:

1. Where have we been and how far have we come?

2. What is the make-up of the pool of student candidates in Canada, Ontario, and the GTA?

3. What proportion of the student body in the colleges examined is made up of ethnically diverse students?

4. Are the student bodies of the colleges examined representative of GTA society?

5. What are colleges currently doing to engage ethnically diverse students in terms of the services offered?

6. What are the experiences of ethnically diverse students from these three very diverse colleges? What are the expressed needs of these students?

7. What do students think is missing? What do they think their college could do better?
8. Do the students feel they would be as successful or more successful if their needs were being met (provided they believe they are not being met)?

To gain this knowledge, this study utilized a qualitative, descriptive survey research methodology. This methodology is discussed further in Chapter Three.

To facilitate the use of this methodology, the study was further enhanced by the utilization of an expert panel. The role of the expert panel was to assist with feedback on the proposed interview questions, and to provide their feedback and perceptions on the findings. The panel consisted of three members selected for their expertise in the areas of human resources, education, equity, and diversity in higher education. Specifically, one member (EP1) is a trailblazer in legal higher education, a superior court justice, and former law school dean. Another member (EP2) is a director of a human rights office at a GTA community college. And the third member (EP3) is a manager of a human rights and diversity office at a GTA community college. This expert panel enhanced the study’s practical focus and contributed to a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by the ethnically diverse student.
Significance of the Study

If community colleges choose to ignore the changing landscape before them, they are missing an opportunity of enormous magnitude. As the numbers increase of first generation students, in addition to new immigrants and international students from countries around

It was predicted in a prior study that, “by the year 2001 the percentage of persons who trace their origins to Africa, the Middle East, Asia or South and Central America was to form approximately 11 to 45% of Canada’s population” (Peters, 2004, p. 9). In 2006 it was confirmed that of the total 5,072,075 GTA population, 2,320,165 were immigrants. Of these, 1,152,045 came to Canada before 1991; 720,185 between 1991 and 2000; and 447,925 between 2001 and 2006. In 2006, 4,429,945 of the GTA population were Canadian citizens and 642,130 were not. Of this GTA population, 2,263,575 were first generation; 882,500 are second generation and 976,750 were third generation or more (Statistics Canada, 2007a).

It is further projected by Statistics Canada (2005) that Canada will have between 6.3 million and 8.5 million visible minorities by the year 2017. This represents a growth rate that is faster than that of the total population. For instance, between 1996 and 2001, the total population increased 4% while the visible minority population raised 25% or six times faster (Statistics Canada, 2007a). These predictions have had an impact on how educational institutions have attempted to meet the needs of a changing population (Grayson, 1995, p. 80). The importance of this issue has been highlighted in the Vision 2000 Steering Committee (1990) report, which acknowledges that with the changing, “multicultural face of Ontario, there is increased demand on the colleges to improve accessibility for special communities … such as members of minority groups … More active intervention is necessary to provide equitable access” (p. 6).
In 2006 there were approximately 500,000 students enrolled in Ontario’s community colleges. Of this number, 182,246 were full time and 290,000 were continuing education (part time) students.

In addition to permanent residents, Ontario receives a significant number of foreign students through the temporary resident stream (those living in Canada temporarily for educational purposes). In 2006, Ontario received 21,085 foreign students across all levels of education. Of these, 28% enrolled in PSE. Approximately 37% of the 21,085 attended university, 14% attended other PSE, and 13% attended community colleges (Colleges Ontario, 2008, p. 10). In 2007 there were 6,958 international students enrolled in Ontario colleges (Colleges Ontario, 2008, p. 39).

In 2008 the number of international students attending community colleges in Ontario increased to over 8,000, and in 2009, the number increased again, to 9,991, a 25% increase over 2008. The three GTA community colleges participating in this study enrol 48% of the total international student population (Ontario College Application Services, 2009).

Reasons for applying to college are somewhat different for immigrants than for non-immigrants. When asked what their main reason for applying to college was, immigrants were more likely to cite career advancement (15% vs. 10%) and preparation for university (10% vs. 6%) and less likely to cite preparation for employment (20% to 31%) and personal development (14% vs. 18%) than non-immigrants (Colleges Ontario, 2008).

Given the increasingly high proportion of international and immigrant students in GTA community colleges, serious consideration must be given to the ways in which colleges must learn to adapt and respond to the changing landscape. It appears that the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) agrees. On October 17, 2007, HEQCO invited provincial
college academic and institutional research leaders to a meeting in Toronto to discuss learning research findings and improvements driven by these findings (HEQCO, 2007, p. 1). The agenda was developed to provide an overview of the current state of the college system’s learning-related data gathering and research, to highlight best practices in college learning research and to consider future research that could contribute to the enhancement of higher education (p. 1). Through discussions, it was highlighted that the current college student population reflects a diverse mix of culture, academic capability, aptitude, linguistic abilities, race, and socio-economic status. It is believed that a better understanding of teaching and learning concepts across institutions will improve through examining these dynamics (p. 10).

To further understand this changing landscape, this study involves five areas of research:

1. A literature review of the history of diversity and CAATs in Canada;

2. A review of the websites of the three GTA community colleges participating in this study to see what services are being provided to ethnically diverse students as well as interviews with student services staff to clarify website information;

3. A qualitative analysis of interviews with ethnically diverse students at the three GTA community colleges;

4. A review of current questionnaire data on student engagement; and

5. Feedback from the expert panel.

This research builds upon Dr. Kersley Peters’ research (2004) by expanding the scope to a broader diverse college student population. While Dr. Peters examined why Black students drop out of college, this study examines the question of how effective community colleges in the GTA
(in general) are at accommodating the ethnically diverse student. His study indicates that there is a gap between the perception of high school students and college students with regard to the role of race in “pushing or pulling” them from completing college. While some participants may not readily identify a direct connection between their race and dropping out, some participants did indicate that their race is a negative factor in the area of employment (p. 265).

This study begins with a look at the history of immigration in Canada and the resulting student body in our GTA community colleges today. Next, the study highlights a comparative analysis of web-based material from each of the three GTA community colleges studied as to what is currently being done in terms of services to meet the general needs of an ethnically diverse student population. This data was confirmed by student services directors at each of the participating GTA community colleges.

The study then examines the results of interviews conducted with ethnically diverse students to gain insight into their overall college experience and their engagement with student services. By drawing upon the theories and concepts of student development and using a qualitative, exploratory descriptive model, together with a participatory action research methodology, this study has engaged those most affected by the issue being examined, i.e., ethnically diverse students. Conducting interviews with this group of participants has provided them the opportunity to reflect upon their experiences, share the difficulties they have faced, and make recommendations for improvements. The study has provided participants with a voice and, in essence, empowered the researched community.

To further enhance this research, a review of recent surveys was also completed. There has been a recent influx of research in this area of study, such as the Pan Canadian Study and Student Engagement Surveys, as well as standard (modified) Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
and college-specific surveys. Two years ago there was virtually no Canadian data in this area. Now there is a recent collection of data created by Human Resources and Social Development Canada and the Association of Community Colleges (2007) titled, Pan-Canadian study of first year college students: Report 1: Student characteristics and the college experience and Pan-Canadian study of first year college students: Report 2: The characteristics and Experience of Aboriginal, Disabled, Immigrant and Visible Minority Students. This study that has been examined and cross-referenced with the identified needs of students and the services that are being offered at the respective institutions.

Lastly, the use of an expert panel has assisted in refining the interview questions, providing a gap analysis, and defining the findings in a broader context. For instance, one panel member (EP1) found the subject of the study to be “a very important subject and the questions have succeeded in soliciting significant results.” Another panel member (EP2) commented that the answers students gave in relation to questions asked, must be examined in light of the particular students’ own perceived biases and cultural differences.

In commenting on the findings, one panel member (EP1) summarized the findings as identifying needs in two areas: administrative or support services and faculty support, while at the same time, bringing awareness to issues of cultural adaptation and religious differences.

This changing landscape is not going to go away, it is only going to continue to evolve and colleges must be aware that not all students view the education system in the same way, or approach their studies in the same way. Students of an ethnically diverse background bring a varied approach to learning and awareness that differences must be brought to the forefront of the minds of all faculty and administrators at our GTA community colleges. The world continues to arrive at their doorsteps and it is a world that expects respect and appreciation for differences
in culture, ethnicity and religion. And if GTA community colleges decide to sweep the obvious challenges and opportunities of ethnicity and diversity within the demographic of the GTA community colleges, under the proverbial “rug”, they will not be ensuring success for all students.

**Organization of the Study**

Chapter One examines the rationale, background, and specific research questions looked at together with the rationale for the study, and the organization of the thesis.

Chapter Two focuses on a review of the literature starting with an examination of the history of immigration in Canada, followed by a review of the history of student services in community colleges of applied arts and technology (CAATs), the tools community colleges use to assess quality, student engagement, and student experience; it concludes with a look at student development theory.

Chapter Three reviews the methodology used in this study: qualitative, descriptive survey research methodology. This includes a look at how the participants were selected, any limitations to the research, the development of the research instrument, and the expert panel.

Chapter Four provides the research findings, the institutions examined, and input from the expert panel.

Chapter Five concludes the study by providing an overview of the findings summarized in relation to the literature review and feedback from the expert panel. This chapter also provides recommendations and suggestions for future research, as well as this researcher's reflections on the area studied.
**Definition of Terms**

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions are offered:

**Community College (Ontario):** term used in this study for institutes of technology and advanced learning and colleges of applied arts and technology.

**Culture:** Cultures are formed when a group of people living in the same place at the same time share common values, beliefs and assumptions that they transfer from one generation to the next. Each societal culture develops a framework for making sense of the world. Within this framework are prescribed behaviours that reflect the society’s values and beliefs. There are accepted behaviours, expected behaviours, and eventually traditions (Dalhousie University, 2007).

**Cultural Diversity:** The presence of ethnic, cultural, and racial minorities and Aboriginal peoples in our society (Dalhousie University, 2007).

**Designated Groups:** Social groups whose individual members have been historically denied equal access to employment, education, social service, housing etc. because of their membership in an identified group. The designated groups in Ontario are racial minorities, women, Aboriginal peoples, and people with disabilities (Dalhousie University, 2007).

**Discrimination:** The making of a distinction, intentionally or unintentionally, that imposes burdens, obligations, or disadvantages on an individual or class of individuals not imposed on others, or denying opportunities, benefits, or mandates to an individual or class of individuals that are available to others. There are three types: intentional, unintentional, and systemic (Dalhousie University, 2007).
Diversity: In keeping with the relevant human rights legislation, it is defined broadly to include race, gender, class, sexual orientation, religion, and ability: a plurality of identities (Loden & Rosener, 1991, as cited in Chan, 2007, p. 3).

Ethnic Group: A group of people who share a common heritage, ancestry, or historical past, often with identifiable physical, cultural, linguistic, and/or religious characteristics (Dalhousie University, 2007).

Immigrant: As per Statistics Canada (2005), the term immigrant is, “applied to a person who has been granted the right to permanently live in Canada by immigration authorities. It usually applies to persons born outside Canada but may also apply to a small number of persons born inside Canada to parents who are foreign nationals” (p. 3).

Minority: Refers not to population size but rather status. Minority groups are those groups who are perceived as different, have a lower status within society, and are generally disadvantaged, underprivileged, discriminated against, excluded, or exploited. They lack access to power, wealth, or privilege (Dalhousie University, 2007).

Multiculturalism: A policy introduced by the federal government in 1971, which acknowledges that many ethnic Canadians experience unequal access to resources and opportunities. It urges more recognition of the contributions of such Canadians, the preservation of certain expressions of their ethnicity, and more equity in the treatment of all Canadians. Since 1971, there has been increasing recognition of the limitations of this concept; first, it does not explicitly acknowledge the critical role that racism plays in preventing this vision from materializing; second, it promotes a static and limited notion of culture that is fragmented and confined to ethnicity; and third, it pays insufficient attention to institutional forms of racial discrimination, focusing instead on individual expressions (Dalhousie University, 2007).
**Racism**: A mix of prejudice and power leading to domination and exploitation of one group over another. It asserts that the one group is superior to the other. Racism is any individual action or institutional practice backed by institutional power that subordinates people because of their race or ethnicity (Dalhousie University, 2007).

**Racialization (Racialized Groups)**: the process through which groups come to be designated as different and on that basis subjected to differential and unequal treatment. In the present context, racialized groups include those who may experience differential treatment on the basis of, for example, race, ethnicity, language, economics, religion, culture, and politics (Dalhousie University, 2007).

**Racially Visible People**: A term applied to people who are Black, Aboriginal, Chinese, South Asian, South East Asian, Filipino and Latin America Canadian. Some racially visible people prefer to identify themselves as “people of colour.” These terms are generally regarded as positive as opposed to “non-white,” “minorities,” “visible minorities” or “ethnics” (Dalhousie University, 2007).

**Settlement**: According to the Canadian Council for Refugees (as cited in Scoppio, 2002), settlement is, “a long-term, dynamic, two-way process through which, ideally, immigrants would achieve full equality and freedom of participation in society, and society would gain access to the full human resource potential in its immigrant communities” (p. 8).

**Social Inclusion**: This term involves, “the basic notions of belonging, acceptance and recognition. For immigrants and refugees, social inclusion would be represented by the realization of full and equal participation in the economic, social, cultural and political dimensions of life in their country” (Omidvar & Richmond, 2003, p. 1).
**Student Services**: Individualized and group aspects of a community college educational program that are designed to help students reach their full potential in their educational, vocational, and personal-social development (Calder, 1982, p. 11).

**Visible Minorities**: According to Human Resources and Social Development Canada, “visible minority refers to individuals who are non-white, non-Caucasian, and non-Aboriginal” (as cited in Dalhousie University, 2007). "Visible minority" is defined by Statistics Canada (2003) as, "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour."
CHAPTER TWO:
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Chapter Overview

The literature review examines the following areas of literature in relation to the overarching research question: Are GTA community colleges meeting the challenges and opportunities of diversity to facilitate the success of all students?

1. The history of immigration in Canada as it relates to the development of the community college and the composition of the diverse GTA community college student body today;

2. The history of the development of student services in community colleges, that is, how these services have developed in relation to the student body they serve;

3. A review of the tools that are currently used by community colleges to assess quality, student engagement, and student experience; and

4. The student development theories that guide the interpretation of the results of the study in relation to the research questions.

History of Immigration in Canada and the Development of Community Colleges

An examination of the history of immigration in Canada gives a sense of the evolution of our current GTA community college student population. Such an examination provides a clearer picture of where we have come from in terms of the issues of racism and stereotyping evident in today’s society and thus a clearer picture of the barriers to be overcome as we move forward as a
society. The discussion includes an examination of the history of immigration policies, immigration statistics, and settlement.

Statistics Canada (2005) has projected that by the year 2017, one in five Canadians will be immigrants (explained further in this chapter). According to Ontario Immigration (1992), Ontario has the most culturally diverse population in Canada with more than one in every four citizens born outside of the country. Ontario welcomes more than half of all of Canada’s immigrants each year. Ontario is referred to as one of the most multicultural societies in the world (Ontario Immigration, 1992). This reality directly affects the demographics of GTA community colleges. To understand the effects and to anticipate issues that might arise it is imperative that we take a closer look at the history of immigration.

In examining the history of immigration in Canada, the initial historical roots of immigration will be briefly touched on, followed by an emphasis on the period from 1960 to 2000. The reason for this emphasis is to correspond with the creation of the community college in 1965 and to provide an analysis of how immigration trends have affected the demographics of the GTA community colleges. This discussion will be followed by an examination of the year 2000 and beyond leading into the next area of discussion concerning the development of student services in community colleges.

**Pre-1960:**

**Immigration and Education**

**Immigration**

Canada is a cultural mosaic. Its population of approximately 33 million is composed of people of all races and backgrounds. As a country, it represents a glimpse into the face of the
world. As author Nancoo & Ramcharan (1995) point out, “cultural, ethnic, and racial diversity has been determined by immigration from various parts of the world, largely from Europe … and brings with it diversity in language, values, religion, expectations, levels of training, and political ideology” (pp. 251-252).

In her text titled, *Strangers at Our Gates: Canadian Immigration and Immigration Policy, 1540–2006*, Valerie Knowles (1992) traces the roots of immigration policy and the peoples, the conflicts, and the ethnic barriers that immigrants faced in settling in Canada. In general, immigration to Canada began with the Europeans in the early 1500s, followed much later by the Americans, and then later still people from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

The roots of racism can be traced back to the early 1700s with the oppression of indigenous peoples and Black slaves (Knowles, 1992, p. 26). In 1785, approximately 3,000 free Blacks arrived in Nova Scotia from New York. They faced many obstacles including a lack of knowledge about farming thin soil in a harsh climate. At the same time, others brought to Nova Scotia by their white masters continued to use their skills to build communities throughout the province.

In 1791, the *Constitutional Act* divided Quebec into Upper Canada (Ontario) and Lower Canada (Quebec). At that time, 15,000 people lived in Upper Canada. Over the next 20 years others arrived, including German settlers, Mennonites, and Catholic Highlanders from Scotland.

In the 1820s, settlers arrived in Ontario from England, Scotland, and Ireland and in 1834, Toronto was made the first city in Ontario (Ontario Immigration, 1992). The late 1800s and onward saw discrimination against Chinese, East Indian, African, Ukrainian, Japanese, and Jewish settlers intensify. For example, with the discovery of gold in the Fraser Valley in British
Columbia in 1858, approximately 14,000 Chinese arrived in Canada to build the Canadian Pacific Railway. Once completed in 1885 the Chinese became unwelcome in Canada. The federal government then imposed a “head tax” in 1886. By 1904, the tax was $500, or roughly a year’s wages. In 1923, the Chinese Immigration Act (or Chinese Exclusion Act) was passed and ended Chinese immigration for many years. The Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed in 1947 and by the late 1950s, most of the discriminatory clauses against the Chinese had been removed from the Immigration Act (Bolaria & Li, 1988, p. 117).

East Indians first arrived in Canada around 1900 (Knowles, 1992, p. 121). The Canadian government limited the numbers of East Indian immigrants by raising the amount of money required for their processing from $25 to $200. The 1914 incident of the chartered ship, Kamagata Maru, whose 376 passengers were not allowed to land in Vancouver, reinforced the legal prohibitions to enter Canadian soil (Tastsoglou, 2001, p. 14). In addition, East Indian Canadians were denied the right to vote and to enter a number of occupations (up until 1947) and faced discrimination in daily life.

From 1897 to 1899 Ukrainians began to settle in western Canada. However, in the eyes of many westerners only those newcomers who assimilated readily into the Anglo-Saxon society were welcome. Given their difference in language and religion, Ukrainians faced much hatred on the prairies (Knowles, 1992, p. 104).

With the arrival of the Japanese in 1907, hostilities mounted in Vancouver with the world race riot in British Columbia where local citizens demonstrated their disapproval of the arrival of the Japanese through riots and organized demonstrations. From 1908-1940 Japanese immigration to Canada was strictly controlled. For instance, the “Gentleman’s Agreement” of 1908 between the Japanese and Canadian governments allowed only very specific categories of immigrants to
move to Canada, up to certain quotas per year. The Japanese volunteered and participated in World War I and became successful businessmen and successful farmers. But the Canadian government decided to exempt them from military service during World War II and after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941, all Japanese Canadians living within a hundred miles of the Pacific Coast were detained by government order regardless of where they were born. The federal government sold their property at a fraction of its value and in 1946, the federal government tried to deport 10,000 Japanese (Tastsoglou, 2001, p. 16).

Jewish immigrants arrived in Canada after 1880 escaping anti-Semitic persecution in Eastern Europe. They were prevented from entering certain occupations in Canada and quotas were placed on the number of Jewish students allowed into universities. In 1938 the amount of capital required for a Jewish family to enter Canada increased from $5,000 to $15,000 (Tastsoglou, 2001, p. 17).

Tastsoglou (2001) emphasizes the pattern of racism demonstrated in the proceeding paragraphs and states, “Until a certain point in time (1962) Canadian immigration policies were explicitly racist” (Tastsoglou, 2001, p. 14). Early pre-confederation immigration was uncontrolled and numbers of immigrants were high. The first controls were introduced through the 1869 Immigration Act and with it the roots of racism, in this researcher’s opinion, were codified into law. It was intensified later on, in 1872 when “criminals and vicious classes” were banned and in 1879 when “the destitute and paupers” were banned (Cashmore, 1987, p. 409) and control has been part of immigration policy ever since. One of the controls introduced after 1879 was the control of country of origin, or what is commonly referred to in the literature as the “institutional racism” of the immigration process (Tastsoglou, 2001, p. 14).
In the 1900s, between 1911 and 1913, one million people immigrated to Canada with the majority settling in Ontario (Ontario Immigration, 1992). Revisions to the *Immigration Act* continued to be, in this researcher’s view, discriminatory and therefore laid the ground for oppression of new Canadians by those already established throughout the early to mid-1900s. The *Immigration Act* of 1906 provided for the barring of prostitutes and their procurers, anyone who was mentally retarded, epileptic, insane, or afflicted with a contagious disease, and any individual “who was deaf and dumb or dumb, blind or infirm unless he belonged to a family accompanying a minor already in Canada”; the deportation of prohibited immigrants and immigrants who, within 2 years of their arrival, had become a charge upon public funds or had been an inmate of a jail, hospital, or charitable institution; and the drawing up of regulations “necessary or expedient for this Act according to its true intent and meaning of the better attainment of its objectives,” and in particular, decreeing the amount of “landing money” immigrants must have in their possession. This new Act would become the first legal mechanism enforcing a policy of selective immigration (Knowles, 1992, pp. 107-108).

Then came the *Immigration Act* of 1910, which gave Cabinet unlimited powers to issue orders-in-council to regulate the volume, ethnic origin, or occupational composition of immigrants to Canada. It did not bar any specific group of immigrants on the basis of race, ethnicity, or national origin, but it provided the immigration branch with the means to encourage some immigrants and to restrict or virtually exclude others. For example, it prohibited the entry of “immigrants belonging to any race deemed unsuited to the climate or requirements of Canada” (Knowles, 1992, p. 110).

The 1919 *Immigration Act* was even more restrictive. It barred any “persons over fifteen years of age, who cannot read the English or French language” and prohibited the entry of
immigrants because of “their peculiar customs, habits, and modes of living and methods of holding property” (Knowles, 1992, pp. 133-134).

The *Immigration Act* of 1952 prohibited the admission of persons for reasons such as nationality, ethnicity, occupation, lifestyle, unsuitability for Canada’s climate, or perceived inability to be readily assimilated into Canadian society (Knowles, 1992, p. 170). This affected the approximately 30,000 Black slaves arriving in Canada in the mid-nineteenth century using a network of secret routes, mainly in Ontario, known as the “Underground Railroad” (p. 59). Blacks received a cold reception from Canadian immigration agents, and their unsuitability to the Canadian climate was cited as the reason for rejection. But colour, of course, was the real obstacle (p. 118).

An example is provided by Knowles (1992) to illustrate this. A prospective Black immigrant from Barbados, the granddaughter of a Canadian citizen, was refused admission to Canada in 1952 on the grounds of climate. Justifying the refusal, the minister responsible, Walter Harris, declared that newcomers from countries such as Barbados, “are more apt to break down in health than immigrants from countries where the climate is more akin to that of Canada” (p. 169).

But again, the oppressive attitudes did not change even with a more liberal immigration policy, and while immigration is vital to the existence of the country, a 1954 poll revealed that just 45% of Canadians looked favourably on it (Knowles, 1992, p. 177). Ontario’s population growth has depended on immigration ever since the American Revolution sent Loyalists north to Canada. About half of the approximately 250,000 people who immigrate to Canada each year choose to settle in Ontario, and more specifically Toronto, where more than 140 languages are
spoken, and has been called the most multicultural city in the world (Ontario Immigration, 1992).

**Education System**

At the same time as changes were happening to Canada’s immigration policy, changes were also happening in PSE in Ontario. Prior to 1945, the purposes of institutions of higher learning were to maintain the English and French culture and to educate the next generation of colonial leaders. In 1791, with the Constitution Act and the creation of Upper Canada, the government asked that a large reserve of crown land be set aside for county grammar schools and a provincial university. These early grammar schools and university were modeled after the “public” schools of England, meant for the education of gentlemen. Their creation reflected a desire on the part of the government to build a colonial aristocracy in Upper Canada.

King’s College, the first university in Upper Canada, opened in 1843 accompanied by three other denominational institutions already in operation in Ontario: Methodist Victoria in Cobourg, and both Presbyterian Queen’s and Catholic Regions in Kingston. Eleven more denominational institutions joined by 1887. In 1849, King’s College was renamed the University of Toronto and was later named University College.

In 1871, common or separate schools became elementary schools, and grammar schools became public secondary schools. Secondary schools that continued to meet a set curriculum were designated collegiate institutes.

In 1872, the government established the School of Practical Science on the University of Toronto campus and a School of Agriculture in Guelph (included colleges of medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, veterinary science, and law).
The report of the Flavelle Royal Commission (1906) made three recommendations for PSE: that there be a strong university executive head with the office of the president fully empowered as the CEO; that the university be bicameral in structure; and that sufficient resources be provided.

At the end of this era, John Seath of Ryerson developed two parallel but equal systems, academic high schools and technical schools, and recommended a third stream, the vocational. This system was legislated in 1911 and as a result, Ontario moved to the forefront of Canadian provinces in the provision of technical and vocational education at the secondary level. But it wasn’t until much later that post-secondary education took into consideration the diversity that was evolving around it. It wasn’t until the 1960s that we saw a change, and that was in response to the changing needs of the economy.

1960 – 2000: Immigration and Education

Immigration

Following the 1960 Bill of Rights, in 1962 new regulations were introduced that eliminated racial discrimination from Canada’s immigration policy. As a result, any unsponsored immigrants who could satisfy the Department of Citizenship and Immigration that they had the requisite education, skills, or qualifications were to be considered suitable for admission, regardless of race, colour, or national origin, provided they were able to support themselves until they found employment (Knowles, 1992, p. 187).

The face of the Toronto population changed in 1963 with the settlement of immigrants from non-European areas (Africa, 264; Middle East, 1,995; South America, 424; West Indies,
1,132). With the implementation of the points system (discussed below) in 1967, the non-European immigrant numbers increased to almost 8,000 in 1967 and 1968, 14,250 in 1969, and 13,600 in 1970 (Knowles, 1992, p. 190).

Major changes occurred in immigration policy from 1963 to 1976. The 1966 White Paper was a policy document commissioned by the Department of Manpower and Immigration. It took the position that the government should make immigration policy reflective of Canada’s labour needs. As the document states, “to remain of positive value … immigration policy must be consistent with national economic policy in general and with national manpower and social policies in particular” (Kelley & Trebilcock, 1998, p. 353).

A points system was introduced at this time whereby immigration officers assigned points up to a fixed maximum in each of nine categories, including education, employment opportunities, age, the individual’s personal characteristics, and degree of fluency in English or French. Fifty points out of a possible 100 earned a passing mark (Knowles, 1992, p. 195).

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, newcomers came from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and Latin America, and settled in the Vancouver, Toronto, and Montréal regions. As a result, visible ethnic and racial minorities were becoming a significant part of Canada’s social fabric and in particular Ontario’s and the now GTA’s (Knowles, 1992, pp. 210-211).

In 1977, a new Immigration Act was enacted and hailed as the cornerstone of immigration policy from 1978 to 2001. The Act further curtailed administrative and executive discretion, increased due-process protections for immigrants, and created a generous refugee policy (Kelley & Trebilcock, 1998, p. 380).
It was not until 1986 that an accurate picture of visible minorities in Canada was developed by way of the national census focusing on these communities in Canada. Naming this growing body of people continues to be a challenge and cause for debate, with labels such as visible minorities, racialized communities, and people of colour, among others (Buduh, 2001).

Because of concerns about racial tension, the Canadian Multiculturalism Act was passed in 1988, which made the government accountable to Parliament through annual reports on progress. The federal multiculturalism program had three main goals:

(1) identity: fostering a society in which people of all backgrounds feel a sense of belonging and attachment to Canada;

(2) civic participation: developing citizens who are actively involved in shaping the future of their communities and their country; and

(3) social justice: building a nation that ensures fair and equitable treatment and that respects and accommodates people of all origins (Jones, 2000, p.121; Tastsoglou, 2001, p.25).

Between 1987 and 1991, Ontario was the destination for 54% of immigrants, compared with 46% for the period 1977 to 1981, who accounted for 38% of the population of Toronto (Kelley & Trebilcock, 1998, p. 383).

In 1993, a new Immigration Act was introduced. The new Act provided for the fingerprinting of refugee applicants, public hearings of refugee cases, harsher detention procedures, and deportations without hearings (Knowles, 1992, p. 239). The new Act did not include discrimination on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion or sex.
However, it did have an inherent class bias that favoured middle and upper-middle class immigrants (Tastsoglou, 2001, p. 21).

In 1996, Ontario had 1,682,045 visible minorities, representing 16% of the total population, with the largest visible minority groups being Chinese (391,095), South-Asian (390,055), Black (356,220), Arab (118,660), and Filipino (117,365) (National Reference Group on Visible Minorities, 2001). Toronto was home to approximately 42% (1996 Census) of the visible minority population of Canada, with over 89 ethno-racial groups (National Reference Group on Visible Minorities, 2001). Approximately 15% of the visible minority community in Toronto was made up of people from East and South-East Asia and the Pacific Islands (including the Philippines), representing 15.3% in 1996; 9% of all Torontonians were Chinese. Ten percent of people in Toronto in 1996 described themselves as having African, Black, or Caribbean origins, with Jamaicans at 3%. South Asians accounted for 8.4% with the majority 5.4% of Indian origin: Bengalis, Gujaratis, and Punjabis. Tamils, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis made up the rest. About 2.9% of the population had Middle Eastern and East Asian roots, with Iranians making up the largest single group and significant numbers of Afghan, Armenian, Egyptian, Lebanese, and Turkish origins. Latin Americans made up approximately 2.8% of the Toronto population. All visible minority groups have younger than average age profiles (National Reference Group on Visible Minorities, 2001).

In 1999, Immigration Minister Elinor Caplan served notice that she would like to raise Canada’s annual immigration by 70%—to 300,000 from the expected 175,000 in 1999. When she made her announcement, municipal authorities in Toronto were already looking into the costs of integrating immigrants in a city that was then receiving more than 42% of Canada’s immigrants. Questions were raised as to where housing would be found and what the pressures
on the overtaxed school systems, social welfare agencies, hospitals, and English-as-second-language programs would be (Knowles, 1992, p. 249).

The following discussion on the education system explores the matching of economic need and training.

**Education System**

The 1960s were a period of enormous expansion. The provincial government increased spending on health and education, including on the development of a new community college system. By 1961, immigrants accounted for one in five Ontarians (Ontario Immigration, 1992). During this time of increasing immigration to Canada and changing immigration policy, our educational environment was also continuing to evolve.

Curtis, Livingstone, and Smaller (1992) found that during the 1960s, Ontario schools were far from fulfilling the principle of educational equality (i.e., providing equal schooling for people of different classes). It is not hard to find schools that were built to serve a certain class of people. At that time, south of Bloor Street, an area marked by the highest concentration of the working class and immigrant population. Bloor Street was a line dividing the working-class sector of the city from the more affluent north end (Ng, 2004, p. 66).

As Winnie Ng, in her 2004 research on race and social class factors that affect students’ satisfaction with school, points out, a survey at the time of the creation of these schools found that a working class child had a 10 times greater chance of ending up in a vocational program than did a child of the professional or managerial class. None of the nine new schools offered the 5-year (Grade 13) courses (that lead to university study) in the science, technology and trade, or
business and commerce programs. As a result, the chances of these students entering universities were proportionately lower than those of middle and upper class youth (p. 67).

What we can see from this is that there was a need created to provide PSE for those students for whom university just wasn’t an option: the students graduating from these vocational high schools. Whether the government was willing to admit this or not would be another story. However, there was an economic need to educate a workforce in vocational skills beyond the high school level.

The origins of the vocational school date back to the federal *Vocational Training Coordination Act* of 1942 to meet the training needs of veterans and others outside of universities. It was replaced in 1960 by the *Technical and Vocational Training Assistance Act*. The Toronto Training and Rehabilitation Centre was established in 1945, and subsequently became Ryerson Institute of Technology. Ryerson was one of several new institutes offering 2-year and 3-year programs for the training of technicians and technologists. Others included the Provincial Institute of Mining in Haileybury, the Provincial Institute of Textiles in Hamilton (later the Hamilton Institute of Technology), and the Lakehead Technical Institute in Port Arthur. Institutes of technology were added in Ottawa and Windsor, and the Northern Ontario Institute of Technology was the last to be added in 1962. In 1957, Lakehead was transformed into a college of arts, science and technology and Ryerson became a polytechnic institute in 1964. To address the concern with apprenticeship the government created the Institute of Trades in Toronto. By 1965, there were Ontario vocational centres in Ottawa, London, and Sault Ste. Marie.

In 1965, the new minister of education, William G. Davis, proposed institutions to be known as colleges of applied arts and technology to offer full- and part-time studies to meet the
needs of all adults within a community regardless of race, economic advantage, or aptitude level. In Ontario, these vocationally oriented institutions were developed:

- to complement the university sector;
- to provide post-secondary education for young people who were not eligible for university; and
- to be governed by locally designated boards.

The college system was viewed as providing both retraining programs for people in the work force primarily interested in new career opportunities and for people whose objectives were less career oriented.

Legislation was passed in 1965, and the first college, Centennial, opened in 1966 in Scarborough. By 1970 there were 20 colleges spread across the province. In Ontario today there are 24 colleges, some colleges of applied arts and technology (certificate and diploma granting) and others institutes of technology and advanced learning or polytechnics (both being certificate, diploma and degree granting). These colleges receive public funding, have more than one campus, and provide full- and part-time courses at more than 100 locations across the province (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007, p. 25).

At this time of educational growth, the Canadian government was also responding to growing diversity: in 1960, the Bill of Rights was introduced; and in 1971, the Multiculturalism Policy of 1971 (not an act) recognized the cultural diversity of Canada. In 1977, the Canadian Human Rights Act outlawing discrimination based on, “race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, marital status, family status, disability or conviction for an offence for which a pardon has been granted” was passed. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms in the Canadian
Constitution was created in 1982 preserving and enhancing basic rights and freedoms for all citizens, including mobility and minority language rights, regardless of, “race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability” (section 15) (Knowles, 1992, p. 256).

A recent study by the Canadian Council on Social Development on immigrant youth in Canada (1999) estimates that 230,000 immigrant youth and children arrived in Canada between 1996 and 1998. About 44% were from Asia and the Pacific region and 22% from Africa and the Middle East (National Reference Group on Visible Minorities, 2001). And if we compare this with enrolment in our colleges we see that the numbers jumped from approximately 11,400 full-time students in 1967 when the colleges first opened to just over 61,000 full-time students in 1977. By 1985, enrolment in the colleges had increased a further 63% to over 96,000 and by 1995 it had reached 135,880. What these data demonstrate is a correlation between increased enrolment and increased immigration to Canada that can be inferred based on the increase in immigration relative to the increase in enrolment in colleges.

In 1987, the Ontario Minister of Colleges and Universities requested that the Ontario Council of Regents oversee a review of Ontario's colleges to develop “a vision of the college system in the year 2000” (Vision 2000 Steering Committee, 1990). At the completion of the report, the government was presented with 40 recommendations addressing major challenges believed to be facing Ontario colleges, including:

1. Lack of system-wide standards and planning;

2. Insufficient attention to general education and generic skills;

3. Limitations on access;
4. Inattention to adult part-time learners and inadequate mechanisms for recognition of prior learning;

5. Lack of flexibility with respect to changing employer needs;

6. Attrition;

7. Inadequate links with secondary schools and universities;

8. Insufficient provision for system-wide development of human resources;

9. Inconsistency in curriculum development and delivery methods; and

10. Perceived conflicts among quality, access, funding, and labour-management relations.

As a result, the Government undertook three initiatives:

1. A College Standards and Accreditation Council (CSAC) was established to oversee the development of system-wide college program standards, and processes for review and accreditation;

2. A Prior Learning Assessment Advisory and Coordinating Group was established for a 3-year period to guide implementation of a system of prior learning assessment in the colleges, after which time each college would assume full responsibility for offering prior learning assessment services; and

3. The government established a task force to examine how best the province might meet its advanced training needs.

As Hurtado (n.d.) states, colleges and universities that have adopted a proactive commitment to student diversity have done so because they understand that their central mission is linked with the future of a diverse society. They are aware that most new jobs in the economy will require a
post-secondary education, and women and racial/ethnic minorities will compose a majority of the workforce. In this researcher’s view, Hurtado (n.d.) describes a vision for the future of our educational institutions. One cannot ignore the changing demographics. And with these changing demographics, one sees the new needs that must be addressed in order that students achieve success in learning and in life in general.

2000 and Beyond:  
Immigration and Education

Immigration

The current Immigration and Refugee Protection Act came into law on June 28, 2002. Drafted in the aftermath of the “9/11” tragedy, this new act is very restrictive. As well, it outlines several basic economic, social, and cultural goals of Canada’s immigration program:

1. To pursue the greatest economic, social, and cultural benefits across Canada, while respecting the country’s federal, bilingual, and multicultural character;

2. To reunite families in Canada;

3. To help newcomers integrate into Canadian society while recognizing obligations of new permanent residents and Canadian society;

4. To attract visitors, students, and temporary foreign workers for the purpose of tourism, trade, and cultural, scientific and educational pursuits;

5. To protect the health and safety of Canadians;

6. To safeguard the security of Canadian society and promote international justice and security by preventing the admission of criminals or security risks; and
7. To cooperate with the provinces in establishing immigration goals, recognizing foreign credentials, and integrating permanent residents.

In addition to these goals, the Act also sets out four humanitarian goals for refugee protection:

1. To fulfill Canada’s international legal obligations regarding refugees and to help those who need to resettle;

2. To give fair consideration to people arriving in Canada seeking protection and to offer a safe haven to individuals with a well-founded fear of persecution;

3. To maintain the integrity of the refugee determination process while safeguarding human rights and freedoms; and

4. To support the well-being and self-sufficiency of refugees by reuniting them with their families.

In addition, it created four separate tribunals: the Refugee Protection Division, which decides claims for refugee protection made by persons in Canada, the Refugee Appeal Division, the Immigration Division, and the Immigration Appeal Division. Under the new arrangement, a points system and a list of attributes are employed to evaluate applicants for immigration. The criteria include formal education and language proficiency, work experience, age, arranged employment in Canada, and adaptability (Knowles, 1992, p. 259).

Between 1991 and 2000, Canada admitted 2.2 million immigrants, the highest intake of newcomers in any decade in the past 100 years. This in turn has led to a rapid increase in the level of socio-cultural diversity (Hou & Bourne, 2004, p. 1). By 2001, about 73% of Canada’s total visible minority population was concentrated in three cities: 43% in Toronto, 18% in Vancouver, and 12% in Montréal (Statistics Canada, 2003).
According to the 2001 census (2002), the five languages most commonly spoken by new immigrants in their family home are English (almost 8 million speakers), French (almost 490,000 speakers), Chinese (almost 405,000 speakers), Italian (almost 296,000 speakers) and German (about 157,000 speakers). Other significant languages include Polish, Spanish, Punjabi, Ukrainian, and Portuguese. According to the 2001 census, almost 4.0 million Canadians are Protestant, making this the largest religious group, followed by Roman Catholic at 3.9 million.

The 2001 census (2002) indicates that 18.4% of Canada’s population (26.8% of Ontario’s) were foreign-born. Over 60% of new immigrants to Canada chose to settle in the province of Ontario, perhaps in part because of Ontario’s pilot program for a Provincial Nomination Program (PNP), which allows the province to fast-track the immigration applications of individuals who have skills that match the province’s needs (canadavisa, 2010). Most of the new arrivals choose to live in Toronto. This figure is 26.8% for Ontario. The majority of immigrants and refugees that come to Canada settle in Ontario, the majority of those in Toronto (Douglas, 2004, p. 1).

Toronto is Canada’s largest city and is ranked among the world’s most livable cities. Half of its population is foreign born. It is known for its cleanliness, safety and availability of services in comparison to other cities of similar size thereby making it a destination for new immigrants to Canada (canadavisa, 2010). As a result, it is referred to as a “global city,” home to one of the most diverse populations in the world. Over half of the city’s population are considered visible minorities. Throughout the city one can find neighbourhoods featuring pockets of immigrants from all corners of the world, from Greektown to Little Italy, from Chinatown to Little Portugal and Korea Town (canadavisa, 2010).
As of 2001, most of the Chinese neighbourhoods in Toronto were located in the mature suburbs of Scarborough, Markham, and Richmond Hill. South-Asian neighbourhoods were more scattered over East York, North York, Scarborough, Mississauga, and Brampton. Predominantly Black neighbourhoods were concentrated in the suburbs of Etobicoke and North York (Hou, 2004, p. 9). This remains virtually the same today.

However, despite this growth in diversity, discrimination is still an issue. It continues to be a problem in Canada, as evidenced by the hard data provided by the Ethnic Diversity Survey of 2004. The survey reveals that while only 14% of Canadians had experienced discrimination or unfair treatment because of their ethno-racial origins, 36% of visible minorities had been subjected to discrimination. It also identified racial tensions in various Canadian cities, which underlines the need for effective multicultural policies (Knowles, 1992, p. 272).

Looking to our future, Statistics Canada (2005) has provided a picture of what 2017 will look like if current trends persist. In their study, “Canada's visible minority population in 2017,” new ethno-cultural population projections were reviewed. They conclude that by 2017 roughly one in every five people in Canada (19% to 23%) will be a member of a visible minority. It is further projected that by 2017 Canada will have between 6.3 million and 8.5 million visible minorities. From this the conclusion can be drawn that the visible minority population is growing much faster than the total population. For instance, between 1996 and 2001, the total population increased 4% while the visible minority population rose 25% or 6 times faster (Statistics Canada, 2005).

The data also suggest that ethno-cultural diversity is likely to remain a feature of urban areas. For instance, in 2001, it was predicted that in 2017 almost three-quarters of visible minorities would be living in one of Canada's three largest metropolitan areas: Toronto,
Vancouver, and Montréal, with the result that half of the population in Toronto would belong to a visible minority group (Statistics Canada, 2005). This rapid growth can be attributed to sustainable immigration. It is predicted that Canada's immigrant population will reach between 7.0 million and 9.3 million in 2017 and will account for 22% of the population (Statistics Canada, 2005).

By 2017, the majority of visible minorities in Canada will belong to the following groups: South Asian (1.8 million); Chinese (1.8 million); and Black (1.0 million). Projections also indicate that the number of people whose mother tongue is neither English nor French will reach 7.6 million by 2017, or 22% of the total population, and almost 95% of visible minorities will live in Canada's metropolitan areas in 2017. Toronto will have 45% of all visible minorities, resulting in more than half the population of Toronto belonging to a visible minority group (2.8 million to nearly 3.9 million) in 2017. It is projected that more than half of Canada's South-Asians and about 40% of Canada's Chinese will be living in Toronto in 2017. These projections directly impact the planning and forecasting for the future of programming, recruitment, and enrolment in our community colleges.

**Education System**

As current educational statistics tell us, colleges in Ontario serve a diverse population of learners: 18% of college applicants were not born in Canada and a further 13% are first-generation Canadians. It is suggested that immigrant applicants are more likely to have dependents, lower incomes, and a university degree. According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2008), more than 130,000 students come to Canada each year to study. With respect to Ontario, according to an Ontario College Application Service (OCAS) report in 2009, there were 7,904 international students enrolled in Ontario’s 24 colleges. In 2009, this number jumped to
9,991 students, a growth of 24% (2,087 students). The three colleges participating in this study had a total enrolment of 4,819 international students, representing 48% of the international student enrolment in all of Ontario’s colleges in 2009 (OCAS, 2009).

When broken down by country of citizenship, the highest proportion of international students, 26%, came from China (2,577 students); 2,306, or 23%, came from India, and 585, 6%, came from South Korea. For 1,401 of the students, or 14%, country of citizenship was recorded as unknown by OCAS. Worth noting are the numbers of students from other countries: 107 from Russia, 144 from Japan, 113 from United States, 97 from Trinidad and Tobago, 65 from Jamaica, 65 from Turkey, 16 from Kuwait, 57 from Bangladesh, 42 from Bermuda, 39 from Brazil, 129 from Hong Kong, 89 from Pakistan, and 9 from South Africa.

Ontario colleges (GTA colleges participating in this study, in particular) are already seeing an influx of international students enrolling in their programs. The winter semester of 2010 alone at these colleges has resulted in double enrolment in 2-year diploma programs.

Increases in the numbers of international students are expected to continue given the recent changes in student work permits, which now allow students who graduate from eligible programs to work for 3 years in Canada (as opposed to 1), with no restriction on the type of employment and no requirement of an actual offer of employment (as opposed to requiring an actual offer of employment for the 1 year) (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2008). In addition, graduates with Canadian work experience can now apply for permanent residence status through the Canadian Experience Class. The requirements are that the applicant be a graduate of a Canadian post-secondary institution and possess at least one year of work experience in Canada. As a result, international students are attracted by the opportunities to study, live, and work in Canada (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2008).
The integration of international students into the GTA community college enrolment, together with the current diverse student body, requires a close look at how these colleges are going to provide equal educational opportunities for all of its students. As Nancoo & Ramcharan (1995) remark:

Education in its broadest sense is a key instrument for the enlightenment of the people, the propagation of ideology, and the maintenance of a superior quality of life in our country. … School is one of the most important institutions in our society; it serves as a vehicle for the transmission of our accumulated knowledge and our culture; a place for training both youth and adults; an instrument for the perpetuation of the status quo; and a form of social control through curriculum decisions. … [the need for] [E]ducation for a diverse population has raised very serious questions about the ability of our schools to provide equal opportunity for all Canadians (p. 260).

The influx into our schools of racialized minority students (ethnically diverse students and immigrant students) is a consequence of the overall increase in the general population of the GTA of racialized minorities (Robinson, 2003, p. 17).

Summary of History of Immigration in Canada and the Development of Community Colleges

Canada has relied on immigration from diverse sources for its population and its culture from the first wave of European immigration in the 1500s. The resulting diversity in race, religion, language, and culture has shaped Canada, Ontario, and the GTA that we know today.

Ontario welcomes more than half of all immigrants to Canada, the majority of whom settle in the GTA. Thus, immigration is clearly vital to Ontario’s future. After all, newcomers play a key role economically, socially, and culturally in making Ontario strong and prosperous. But in order to meet changing economic needs, Ontario’s diverse population must be provided the best possible opportunity by our PSE institutions.
As Knowles (1992) tells us:

The decisions that we make now about what sort of people are admitted to Canada will determine the kind of country we will have a hundred years from today. That is why it is so important for Canadians to know something about the history of Canadian immigration and the realities of present day immigration policy (p. 272).

The Vision 2000 Steering Committee (1990) report is also helpful in painting a picture of what needs to be done for the future of our colleges. The project commenced in October 1988 as per a request to the Ontario Council of Regents by the then minister of colleges and universities, the Honourable Lyn McLeod. It was intended to provide a vision for colleges for the year 2000, assuring the quality of career education provided by Ontario’s college system and enhancing opportunities for students to participate. It is about how the colleges can help ensure that Ontario has the skilled and adaptable workforce necessary to prosper in the global economy, while contributing to the development of individuals as informed, productive and socially responsible citizens (p. 1).

It is against the history of immigration in Canada, and more specifically in Ontario and the GTA, that we ask: Are we providing the student programs and services, student–faculty relations, and overall institutional environment required to meet the needs of the ethnically diverse student? Part of the answer can be found in a history of student services in the community colleges.
History of Student Services in Community Colleges:
Calder (1982)

Introduction

William Calder (1982) examined the developmental history and the perceptions about the future directions of student services within Ontario’s colleges of applied arts and technology (CAATs) (p. 7). In doing so, he walks through the history of the development of CAATs in three stages: 1960 to 1965, 1970 to 1975, and 1976 to 1980. Throughout the history of community colleges and the development of student services, the same mantra has held true: students need more than just academic counseling or academic tutoring in order to be successful at college (or any form of education for that matter).

Each of Calder’s three stages of student services development are reviewed in turn followed by conclusions for the post-1980s. Please note, for consistency, the term “student services” will be used when discussing the areas of services and affairs.

1965 – 1969

The first time period was considered to be a stage of youthful experimentation and a building period for the CAAT system as a whole and for the student services area in particular. It included the establishment of guidelines and foundations for the work of student services in the colleges (Calder, 1982, p. 92).

With the initiation of the community college into the PSE stream, CAATs were faced with a student body of diverse educational needs. Given their open door policy, distinguishing them from the universities, the student applying to a community college could be any one of the following:
- a secondary school graduate
- 19 years old with less than a complete high school education
- a mature adult interested in updating his or her skills
- someone requiring retraining and the immigrant who requires new skills for the purpose of becoming economically independent

This applicant pool only emphasizes further the need to offer a wide range of student services to help students succeed at our CAATs.

In order to determine the services needed in community colleges, a review was completed of what was successful in the United States. A group of educational professionals visited several colleges in California and Illinois, and noted the important role the student services office played “to ensure the proper placement of students” and provide counseling services to help students choose academic courses and a sense of “direction as well” (Calder, 1982, p. 5).

In 1968, the new role of director of student affairs (Calder, 1982, p. 94) was announced. This role included such responsibilities as the maintenance of all student resources, administration of examinations, and supervision of counseling services in three broad areas: (a) financial, academic, personal, and placement; (b) liaison with student government, student press, student athletic association, and other student organizations and clubs; and (c) the organization and administration of such student services as food, health, and insurance programs (p. 95).

As community college enrolments grew so did student services. The various activities that formed performed by this division were derived from student and institutional needs rather than from any strong theoretical or philosophical basis, and were referred to as a loosely organized group of services and programs. These included non-academic services available to
students such as counseling services, housing, placement, financial aid, health services, student activities (e.g., athletics), admissions, registration, and high school liaison. The services were provided out of offices of various names such as, “student personnel services,” “student affairs,” and “guidance services,” and “student services.” The purpose of each student services office was to provide direct and indirect services to students, faculty, and staff through various programs and consultative activities (Calder, 1982, p. 2). The concern then and now was to provide adequate services to help meet the needs of the diverse student population attending the newly created CAATs (p. 8).

In 1982, Calder completed a number of interviews with student services representatives and high level college officials to gain a more personal perspective on the development of student services. What was discovered was that the focus of the student services office was, in practice, largely focused on counseling. He is quick to point out that while counseling was not included in the June 1966 printing of the Basic Documents (Calder, 1982, p. 100), it was important nonetheless. However, the Unique Features document, which was intended to give shape to college guidelines (Basic Documents), did suggest that a full range of diagnostic tests coupled with personal counseling interviews be made available to students. As the Unique Features document highlights:

A team of counselors [was] the only viable method, with counselors who are fully qualified in normal and social psychology, testing and evaluation, employment needs and conditions; and, since many students are often emotionally or physically handicapped, counseling entails the availability of psychiatric services (Department of Education, 1967, as cited in Calder, 1982, p. 100).

Building on the initial foundation of the CAATs and the student affairs office, during the next time period the loosely grouped services being provided to students were refined and made consistent.
1970 – 1975

The second time period is considered to be a stage of implementation for student services (Calder, 1982, p. 92). This was a time in which there was an increase in services to meet institutional and student needs with a focus on counseling, testing, placement, and financial aid (pp. 104, 106).

Calder (1982) proposes two models to look at this era of growth in student services. One is the Production Model and the other is the Humanistic Model. The Production Model focuses on separating the role of faculty from that of counselor. The faculty provide the in-class learning while the counselors take on the counseling functions (p. 113).

In the Humanistic Model everyone takes part (Faculty, Student Services, Counselors, Clerical Staff and Support Staff, Administration), the focus is on the total human development. Everyone in the institution is not only concerned with development but is a contributor to it. As echoed by Giroux in a 1973 conference on the Community College,

> everyone in the institution ought to be working for the student development. My point of view is that we should use the expertise of the people in Student Services effectively in student development, but no way are they completely responsible for total development of the student. This is something that we all must work at (pp. 87, 89).

During the next period the solid foundation of services, and a commitment from the entire institution to work towards the common goal of developing the student academically, socially, and psychologically, is built upon to connect the college with external factors and economic realities.
1976 – 1980

The third time frame in the development of student services is described as a consolidation period (Calder, 1982, p. 91). Due to economic conditions during this period colleges were under funded by the government. As Calder points out, services to students were reduced and restricted more than at any other time in the history of the colleges (Calder, 1982, p. 91).

As a result the colleges were faced with the task of redefining their thinking around goals and objectives in the area of student services (Calder, 1982, p. 117). To this end, the executive of the Senior Student Services Officers (now Provincial Committee on Student Affairs) established a task force to “develop, publish, and disseminate guidelines for the CAATs describing a model of the functions typical of Student Services in the Colleges” (Calder, 1982, p. 117).

Out of this task force came six student services functions. Calder (1982) describes them as follows:

1. To inform (communications to students, staff and community);

2. To develop (affect in a dynamic way the character of individual students, staff, and groups);

3. To appraise (diagnostic role related to programs, persons, ideas, and things);

4. To consult (use of staff expertise to assist others to have an effect on self and/or others);

5. To regulate (establish and carry out the rules and procedures); and

6. To organize (functions and managing the staff, facilitates and budget resources), (p. 136).

It is on the basis of these six functions that the current student services office operates today.
Conclusions:  

Post-1980s

As demographics changed post-1980, the offices of student services faced more challenges. As Calder (1982) highlights, while diversity in enrolment, faculty numbers, programming, learning disabilities, socio-economic status, stress, and external pressures still exist, there is more and more ethnic diversity, creating even further challenges for colleges to deliver programs and provide services to meet this diverse student body (p. 23). In addition to the areas already developed, student services professionals were encouraged to turn their minds to the needs of ethnically diverse students in such areas as instruction and delivery of curriculum, religious awareness, and cultural customs and beliefs.

The “main purpose of student services is to provide a climate which will supplement or complement academic learning and thus facilitate the total growth of the student” (O’Banion, 1970, p. 9, as cited in Calder, 1982, p. 54). At the student services professional is encouraged to keep these current trends and issues in mind when defining future goals and objectives.

Calder (1982) also reminds us once again that we will encounter many new challenges, such as computer-assisted instruction in the classroom, women’s issues, the delivery of distance education, the increase in emphasis on technology, the aging student population, the intercultural nature of the student body, high attrition rates in enrolment, and the pressure to increase the accountability of the entire college operation (p. 194). But in light of these issues, if we work together to put the students first, we will be able to move into the next phase of student services development in a way that best meets the ever-changing needs of the students.
Community College Tools to Assess Quality, Student Engagement, and Student Experience

An examination of the history of CAATs, leads to the question of quality and how it is assessed in our PSE institutions. Ontario administers key performance indicators and accountability measures. The results have indicated generally high levels of satisfaction over time. In Ontario, for example, student satisfaction with the college experience has been rising (from 68.4% in 1999–2000 to 77.8% in 2005–2006), and graduate satisfaction has been maintained at around 80% during this same period (Canadian Council on Learning, 2006, p. 54).

The Canadian Council on Learning’s first annual report on PSE in Canada (2006) is also the first report that examines post-secondary education in Canada from a nationwide perspective. It found that while other countries have been active, Canada has neglected to define and articulate national goals and corresponding benchmarks (p. i).

When one looks at the history of enrolment in Canadian PSE institutions, it is apparent that Canada has come a long way in promoting the importance of education. In the 19th century, just 2% of Canadians aged 20 to 24 years went to university (to become a clergyman, a doctor, or a lawyer). The number increased to 4% in the early 1940s. In the post-war period with the federal government incentive to returning servicemen to attend PSE, enrolments increased. Today there are approximately 100 public universities and 200 public community colleges, and 44% of Canadians are in possession of PSE credentials (Canadian Council on Learning, 2006, p. iii).

The value of higher education provided by institutions extends far beyond financial investment. Other factors affect the quality of the educational experience, such as the dedication
and focus of faculty and staff, the motivation of and supports available to learners, and the culture and climate of the institution itself. Quality is also determined by outcomes; the actual learning that is acquired by students, the research and knowledge dissemination performed by faculty, and the social and economic returns flowing to individual students, the communities they live in, and the society and economy as a whole (Canadian Council on Learning, 2006, p. 49).

To address the question of quality and accountability, there are a number of evaluation, feedback, and assessment tools available to Canadian community colleges to help them to become more informed about the learning environment and its perceived effects on its students, faculty, and the larger community. In 2006, when the Canadian Council on Learning report was released, there was no pan-Canadian body with a mandate to determine issues of quality or the accreditation of PSE institutions (p. 48). This changed in 2008 with the introduction of the Pan-Canadian Study of First Year College Students: Report 1: Student characteristics and the college experience and Pan-Canadian study of first year college students: Report 2: The characteristics and Experience of Aboriginal, Disabled, Immigrant and Visible Minority Students (Pan-Canadian Study). For the purposes of this study, the reports of the Pan-Canadian Study are used as a benchmark to compare college students from across the country to those from an ethnic background interviewed for this study. Differences and similarities in the responses are discussed in Chapter Five. In what follows, 6 community college student engagement assessment tools are discussed.

Pan-Canadian Study of First Year College Students (Report 1 and 2)

In Canada, the Association of Community Colleges of Canada (ACCC), together with Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSD) launched the Pan-Canadian Study of College Students in 2007, an extensive CCSSE-type study that attempted to measure the
student experience and the key determinants of student academic success and persistence (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007, p. 56). The study asked five questions concerning the characteristics of students who attend Canadian colleges and technical institutes, the nature of the college student experience during the first year, the key determinants of student academic success and persistence, the policies, practices, programs and services developed to promote student success and of those, which have a significant positive impact on first year student success and persistence? (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007, p. 58).

The Pan-Canadian Study was funded by HRSDC and consisted of two surveys of first year students at colleges and institutes. A total of 28,992 students from 102 different colleges and institutions Canada-wide completed the first survey (Student characteristics and the college experience and Pan-Canadian study of first year college students) and between November 7 and December 9, 2005, a total of 17,642 students completed the second survey. It was reported that more than two-thirds of the students who participated originated from Ontario (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, p. i).

The first survey was administered as students were starting their first semester at college. It identified characteristics of the students including enrolment status, and program length, demographic and family background such as age, gender, socio-economic status (SES), first language, minority status, citizenship status, number of dependents, activity prior to college, and residence type, academic background and preparation, secondary school variables, career preparation, college expectations such as hours working while studying, support needs and goals, financing college, attitudes towards success, job preference, commitment to graduation, and career certainty). (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, p. 14).
The second survey (The characteristics and Experience of Aboriginal, Disabled, Immigrant and Visible Minority Students) was administered as students were ending their first semester at college to gain an understanding of the nature of their experience (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 2, 2008, p. 14). It assessed student attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, behaviours, and experiences during the first semester of college. The questionnaire included 141 items similar to the first report including, enrolment status and program length, demographic and family background such as age, gender, SES, first language, minority status, citizenship status, and number of dependents, college finances, self-assessment skills and college academic experiences such as support needs and receptivity, difficulties in college, frequency of group study, perceptions of faculty and institution, and frequency of faculty interaction, attitudes towards confidence, commitment and certainty, and use of time including extracurricular involvement and use of student services (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, p. 15).

The data collected in response to the five questions noted above have been released in three reports (two of which have been published and reviewed here). The first report provides a descriptive overview of the first results of these two surveys. The second report (discussed next) describes the differences in the profile and experiences of visible minorities, Aboriginal students and new Canadians. The third report (yet to be released) will be a longitudinal analysis of the determinants of first term outcomes using data from the surveys and grades data submitted by participating colleges and institutes (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, p. i).
a. Report 1: Student characteristics and the college experience and Pan-Canadian study of first year college students (“Report 1”)

In providing a descriptive overview of the results of the two surveys, key results are summarized from Report 1 (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007) in the paragraphs that follow.

The results confirm that colleges and institutes admit students with diverse characteristics, including their demographic and family background, and academic, personal, and life experiences. This is unsurprising since just as many students come to colleges or institutes from the workforce as from high school (p. 59).

In relation to students’ skills, a significant number of students believed their basic academic and learning skills were weak. In particular, their study, test taking and math skills. An equivalent number of students reported they could use help in developing these skills and would use college services if offered. However, service use findings show that a significantly lower percentage of students used services than reported a need (p. 59).

The results confirmed that students understand the labour market focus of college and institute programs as most indicated they enrolled in their program to prepare for a specific occupation or for career advancement. At the same time, significant numbers of students viewed college programs as a stepping-stone to university. Generally, respondent students were decisive in their college goals, were committed to graduating, and perceived the benefits of a postsecondary education as many and varied (p. 59).

Students reported areas of difficulty to include balancing the demands of their studies with those of work and family, and difficulty knowing how to improve their grades. Also, many expressed concerned about financing their studies at college entry and even more expressed this
concern at the end of the first term. However, the majority of students began college confident that they would succeed in their studies and achieve a post-secondary credential (pp. 60-61).

The results depict the first term experience as one in which the majority of students have positive interactions with other students and faculty. Students also considered their academic experiences to be positive and, overall, survey respondents were very satisfied with their college experience and with their specific institution. Indeed, the majority felt they were gaining the knowledge and skills they needed to be successful in the future.


Report 2 (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2008) of the Pan-Canadian Study describes the differences in the profile and experiences of visible minorities, Aboriginal students and new Canadians. As the report explains, access to post-secondary education by traditionally underrepresented groups is recognized as a priority by the federal government as well as provincial and territorial governments across the country. Canadian colleges and institutes have a pivotal role to play given their ability to reach across rural and urban regions and their ability to reach diverse client groups through a wide range of programs that include basic literacy, high school equivalency, career and technical diplomas and certificates, and baccalaureate and applied degrees (Executive Summary).

Report 2 (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 2, 2008) breaks down the data collected from the two surveys in relation to the four identified groups: Aboriginal, visible minority and immigrant students and students with disabilities. Of the 28,932 students surveyed, 1,818 were Aboriginal (7%), 1,929 were recent immigrants (7%), 1,668 were visible
minority students (excluding immigrants) (8%) and 2,216 were students with disabilities (9%) (p. 15).

1. Aboriginal Students

Due to the fact that there were no identified Aboriginal student participants in this study, the specific experience of the Aboriginal student is not examined. However, it is worth noting recent data on the experience of the Aboriginal student while attending college generally.

Report 2 (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 2, 2008) drew conclusions pertaining to Aboriginal students as compared to non-Aboriginal students.

The results confirm that while more Aboriginal students came from the work force than from high school, college was the first choice among post-secondary options for the majority of Aboriginal respondents (more so than the non-aboriginal group). They are older than their fellow classmates, have a higher likelihood of being female than male and a higher proportion responded as having financial dependent children or adults (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 2, 2008, Executive Summary).

While more Aboriginal students then non-Aboriginal students experienced difficulties balancing school, family and work responsibilities, they reported a strong sense of engagement in college, were reported as committed to completing their studies, and confident in their ability to succeed (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 2, 2008, Executive Summary).

A notable proportion of Aboriginal students had indicated that preparation for university and personal development were goals for college attendance and were more likely to rate their proficiency in basic academic and study skills lower. They were also more likely to confirm that they would benefit from and use the support services offered by their colleges or institutes and
more actually made use of support services such as learning skills centres and peer tutoring (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 2, 2008, Executive Summary).

2. Recent Immigrant Students

Students were defined as recent immigrants if they were not born in Canada and had arrived in Canada in the year 2000 or later (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 2, 2008, Executive Summary). The report concluded that a large proportion of immigrant students indicated college was not their first choice, university was (18%) and higher proportion were involved in advanced diploma programs rather than career and technical programs.

It was confirmed that two-thirds of immigrant students did not have English or French as their first language, were more likely to be older males with dependents, and a higher percentage had a father or mother who had completed an undergraduate or graduate university degree (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 2, 2008, Executive Summary).

The report concluded that a higher proportion of immigrant students reported being less committed to their programs and institution and would have preferred to be working rather than studying. While at the same time, a higher percentage reported being very concerned about their ability to pay for college and repay accumulated debt, a higher proportion expected to work while studying, were preparing for university studies and more likely to report that it was very important to their parents that they complete post-secondary education (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 2, 2008, Executive Summary).

In terms of services, the report concluded that a higher proportion of students confirmed they would benefit from and likely use the support services offered by their institution in areas
such as financial aid, language-related skills, and preparing for future studies (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 2, 2008, Executive Summary).

3. Visible Minority Students

Visible minorities were defined as a sub group who were neither immigrants (recent or otherwise) nor visa students. Report 2 (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 2, 2008) concludes that visible minority students see attending college as preparation for university and that university would have been their first choice for post-secondary education (Executive Summary).

The visible minority student reported a higher degree of difficulty in all areas examined including balancing school, work and family responsibilities, course content, and program workloads and had higher levels of concern about financing their education. At the same time, from a program perspective, a lower proportion of visible minority students indicated that they were well integrated into college, both academically and socially and felt they had a weaker commitment to their program and institution, and less likely to have a positive impression of the faculty. More reported they would benefit from and use support services, in particular to improve language-related skills, to secure financial aid, to plan for future studies and to improve study and test-taking skills (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 2, 2008, Executive Summary).

4. Students with Disabilities

One in every 10 respondents to both surveys reported having a disability: about 60% had a learning disability, 10% had mobility related disabilities, 6% had sensory disabilities and 24%
had disabilities that fell into the “other” category (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 2, 2008, p.1). The report concluded that students with disabilities as opposed to students without disabilities, were reported to be older, more likely to have English as their first language, more likely to have financially dependent children or adults, less likely to feel academically integrated and less likely to feel socially integrated (Executive Summary).

The report concluded that a higher proportion self-identified as being Aboriginal and fewer reported they were from another visible minority group, and fewer came directly from high school and the workplace. Students with disabilities were also more likely to report having difficulties with program workload, not knowing how to improve grades course content, were concerned about financing their education and the amount of debt they will accumulate; and indicated they would benefit from and likely use college/institute support services (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 2, 2008, Executive Summary).

**The Community College Survey on Student Engagement**

The Community College Survey on Student Engagement (CCSSE) (HEQCO, 2007) is also used in American institutions of higher learning to assess the diverse populations of their community colleges. It was used to survey students about behaviours that are correlated to learning and served to assess institutional practices. The survey is used as a benchmarking instrument, diagnostic tool, and monitoring device. In fact, one of the participating colleges in this study placed first among the 58 North American colleges with enrolments of 15,000 or more participating in CCSSE.
National Survey of Student Engagement

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) (HEQCO, 2007) is a recent attempt to measure institutional quality. The NSSE asks students about their learning experiences at PSE institutions, covering topics such as average frequency and duration of homework, frequency of contact with faculty or other advisors, and number of books read for courses and for pleasure (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007, p. 56).

Chris Conway, director of institutional research and planning at Queens University, in a report on the NSSE, indicates that there is a growing level of interest by universities in the instrument because it provides a measure of student engagement against five “benchmarks”: level of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student–faculty interaction, enriching educational experiences, and supportive campus environment. While a measure of engagement does not indicate outcomes, it has been proven helpful in identifying needed interventions and assessing their effect. Universities use NSSE data to identify, study, and measure concerns and in their business plans. About half of the province’s universities have used the NSSE (HEQCO, 2007, p. 3).

Ontario College Student Engagement Survey

The analysis summarized by Dr. Peter Dietsche on the 2006–2007 findings of the Ontario College Student Engagement Survey (OCSES) links “student background and entry characteristics,” “student perceptions and experience,” and “outcomes” (HEQCO, 2007, p. 4).

While colleges have expressed some reservations about using the OCSES, it has provided valuable insights into college student engagement. Because of its value, the Ministry of Training,
Colleges and Universities has agreed to review and refine the survey and the processes under which it is administered in order to address the concerns.

Dr. Peter Dietsche highlights the findings of the 2006–2007 OCSES survey and student grades data as follows:

1. 41% of college leavers are academically successful.

2. The profile of Successful Leavers appears to be the same as Successful Persisters except that leavers have less clear career goals, are less likely to feel that they are making progress in their program, and are more likely to prefer a job over college.

3. The profile of Unsuccessful Leavers appears to be the same as Unsuccessful Persisters except the leavers report being more concerned about finances.

4. The ability “to make friends easily” correlates with persistence.

5. Persisters are more likely to say most or all of their faculty were “very good teachers.”

6. The most powerful attributes of good teaching that contribute to persistence relate to teacher–student relationships.

7. Very good teaching has the following impacts on students:
   a. believe they are achieving their goals;
   b. have a positive view of their courses;
   c. find their program interesting;
   d. develop good relationships with faculty;
   e. interact more with faculty outside of class;
   f. say faculty have a greater influence on their interest in ideas;
   g. interact more with faculty if they are perceived to value student’s success;
   h. interact more with peers in study groups (HEQCO, 2007, p. 5).

The academic leaders note that colleges use their findings of the OCSES in a variety of ways. These include:
1. **Strategic Planning at All Levels:**

Information is used by colleges to evaluate program resources in order to improve student perception of and satisfaction with the quality of particular programs, and to guide faculty hiring, assignment, and professional development priorities.

2. **Informational and Training Purposes:**

Research findings are used in the orientation and development of staff, faculty, and administrators while employer and graduate satisfaction data are used to refine programming, delivery methods, and industry placements. Some colleges have used the Freshman Integration Tracking System (FITS) and OCSES to provide support for at-risk students.

3. **To Guide Marketing Efforts:**

Learning-related research data, including successful student profiles, tracking of at-risk students, and remedial success rates, were used to guide college recruitment efforts, student orientation and planning for the “freshman experience.”

4. **Developing and Implementing Learning Initiatives and Improving Related Practices:**

Learning initiatives are engaged to generate a positive climate for change and to inform, guide, and drive improvement initiatives.

5. **System Self-Regulatory Program Quality Assurance:**

Collectively, the colleges have agreed to a program quality assurance process audit (PQAPA) that has required them to establish quality assurance processes that meet learning-related criteria (HEQCO, 2007, pp. 6-7).
**Key Performance Indicator (KPI)**

Most institutions have well-established student feedback processes that evaluate faculty and courses. Since the 1990s, the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) reports have given colleges the tools to compare their own students’ perceptions, graduates’ satisfaction and success, and employers’ satisfaction with the provincial aggregate data. This has helped colleges further study correlates with key success indicators (HEQCO, 2007, p. 4).

The KPIs provide faculty with student perceptions about their individual teaching methods, curriculum delivery, and the learning environment provided, which can be compared to overall school, college, and province-wide standings. The academic managers typically receive individual professor as well as aggregate reports, which offer additional information about the link between the learning environment and learning (HEQCO, 2007, p. 4).

The following is a summary of the KPI data (2008/2009 academic year) obtained from the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities website for the three GTA community colleges studied:

- Employment rate: 85 to 89% - 1/3 below the average of 88.9%
- Graduate Satisfaction: 81 to 83% - 2/3 below the average of 82.7%
- Employer Satisfaction: 91-93% - 2/3 slightly below the average of 93.3%
- Student Satisfaction: 71 to 78% - 2/3 below the average of 78.4%
- Graduate Rate: 56 to 73% - 2/3 below the average of 64.6%

**Freshman Integration and Tracking Systems (FITS)**

The FITS survey is provided to students early in their first semester at college to give students the opportunity to self-identify as first generation students, and to self-identify academic, personal, and financial needs that may place them in the “at-risk” group. FITS is
administered online and is designed to provide timely and concise information to students, faculty, administrators, and other student services personnel. Students receive a personal report that identifies resources and services that might benefit them and provides the program faculty with the information necessary to initiate mentoring or assist with referral.

FITS also serves to assist students in choosing a career path and college services based on real information, while at the same time, the information collected can help college staff identify self-esteem, self-concept, or financial concerns early in the student’s college experience.

**Student Development Theory**

*Introduction*

Evans et al. (1998; 2010), in their text, *Student Development in College: Theory, Research, and Practice*, provide a comprehensive analysis of the most relevant discussion on student development theory in Canada. As the authors point out, to date, the student affairs profession has lacked a single, comprehensive overview of student development theory to serve as a guide for understanding what happens to students in college and for determining interventions to enhance student learning and development (p. xi). The text of Evans et al. fills this gap, and this study uses their work as a foundation for its examination of student development theory.

There are an ever increasing number of student development theories emerging. As Evans et al. (2010) state, “The sheer volume of theoretical literature currently being produced is daunting even for scholars in the field” (p. 20). This study has focused on foundational theories of psychosocial theories of student development (Chickering and Chickering & Reisser) and briefly discusses theories of ethnic identity.
These theories will be discussed in relation to the experience of the ethnically diverse student in GTA community colleges. However, before delving into the specific theoretical frameworks, it is important to first review the foundations of student development theory, and the importance that it plays in the area of student services.

The roots of student development theory are found in the 1967 work of psychologist Nesbitt Sanford (Evans et al., 2010, p.6). He saw development as a positive growth process in which the individual becomes increasingly able to integrate and act on many different experiences and influences. He distinguished development from change, which refers to an altered condition that may be positive or negative, progressive or regressive, and from growth, which refers to expansion, which may be either beneficial or detrimental to overall functioning (Evans et al., 2010, p.6).

Theorist Kurt Lewin introduced a formula that forms the cornerstone of development theory: \( B = f(PxE) \). Spelled out, the formula states that behaviour (B) is a function (f) of the interaction (x) of person (P) and environment (E) (Evans et al., 2010, p. 29). The use of this formula assists the student services professional to understand why people act the way they do, based on information such as their characteristics, background, and developmental level, as well as the environment in which the person is living, studying, or working. As Evans et al., (2010) point out, student development theory helps describe the “person” in Lewin’s formula (Evans, 2010, p. 30).

Miller and Prince (1976) suggest that student development comes about as the result of, “the application of human development concepts in postsecondary settings so that everyone involved can master increasingly complex developmental tasks, achieve self direction, and
become independent.” They introduce four questions that student development theory should answer, as follows:

1. What interpersonal and intrapersonal changes occur while the student is in college?
2. What factors lead to this development?
3. What aspects of the college environment encourage or retard growth?
4. What developmental outcomes should we strive to achieve in college? (Evans et al., 2010, p.3)

By answering these questions, the student services professional can assess student need and be proactive in proposing changes to programs and policies and enhancing the college environment. It is on the basis of this information that this study now examines the three kinds of student development theory: psychosocial, cognitive-structural, and typological.

**Psychosocial Theory**

The majority of the focus in this study on the ethnically diverse student is on the psychosocial theory of student development. Relying on the theories of Chickering (1969), Chickering and Reisser (1993), Helms (1995), Rowe, Bennet & Atkinson (1994) and Schlossberg (1989) (racial and ethnic development theory), the student experience is examined from the point of view of human identity development continuing over a lifespan.

**Arthur Chickering (1969) and Chickering and Reisser (1993).**

One of the most widely cited student development theorists is Arthur Chickering (1969). Building on the work of the developmental psychologist Erik Erikson (1959) (Evans et al, 2010, p. 42), Chickering describes seven vectors of development that contribute to the creation of identity. In a revision of Chickering’s original theory, Chickering and Reisser (1993) point out
that “age-specific cultural norms and culturally defined roles structure the environmental
demands placed on a developing individual, while culture and gender-related influences can vary
the sequence in which adults perform developmental tasks” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 42).

Chickering’s 1969 theory of psychosocial development is the first major theory to
explore student development in college. He revised his work in 1993 in partnership with Reisser
to include an examination of racial identity and the interaction of personal and racial identity
formation.

Chickering’s original work identifies seven vectors of development that contribute to the
formation of identity. He calls these factors vectors because he sees them as, “major highways
for journeying toward individuation” (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 35). A student achieves
identity once these vectors reach resolution. “Just like a highway, they can interact with one
another, build upon each other and grow with one another.” Of particular note, Chickering’s
work takes into account emotional, interpersonal, ethical, and intellectual aspects of development
(Evans et al., 1998, p. 37).

Developing competence, the first of the seven vectors, encompasses intellectual
competence (knowledge and skills), physical competence (health and wellness) and interpersonal
competence (communication, leadership, team work).

Managing emotions, the second vector, includes managing, for example, feelings of
aggression, sexual desire, anxiety, depression, anger, shame, guilt, caring, optimism, and
inspiration.

The third vector, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, involves “Freedom
from continual and pressing needs for reassurance, affection, or approval from others”
(Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 117). In this stage of development, one develops instrumental
independence, which includes self direction, problem-solving ability, and mobility, and one comes to recognize and accept the importance of interdependence, an awareness of interconnectedness with others.

Vector four, developing mature interpersonal relationships, is critical in the development of intercultural and interpersonal tolerance and appreciation of differences as well as the capacity for healthy and lasting intimate relationships with partners and close friends.

Establishing identity is vector five. At this stage, one acknowledges differences in identity development based on gender, ethnic background, and sexual orientation, becomes comfortable with one’s body and appearance, and becomes comfortable with gender and sexual orientation. In addition, one develops a sense of one’s social and cultural heritage, a clear self-concept and comfort with one’s role and lifestyle, and a secure sense of self in light of feedback from significant others, self-acceptance and self-esteem, and personal stability and integration.

In developing purpose, vector six, one engages in developing clear vocational goals, making meaningful commitments, and establishing strong interpersonal commitments. And the final vector, developing integrity, allows one to develop humanizing values, personalizing values and allows one to develop congruence.

With these seven vectors in mind, Chickering (1969) offers a set of environmental influences that he proposes be used by the institution to decrease students’ perception that student services are designed to manipulate them and leave the institution in a better position to facilitate development along the seven vectors listed above. These factors are relied upon in the discussion of the research findings in Chapter Five. The seven factors are:

1. Institutional objectives
2. Institutional size
3. Student–faculty relationships
4. Curriculum
5. Teaching
6. Friendships and student communities
7. Student development programs and services

As Evans et al. (1998; 2010) point out, psychosocial theories are helpful in understanding the issues individuals face at various points in their lives. To this end, there has been discussion about whether or not Chickering’s theory of development is applicable to visible minority students: those who are not from white, middle-class backgrounds.

Evans et al. (1998) give an example of the experience of an African American student and the role of the student services professional.

Student affairs staff working with an African American student who has never experienced a predominantly white educational setting might anticipate that his transition could be difficult. Knowing that family and church are important components of the African American world view would help the student affairs professional understand the central role these institutions play in the student’s support system as he confronts a strange and often hostile environment (p. 34).

This demonstrates that culture and background play a large role in influencing one’s psychosocial development and those engaged in student services for a student of an ethnically diverse background must be aware of such influences.

What appears to be missing from Chickering’s work is consideration of social interaction with one’s peer group. In the case of the African American student, this would include religion, spiritual development, and social responsibility (Evans et al., 1998, p. 47). A sense of belonging or social inclusion is key to racial identity. It is vital that one relate to others and share perceptions. As Helms (1995) points out, racial identity theory comes from “the tradition of
treating race as socio-political and, to lesser extent, a cultural construction” (Evans et al., 1998, p. 72).

There are a number of theories that examine racial awareness. While not the focus of this study, it is worth noting these theories given their insight into the development of students of an ethnic background. One area of ethnicity that is discussed that has some relevance to the researcher in this study is that of whiteness: often overlooked as a racial/ethnic group. It is important, as Helm (1995) tells us, to be aware of one’s whiteness when working with students of a different ethnic background. In commenting on Helm’s Racial Identity Theory, Rowe, Bennet and Atkinson (1994) see understanding whiteness and the implications on other racial groups as either unachieved (one dismisses race, depends on others to form an opinion, or one is confused about it), or achieved (has racial superiority, objects to racism but opposes non-discriminatory practices, responds to inequalities and fosters social change) (p. 129-146). As Rowe et al. (1994) state, “One’s own awareness of being white and what that implies in relation to those who do not share white group membership” (p. 133).

As is earlier discussed in this chapter, “race” and “ethnicity,” while often used interchangeably, have different meanings in different contexts. Evans et al. (1998) define ethnic identity as identification with,

a segment of a larger society whose members are thought, by themselves or others, to have a common origin and to share segments of a common culture and who, in addition, participate in shared activities in which the common origin and culture are significant ingredients (Evans et al., 1998, p. 72).

When one shares one’s ethnicity with someone, one is sharing culture, religion, heritage, and language. One feels a strong sense of kinship and loyalty to others who share these
characteristics. It is vital that these connections be made between students and that opportunities exist within the educational environment to foster these connections.

It is unfortunate that not all faculty, staff, and administration at educational institutions are fully culturally aware and able to appreciate the diverse backgrounds of their students. As Evans et al. (1998) points out, since institutions of higher education traditionally maintain the status quo, theories and models that explain how whites move from a racist to a non-racist perspective are important in creating equality and changing embedded power imbalances (p. 87). With the increase of students in the community college system who declare themselves to be visible minorities, we see a need to develop racial and ethnic identity theories even further. As one author emphasizes,

more must be known about the identity and acculturation processes of diverse students from a dynamic perspective—the affective and cognitive manifestations and their implications for an individual’s psychological well-being and personality and/or character development from both a short- and long-term perspective (Evans et al., 1998, p. 87).

For their 1998 paper titled, “Voices for Change: Racism, Ethnocentrism, and Cultural Insensitivity at the University of Victoria,” Martin and Warburton sought to “explore the working, learning and living environment for racial, ethnic, and cultural minorities at the University of Victoria,” and “to propose measures and strategies to promote an environment for work and study that is supportive, inclusive, safe, and healthy, and which fosters mutual respect and civility at the University of Victoria” (p. vii).

Support is needed to help them to be successful in their PSE experience. Three factors were viewed by students as potentially affecting their success at university including a eurocentric curriculum and difficulty finding courses of study on minority cultures; the inability
deal with content about minority groups; and racism, differential treatment, and unfair evaluation of work and progress (Martin & Warburton, 1998, p. ix).

**Eurocentric curriculum.**

Canadian history is still told from the viewpoint of “two founding fathers,” French and English, who “discovered” and “developed” the country. Students are not exposed to a curriculum that addresses the complexities of Canadian history. It remains somewhat of a Eurocentric curriculum. This type of curriculum perpetuates racism and denies racialized students a creative educational experience (Ng, 2004, p. 12).

To facilitate change, educators must open up their classrooms to diverse resources and traditions, they must be willing to learn about the oral histories of non-majority communities, and develop meaningful connections between the curriculum and the experiences of student that liberates and empowers. To this very point is a commentary by a young black female, an education student:

Recently, while riding a city bus to campus, I overheard a conversation between two young women. One of them was upset with her boyfriend. She exclaimed loudly, “He be acting so crazy.” A year ago her speech would have made me cringe. I would have dismissed her as illiterate and her speech pattern as bad English. I would have been thankful that I did not sound like that when I opened my mouth. It’s amazing how much my perspective has changed over the past year. I didn’t realize that linguists have considered her speech pattern … to be a legitimate language system … The roots of my bias were planted very early in my childhood. My mother was a high school English teacher. For the first twelve years of my life, we lived in Cairo, Illinois. Cairo was a very small and economically depressed area. Blacks comprised over 60% of the population and most of them relied on some form of public assistance in order to survive. Alcohol and drug-abuse were becoming big problems. My mother was sickened by what was happening in her hometown but she also wanted to stay and try to make a difference in the lives of the children who lived there. She also wanted to give her three children a chance at a good life. Thus, my siblings and I were required to speak “good English” at all times. If we slipped and used “bad English” my mother would correct us immediately—she did not care where we were or who was present. Although my mother achieved her goal of helping her
children acquire “good English” skills, there were some negative consequences. Because we spoke so differently from most of our peers, my siblings and I were accused of “actin” white or “soundin” white. We were frequently beat up by other children—(Yvette Michele Harvey (1998, December) in Pai, Adler and Shadow, 1990, p. 85).

As Pai et al. (1990) tell us, even today, most administrators and teachers regard Standard English as the only “correct” form of English. Consequently, they treat the linguistic patterns of African American (Canadian) children as “broken English,” “sloppy speech,” “slang,” or “some bizarre lingo spoken by baggy-pants-wearing Black kids” (Smitherman, 1998, p. 30). Children using African American (Canadian) Vernacular English are labelled as verbally deficient, and their use of non-Standard English is viewed as a serious barrier to their cognitive development and classroom success. Statements such as “He be lookin good” and “Ask yo momma” follow a clear and consistent set of rules. As Pai et al. (1990) explain, according to these rules, the words “is” and “are” can be deleted in many contexts, the possessive is optional, and the third-person singular or present-tense verb has no distributive s ending. As a result, African American Vernacular English can be viewed as a legitimate linguistic form both structurally and functionally (Delpit, 1995, p. 67).

Author Hazell (Ng, 2004, p. 25) did a survey in 1992 on “Teaching and Learning” in continuing education. She asked students to rate their course content, materials, and instructors using four ratings (excellent, good, fair, and not satisfactory). The results of the study demonstrate that 81% of the students were satisfied with their course content and 90% were satisfied with their instructor. When broken down by cultural diversity, 59% of those students who were educated in Ontario rated their instructor as excellent while 48% of those educated outside of Canada felt the same. Also, 44% of those students who indicated English is a problem
for them rated their instructor as excellent as opposed to 57% of those for whom English is not a problem (Ng, 1994. P. 25).

Some changes are being made in the American university context. One study at the University of Michigan found that curriculum has the most significant positive impact on increased support for educational equity (Lopez, 1993). And yet another study found that students whose professors included racial/ethnic materials in their courses reported higher levels of satisfaction with their college experience (Villalpando, 1994).

As Sidanius, Levin, van Laar, and Sears (2008) points out, we might expect that, for minority students, ethnic content in class materials and having professors of their own group might be beneficial to maintaining interest, upholding motivation, and providing a role model (Smith, 1989 in Sidanius).

The continued reliance on the majority language in Canadian schools (English and French where it is French speaking school or English speaking but French immersion) has served to establish it as a benchmark for success, privilege, access, and normalcy in both education and society (Dei, James, Karumanchery, James-Wilson, Zine, 2000). As a result, minority students find themselves gauging the appropriateness of their own languages against the standard language of the school (in particular English or French), and society in general. It is true that in Canadian schools English (or French where it is the first language spoken) is employed as the norm against which all other linguistic forms are compared. Traditionally, attention to the needs of linguistic minorities has been expressed through the promotion of “special education” curricula (e.g., ESL classes), or they have been overlooked altogether (Ng, 2004, p. 30).
Content about minority groups.

A good number of teachers and administrative decision-makers simply lack the required knowledge of cultures other than the “norm” of European and American white culture. In order for a teacher to successfully educate students he or she must first have an understanding of the students’ historic and contemporary relationships to institutional forms of discrimination (Ng, 2004, p. 13). The effects of racism on their students are too far-reaching to be ignored. This must form part of the teacher’s socio-political consciousness (Robinson, 2003, p. 20). Colleges can play a role by instituting formal training for faculty on an inclusive curriculum.

In 1994, Paul Grayson (1999) conducted a series of four studies at York University in Toronto, examining the correlation between race and student satisfaction. He found that satisfaction with overall academic programs varies by race, with students of European origin indicating the most satisfaction, and those of Chinese origin expressing the least satisfaction. In terms of course content and academic programs, European students had the highest satisfaction rate, while the Chinese students had the lowest. He found that 74% of Black students agree that a variety of perspectives on diversity were offered in their courses. By comparison, only 49% of students of Chinese origin agree. The comparable figures for individuals of East Indian, European, and South-East Asian origin are 65%, 66%, and 71% respectively. More than half of the Black, East Indian, European, and South-East Asian students believe that they are being exposed to a variety of perspectives in classes. Only students of Chinese descent were less satisfied than students of European ancestry (Grayson, 1999).

One theme that comes to light in Grayson’s study is the desire for a community college environment that is more student-centered and inclusive. While some conflict does occur in diverse communities, research shows that students tend to perceive relatively lower racial or
ethnic tension on campuses that can be characterized as “student-centered,” where faculty take an interest in the students’ personal and academic development. More importantly, research indicates that emphasizing diversity on community college campuses tends to have consistently positive effects on students’ undergraduate experiences and on their educational outcomes. These findings indicate that valuing students as learners creates a more harmonious campus community, and that an emphasis on diversity in the curriculum and in institutional priorities often leads to improvements in the learning environment for students (Hurtado, n.d.).

These findings emphasize the important role that a positive inclusive campus climate can play in protecting minority students’ psychological well-being and promoting their academic achievement. Existing research shows that attempts to increase the number of minority students on college campuses (structural diversity) can have positive effects in terms of educational outcomes and changes in socio-political attitudes and values for many students (Sidanius, 2008, p. 290).

While the student bodies of the three GTA community colleges participating in this study are majority non-white, it is worth noting that another factor that has emerged in the literature is concern over the low sense of belonging that many minority students feel in predominantly white institutions (Sidanius, 2008, p. 282).

As Grayson’s study shows, Black and Hispanic students, who tend to come from disadvantaged families, enter university and college less prepared academically, and have less cultural capital than their white peers. As a result, they experience stress and become alienated from the core values and practices of the institution (Grayson, 1999, p. 37).

Changing demographic patterns, combined with the concerns of minority students and their parents about cultural inclusiveness in college structures and curricula, have convinced
many colleges and universities to develop forms of education that are pluralistic in orientation and positively embrace multiethnic and multicultural perspectives (Modgil, Verma, Mallick, & Modgil, 1986). This education is designed not only to broaden students’ educational base, but also to foster self-esteem and positive intergroup relations by emphasizing multicultural ideals and respect for people from different ethnic traditions (McHugh, Nethers, & Gottfredson, 1993). As Sidanius (2008) states, “the fundamental assumption of multicultural education is that increased intergroup contact, combined with increasing knowledge about other groups’ histories and cultures, leads to more cooperative intergroup relations” (p. 5).

There has been controversy over the value of ethnically oriented student organizations since the mid- to late 1960s. On the one hand, a number of critics have argued that such organizations are generally destructive to the creation of a common identity and maintain and even aggravate both ethnic tensions and the alienation of minority groups on campus. On the other hand, others have argued that ethnically oriented student organizations provide minority students with a safe harbour and social support system from which to reach out to the larger campus community and form friendships with students from other ethnic communities (Sidanius, 2008, p. 29). As Sidanius (2008) remarks:

The little work that has been done suggests that students join minority racial ethnic organizations for the purpose of identity enhancement and that this increased comfort with their identity leads to greater interest in cross cultural contacts, a richer sense of belonging to the university community, and greater integration into broader campus life. Participation in ethnic organizations enable minority students to experience less threat to their social identities and to feel a greater sense of inclusion in campus life, and thus contributes to an improved inter group atmosphere on campus (p. 229). Sidanius’s study shows that,

in addition to the academic, social, and economic barriers faced by students, those from minority groups face an extra barrier of minority status stressors, which
include achievement stresses, social stresses, winning-group stresses, and interracial stresses.” This translates to “negative expectations from staff, exclusion on campus, prejudice, and discrimination resulting in negative impacts on well-being and academic outcomes (Sidanius, 2008, p. 251).

“High self-esteem is seen to be a positive predictor of academic performance. Individuals who have high self-regard and strong feelings of self-worth are likely to be more motivated to engage in the effort required to obtain better outcomes” (Sidanius, 2008, p. 260).

Feelings of belonging play an important role in the academic achievement of minority students. Experiences on campus may indirectly affect the performance of students to the degree that they influence students’ involvement and sense of belonging on campus (Sidanius, 2008, p. 273).

Tinto (1975) conducted extensive studies on the effects of individual characteristics such as past educational experience, individual ability, and family background on academic success in PSE. He concludes that the socio-economic background of parents tends to have an inverse effect on dropping out (p. 100). Thus, coming from a low socio-economic background is associated with a high dropout rate while a high socio-economic family background is a hallmark of low dropout rates among students (Peters, 2004, p. 53).

In one of Grayson’s four studies (1999) he found that first year experiences vary by race; however, in another study, Grayson (1999) found that ethno-racial origin has no impact on voluntary withdrawal from the university after the first year (Grayson, 1999, p. 39).

**Racism, differential treatment, and unfair evaluation.**

Teachers and educators have an important role to play in the development of a critical classroom pedagogy that challenges the current Eurocentric curriculum (Peters, 2004, p. 88). Examining the experiences of African American students at predominantly white colleges,
(Sidanius, 2008, p. 278) found that the ability to understand and deal with racism, the preference of long-term over short-term goals, and participation in community service were three of seven important noncognitive variables relevant in explaining Black students’ academic success. Such engagement with one’s ethnic group as a response to experience with prejudice and discrimination may buffer social identity and reduce the effects of negative climate variables. It is also important to appreciate the role of the following ethnic outlook variables in explaining academic performance relative to position: campus climate variables, ethnic activism, expectations about future socio-economic status, attributions for the future economic life outcomes of oneself and one’s ethnic group, feelings of intergroup competence, and perceptions of the permeability and stability of the ethnic status hierarchy (Sidanius, 2008, p. 278).

Dei and Calliste (2000) argue that educators must actively oppose racism and that their work must demonstrate an understanding that racism can be combated and that it must be dealt with at both the micro (everyday life) and macro (societal) levels. They stress that, “individuals develop their identities through these categories” (p.12). Again, Dei and Calliste stress that anti-racist education is a useful analytical framework for understanding how Canadian society works and how it contributes to resistance to racial oppression (p.12) and argues that such a framework is crucial because: “This anti-racism theoretical perspective interrogates the institutional structure of delivering education, and how local communities (e.g., parents, family, and community groups) interact with these structures” (Dei and Calliste (2000), p. 12). They further note that anti-racist work begins when the individual becomes conscious of his or her position of power, privilege, and advantage.

Anti-racist education is, “an action oriented strategy for institutional, systemic change to address the issues of racism and the interlocking systems of social oppression” (Dei, 1994, p.
23). The problem lies in the way that racial difference is used to perpetuate and justify unequal treatment of minorities. What anti-racist education seeks to do is to investigate the many ways in which racism violates the dignity of minorities and promotes unequal power relations in society (Troyna, 1987). The anti-racist perspective is concerned about issues of diversity in the school system, that is, “the presence of a diversified student body, as well as teaching staff that reflects the pluralistic nature of Canadian society” (Dei, 1994, p. 231).

The framework further emphasizes the need for storytelling to engage in the narratives of those affected by the problem. In this regard, the concept of choice is important. Dei (1993) argues that: “We need a theory based on students’ articulation of their lived experiences and a good conceptual analysis about how the diverse experiences of students inside and outside the school system contribute to dropping out” (p.3).

Anti-racist theory and practice identifies the categories of race and social difference as issues of power and equity instead of a matter of cultural and ethnic variety. An anti-racist approach to social relations intends to bring racial difference to the centre of education in Euro-American societies (Dei and Calliste, 2000, p. 30).

Sidanius (2008) highlights social dominance theory and argues that when there are power and status differences between ethnic and racial groups in societies, such as those found in the United States, members of dominant ethnic groups (for example, white Americans) feel a greater sense of ownership of, and attachment to, the nation-state than do members of subordinate groups (such as Latinos and African Americans) (p. 7). Further, he states that social dominance theory starts with the observation that human social systems tend to be organized as group-based social hierarchies, with one social group at the top of the social system and one or a number of social groups in the middle and at the bottom of the social system (p. 20).
Social dominance theory further assumes that human societies are predisposed to structure themselves as group-based social hierarchies and that the major forms of group oppression, prejudice, and discrimination (for example, racism, sexism, nationalism, and religious intolerance) are simply expressions of this group-based social inequality. The theory posits the existence of a general orientation called social dominance orientation (SDO), which is defined as a, “general desire for unequal relations among social groups, regardless of whether this means in-group domination or in-group subordination” (Pratto, Sidanius, & Levin, 2006, p. 282).

Educational institutions houses social groups of students. As Nancoo & Ramcharan (1995) points out, students are the largest group of stakeholders in the educational enterprise, yet they have the least power. Although some are born here, students of non-European descent tend to suffer from the consequences of negative stereotyping and racism. Self-esteem and pride in one’s culture are seriously jeopardized; learning suffers, performance levels drop, and those affected either drop out of school or are labelled a “behaviour problem” (p. 266).

In addition to the three issues discussed, the participants in Martin and Warburton’s 1998 study (p. xiv) made recommendations for addressing the following:

1. provide a safe place for minorities;
2. develop a solution created by all stakeholders and interested parties;
3. develop awareness and sensitivity through the education of students, faculty, and staff;
4. gain cultural support;
5. develop a greater variety of courses;
6. recruit for greater diversity among students, faculty and staff;
7. institute strong and effective policies; and

8. get a commitment from senior administration to implement (p. xiv).

Further, Martin and Warburton (1998, p.xiiv & xv) recommend the following:

1. senior administration adopt a leadership role with respect to development of concrete strategies for change;

2. there be greater representation of ethnic and racialized minorities in all segments of the university community, and that issues related to the retention, promotion, and tenure of those minorities be developed; and

3. a forum be constituted to make ongoing recommendations about

4. mechanisms to provide greater access for ethnic and racialized minorities to persons with whom they can identify and communicate freely in order to resolve problems of racism and discrimination;

5. ways of achieving a diverse curriculum that taps into the resources of their cultures, encouraging revision of course materials, and recognizing the contributions in the classroom of students from diverse cultural backgrounds (p. xiiv);

6. ways to support, strengthen, and reinforce existing initiatives and activities;

7. implications of steps taken at other Canadian universities; and

8. a process for periodic review of progress; cultural sensitivity training for students and employees; a course on cross-cultural communication and understanding be made available to students, faculty and staff and an international program be instituted and funded on a continuing basis. (p. xv)

Winnie Ng’s 2004 research is also insightful. In her paper titled, “Importance of Race and Class in Satisfaction with School: A Comparative Study of Hong Kong Immigrant and white Canadian Students,” she examines how race and social class affect students’ satisfaction with school, specifically students from Hong Kong (p. ii).
Ng (2004) concludes that, “racial minority people are facing unfair educational treatment that leads to a greater probability of a high dropout rate. They are also underrepresented in higher education, and in turn, they are stereotyped and labelled as students with low academic ability” (p. 9).

The Ontario Human Rights Commission (1996) suggested that Canadian schools at risk of creating a “poisoned environment” for some individuals that would lead to unequal treatment of them. A “poisoned environment” can arise when, for example, a person or group of people is treated differently for reasons related to the language they speak. Language is often a pretext for indirectly discriminating against someone because of her or his ancestry, place of origin, or ethnicity (Ng, 2004, p. 29).

Schlossberg’s theory of transition ties in with the development of students from various racial and ethnic groups. While Chickering addresses what services need to be available, Schlossberg focuses on getting the student to engage the available services. In her research on student development theory, Schlossberg highlights the importance of the feelings of being marginalized and the need to “matter.” Her view is that students may feel marginalized in a situation in which they feel that they don’t fit in or feel self-conscious. This can occur when a minority student enters college for the first time (Evans et al., 1998, p. 27). As a result, students feel like they just don’t matter to anyone and so starts the downward cycle. Schlossberg (1989) presents five aspects of mattering (the first four being those of Evans et al. (1998, p. 25), and the fifth being her own) as follows:

1. Attention (being noticed)
2. Importance (being cared about)
3. Ego extension (being proud of)
4. Dependence (being needed)
5. Appreciation (efforts recognized)

Based on Schlossberg’s theory, if students truly feel like they matter, they will engage in what the institution has to offer.

**Cognitive-Structural Theory**

While not the focus of this study, the cognitive-structural theory is worth noting. Cognitive-structural theory, which originates in the work of Piaget (1952), stresses the importance of heredity and environment in intellectual development and reveals the various ways an individual develops cognitively: “sets of assumptions people use to adapt to and organize their environments” (Evans et al., 1998, p. 173).

It is assumed under this theory that one learns to think and reason and make sense of the world by means of assimilation and accommodation. We take in information and either add it to our current knowledge, or modify it in some way to make it our own (Evans et al., 1998, p. 124). For example, when one experiences conflict (negative experiences), one will first try to assimilate it into one’s psyche, but when there is nothing in the memory bank to match it up with, the information will be accommodated or rejected. Cognitive-structural theories can help student services professionals understand how students view situations or work through conflict, and then be in a better position to provide the necessary tools (Evans, 1998, p. 125).

**Typology Theory**

The final theory, “examines individual differences in how people view and relate to the world” (Evans et al., 1998, p. 179). Originating from the work of Carl Jung (1923, 1971), typology theory examines the mental processing of information (Evans et al., 1998, p. 12). Individual differences are highlighted as positive to the overall community and fostered and this
in turn would be beneficial to the student services professional in preparing classes, workshops, training sessions, and other structured educational experiences (Evans et al., 2010, p. 43).

**Summary of Literature Review**

The literature review in this chapter offers insight into the body of knowledge concerning the history of immigration in Canada, the history of student services in community colleges of applied arts and technology (CAATs), the tools community colleges use to assess quality, student engagement, and student experience, and student development theory.

More specifically, expanding on the analysis of how students experience the environment around them are the theories of student development. Each of these models offers some unique insights into the manner in which certain factors may affect the role of the community college in influencing the experience of the ethnically diverse student in terms of overall college experience and the utilization of student services. Specifically, the psychosocial theories of Chickering (1969) and Chickering and Reisser (1993) on racial identity are the theories that are most relevant to this study. It is through this literature review, and in particular the study of Martin & Warburton, that we see themes come to light as a result of the research findings outlined in Chapter Four.

In Chapter Five, the bodies of knowledge examined in the literature review will once again resurface and be examined in light of these research findings. All of which is guided by the overarching research question and subsidiary questions.
CHAPTER THREE:
METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Chapter Overview

This chapter describes the methodology and procedures that were used in this study. The discussion focuses on the following areas: the research methodology, the research instrument, selection of the participating GTA community colleges, selection of student participants, selection of the expert panel members, data collection and recording, limitations, credibility, ethical considerations, and a restatement of the problem.

In this study, an expert panel was used to review the interview questions and provide feedback on their wording, sequence, and phrasing to ensure that the questions were respectful and likely to be understood by the participants. The expert panel also provided feedback on the findings of the research and the recommendations for further research, which are discussed in Chapters Four and Five respectively.

Description of Research Methodology

This study used a qualitative survey research methodology that is both descriptive and influenced by both a naturalistic enquiry (Robson, 1993, p. 61) and a motivational research approach.

It is also important to point out that the qualitative findings, in this researcher’s view, are not transferable because of the purposeful sampling techniques utilized, the fact that only 3 of the 24 Ontario colleges were involved, and the fact that not all student groups identified as ethnically diverse are represented in this study (none of the respondents identified as Aboriginal or as having a disability). However, in looking at the principle of transferability, the findings have
provided useful insights that have helped identify future issues and key factors that are important to enhancing the GTA community colleges’ ability to meet the needs of the ethnically diverse student. In addition, the findings are helpful for refining questions and methodology for further research in this area. If this study were to be repeated with a similar group of students, under the same conditions, it is possible that the same results may occur. However, that decision would be left up to the researcher to decide. As Marshall & Rossman (2006) state, “The burden of demonstrating that a set of findings applies to another context rests more with the researcher who would make that transfer than the original researcher” (p. 201-202). If this study were to be repeated at the same institutions, given recent positive changes to student services in addressing some of the concerns raised in this study, it is likely that different findings would result.

Dr. Kersley Peters’ (2004) research has been built upon, although the current study is of a different scope. While Dr. Peters’ research explores the reasons why Black students in Toronto drop out of college, this study examines the question of how effective community colleges in the GTA (in general) are at adapting to students with ethno-cultural differences by way of services they offer.

Following a detailed literature review examining the history of immigration in Canada, the history of student services in community colleges, tools community colleges have to assess quality, student engagement, and student experience, and student development theory, this study then looks at a comparative analysis of web-based material for each of the three participating GTA community colleges to determine what is currently being done, or at least purported to be in place, at each college in terms of services they provide to meet the general needs of a diverse student population (ethno-culturally diverse). This information was confirmed by student services representatives (directors) at each of the respective colleges. This collection of data
about student services serves to illuminate the context in which the qualitative research took place.

Marshall & Rossman, 2006, point out that an historical account is, “particularly useful in qualitative studies for establishing a baseline or background prior to participant observation or interviewing… Historical research traditions demand procedures to verify the accuracy of statements about the past, to establish relationships, and to determine the direction of cause-and-effect relationships” (p.119). Using an historical analysis in this study was done so by using secondary sources and serves to enhance the credibility of the study. It provides the background from which an understanding of settlement in Canada, CAATs in Ontario and the development of student services can be found.

As previously stated, three GTA community colleges participated in this study and up to 10 students from each college were interviewed. One of the colleges participating in this study was that of this researcher. However, it is the assessment of this researcher that this occasioned no more risk than that found in everyday interactions of a student being a student and having discussions with his/her peers.

The researcher also took steps to ensure her position at one of the colleges did not influence student participation. First, every step was taken to ensure there was no pre-existing relationship with any student who chose to participate in this study. Given that this researcher had not been formally in her role at the college for over a year and a half, having been on two consecutive maternity leaves since February 2007, the chance of a pre-existing relationship with any student was very small.

A qualitative survey research methodology was used to gather information about the experiences of the ethnically diverse student at college as a whole and in the utilization of the
services that their colleges provide through personal interviews using semi-structured interview questions. Student responses were descriptive; they provide “portraits” of their lived experiences. As such the study has characteristics of a naturalistic enquiry, including a natural setting, human instruments, use of tacit knowledge (intuitive, felt), qualitative methods, purposive sampling, and inductive data analysis (Robson, 1993, p. 61).

Qualitative methods are defined as unstructured and flexible approaches suitable for personal interviews (Selltiz et al., 1981, p. 151). These approaches permit the widest possible exploration thereby eliciting a larger volume of information and in greater depth. The questions asked of participants in qualitative research should be as open-ended as possible, in order to permit spontaneous and unfettered reactions from key informant’s or participants on the subject (Peters, 2004, p. 101). The researcher explores a few general topics to help uncover the participant’s views but otherwise respects how the participant frames and structures the responses (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 101). Selltiz and colleagues (1981), also note that most people will participate in a study if all they have to do is talk rather than write answers out. They contend, “People usually enjoy talking to others who are friendly and who are interested in what they think” (p. 150).

Borrowing again from Peters (2004), the approach adopted is therefore derived from what is commonly referred to as “motivational research,” which uses direct questioning of or interviews with the target population on the subject or issue being studied. Selltiz et al. (1981) contend that the interview approach, “relies heavily on verbal reports from subjects for information” (p. 146) about their experiences.
**Research Instrument**

This study utilized a survey instrument for research purposes. The term ‘survey’ is used in a variety of ways, but commonly refers to the collection of standardized information from a specific, or some sample from one, usually but not necessarily by means of questionnaire or interview (Robson, 1993, p. 49).

Among the three common types of survey methodologies (postal questionnaires, telephone interviews, and personal interviews) the personal interview utilizing flexible (open-ended) questions in a semi-structured format was chosen in order to maximize the opportunity to obtain the participants’ personal beliefs (see Appendix A). Personal contact and semi-structured (open-ended) questions provided the opportunity to further explore answers given to specified questions asked (i.e., to probe).

The semi-structured format has been proven useful, “when researchers are scouting a new area of research or when they want to find out what the basic issues are, how they conceptualize the topic … or what is their level of understanding” (Selltiz et al., 1981, p. 187). They are a commonly used middle ground between questionnaire and open ended questions (Robson, 1993, p. 227). According to Selltiz, Wrightsman, and Cooks (1981), the reason for using a semi-structured interview is that it reveals more personal information about the meaning of the experience to the lives of the participants, thus it is more likely to reveal information that is both complex and emotionally laden and to allow for probing the sentiments that may underlie an expressed opinion (p. 150).

Personal interviews are considered to be one of the most effective instruments for obtaining detailed, descriptive, and interpretive information from participants. As a research instrument, an interview is a conversation or interaction between the interviewer and respondent.
that is intended to elicit certain information. Using this method, the researcher can ask the respondent specific questions related to the research problem to further probe the meaning of the answers given (Peters, 2004, p. 118). This can be followed by a supplementary or follow-up question to clarify the issues, thereby producing higher quality data. However, interviews have some limitations such as potential for lack of cooperation by the participants, interviewees may be unwilling or they may be uncomfortable (Martin & Rossman, 2006, p. 102), or the inclusion of too many questions can result in cumbersome responses (Palys & Atchison, 2008, p. 172). It is up to the researcher to ensure that the participant is at ease and feels welcome within the environment.

These interviews were based on 17 questions, some of which were adapted from Dr. Peters’ (2004) research into why Black students drop out of college. Even though the focus of Peters’ research is different than that of this study, the questions about the general experience and engagement of the students within their colleges were helpful. Selltiz et al. (1981), as cited in Peters, 2004) also suggest that using questions from previous research has the “advantage of comparability to the previous work” (p. 160).

**Selection of the Institutions Studied**

The three colleges were chosen because they represent the GTA population demographic. As previously stated, three GTA community colleges participated in this study and up to 10 students from each college were interviewed. These colleges were chosen to participate based on their size, reputation, and diversity of student body. A review was made of all colleges in the GTA to determine which colleges would be appropriate for this study. While all of the GTA colleges provide consistent services, only three stood out as comparable and ideal for this study.
All three chosen colleges are members of Polytechnics Canada. Polytechnics Canada is a national alliance of nine leading research-intensive, publicly funded colleges and institutes of technology dedicated to helping colleges and industry create high-quality jobs for the future (Polytechnics Canada, 2010). As members of Polytechnics Canada, the three participating GTA community colleges provide degree programming and are committed to growing the field of applied research. As such, all three provide similar programming at a comparable credential level and attract a similar student base.

All three colleges have multiple campuses located across and north of the GTA. All three colleges offer educational opportunities in apprenticeship, certificate, diploma, bachelor's degree, and graduate certificate programs. Combined, these colleges offer in excess of 1,000 programs and meet the demands of over 20,000 full-time students, and over 55,000 part-time students, each.

Over the last 20 years, the GTA has experienced immigration to the point where these colleges have been recognized as some of the most culturally diverse post-secondary institutions in Canada. Combined, these colleges service approximately 5,000 international students from over 90 countries and service members of over 100 ethno-cultural groups that speak over 80 languages (almost half of whom speak a second language).

All three colleges are centrally located and all enjoy a significant enrolment base and represent the top three colleges in the GTA for international student enrolment. As discussed in chapter 5, in 2009, the number of international students attending community colleges in Ontario numbered 9,991. The three GTA community colleges participating in this study enrol 48% of this total international student population (OCAS, 2009). It is on this basis that they are
distinguished from the other GTA colleges, and the reason that they provided the greatest opportunity to reach the greatest number of ethnically diverse students.

In order to pursue this study, permission was first sought from the chosen three GTA community colleges. Each college required completion of a formal application for ethical review following a review by the University of Toronto. This application included submission of an application form outlining the purpose of the research, timelines for the research, an account of ethical considerations and the participant consent process, and copies of any questionnaires, posters, or materials to be provided to participants.

Once administrative consent was received and the ethical review application approved (see Appendix E), students were recruited to participate on a voluntary basis through advertisement of the opportunity at the colleges through online portals, word of mouth, and posters posted around campus.

**Selection of Participants**

When discussing the selection of participants, it is first important to decide not only the who, when, and why participants will be selected, but how many and how they are to be chosen. As Peters (2004) states, the question of sample size is crucial. Peters refers to Kvale’s (1996) answer to this question that the main disadvantage of a small sample is that it is not “possible to make statistical generalizations” (p. 101).

A purposive sample was used in this study. The sample was recruited using specific participant criteria. All participants had to self-identify as being from an ethnically diverse background, over the age of 18, and enrolled in one of the three GTA community colleges participating in the study; preferably in the final year of study. As a result, 25 students were
interviewed from the three participating GTA community colleges. In doing so, the target population invariably expresses the researcher’s interests and objectives (Palys & Atchison, 2008, p. 124).

Administrative consent was sought from the participating institutions, and each college’s student federation was contacted to assist with to request a call for volunteers. Students who were interested in participating contacted the researcher via phone or email and the researcher responded by providing the students with an information letter and consent form and some details about the background of the study and the process that would be followed, as well explaining the confidential nature of the study and the voluntary nature of the study (i.e., participants can withdraw at any time, don’t have to answer questions if they don’t feel

After clarification of the information provided, students signed the consent form and returned it to the researcher, following which an interview was scheduled. At that point, participants were told that the interview would take approximately one hour and they would be asked approximately 20 questions relating to the types of services the participant has made use of, the effectiveness of the services (whether the participant found it to be useful), and any thoughts on areas in which students need more services.

They were also told that the session would be tape-recorded and transcribed and that they would be asked to sign giving their specific approval of this point on the consent form and with the understanding that their participation is completely voluntary and they would be free to withdraw at any time. Participants were told that at no time would they be judged or evaluated and at no time would they be at risk of harm or value judgments placed on their responses.
Participants were informed that all responses and data recorded in relation to the participants would be retained in a secure location for five years (locked filing cabinet in the researcher’s residence) and kept confidential and their names would not be used in the study, in reports, publications, or presentations.

**Selection of Expert Panel Members**

An expert panel was consulted to assist with refining of interview questions and to provide feedback on the overall study findings. In the interest of accountability, members of the expert panel were recruited based on their experience with issues around the diversity that exists within our GTA community colleges.

The expert panel membership was determined based upon recommendations received from my thesis supervisor and colleagues engaged in the area of human rights and diversity. The panel consisted of three members, selected for their expertise and personal experience in the areas of human resources, education, equity, and diversity in higher education. One member (EP1) is a trailblazer in legal higher education, a superior court justice and former law school dean. Another member (EP2) is a director of a Human Rights office at a GTA community college and the third member (EP3), a manager of a Human Rights and Diversity office at a GTA community college.

Feedback was collected from each member via telephone conversations, e-mail correspondence, and individual face-to-face meetings concerning three areas: the interview questions, the interview process, and the findings of this study.

**Data Collection**

This study was undertaken in four parts:
1. Review of the websites of three GTA community colleges, specifically to determine what student services they offer, followed by meetings with student services representatives to confirm the information where appropriate;

2. In-depth interviews with students of ethnically diverse backgrounds at three GTA institutions investigating their experience with services offered at their colleges;

3. A review of the existing data on student engagement that has accumulated in the last few years; and

4. Input from the expert panel.

A comprehensive review of the websites of all colleges was completed and a table was formulated listing the services offered by each of the participating colleges. Meetings were held with the director of student services at each of the three community colleges in order to confirm the information found on the websites. A comprehensive review of student engagement data was also completed. Surveys reviewed include the Pan-Canadian Study Reports 1 and 2, CCSSE, NSSE, OCSES, KPIs, and FITS.

As to the qualitative research, written approval was received from each of the respective colleges before any data collection was undertaken (see Appendix B). As outlined in the section titled “Participant Selection,” each of the individuals who self-identified as a potential interview candidate was contacted by e-mail to introduce the study and to set up a convenient interview time (see Appendix F). Those agreeing to be interviewed were then provided with a copy of the interview protocol and a consent form (see Appendices C and D). Those who agreed to participate were asked to sign the consent form prior to the interview.
The interviews took place from May 2009 to August 2009. Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes and focused on the individual’s experience with his or her community college and utilization of student services on campus. The interview consisted of 17 semi-structured questions which allowed for individual responses from the participants (see Appendix A). The data collected were coded to keep the information separate and to protect the anonymity of the participants. A transcript of their interview was made available to the participants for their review and clarification where requested. This information was then grouped and tabulated.

**Limitations of the Study**

This study was not without its limitations and included the sample, the questions asked, the position of the researcher and research.

Determining a representative sample and finding students willing to participate in such a study was a limitation in that the number of students that were actually interviewed as opposed to the number this researcher planned to interview were reduced to 25 from the projected 30 to 45 students. Approaching student run clubs and student associations and federations assisted in finding students to participate by way of advertising on their web portals and through campus signage.

Similar to the limitation outlined above, the number of students projected to be interviewed was reduced given convincing student participants to agree to in-person interviews was a challenge. While interviews for this study were conducted in person, most students expressed a preference to do the interviews over email or over the phone. In fact, there were 42
students that expressed an interest in taking part in this study, but only 25 followed through with setting up interviews.

Finding a current and relevant base of Canadian research in this area was also a limitation. Most of the literature in this area comes from the historical U.S. perspective and therefore only permitted analogies when comparing to the Canadian context. In this regard, this study echoes the same concerns to some extent that Dr. Peter’s (2004) found in his study. The reliance on American research data concerning racism, social integration and student services studies is limited in its application given the very different history of immigration and settlement in the United States (Sidanius, 2008, p. 295) as opposed to the history of settlement in Canada.

In conducting interviews of this nature, the interviewer naturally plays a key role in the interview process and can have an impact on the validity and reliability of the data collected. With this data gathering technique, there is the potential for subjectivity and bias. It is unavoidable that all researchers bring a certain level of bias to any academic activity whether visible to the researcher or not (Peters, 2004, pp. 38, 40). To address this issue, the researcher became better acquainted with appropriate interview techniques prior to commencing the data collection phase of the study to mitigate against interview bias.

The position of the researcher at a college participating in a study may contribute to the respondents feeling uncomfortable in the interview and unwilling to report true feelings. While this did not come to light in this study, it must be mentioned that it is possible that where the researcher is from the institution being studied, some respondents may feel a slight reluctance in sharing negative feedback.
The questions “Are you successful?” not asked directly of the students. To gain a better understanding of whether and how the utilization of services assists in producing a successful outcome, more indirect questions were asked. But it has been suggested that these direct questions might have been useful to ask. In future research pertaining to student success, it is recommended that these questions be asked, and that they be asked after less direct questions about success had been asked. Success depends on social inclusion, social integration, and academic achievement. As the research findings in Chapter Four show, students are successful by virtue of being engaged, using services, and demonstrating integrity and commitment. This is also consistent with research findings in the Pan-Canadian Reports (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 2, 2007).

Results based on a limited number of students not chosen at random are not generalizable to the general population. As such the recommendations made as a result of this study are ideas to consider, or research directions to take. The findings of this study are drawn from colleges in the Toronto area using a relatively small, purposeful sample of 25 participants. Thus, because of the small sample size and the use of purposive sampling techniques, generalizations to the larger population cannot be made. However, it is assumed that this exploratory study will serve as a jumping-off point for further research in this area.

Only a small segment of a much larger group of ethnically diverse students was examined and did not engage aboriginal student participants or students with disabilities (findings cannot be generalized). This study was designed to focus on a small sample size with a main focus on the ethnic student as opposed to visible minority students.
The focus of this study is on community colleges only. Other forms of PSE including universities and private colleges were not included and results cannot be generalized to these institutions.

In conducting interviews of this nature, the interviewer naturally plays a key role in the interview process and has an effect on the validity and reliability of the data collected. With this data gathering technique there is the potential for subjectivity and bias. In fact, it is unavoidable. All researchers bring a certain level of bias to any academic activity whether visible to the researcher or not (Peters, 2004, pp. 38, 40). To address this issue, the researcher became better acquainted with interview techniques designed to mitigate against interview bias prior to commencing the data collection phase of the study.

The position of the researcher at a college participating in the study may have contributed to the respondents feeling uncomfortable in the interview and unwilling to report true feelings. While this did not come to light in this study, it must be mentioned that it is possible that when the researcher is from the institution being studied, some respondents may be reluctant to share negative feelings about the college.

**Establishing Credibility**

To enhance content validity of the interview questions put to the student participants during the interviews, they were sent to the expert panel participating in this study. Some revisions were made based on their input. The original questions included specific questions relating to ethnicity and it was suggested (by EP3) that a more subtle reference to ethnicity be reflected in the questions. Thus, the interview questions were developed and revised to ensure the questions were clear, accurate, and appropriate.
The use of the expert panel not only assisted in refining the interview questions, but also served by providing a gap analysis and helping to define the findings in a broader context. The expert panel lends to this study their expertise in the area of human rights and diversity. One member brings 10 years of non-profit, community development and youth engagement experience (EP3). A second member brings an extensive background as an advocate for assaulted women and children, anti-racism education, and employment equity (EP2). The third member is a trailblazer in the legal world, breaking ground for women of colour, and has been honoured for a commitment to ending discrimination in Canada.

**Ethical Considerations**

Written approval from the college participating in the study was obtained before any data collection was undertaken (see Appendix D). Participants were assured that all information obtained about them would be held in strict confidence. Further, participants were informed that individuals would not be identifiable in any reporting of the findings. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to starting the interview (see Appendix C). None of the participants were under the age of eighteen, so parental consent was not needed. The approval of the University of Toronto Ethics Review Unit as well as the ethics review committees of the participating colleges was obtained before any research commenced.

The names of the colleges that participated are omitted so that association with a college cannot identify participants. Participants were given the option of reviewing the transcripts of their interview to make deletions or additions. Efforts were made to ensure that the participants understood that the recording of the interview was part of the process.
To put the participants at ease, the researcher took time at the beginning of the interview to talk about the process and about the motivation behind the study. Throughout, the researcher was “brief, friendly, and conversational but not too talkative, putting participants at ease so that they w[ould] talk freely and fully” (Selltiz et al., 1981, p. 179). The participants were also informed that they could refuse to answer any questions or terminate the interview at any stage if they so wished.

**Restatement of the Problem**

In attempting to answer the overarching question “Are GTA community colleges meeting the challenges and opportunities of diversity to facilitate the success of all students?” an exploratory examination will be made of the following subsidiary research questions which aided in the organization of the data gathered for this study:

1. Where have we been and how far have we come?

2. What is the make-up of the pool of student candidates in Canada, Ontario, and the GTA?

3. What proportion of the student body in the colleges examined is made up of ethnically diverse students?

4. Are the colleges examined representative of the GTA society?

5. What are colleges currently doing to engage ethnically diverse students, that is, what services are they providing?
6. What is the experience of the ethnically diverse students from these three very diverse colleges? What are the expressed needs of these students?

7. What do students think is missing? What could their college do better?

8. Do the students feel they would be as successful or more successful if their needs were better met?

**Summary**

This chapter has described the research methods used for this study and the research instruments. It has detailed how participants were selected, how the educational institutions were selected, and how the research instrument was designed using general theoretical principles and previous research as guidelines.

Chapter Four presents the data collected and research findings. Chapter Five focuses on summary, review, implications, recommendations for further study, theory development and research, final comments from the expert panel, and conclusion.
CHAPTER FOUR:
RESEARCH FINDINGS

Overview

This chapter presents the findings of this study: an evaluation of the overall college experience and utilization of college student services of the ethnically diverse student. The aim is to determine how well colleges are adapting to the needs of the diverse student population. Data was gathered and findings presented in the following four categories:

1. An overview of the student participants’ demographic information.

2. A description of the services provided to students at the three participating GTA community colleges.

3. A culmination of qualitative data collected in interviews with ethnically diverse students concerning their overall college experience and their utilization of student services. Responses of the 25 student participants interviewed for this study are presented. Each student participant was asked a series of 17 questions (see Appendix A) about student services and their overall college experience as a student of an ethnically diverse background. The qualitative data collected through the student interviews have been grouped under each interview question. To ensure the integrity of the data collected, verbatim responses were selected to reflect key expressions and experiences.

4. Feedback provided by the expert panel.
Demographic Information

The following describes the declared ethno-cultural backgrounds of the student participant sample, as depicted in Table 1:

- 9 student participants were from India (36%) (this includes 7 international students)
- 4 student participants were from Pakistan (16%) (this includes 1 international student)
- 3 student participants were from China (12%) (this includes 1 international student)
- 2 student participants were from Jamaica (8%) (this includes 1 international student)
- 2 student participants were from Trinidad and Tobago (8%) (both are international students)
- 1 student participant was from Turkey (4%)
- 1 student participant was from South Africa (4%)
- 1 student participant was from Russia (4%)
- 1 student participant was from Korea (4%)
- 1 student participant was from Kuwait (4%)

Of the 25 student participants, 12 were female (48%), 13 were male (52%), and 12 identified themselves as international students (48%).
Table 1

Profile of Student Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Year / Semester</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Country of origin</th>
<th>When interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 *</td>
<td>Final year</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>May 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 *</td>
<td>Final year</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>May 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 *</td>
<td>Final year</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>May 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 *</td>
<td>Final year</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>May 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2nd semester</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>May 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Final year</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>May 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Final year</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>May 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 *</td>
<td>3rd semester</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Trinidad &amp; Tobago</td>
<td>May 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 *</td>
<td>1st semester</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Trinidad &amp; Tobago</td>
<td>May 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Final year</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>May 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>3rd semester</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>June 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>3rd semester</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>June 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 *</td>
<td>2nd semester</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>June 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>3rd semester</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>June 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 *</td>
<td>2nd semester</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>June 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
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<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>June 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>June 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>August 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>1st semester</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>August 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>First year</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>August 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 *</td>
<td>First year</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>August 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>2nd semester</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>August 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 *</td>
<td>3rd semester</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>August 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 *</td>
<td>6th semester</td>
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<td>August 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 *</td>
<td>6th semester</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>August 2009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * Students that self-identified as international students.
Student Services

In order to gain a broader perspective on student services and confirm the online information relating to the offering of services at each of the three GTA community colleges examined, brief meetings were held between the researcher and the director of student services at each of the three colleges.

Table 2 lists the student services available at the three GTA community colleges examined. The table also breaks down the services offered at each of the individual colleges. All material was extracted from the college websites and then reviewed, confirmed, and edited by the student services directors.

Table 2

**Student Services (by College)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service provided</th>
<th>College A</th>
<th>College B</th>
<th>College C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Support</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Services</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselling Services</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Services</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf and Hard of Hearing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Success Office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletics</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence &amp; Housing</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Services</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaplain Services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Student Office</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutoring and Mentoring</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Year Experience Program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Aid Office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity or Diversity Office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Services</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From these data we see that the colleges studied are consistent in the types of student services provided. All three colleges (Colleges A, B, and C) provide academic support, career services, counseling services, disability services, athletics, international student services, financial aid services, Aboriginal services, and a student federation or association. Two of the three colleges have student success offices (Colleges B and C), health services (Colleges A and C), and an equity or diversity office (Colleges A and C).

One of the three colleges has a deaf and hard of hearing office (College B), one offers chaplain services (it should be noted that this is separate from a prayer room) and gay and lesbian student services (College A), one offers a first year student experience program and a degree and credit transfer service (College C).

As per the website information of the participating colleges and interviews with the student services directors, the following are descriptions of the student services provided at each of the three GTA community colleges participating in the study:

\textit{Academic Support}

Academic support is provided to students who are experiencing difficulties with their studies. This can be provided by such offices as counseling services, university advising, study
skills workshops, and tutoring. These may overlap with other services listed by each college. For instance, at one college (College A), academic counseling includes:

- study skills workshops held at the beginning of each semester to learn how to write exams, manage time, and improve concentration;
- resources for tips on learning;
- resources for tips on coping with stress;
- peer tutoring; and
- learning disabilities assistance.

**Career Services**

This includes such services as job search assistance, resume assistance, practice interviews, tips on dressing for success, international student workshops, study abroad programs, career event opportunities, recruitment materials, web links to other valuable resources, employment-related workshops, job fairs, and career conferences. Career counseling is intended for students who are unsure or confused about their academic and career goals.

**Counselling Services**

Counselors are available to help students overcome problems and develop strategies to reach their personal, educational, and career goals. Counselling is confidential and is offered free of charge in a private setting with professional counselors. Services are broad and include support in the following areas:

- academic counseling;
- academic advising;
- career counseling;
- career assessment;
- crisis intervention;
- personal counseling;
- study skill workshops;
- support and discussion groups;
- university advising; and
- coping with tragic events.

Concerns for which counselling is sought include:

- anger management;
- assault/abuse;
- dealing with loss/death;
- depression/anxiety;
- relationship difficulties;
- school failure/underachievement;
- sexuality;
- stress management; and
- substance abuse.

**Disability Services**

Disabilities include, but are not limited to, the following:

- acquired brain injury (ABI);
- attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADD/ADHD);
- medical (includes conditions such as epilepsy, HIV, diabetes, and kidney disease);
- deaf, hard of hearing;
• learning disabilities; and
• impaired vision/blindness;
• mobility/functional (includes physical, mobility, and neurological disabilities); and
• mental health (includes depression, anxiety disorder, schizophrenia, mood disorders, and post traumatic stress syndrome (PTSS))

Educational accommodations of disabilities include: tutors, peer note takers, reduced course loads, learning strategies, large print, taped, or Braille materials, accommodation for pre-admission and placement, sign language interpreters, computerized note takers, access to adaptive technology, loaning of recording devices, financial assistance (bursary).

**Deaf and Hard of Hearing**

This service is provided as part of ‘counseling’ services at two of the three colleges (Colleges A and C). The range of services offered include interpreting, intervening, computerized note taking, transcribing, peer note taking, peer tutoring, modified course load and test proctoring, technical devices, and counseling.

**Student Success Office**

An on-line tool that has information about what to do in all kinds of academic, social, personal, and emergency situations, from missing a test to finding out ways to get involved on campus. This office promotes a positive college experience and works with students to increase student engagement, persistence, and graduation rates. Through a collaborative approach students experience a smooth transition to college life, a strong sense of belonging and connection, an increase in self-confidence, constructive use of college resources and services, and an encouraging and supportive environment.
**Athletics**

Athletics provides an opportunity for all students to participate in fitness and sports programs, to enhance their experience during their time at the college as well increase personal life satisfaction and health. All colleges offer intramurals and organized sports leagues as well as fitness centres in addition to competitive varsity leagues as members of the Ontario College Athletic Association (OCAA).

**Residence and Housing**

Residence and housing is a service created to help students find accommodations both on and off campus.

**Health Services**

Students and staff can obtain help from qualified nurses and physicians on campus for medical-related health concerns through the health centre.

**Chaplain Services**

Chaplain services respond to the spiritual needs of all people at the college, whether the individual belongs to a particular faith tradition or not. In all three colleges, a prayer room is made available for students through the student services office.

**International Student Office**

The international student office develops, administers, and promotes academic and social programs for international students. The office also facilitates cross-cultural experiences for both
international and Canadian students. Services also include academic counseling, immigration
information, peer tutoring, special activities, trips, and social events.

Tutoring & Mentoring

Peer tutoring offers assistance for students having difficulties in specific courses. This
includes one-on-one tutoring, course-specific workshops, conversation clubs, and reading clubs.
Peer tutors act as a support for professors by providing extra review and practice of course
material. Tutoring traditionally takes place outside of scheduled classroom hours, but not off
campus.

The peer mentor program is designed to assist first year students in making a successful
transition to college life. A peer mentor is an upper year student hired to help a student transition
into first year at college. A peer mentor acts as a guide by introducing a student to college life
and post-secondary expectations. A mentor will help a student navigate the college campus,
answer questions, and direct the student to resources he or she may need during the first
semester.

First Year Experience Program

The first year experience program is designed to ensure that new students make a
successful transition to life at college. The aim of the program is to provide information and links
to campus resources in order to support students in achieving their academic and personal goals.
This includes activities such as orientation, tools and resources to get ready, and information
about awards, clubs, and associations.
Financial Aid Office

The financial aid office provides information on scholarships, bursaries, and student aid programs.

Equity and Diversity Office

The equity and/or diversity office is committed to ensuring a respectful, accessible, safe, and inclusive environment free from discrimination, harassment, and violence for all students, employees, and visitors. This office is also mandated to receive, identify, and resolve issues of concern or conflict related to a college policy, procedure, or legal statute.

Aboriginal Services

Aboriginal services include funding assistance, Elder programs, cultural events, a speaker series, Aboriginal-specific scholarships and jobs, cultural counseling and a First Peoples’ resource library.

Gay and Lesbian Services

Gay and lesbian services offer students a “positive space,” an environment where sexual diversity is fostered for all individuals whether straight, lesbian, gay, and bisexual, or transgendered.

Student Federation or Association

The student federation or association advocates on behalf of full-time students and is committed to providing services and programs that appeal to the entire student body. It also lobbies the provincial government regarding important student-related issues.
Degree and Credit Transfer Office

The degree and credit transfer office assists students with their plans to attend university after attending college. Services include researching options, verifying requirements, and assisting with the application process.

Interview Results

The following material summarizes the responses provided by student participants in response to the 17 questions asked in their respective personal interviews.

Interview Question 1:
What semester/year are you in?

At the time the interviews were conducted, 28% (n=7) of the student participants were in their final year of study (includes 4 international students), 28% (n=7) were in their 3rd semester (includes 2 international students), 20% (n=5) were in their 2nd semester (includes 2 international students), 8% (n=2) were in their 1st semester (includes 1 international student), 8% (n=2) were in their first year (includes 1 international student), and 8% (n=2) were in their 6th semester (includes 1 international student).

As a point of clarification, while being in the final year of a program can mean a student is in 4th semester of a 2-year program, or 6th semester of a 3-year program, where “final year” is declared, the student participants indicated that they are taking courses from various semesters and that “final year” best described their current status. The same explanation was given for those students enrolled in their “first year” of a program. Due to exemptions, these participants explained that they are taking courses in various semesters, but are currently in their “first year” of their programs.
**Interview Question 2:**

*What have you liked most about attending college?*

The top three responses given for this question include the following:

1. Applied/hands on and practical nature of learning
2. Small class sizes
3. Social/friends

It should be pointed out that students sometimes gave more than one response to this question. The most frequent response from the student participants (32%, n=8) was that what they liked most was the applied/hands-on and practical nature of learning found in colleges. One student participant stressed that the “first hand peer to peer experience” is what made her realize she had “chosen the right program to study.”

Approximately the same number of student participants (28%, n=7) indicated that the small classes was what they liked most. As one student stated, “I’ve liked how the classes are small, like high school. I can talk to my teacher more.”

Following closely behind 24% (n=6) of the student participants indicated that their social network of friends was what they liked most about attending college.

The interviews reveal that 8% (n=2) of student participants saw residence life as what they liked most while the remaining student participants indicated interaction with their program coordinator (n=1, 4%), use of computer labs (n=1, 4%), curriculum that is academically challenging (n=1, 4%), having professors who are involved in their classes (n=1, 4%), easy transition from high school (n=1, 4%), having a co-op position (n=1, 4%), and good interactions with administration (n=1, 4%) as what they liked most about attending college.
One student participant’s reflections reflect many of these findings. As the student participant stated:

You can make a set of friends that seem to go to the same classes due to the program I am in. Thus, the transition from high school to college is not as drastic when I compare with friends who are in University. Thus, the close-knit classrooms are what I’ve liked most about attending college.

Another student participant reported liking, “the personal interactions with authority that make education a much better and more enthusiastic learning experience in comparison to university.”

**Interview Question 3:**

*What do you dislike most about attending college?*

The top three responses given for this question include the following:

1. Not able to find jobs on campus
2. Fees for international students too high
3. Food lacks variety—doesn’t cater to ethnic tastes

It should be pointed out that when student participants responded to this question, they sometimes gave more than one answer.

Thirty-two percent of student participants (n=8) responded that the lack of available of jobs on campus is what they dislike most about attending college. As one student participant stated, “no jobs are hard for students, especially the international ones because they lack money.” Eight per cent (n=2) found that while they were given the impression that jobs were available in their field when in fact they weren’t, and the students were concerned that the credential they were studying for might not get them the job they want. As one student
participant reflected, “a diploma is not recognized as highly as a degree. It might be hard to obtain a satisfactory job with a college diploma.”

Of great concern as well were the fees required of international students as 24% (n=6) commented.

A surprising finding was that 20% (n=5) disliked the fact that there was not a great variety of ethnic food offered on campus. Also 20% (n=5) complained that textbooks were too expensive. One student commented, “Books are too expensive. I buy them and then don’t need them, and they don’t buy them back. They change each semester, and aren’t in the library.”

Student participants were also concerned about having a place to pray: 20% (n=5) found that they did not have appropriate space to do so at their college. One student participant stated this very clearly,

Something I disliked most about attending college is not having this feeling of a space that I can go and pray. My campus does have a room. There was a nice room at first but then they moved the prayer room to a room in the corner of the school and it has an interesting, funky smell that is not pleasing to be in. The initial room is now taken over by some social working program, I believe. Thus, it cares to show the college gives more importance to their programs than a room that many people come to throughout the day to call it their “niche.” Also, when I come in, I find students in there thus it’s a small room that can probably really fit three people maximum. Thus I then have to go about come another time of the day to pray.

Some student participants (16%, n=4) found it offensive to be mistaken for international students on the basis that they speak with an accent. Others (12%, n=3) found they are coddled too much at college. Some student participants (n=2, 8%) found the class schedule to be what
they disliked most. As one student participant commented, “there are long breaks between classes making long days and it’s hard to stay focused on my studies.”

Other responses were that student participants disliked being required to take general education courses unrelated to their program (n=1, 4%), that there was too much competition for grant money (n=1, 4%), and a large gap in entry level of the student body re: 17 yrs vs. 45 yrs (n=1, 4%).

**Interview Question 4:**

*Do you think your experience would be different if you were male/female?*

Of the student participants, 40% (n=10) stated “Yes” and 60% (n=15) stated “No”. Those student participants stating yes qualified their answers as follows:

- Program area: (n=3) “depends on program”
- Faculty role models: (n=2) “need more faculty role models”
- Jobs: (n=1) “females have more chances of getting jobs in HR field.”
- Female Traits: (n=2) “if I was a male in college instead, there might be not be as much drama viewed from my perspective,” and “if not female, wouldn’t be as much drama.”
- Male Traits: (n=2) “Yes, I might focus more as a male.”

Only 2 of the participants who responded in the negative offered explanations of their response. One participant commented, “we’re treated equally”, and the other stated, “Personally, I don’t think it would be any different if I were male.”
**Interview Question 5:**

*Do you think your experience would be different if your economic status were different?*

Of the 25 student participants, 80% (n=20) stated “yes” and 20% (n=5) stated “no.” Student participants answering “yes” took the perspective that their situation would be better. As one student participant commented, “I would work less with more disposable income.” Another stated in relation to having to work in addition to taking courses, “We’re losing our youth.” Another student participant stated, “In comparison to students coming from more well-off families I find that they have it a lot easier than me in many ways.” And another stated, “I would have less pressure regarding my finances and hence, I would be able to concentrate well on my studies.” One student participant commented, “If my economic status were different, I’d definitely think my experience would be different as I’d probably take part in events such as games and skiing that the school had organized.”

The student participants that indicated “no” stated that they would still be in college doing what they’re already doing regardless of their economic status. One student commented, “[college] teaches you to be goal oriented and learn for a reason.”

**Interview Question 6:**

*What extracurricular activities are you involved in?*

The top three responses given for this question include the following:

1. Working at a part-time job
2. Intramural sports
3. Recreational sports
The most recorded responses came from those engaged in recreational and intramural sports (n=11, 44%). This included the following: Recreational softball (n=1), soccer (n=2), tennis (n=1), sport referee (n=1), cricket (n=1), badminton (n=1). Intramural sports were also popular (n=4).

Others (n=9, 36%) reported the following activities: Internet surfing (n=1), reading (n=1), music (n=1), Legal Studies Student Association (n=1), student council (n=1), Dean’s program (n=1), body art classes (n=1), college-wide events (n=1) and volunteering (n=1).

Some student participants reported working as an extracurricular activity (n=5, 20%). One student participant reported no involvement in extracurricular activities stating,

Currently I’m not involved in any extracurricular activities as my campus is far off, by the time I finish my classes, I am exhausted and I have an hour drive home thus I just call it a day when I’m done class. Also, my campus has very few limited groups. I would’ve liked to join the Student Federation but upon seeing that it is filled with all Caucasians, I felt inferior and didn’t bother applying for a position.

**Interview Question 7:**
*Who are your role models? Why?*

The top three responses given for this question include the following:

1. Mother
2. Parents
3. No one

The greatest number of respondents described their “mom” as their role model (n=9, 36%). Student participants commented as follows:
My mom is inspiring, hard worker and manages household chores and takes care of our family and even takes classes at night.

My one and only role model would be my mom who manages the household doing the cooking, taking care of us three kids and works and goes to college part-time. She handles all these jobs and I’d like to be her in the future.

My house mom in Africa because she works hard.

Parents was the second most popular response (n=4, 16%). As one student participant commented, “My parents. I’m proud of where they’ve come from. They work hard and made sacrifices.”

A popular response (n=4, 16%) was also no one. Student participants who responded this way explained either that they were their own role model, that they didn’t look up to celebrities, or gave no reason at all. One student participant responded simply, “I live as I am.”

Athletes (n=2, 8%), politicians (n=1, 4%) and scientists (n=1, 4%) were also mentioned. One student commented, 

My role models are famous athletes, politicians, and scientists. I learn many things observing them. Sometimes I try to follow them, which I think will help me to become successful like them. I don’t believe in celebrity role models as I feel they can be unrealistic.

Other student participants reported that their role model is their “dad” (n=1, 4%), “he’s there for me.” “My dad is a great parent in regards to taking care of us, social support and being there for us anytime of my life.” One described a sister as a role model (n=1, 4%) “she handles a lot” (June, 2009, p=13). Another responded those who inspire (n=1, 4%), “those that do what they can with what they have.” And yet another named grandfather as a role model (n=1, 4%)
stating, “my grandpa is a tremendous human being.” One student participant simply reported, “Life itself is a role model” (n=1, 4%).

**Interview Question 8:**

*Tell me about your most unpleasant experience in college.*

The top three responses given for this question include the following:

1. Accessing their coordinator.
2. Being an international student
3. Seeking assistance from registration/faculty offices

The most common response from the student participants was that they had difficulty meeting with their coordinator for assistance (n=6, 24%). One student participant commented, “It takes months to get in to see him.”

Clearly related to contact with the availability of one’s coordinators is academic advising (n=3, 12%), about which one student commented, “Academic advising is frustrating. The advisors are so oppressive. We ask them to be professional but they’re not, even the Chair.”

Student participants also found seeking assistance from the registration and faculty offices frustrating (n=4, 16%).

Some student participants found being an international student unpleasant (n=5, 20%). As one commented, “Being an international student is hard. The college seems to be more focused on non-international and discrimination in class is so rude.”

One student participant was very upset about the timing of student federation events (n=1, 4%). The student commented,
By far, the most unpleasant experience in college is when they have music bands come in during the day, and they supply alcohol thus we then have kids in our classes or in the hallways whose breath smells like alcohol. Coming from a family who does not drink or smoke, the smell makes me giddy and gives me the most unpleasant experience.

Unpleasant experiences were reported by student participants concerning textbooks (n=1, 4%), cafeteria line ups (n=1, 4%), job opportunities (n=1, 4%), dealing with the drama of other students (n=1, 4%), fighting between student council members (n=1, 4%) and using the health centre (n=2, 8%). As one participant commented, “The health centre has too many closed hours and needs more access and hours. The doctors are only there half day and getting appointment is difficult.”

**Interview Question 9:**

*Tell me about your most pleasant experience in college.*

The top three responses given for this question include the following:

1. friends and people you meet
2. good teachers
3. Student activities

The response indicating that the most pleasant experience involved friends and people they’ve met while at school was given by the highest number of participants (n=10, 40%). As one commented, “I got to know lots of new friends whom I will have for life.”

Good teachers was also a popular response (n=7, 28%). Comments include, “Having amazing professors that are goal-oriented and successful, and very inspirational.” “Professors are
very nice, helpful. They definitely are very encouraging and promote students for success. The motivation is definitely encouraging and I would find that pleasant.”

Student council activities also rated high (n=5, 20%). As one participant commented, “They put good posters all over campus, cater to everyone, and help everyone.”

**Interview Question 10:**

*What are your academic and career goals?*

The top three responses given for this question include the following:

1. Immigration
2. Professor
3. Go to university

The most recorded response was wishing to eventually complete citizenship requirements and live in Canada (n=7, 28%), followed by becoming a professor (n=3, 12%), and wishing to go to university (n=2, 8%).

The number of student participants who wished to pursue further specific qualifications (as opposed to generally attending university) is quite high (total n= 9, 36%). The qualifications mentioned were law (n=2), MBA (n=1), BScN (n=1), master’s degree (n=2), journalism (n=1), PhD (n=1) and nursing (n=1). As one student participant commented,

Although I want to pursue the field of law as a career, I am considering giving journalism a try as it is one of my passions. I am going to university to do a degree in Business Management. Then it would hopefully guide me to a demanding MBA. My final goal is to join one of the highly successful companies in the U.S.
Other student participants had goals of doing something good (n=1, 4%), “wherever life takes you” (n=1, 4%), financial advisor (n=1, 4%), open own business (n=1, 4%) and work for not-for-profit (n=1, 4%). This last student participant commented, “I want to make a difference and work in Africa in sustainable tourism.”

**Interview Question 11:**

**How do you hope to accomplish these goals?**

The top three responses given for this question include the following:

1. Good grades/academic Success
2. Landed immigrant status
3. Gain co-op and work placement experience

The majority of responses indicated that accomplishing their goals would be achieved through good grades and academic success (n=12, 48%), “passing my program,” (n=1, 4%), graduating (n=1, 4%), and “keep focused” (n=1, 4%). One student participant’s comment captures the majority who responded,

I hope to accomplish these goals by keeping my mind set on the goal I want, organize my time well. That helps me succeed and basically follow what I have been doing as of this last year as it has proven to be successful.

International student participants saw landed immigrant status (n=8, 32%) as a way to achieve their goals, and others mentioned gaining good co-op and work placement experience (n=7, 28%), finding work in a hotel (n=1, 4%), and meeting professors and others in industry (n=2, 8%).
Others responded that they would obtain a university degree (n=3, 12%), or an MBA (n=1, 4%). As one participant commented, “I have completed a diploma in Court and Tribunal Administration and have completed a year of university (U of T) and wish to complete it and move on to law school. I have done a high school co-op at a law firm, have participated in U of T’s Summer Mentorship Program in Law and now am attending the Summer Institute of Broadcast Journalism.”

Some student participants (n=4, 16%) saw hard work and dedication as important to reaching their goals. One student participant stated, “hard working, dedication and thinking what my life would be like if I do not have a proper career.”

**Interview Question 12:**

*Do you feel your college has been successful at helping you reach your goals? How?*

The majority of participants answered “yes” to this question (n=19, 76%). Their reasons for doing so include the following:

- It reinforced my career path.
- My education is stronger and I have a business plan now.
- I’ve excelled and confirmed my job goals.
- In regards to technology and having a computer when in need, the college has done a great job.
- By helping me get some hands on experience with my field placement that I completed in my last month of college.
- Lots of networking.”
What I do in college is very practical and directly work-related.

Those student participants who answered “no” (n=5, 20%) gave reasons such as a lack of internships, and a lack of space for quiet study. As one student participant commented,

Well, in regards to the studying, I can’t find myself to study in the campus that I am at because the library has limited cubicles so it is always taken. People chatter about like they do in the cafeteria. So when I really need to get myself to study I sit in between the bookshelves trying to find some quiet area that I can concentrate and focus on my notes. But it was definitely appreciative of the librarians to bring “quiet mode” only during exam week. They would patrol and students chatting away were encouraged to leave the library thus it maintained the quiet feeling a library should have.

**Interview Question 13:**

*Is there anything you feel your college could do to help you better achieve your goals?*

The top three responses given for this question include the following:

1. Get me a job placement/co-op position
2. Help with job after graduation
3. More Career Days

Student participants were clear that their colleges could do better at assisting them with job placements or co-op positions (n=21, 84%). As one student participant summarized, “They’re false advertising that they’ll get you a job. My co-op position failed, and there aren’t enough job postings” (June 2009, p=16). Others commented that the college could do better at helping students with finding jobs after graduation (n=5) and by offering more events like Career Days (n=2, 8%). One student participant commented,
Maybe the college can establish Career Days, where people with professional careers such as accountants, business consultants could visit the college doing presentations about their work, necessary skills and knowledge.

Others commented that they needed more help with internships (n=1, 4%), that quiet time in the library should be better enforced (n=1, 4%), and that there be better advertising of programs to employers (n=1, 4%). To this point, a comment was made by one participant, “[Participant’s college] seems to be highly focused on business and business is all you see in advertising but it’s more than business at [Participant’s college].”

**Interview Questions 14 and 15:**

*Have you ever used the services of your college?*

*If yes, which services have you used and were they helpful?*

Almost all student participants responded “yes” (n=28, 84%) to using their college’s services. Four (16%) student participants answered “no.” While these students utilized their college’s international office, cafeteria, library, and computer labs, they did not see these as “student services.”

Services used include the gym (n=23), library (n=23), computer labs (n=25), health centre (n=5), international centre (n=15), cafeteria (n=22), pool (n=2), math centre (n=12), dental hygienist (n=4), spa (n=8), media centre (n=12), residence (n=8), bookstore (n=10), orientation (international and college-wide information sessions and services) (n=21), tutoring (n=5), computer job search (n=1), student services/academic counseling (n=2), financial aid (n=2), chef school (n=1), TTC pass (n=1), lost and found (n=1), career services (n=2), and technical services/IT support (n=5).

Comments from five students included:
Yes, I’ve used the library, computer area, student services, and Financial aid.

I’ve basically touched every service area of my college.

Financial aid was only helpful when I took the 2-year diploma program.

Career services is a good tool if you want to help yourself to their listings online.

Technical services is helpful when your passwords expire.

Those student participants responding “no” (n=4, 16%) indicated that they did not utilize the student services because they had no need to do so.

What do you think they could improve upon?

The top three responses given for this question include the following:

1. Better place to pray
2. More lab hours in computer labs
3. More computers in the labs

The majority of responses were that a better prayer room (n=10, 40%) is needed at their college. Student participants also found the hours the computer labs are open (n=7, 28%) and the number of available computers in the labs (n=6, 24%) as areas to be improved upon. Some believe Facebook should be removed from the computers in the labs (n=2, 8%) and improved online research capability be put in the library (n=1, 4%); it was also suggested that more cubicles in the library are needed (n=1, 4%).

Others commented on the need for more tills in the cafeteria (n=1, 4%), better prices on books (n=3, 12%), better prices for TTC passes (n=1, 4%), and an improved website for international students (n=2, 8%).
Seven student participants (28%) commented that nothing needs to be improved upon.

**What is missing?**

The top three responses given for this question include the following:

1. Food Selections of an ethnic variety
2. Place to just go and sit
3. Career Centre for International Students

The majority of student participants responded that ethnic food choices (n=14, 56%) were not adequate. As one participant stated,

Food selections in the cafeteria and on campus don’t represent ethnic foods.” “I have to go off campus to eat because nothing works for me.

Others also commented that there was “no place to just go and sit other than using the hallways” (n= 6, 24%), as well as the lack of a career centre for international students (n=7, 28%).

**Interview Question 16:**

*If you have not used the services at your college, why not?*

Four students (16%) responded that they had not used the services at their college. All 4 were international students and did not use services other than the international office, library, computer lab and cafeteria. They did not view these as “student services.” One student summarized the views of the 4 in explaining the answer this way: “International students have good backgrounds and are strong academically.”
Interview Question 17:
If you could change anything you want about your college, what would it be?

The top three responses given for this question include the following:

1. Nothing
2. Tuition for international students
3. Caring about the future of students

“Nothing needs to be changed” was the most frequent response (n=7, 28%). Others indicated that tuition for international students should change (n=4, 16%). And a number indicated that caring about the future of the students should improve (n=4, 16%). As one participant stated, “We need more job opportunities for careers and good counseling.”

One responded that classrooms need revamping (n=1, 4%) and another stated the library needs more quiet time (n=1, 4%). As one student commented, “We need a better seating design for the acoustics and a quiet area to sit.” Another highlighted the need to change the operating hours/scheduling of classes (n=1, 4%). This student participant stated,

If I could change anything about my college would be to start my college at about 9:00 a.m., as it is really hard to make it to the 8:00 a.m. classes. Since a lot of us bus it, it takes up a lot of our time.

One student participant suggested that the college open a walk-in counseling service. The student stated, “I would recommend they have a walk-in mentoring and counseling office available for students who need to just vent on stresses related to school.” Others suggested that there be more computers for students (n=3, 12%).
**Expert Panel Feedback on Findings**

As described in Chapter One, an expert panel assisted in the refinement of the research questions, by commenting on the findings, and by assisting in the evaluation of the results with a view towards providing policy and program recommendations. This panel consisted of three individuals working in the area of diversity and human rights on a daily basis. Panel members were selected based on recommendations made by my thesis supervisor and prior relationships in an educational context.

The expert panel provided initial feedback on the creation of the student participant interview questions. As one panel member commented (EP1), when formulating the questions, one must ask, “what are the students going to get out of this?” (October 2008). This statement served as a point of reference for the process of interviewing that ensued. Some questions were altered in wording to ensure all students would feel comfortable with answering them. For instance, the question enquiring about role models was altered from “Who do you look up to in society?” to “Who are your role models?” One panel member questioned the researcher’s whiteness in conducting the research.

After reviewing the results of the interviews, one panel member commented that the interviews helped identify needs in the areas of administrative support services, job referral services, faculty support, cultural adaptation, future research in the area of mentoring, and an examination of religious differences.

With reference to administrative support services, it was recommended that focus groups be conducted among administrators to determine why support services and access to counselors may not be as accessible as they should be.
It was also recommended that job referral services could benefit from more awareness and more resources for students in terms of a more reasonable cost for books and more computer time. Recommendations concerning cultural adaptation include more ethnic foods on counseling (a possible project for the colleges’ culinary schools and more outreach such as providing more speakers on outreach strategies to improve participation and representation of minority students in student government.

A recommendation for comments concerning religious differences includes accommodation in the form of more prayer rooms.

Summary

As we move to Chapter Five, the findings that were drawn from each of the 17 interview questions are grouped according to the theme of the appropriate research question. Chapter Five examines each of these themes in relation to the data collected in this study including cross referencing with the literature as reviewed in Chapter Two.
CHAPTER FIVE:
ANALYSIS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the ethnically diverse student’s overall college experience and utilization of student services, in addition to tracing the history of immigration and PSE (post-secondary education) in Canada and the development of student services in three GTA community colleges.

Over a 4 month period during the summer of 2009, 25 students who declared themselves to be from an ethnically diverse background were interviewed. Data were collected on their overall college experience and specifically their experience of student services.

The findings of the interviews are presented in Chapter Four. These findings will now be reviewed and cross-referenced with the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, in light of the themes that emerged. This analysis will also consider the overarching research question, “Are GTA community colleges meeting the challenges and opportunities of diversity to facilitate success for all students?” while taking into consideration the following subsidiary research questions:

*Historical and Statistical Data*

1. Where have we been and how far have we come?

2. What is the make-up of the pool of student candidates in Canada, Ontario, and the GTA?
Representative Demographics

3. What proportion of the student body in the colleges examined is made up of ethnically diverse students?

4. Are the colleges examined representative of the GTA society?

Student Services

5. What are colleges currently doing to engage ethnically diverse students in terms of services offered?

Experience of the Ethnically Diverse Student

6. What is the experience of the ethnically diverse students from these three very diverse colleges? What are the expressed needs of these students?

7. What do students think is missing? What could their college do better?

8. Do the students feel they would be as successful or more successful if their needs were being met (provided they believe they are not being met)?
Analysis of the Research

Historical and Statistical Data

The historical data reviewed has served as a base upon which this study stands. In order to appreciate and understand why it is we are looking at the needs of a specific demographic of our Canadian population: the ethnically diverse student, we must understand how we arrived at this profile of diversity in Canada.

From an historical perspective, Canada has evolved and changed over the years, and so have our community colleges. From small entrepreneurially focused institutions in 1967 to the polytechnic institute offering 4-year baccalaureate degrees, and with an ethnic forecast that by 2017 of one in five Canadians will be identified as belonging to a visible minority group, it goes without saying that student services in the community colleges have had to learn to adapt and change to an ever-changing cycle of need from many directions.

To answer questions one and two, we can turn to recent data from Statistics Canada (2007a) to explore the demographics of our growing Canadian landscape. Between 1996 and 2001, the total population increased 4% while the visible minority population rose 25% or six times faster. From this was can conclude that the visible minority population is growing much faster than the total population. It is projected that Canada will have between 6.3 million and 8.5 million visible minorities by the year 2017.

The data also suggest that the highest levels of ethno-cultural diversity will likely continue to be in a number of urban areas. For instance, in 2001, it was projected that in 2017 almost three-quarters of visible minorities would be living in one of Canada's three
largest metropolitan areas: Toronto, Vancouver, or Montréal. The result for Toronto would be that half of the population would belong to a visible minority group (Statistics Canada, 2007a).

These projections directly affect planning and forecasting for the future of programming, recruitment, and enrolment in our community colleges. In looking at the current profile in Ontario, we see that we are not that far from reality.

As previously highlighted in Chapter One, the GTA community colleges are experiencing an increasingly diverse student population. The geographic location of the colleges participating in this study is the GTA. Referred to as the fastest growing region in Ontario, it is predicted that this region will increase in population from 5.9 million in 2006 to 8.3 million in 2031.

Toronto is already referred to as a “global city,” home to one of the most diverse populations in the world. Over half of the city’s population are considered to be visible minorities (Citizenship & Immigration Canada, 2008). This leads to the question of representative demographics.

**Representative Demographics**

According to the FITS survey data (described in Chapter Four) the majority of students enrolled in the three GTA community colleges participating in this study speak more than one language and over half are either first generation Canadians (neither parent was born in Canada), landed immigrants/permanent residents, or naturalized citizens (not born in Canada). While the student sample examined is too small to be considered a representative sample of the GTA, this information, combined with the data previously presented (over half of the population has declared themselves as visible minority), confirms that the three GTA community colleges studied represent a strong ethnically diverse student population and answers questions 3 and 4.
One school within the largest of the three GTA community colleges participating conducted their own survey and it was discovered that the 10 largest groups of ethnically diverse students were Canadian (25%), Indian (9%), Italian (8%), Jamaican (5%), Polish (4%), Chinese (4%), Portuguese (3%), Pakistani (3%), Trinidadian (3%), and Ukrainian (2%).

Similarly, in the current study, the groups represented by the student participants were as follows: 32% from India, 16% from Pakistan, 12% from China, 8% from Jamaica, 8% from Trinidad & Tobago, 4% from Turkey, 4% from South Africa, 4% from Russia, 4% from Korea, and 4% from Kuwait. These data demonstrate the growing ethnic diversity among students in the population of the three participating GTA community colleges.

Over the last 20 years, the GTA has experienced significant immigration; as a result, the three GTA community colleges participating in this study have been recognized as among the most culturally diverse post-secondary institutions in Canada. Among the ethnically diverse students in the colleges are international students.

**Student Services**

When examining research question 5 and the provision of student services at our three GTA community colleges, we turn to Arthur Chickering (1969; Chickering & Reisser, 1993) and his psychosocial student development theory. Pertinent here are Chickering’s seven influences on student development that, he argues, educational institutions exert (1993, p. 41). He offers these factors be used by the institution to decrease students’ perception that student services are designed to manipulate them and leave the institution in a better position to facilitate development along the seven vectors.

1. Institutional objectives
2. Institutional size
3. Student–faculty relationships
4. Curriculum
5. Teaching
6. Friendships and student communities
7. Student development programs and services

The seven factors are similar to the themes raised in relation to the barriers the ethnically diverse student might face in seeking out services to be successful at his/her college.

**Institutional objectives.**

It is recommended that there be clear and specific objectives in college policies, programs, and practices so that students are able to agree or disagree, as the case may be, with matters affecting their educational environment.

To this point, all three GTA community colleges examined have clearly posted academic regulations, student charters of rights and responsibilities/codes of conduct, academic calendars, student services, operating hours, facilities use, and processes for formal complaints and academic appeals. In addition, all three have clearly presented business plans, strategic plans, annual reports, their visions and missions, and overall educational philosophies.

Student participants commented that, first and foremost, they like the hands on and practical nature of learning offered by their college. Class sizes were also important. Hawkey (2004), in exploring the experience of community for a group of students who share a disciplinary affiliation (p. 124) found that in addition to other factors, such as the curriculum and faculty connections, class size is an important part of the motivation of students to attend their chosen college or program (pp. 139-140). Other areas of importance to these student participants
include building of a social network of friends. Personal interactions with other students, staff, and faculty fared well for these students and fostered their success.

Services that fostered this directive included the Academic Support Offices, which provides assistance to students experiencing difficulties with their studies. This area can include such elements as counseling services, university advising, study skills workshops and tutoring.

The Student Success Office offers an on-line tool that has information on what to do in all kinds of academic, social, personal, and emergency situations, such as what to do if one misses a test or how can one get involved on campus. This office promotes a positive college experience and works with students to increase their engagement, persistence, and graduation rates. Through a collaborative approach students experience a smooth transition to college life, a strong sense of belonging and connection, an increase in self-confidence, constructive use of college resources and services, and an environment that is encouraging and supportive.

The First Year Experience Program is offered to ensure that new students make a successful transition to life at college. Its aim is to provide information about and links to campus resources in order to support students in achieving their academic and personal goals. The programs offered include orientation, tools and resources to get ready for college, links to awards, clubs, and associations.

Institutional size.

Chickering and Reisser (1993) argue that, “as the number of persons outstrips the opportunities for significant participation and satisfaction, the developmental potential of available settings is attenuated for all” (p. 269).
As the colleges continue to grow, they must meet the demand, not only by providing seats to potential students in programs, but they must also meet the demand by providing services and activities for the students.

As student respondents have commented, they like the small class sizes and the opportunities to meet one-on-one with faculty. Being able to know faculty and having their faculty know them engages students in the college experience. However, respondents also commented that there wasn’t enough space for students to sit and socialize with friends, and that the number of available computers was insufficient.

**Student–faculty relationships.**

According to Chickering and Reisser (1993), extensive and varied interaction among faculty and students facilitates development. Participants in this study commented that they feel their faculty have been very good at being mentors in their chosen career programs. They described faculty as approachable and able to connect them with relevant external resources to network for placements and job opportunities. Some students did comment on the lack of diversity among the faculty, but also commented that this did not pose any problem for learning or academic success.

**Curriculum and teaching.**

A relevant curriculum is needed that is both sensitive to individual differences and offers diverse perspectives (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). It is through teaching that this curriculum is delivered; teaching that is active, student–faculty interactive, provides timely feedback, and respects individual learning differences (p. 269).
As students have shared in this study, they want the general education courses to be relevant to their chosen area of study. Sometimes students do not appreciate the purpose behind the general education course: to provide a more rounded educational experience. However, their point is well taken in that they have not been offered anything that they find interesting or perhaps related to their core program in order to maintain their interest in the course, a key to ensuring retention. For instance, a student in a police studies program may find a General Education course on Police, Race and Ethnicity, or on Crime in Society, to be more interesting, and more likely to attend this class, then say a class on Marxism.

**Friendships and student communities.**

The student respondents commented that their friends and social connections are very important to their experience at college and ultimately in their success.

Chickering and Reisser (1993) argue that meaningful friendships and diverse student communities in which shared interests exist and significant interactions occur encourage development along all seven vectors. Communities may be informal friendship groups or more formal groups, such as residence hall floors, student organizations, or classes. For maximum positive benefit, the community should “[encourage] regular interactions between students,” “[offer] opportunities for collaboration,” be “small enough so that no one feels superfluous,” “[include] people from diverse backgrounds,” and “[serve] as a reference group” (p. 277).

To help foster the building of personal relationships at the college level, a number of student services are offered including the *Gay and Lesbian* office offering students a “positive space”, and *Aboriginal Services* office with funding assistance, elder programs, cultural events, speaker series, and a First Peoples’ resource library; *Athletics*, providing an opportunity for all students to participate in fitness and sport programs, and *Equity/Diversity Office whose purpose*
is to ensure a respectful, accessible, safe and inclusive environment; free from discrimination, harassment and violence for all students, employees and visitors.

**Student development programs and services.**

Collaborative efforts by faculty and student affairs professionals are necessary to provide an environment that is inclusive and aware of the diverse student body that it serves.

The three GTA community colleges studied offer a broad range of services as outlined in detail in Chapter Four and as found in Table 2 (p. 116).

Of particular relevance to student development are the *Student Federation/Association* office advocating on behalf of full-time students, *Career Services* providing assistance in job searches, resume writing and career event opportunities, and *Counselling Services* and *Disability Services* to help students overcome problems and develop strategies to reach their personal, educational, and career goals.

National surveys show that 6% of university students and 10% of college students have a disability. Of first year students, 9% of those in Canadian colleges and 5% of those in Canadian universities reported a disability (Colleges Ontario, 2008, p. 37).

To assist students in their development, colleges also offer *Chaplain Services*, which respond to the spiritual needs of all people and the *International Student Office*, which promotes academic as well as social programs for international students.

It is worth noting that in one college in particular (College A), the international office has increased its profile and services provided to students and has taken steps in connecting with the academic schools to make the students aware that such services exist.
Peer Tutoring offers one-on-one assistance for students having difficulties in specific courses. This includes one-on-one tutoring, course-specific workshops, conversation clubs, and reading clubs. Peer tutors act as a support for professors, providing extra review and practice for the course material that have previously been taught. Tutoring traditionally takes place outside of scheduled classroom hours, but not off campus (always on campus) (College A and C).

The Peer Mentor program is designed to assist first year students in making a successful transition to college life. A peer mentor is an upper year student hired to help a student transition into first year at college. A peer mentor will act as a guide by introducing a student to college life and post secondary expectations. A mentor will help a student navigate the college campus, listen to questions and direct the student to resources the student may need during the first semester (College A).

Experience of the Ethnically Diverse Student

In examining the experience of ethnically diverse students, what they identify as their needs, what they consider is missing from their colleges, and whether or not they feel they are being successful, or their needs are being met, the results of this study can be grouped into various themes including (but not limited to) the following:

1. Eurocentric curriculum and delivery;
2. School structure/organization;
3. Socio-economic status;
4. Social integration; and
5. Diversity of the faculty / administration (availability of role models).
To facilitate student success, these factors must be kept at the forefront of the minds of college leaders.

Colleges are learning-centered and provide support services which are intended to ensure that learners succeed from the point of entry to program completion, and then successfully move into the labour market. The Pan-Canadian Inventory of Exemplary Practices in Learning at Colleges and Institutes conducted in May 2005 and funded by the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation (CMSF) helped to identify the types of institutional policies, programs, practices, and services that exhibit high levels of student involvement, engagement, and persistence (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, p.11).

Until this study, no pan-Canadian research of this type had been conducted and, in particular, information on students attending Canadian colleges was very limited. This study begins to address the lack of information on Canadian college and institute students. The first ever mechanism for the profiling of students attending Canadian colleges and institutes, the first report of this study is also a continuation of previous work the ACCC had undertaken in the area of student success, including their 1997 study entitled Just Say Yes to Student Success, which was the concluding report of the ACCC Task Group on Student Success and Retention (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, p.11).

The results of the ACCC confirm that colleges and institutes admit students with diverse characteristics, including their demographic and family background and academic, personal, and life experiences, particularly since just as many students came to their college or institute from the workforce as from high school (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, p.59).
The second report provides further analysis on the differences in experiences of visible minorities, Aboriginals, students with disabilities, and new Canadians attending colleges and institutes. The third report (not yet released at the time of writing) will provide a longitudinal analysis of the over 6,000 students who completed both the college entry and end of term surveys, as well as an analysis of the determinants of first year outcomes based on grades and other data submitted by the participating colleges and institutes (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, p.61).

A study on the impact of college on students in the United States, conducted by Pascarella and Terenzini (1991, (Peters, 2004, p. 250) demonstrates that, among other findings, three sets of variables contribute to student learning and educational outcomes in post-secondary institutions: characteristics of students; characteristics of educational institutions; and interactions between these two (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, p.11).

It is clear that support services are key to ensuring the success of students from underrepresented groups, as confirmed by the survey responses of students from these groups as well as previous work of ACCC and other stakeholders examining how programs and services are delivered to Aboriginal students, immigrant students, and students with disabilities. It is also important for institutions to develop innovative approaches across departments and services to foster partnerships with community organizations and service providers so that the varying needs of the students from underrepresented groups can be met in an effective and more holistic manner (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2008, p.77). Given that the questions asked of students in the Pan-Canadian Study are similar to those asked this relatively small, ethnically diverse student sample, the Pan-Canadian first report data provide the
opportunity to make comparisons and find differences in experiences between all students across the country and those of an ethnically diverse background participating in this study.

Also, the Report 2 of the Pan-Canadian Study (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2008) provides an opportunity to make comparisons between the experiences of students of ethnically diverse backgrounds across the country and the students of an ethnically diverse background participating in this study.

**Eurocentric curriculum and delivery.**

Historically, our educational curriculum has depicted a white, middle-class businessman, conquering the world. He walks on his own power with two legs. English is his first language. He has a wife and two children waiting to dote over him at home. His history is Anglo-Saxon, he is a Christian, his culture is dominant middle class, and he celebrates Easter and Christmas just as his neighbours do. Okay, so times have changed, but this white man still prevails in our texts and in our classrooms. He has dominated the pages of elementary and high school texts and is the basis of the socialization of our children.

Educational leaders must realize that “the world is experienced differently according to race, ethnicity, gender and sexual preference, and one’s place in the world’s economic system” (Dei, 1993, p. 3). One’s culture at home and in one’s community influences one’s perception of the educational environment.

Students from minority cultures have different ways of learning (Cartledge, 1996). It is the responsibility of educators, such as teachers, faculty, and college administrators, to appreciate and recognize these differences. As such, change has to start in the classroom. It has to take place

To facilitate change, educators must open up their classrooms to diverse resources and traditions, they must be willing to learn about the oral histories of non-majority communities, and develop meaningful connections between the curriculum and the experiences of students that liberates and empowers (p. 236).

The Eurocentric curriculum must be challenged by an inclusive pedagogy that focuses on “racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, and homophobia in the schools, and ways in which race, ethnicity, class and gender have differentially shaped the experiences of being Canadian for different groups at different points in time” (Dei, 1993, pp. 14-15).

As commented in a *Toronto Star* article (Brown, 2006), failure in school shows us that language, in addition to other factors, can be a barrier to student success. The article describes parents asking for “more sensitivity to their children’s often turbulent background, more inclusive curriculum, more teachers from their backgrounds, [and] more outreach to help parents become comfortable with public schools” (p. A12).

With a more inclusive pedagogy, students will be less likely to experience the negative effects of language barriers and cultural differences. In addition, through orientation of new faculty, examples of effective classroom management, and demonstrations of effective delivery techniques administrators can assist faculty to become more inclusive.

While the literature is clear that a Eurocentric curriculum can inhibit success, it is interesting to note that the students participating in this study did not raise this as an issue. When this researcher first engaged with this research topic, assumptions were made about what students would comment on. It was expected that students would report that the curriculum content is not meeting their expectations. However, this did not occur. There are two possible
reasons for this. First, it is quite possible that the interview questions were not specific enough to lead students to reflect on the content of the material being delivered. Second, it could be that the students did not see course content as important as their other concerns such as finding an appropriate job placement or job upon graduation, not to mention the concerns of international students seeking the status required to allow them to remain in Canada.

Participants did comment that the faculty should be more ethnically diverse, but also commented that learning has not been negatively impacted by the lack of diversity. For the most part, student participants in this study were more concerned with the fact that their college does not offer a variety of ethnic food.

An interesting study looking at the effects of diversity on student learning and campus relations has emerged in the U.S., *Diversity Works: The Emerging Picture of How Students Benefit*, a new publication from the Association of American Colleges and Universities. It provides an overview of the latest research and includes an annotated bibliography of more than 300 different research studies from across the nation (Humphreys, 1998). Out of the study come a number of recommendations for changes in campus services, intergroup relations, curriculum and pedagogical practices, and institutional and organizational policies and procedures to better service the ethnically diverse student (Humphreys, 1998).

What they discovered is that campus diversity initiatives have positive effects on both minority and majority students. They improve students' relationships on campus and positively affect their satisfaction and involvement with their institutions and their academic growth. Also, they promote satisfaction, academic success, and cognitive development for all students. Involvement in specialized student groups—such as ethnic residential theme houses, support centres, and academic departments—benefit both minority and majority students. Their research
also shows that when students perceive that there is a broad campus commitment to diversity, there is increased recruitment and retention of students from underrepresented groups and an increase in all students’ satisfaction and commitment to improving racial understanding (Humphreys, 1998). This is consistent with the findings of this study. Student participants in this study commented that the more diverse the student body, the more students are satisfied.

Sidanius (2008) also completed a study with UCLA students. Sidanius found that students are changed very little in their ethnic and racial orientations by the college experience (p. 322). They found that diversity experiences on campus, whether membership in ethnic organizations or among inter-ethnic friends, roommates, and dating partners, have quite modest effects. For the most part the absolute sizes of the changes were small. Cultural diversity and multicultural education simply are not earth-shattering experiences of university students (p. 323).

**School structure.**

As authors have warned, any efforts to combat Eurocentric curriculum cannot simply stop in the classroom, but must extend to the school as a whole including books, posters, artwork and other forms of visual material (Dilworth, 1992, p. 65).

As one walks the halls of elementary schools, high schools and post-secondary institutions today, it is encouraging to see these changes in place. A school that recognizes the history of the cultures of its students is a school on the path to creating an inclusive structure and welcoming environment.

Aside from the aesthetic appearance of the school, one must also consider whether the internal school programming is inclusive of students of minority backgrounds. As Dei et al.
(2000) stress, “the organizational structures of schools often work to reproduce and reinforce existing patterns of class and ethnic dominance. Students of low socio-economic status are often streamed into inferior programs and schools, thus restricting their educational options and reproducing a working class” (p. 18).

Introducing apprenticeship programs and employment opportunities with minority employers and building relationships with minority communities, their associations and organizations, will assist in building quality programming accessible to all.

It is apparent that the way a school is structured can have a great impact on one’s experience in learning. That is why administrators must take care to ensure that the structure of the school, its policies, and processes, must not foster an environment of discrimination and inequity. The Vision 2000 Steering Committee (1990) report recognizes the importance of the structural aspects of an educational institution in its recommendations for challenging the structures of colleges to be more inclusive. It recommends that:

Every college should have in place educational equity policies and formally defined measures for implementing and monitoring those policies; race and ethnic relations policies; mechanisms to monitor employment equity policies; and mechanisms for building and maintaining partnerships with special communities and for advocating on their behalf on issues of educational equity.
(Recommendation 6) (p. 12).

Colleges acting on these recommendations will benefit in that they will become a school that is welcoming and respectful and promotes student success.

Ng (2004) raises another issue that may explain why post secondary students are not successful in their program of study and that is the amount of time post secondary students spend outside of school working in full-time or part-time jobs. As Ng tells us, working part-time is common among post secondary students, especially those from low income families, for needed
income and to lessen the financial burden that high tuition fees bring. Most research shows that working for more than 15 hours a week has a detrimental effect on achievement. Such students have lower grades, do less homework, and are more likely to drop out. These findings are supported by Statistics Canada (2003) data that show that students who work fewer than 20 hours a week have much lower dropout rates than those who work more than 20 hours a week.

Whether marks decline because students work more, or students whose marks are declining choose to work more is not fully determined. However, in a study that examined socio-economic status and previous achievement, it is stated that the more hours post secondary students worked, the greater the negative effects on student achievement. Studies also show that some students who work part-time have problems balancing school and work demands. This may further limit their participation in extracurricular activities and affects the work and school balance. Thus, it is not unreasonable to believe that low income post secondary students have a greater need to work for more hours on part-time jobs, and are thus more likely to achieve less and thus to be less satisfied in their post secondary schooling (Ng, 2004, p. 42).

Students in the Pan-Canadian Report (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007), cited many difficulties that could have a profound influence on their success. For example, one third reported significant difficulty knowing how to improve their grades. This is substantiated by research that has found a very high correlation between midterm and end of term grades (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007) in colleges that assign midterm grades. Generally, students who are failing at midterm will fail final exams as well. The fact that many students in the Pan-Canadian Study reported they do not know what to do to improve suggests that students do not change their behaviour, which makes a significant contribution to the problem. One in five students reported they had a difficult time knowing who
to talk to about a problem as well as finding out information as to how well they were doing in their course (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, p.61).

First year students in the Pan-Canadian Report 1 and 2 were also asked how likely they would be to accept support in the same areas they confirmed they would benefit from, if offered by their college or institute. First year students expressed openness to using the support services offered (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, p.32).

An interesting finding came out of this study in relation to international students and the utilization of support services. When asked the question, *If you have not used the services at your college, why not?* 16% responded in the negative. All respondents were international students. However, when probed further, it was determined that they had in fact used services, but did not perceive the services of the international office, library, computer lab and cafeteria as ‘student services.’ This leads to the question of how terminology can affect one’s perception of what is being asked of them. To a student studying in Canada, born in Canada, the definition of student services is fairly clear. However, to an international student, requesting the assistance of student services may transcend into requiring psychological counseling, or stigmatic in that only students who cannot be successful need student services.

Towards the end of their first term, students participating in the Pan-Canadian Study seemed happy with the services provided as almost three-quarters of respondents felt that their institution makes sure that students have the resources they need to learn and provides services to students that are readily available. Approximately 63% reported that their institution provides sufficient space for students to study in groups, while 60% reported that their college has specified programs or strategies to help students adjust to college studies (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, p.55).
The Pan Canadian findings: sufficient space for students to study is inconsistent with the findings in this study. Approximately 24% of students participating in this study saw a lack of places to ‘just go sit’ a problem. An additional 20% responded that there is a lack of group study space. Others reported an inadequate amount of space to eat (along with lack of ethnic food). Combined, these results indicate that our community colleges could be doing better at providing adequate space of our students to sit, study and eat on campus.

Hawkey (2004) explains that physical space, or the special aspect of community to be of great significance for undergraduate students (p. 131). Students in this current study also believe that a place to sit and socialize is important for social integration and success. It is Hawkey’s (2004) conclusion that in the absence of such places, students are isolated and sometimes lonely (p. 131).

The majority of colleges and institutes offer specific services for students with disabilities. Of the 61 participating institutions in the Pan-Canadian Study, 9 in 10 confirmed that they offer services specifically for students with disabilities. Most post-secondary institutions can accommodate students in all seven of the disability type categories which include: blind/visually impaired, mental health, or medical (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 2, 2008, p.69). Services to students with disabilities are provided for the most part through a centralized office with a specific mandate to do so. Smaller institutions that serve less than 10 student0ls with disabilities tend to provide services on a case-by-case basis through a student services offices intended for all students, with or without disabilities. The services provided work towards removing institutional barriers, both physical and attitudinal, and ensure that the students receive the necessary accommodations whether academic or physical, to enable them to pursue

Student participation in campus activities provides a good measure of student engagement in college. Generally, just as for non-disabled students, the Pan-Canadian Study reports that students with disabilities spend more time just hanging out in the cafeteria, at the student pub and games room, and in the library. However, students with disabilities are more likely to have interacted with a peer mentor, to be involved in student association activities or in special interest clubs, but less likely to participate in intramural or varsity sports. The National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS) has developed a very useful guide entitled *Making Extra-curricular Activities Inclusive – A Guide for Campus Programmers* which describes the benefits of participation in extracurricular activities for personal growth, health and wellness, skills development and to increase students’ sense of belonging and commitment to their institution and academic achievement. This guide also identifies some of the barriers that these students face that prevent them from participating in extracurricular activities, including lack of transportation to and from events, lack of accessible material formats, and lack of access to the location. As well, the ways that events are advertised often do not consider the needs of students with disabilities, so the students are unaware of campus activities (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 2, 2008, p.75).

No students self-identified as a student with a disability in the current study, so no comments about the provision of student disability services were elicited.

Other areas of specific interest for colleges and institutes are the service areas specifically for students that self-identify as Aboriginal students, visible minority students or immigrant students. The Pan-Canadian Report 1 and 2 (Human Resource Social Development Canada,
Report 1, 2007 and Report 2, 2008) examined the perceptions of these three identified groups of services provided.

David Holmes (2005) (as cited in Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 2, 2008, p.18) classifies the barriers for Aboriginal students into six categories:

1. Historical: educational system as tool for assimilation, residential schools.

2. Educational: high school completion rates among Aboriginal people are below the national average and in 2001, 43% of the Aboriginal population between the ages of 20 and 24 had not completed high school. Lack of high school credentials makes acceptance into PSE programs difficult.

3. Socio-cultural: the number of Aboriginal faculty members continues to be small in PSE institutions. Furthermore, PSE institutions are often located in cities that may be unfamiliar and unappealing to Aboriginal students from smaller communities. Last, one cannot ignore the presence of racism towards Aboriginal people in Canadian society.

4. Geographical: distance from post-secondary institutions adds to the cost of attending PSE and reduces participation.

5. Personal/Demographic: the Aboriginal population is young, the median age is 24.7 compared to the non-Aboriginal median age of 37.7 (Holmes, 2005, p. 10), and is growing faster than any other group in Canada. Despite this, Aboriginal students tend to be older and are more likely to have dependent children or adult family members. The Aboriginal population also has a higher occurrence of disabilities than the rest of the Canadian population, adding another difficulty to overcome for many potential students.

6. Economic: Aboriginal people in Canada have an average income that is 64% of what the rest of Canada earns on average (Holmes, 2005 as cited in Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 2, 2008, p.18). Attitudes towards debt are less understood for Aboriginal people, however it is noted that aversion to debt may be

Holmes (2005) (as cited in Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 2, 2008, p.18) notes that in 1969 there were only 100 Aboriginal students attending university. Thus, it is important to consider how the education system, as it relates to Aboriginal people in Canada, has changed over time. While improvements have been made over the last 40 years, inequality in post-secondary participation is still too great (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 2, 2008, p. 17).

The term Aboriginal describes an incredibly diverse group of people including First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. In 2001, 4.4 % of the Canadian population identified themselves as having some Aboriginal ancestry, while 3.3 % of the Canadian population identified themselves as being an Aboriginal person (Holms, 2005). There is also the distinction between status and non-status Indians, association with a band or not, or living on or off a reserve (but this level of data is not examined here) (Human Resource Social al Development Canada, Report 2, 2008, p.18). There were no identified Aboriginal students in this study.

In 2001, recent immigrants accounted for over 3% of all Canadians. Canada’s immigration system has undergone two significant changes in the last couple of decades. First, Canada is admitting a higher proportion of immigrants with post-secondary education. In 2001 more than 40% of the immigrants admitted to Canada had a bachelor’s degree or higher. This compares to only 22% with similar qualifications admitted in 1991. The second change is that the country of origin of immigrants is now less likely to be European or North American. Between 1991 and 2001, nearly half of the immigrants to Canada came from Eastern, South-East, or Southern Asia (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 2, 2008, p.33).
As Tinto (1975) points out, the two key spheres of the college experience are the academic and social. Data from the Pan-Canadian Report 1 and 2 (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007 and Report 2, 2008) indicate that visible minority students are less integrated in both of these areas. These results are corroborated by visible minority students’ academic performance, as they spend less time studying, complete homework on time less often, and are more likely to drop a course during their first term (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 2, 2008, p. 61).

This finding is inconsistent with that found in this study pertaining to the ethnically diverse student. It was found that 48% of student participants saw good grades, academic success, completing the program, and graduation as keys to achieving their goals. In fact, 84% saw hard work as a key attribute of their respective role models. This leads to the conclusion that the ethnically diverse student in this study is focused on hard work, obtaining good grades, and academic success.

Students participating in this study commented that the very high tuition that must be paid by international students gave rise to negative experiences (100% of self-identified international students representing 12 of the 25 students participating in this study), they also reported a lack of prayer facilities, a lack of ethnic food offerings on campus, and that they found the fact that those of a visible minority background were quite often mistaken for international students (those not born in Canada/new immigrants) because of their ethnic appearance to be a negative experience. However, overall, the student participants felt that their student associations/federations were doing an excellent job of providing activities for interaction with their peers outside of the classroom.
These results correspond with the results of the Pan-Canadian Report 1 and 2 (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, and Report 2, 2008). At the end of the term, 62% (slightly less than two in three) of the participants in the Pan-Canadian Report 1 and 2 (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, and Report 2, 2008) believed their college or institute tries “quite a bit” or “very much” to help students and faculty interact regularly. Few students felt that their institution treats students like numbers and almost half felt that their college includes student views when creating policy. Overall, student responses indicate they believed their institution was not only concerned about their success but also provided the necessary resources. They neither perceived their college as being highly selective nor did they feel that they were treated “like numbers in a book.” The picture that emerges is one of Canadian colleges and institutes as institutions that are student and success oriented (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, p. 55).

*Socio-economic status.*

Closely tied to the awareness of the structure of the organization is socio-economic status. Peters (2004) found a high correlation between dropping out and low socio-economic status (p. 53). He also found that factors affecting the likelihood of dropping out include, “poverty, discrimination, boredom and white male privilege … personal problems, peer pressure, family problems, financial difficulties, dislike and boredom with school and academic failure” (pp. 30-31).

Student participants in this study did comment that they believed that their experience would be different if their economic status were different. Most students associated having money with the ability to have more time to work on their studies and to socialize. They viewed having more income as having more freedom to make choices.
While student participants in this study did not see their socio-economic status as a barrier to applying to college, they did see a lack of on campus work, work study programs, or employment as a barrier to completing their studies. Without an income, they commented, they would not be in a position to pay their tuition and continue.

The greatest difficulties identified by students in the Pan-Canadian Report 1 and 2 (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, and Report 2, 2008) were balancing the demands of school, family and studies as well as financing their college education. For many, these external demands meant little time was spent on campus engaged in activities outside the classroom. In spite of this, students had positive experiences with peers and faculty and thus remained committed to their college and to the prospect of graduating with a credential (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, p.61).

Forty-one per cent of students in the Pan-Canadian Report 1 and 2 (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, and Report 2, 2008) reported they found it quite or very difficult to find time to work and study and balance demands of school and family, as well as dealing with program workload (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, p.51).

The Pan-Canadian survey results confirm that obtaining adequate funding to cover the various expenses associated with going to college was an ongoing concern (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, p.35). Students working for pay while studying in college or university is a well-documented phenomenon (Junor & Usher, 2006). It is presumed that first year students who work too many hours are more likely to have academic difficulty and to leave school.
The participating institutions provide educational opportunities for those who cannot afford to attend a residential institution, need to work part-time, have family responsibilities, and may spend considerable time commuting. These students are often described as “parkers,” those who drive to a campus parking lot, attend classes, return to their car, and leave campus. For these students the college experience is the classroom (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, p.57). The engagement of these “parkers” also related to a low level of career exploration activity during high school and, no doubt, to their stage of development (Erikson, 1959; Chickering, 1969) (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, p. 32).

Contrary to these findings, the ‘parkers’ in this study expressed a commitment to their learning and career goals that were focused and driven. One student talked of pursuing a law degree and one talked about travelling overseas to work in humanitarian efforts. While very different in nature, both career ambitions require a clear and focused career plan, combined with a great deal of hard work and perseverance. It might just be that students are working, caring for family, and want to complete their education so badly that they’re willing to sacrifice the social aspects of being a student, and something they don’t view as a negative.

Almost all students are attending colleges and institutes to obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for a career. College and institute students have a definite job focus and this can create a tension between persisting in a program of study and leaving if a job becomes available (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, p.41).

It is well documented that as a barrier to success, one’s socio-economic status can be overcome by improved accessibility to college programs for disadvantaged and minority students (Vision 2000 Steering Committee, (1990). Ways to improve accessibility might include more aggressive recruitment, stronger ties with minority business communities, increased availability
of financial assistance, grants, scholarships, awards, and entrance bursaries. The more opportunities we can provide to students to access these forms of educational assistance, and the more opportunities we can provide to students to realize that assistance is available, the quicker we will see the removal of the socio-economic status barrier.

**Social integration.**

It is also suggested by the literature that a lack of social integration by minority students may be a factor in hindering their success. A lack of, “informal peer group association, extra-curricular activities and encounters with college faculty and administrative personnel” (Peters, 2004, p. 55) may result in students dropping out. Peters further comments that, “the more students interact with other students, with faculty and participate in extra-curricular activities in college, the greater the chances of persisting” (p. 66).

A good number of students in this study commented that social networks (interacting with friends and belonging to groups) was one of the most important factors in their enjoyment of their college experience and in their success at college. They also commented that their colleges’ student federations/associations are doing a great job at putting on events and social activities for the diverse student population. While the social integration was enjoyable for these students, they did not see it as a barrier to success.

In any event, colleges could be doing a better job at encouraging clubs, associations, cultural events, and cultural foods through the services provided to students. The researcher’s experience with one college suggests that it doesn’t take a lot of effort. It can be something as simple as a Caribbean canteen in the school cafeteria. This creates a positive atmosphere in which students of Caribbean culture can experience a taste of home and students of other cultural backgrounds can share the experience.
Racism can also be considered a barrier to social integration. However, in this study, as Peters (2004) found in his study, race and racism was not perceived by many participants to be a factor leading to negative experiences at college. Such a finding is in contrast with previous research by Loo and Rolison (1986) (Peters, 2004, p. 265) who report racist experiences as one of the major factors affecting the persistence of minorities in schools in the United States (Peters, 2004, p. 265). This finding is also inconsistent with Dei’s (1997) findings and the general literature on schooling. Dei’s study shows that students believe that for Blacks to do well in school they have to work harder than whites, and even when they do, this is sometimes not recognized and if it is, the recognition is accompanied by a negative comment to reduce its effect.

This researcher believes that colleges and institutes are providing an education that fosters an environment of inclusiveness and provides the tools students need in order to be successful in their chosen career paths. The challenge comes in making the students aware of these resources and their utilization.

The results of the Pan Canadian Report 1 and 2 (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, and Report 2, 2008) depict the first term experience as one in which the majority of students have positive interactions with other students and faculty. Students considered their academic experience to be positive and, overall, survey respondents were very satisfied with their college experience and with their institution. Indeed, the majority felt they were gaining the knowledge and skills they needed to be successful in the future even though many felt they were weak in a variety of basic academic and learning skills areas and could use the help of corresponding college services (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, p.60).
A good example of a social integration activity that could be delivered in a more purposeful way is first year orientation. Ideally this would be delivered college-wide and include events that promote contact with other students, faculty, and college/institute services. The inclusion of information about the demands of their programs and future job prospects would also help promote career clarity and academic integration (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, p.60).

Tinto’s (1975) model of student departure emphasizes the role of social integration on campus. The greater the level of social integration the more likely a student is to persist (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, p.52). In Tinto’s model, academic and social integration are defined by measures such as grade average, academic behaviour, and interaction with peers and faculty (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, p.25).

Two-thirds of students in the Pan Canadian Report 1 and 2 (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, and Report 2, 2008) agreed that student friendships in college have helped them cope with the stress of college life. In addition, almost four in five respondents agreed that they felt like they “fit in” at their college. A small percentage of students (17%) reported finding it difficult to meet and make friends with other students (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, p.45).

Other research (Dietsche, 1990) indicates that students’ perceptions of their program and college studies can exert a considerable influence on their academic behaviour. The results of the end of term Pan Canadian Report 1 and 2 (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, and Report 2, 2008) survey provide some understanding of the degree to which students

**Diverse faculty and administration.**

As our student body continues to diversify, our faculty and administration remains amazingly white and middle-class. Over the last decade we have seen the movement of women into leadership roles in the college. However, there is work to do to improve the cultural diversity of our faculty, staff, and administration and our understanding of diversity and its impact.

All can benefit from diversity in the staff, faculty, and administration of a college. They “not only provide role models for minority youth, but bring diverse teaching styles, modes of communication and knowledge into schools for the benefit of all students” (Dei et al., 2000, p. 176). With an increased focus on hiring plans, succession planning, and recruitment plans, colleges can become more representative of the communities they serve.

However, on the contrary, the results of this study, and Peters’ (2004) study, also suggest that institutional factors such as diversity of the faculty did not directly impact the students’ experience. Student participants reported that they experienced very good rapport and interaction with college faculty because college faculty treated them with respect. A number of researchers have argued that the quality of student–faculty interaction can have a substantial impact on persistence and in fact is essential in retaining students. Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) for example, report that freshman-to-sophomore persistence was positively and significantly related to the total amount of non-classroom contact and especially contact with faculty involving discussion of intellectual matters (Peters, 2004, p. 250).
A small percentage of respondents (4%) in the Pan Canadian Report 1 and 2 (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, and Report 2, 2008) indicated they “did as little work as possible” but the majority (86%), reported being “interested in what they were learning in classes.” More than 9 in 10 reported they “got along well with faculty and instructors” and only a very small percentage (5%) indicated they routinely “felt like an outsider or left out of things.” The results show that the majority of respondents were interested in their studies and got along well with faculty (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, p.47). Student attitudes can be powerful indicators of future behaviour. If students have a positive attitude about their educational experience they are likely to continue their studies and if not, they are more likely to leave college (Tinto, 1975) (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, p.39).

Only 17% of students participating in the Pan Canadian Report 1 and 2 (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, and Report 2, 2008) reported having difficulty meeting with faculty outside of class. This suggests that students, for whatever reason, chose not to meet with faculty outside of the classroom. The low levels of peer and faculty interaction reported in this current study suggest a significant percentage of students new to colleges and institutes are minimally engaged. Many students have commitments to part-time jobs and family members who are dependent upon them. Students have to balance many demands on their time, and as is discussed above, this is very difficult for many and results in little time spent interacting with peers and faculty on campus. In spite of this, those who did interact with faculty, reported positive interactions (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, p.53).

Approximately 75% of students participating in the Pan Canadian Report 1 and 2 (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, and Report 2, 2008) felt their
faculty were good teachers and had a good relationship with their students. The results indicate that most college faculty utilize a variety of instructional methods including lecture, group work, and demonstrations or projects. This is well advised given the diversity of the college/institute student population (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, p.55).

Students in the current study commented that they had good relationships with faculty and found that faculty were overall respectful in the classroom and played the role of mentor. However, improvement could be made in terms of the relationships with program coordinators or chairs. Student participants commented that they felt that getting to speak with these persons was a bit of a struggle and that they were not getting the assistance they needed.

While no examination has been made in this study of the challenges that may be faced in collecting data from students from across various years of study, Hawkey (2004) explains that upper year and graduate students were found to be more likely to have faculty contact and a connection to their discipline than their first and second year classmates (Andres & Finlay, 2010, p. 114). This in turn results in the possibility of greater integration into the educational community given they have had time to get comfortable with their environment. The majority of students participating in this study (64%) identified themselves as in their final year or final semester of study (semesters 3, 4, 5 and 6). Consequently, 34% of students identified as being in their first year of study (semesters 1 and 2). In following Hawkey’s (2004) analysis, the students in their last year of their program, may experience their educational environment differently than those in their first year, in addition to better connections with their faculty which transcends into a more positive educational experience.
Recommendations

A limited list of recommendations, based on the study findings, are provided, in the hope that the they will stimulate discussion and provide some concrete steps in the development of student services for the ethnically diverse student as well as indicate areas of badly needed further research.

The following are recommendations offered by the student participants:

1. More computer labs available for students to work outside of classroom hours and more hours available in these labs for students to work.

2. More quiet time in the library is needed to do independent study.

3. More open areas are needed for students to just go and “sit” so that they are not noisy in quiet areas such as the library, or sitting in the hallways and obstructing student traffic.

4. More on campus jobs are needed, especially in the area of work study for international students.

5. Better, more appropriate, and respectful prayer rooms are needed for students at the appropriate times of day for students of all faiths, but more specifically, of the Muslim faith, to pray when they need to.

6. A more developed website for international students so that information can be easily found, especially concerning Citizenship and Immigration.
7. A career centre focussed on the international student is required to meet the needs of this unique student group.

8. Improved food selections of an ethnic variety are recommended.

9. Improved advertising of all program areas is recommended so that employers don’t have a narrow view of what a particular college is good at.

In addition to the recommendations made by the student participants, this study brings to light a number of additional recommendations, based on forecast trends associated with the development of the GTA community college. The following recommendations are offered:

1. While an initial orientation exists, colleges should offer more orientation providing information about what it takes to be successful in college. Sessions should also include information about programs, available financial aid, scholarship, bursaries, and how to select appropriate courses.

2. Provide in-depth diversity training for all staff and faculty with ethno-specific counseling techniques that will enable them to appreciate and support the ethnically diverse student.

3. Expand collaborations between colleges and the business community to specifically assist the ethnically diverse student in obtaining employment during and after college; (especially international students).

4. Adopt more flexible and innovative methods of delivering course instruction to accommodate the specific needs of students with major responsibilities outside of college.
5. Expand resources and services offered for the development of language skills.

6. Special campus services designed to support minority students, including racial and ethnic theme houses, student organizations, and academic departments are recommended as research shows that such support positively contributes to minority student retention. (Humphreys, 1998).

7. There is value in developing a holistic student success model that colleges and institutes can refer to and adapt to their needs. This would begin at the recruitment stage, which should involve collaboration between colleges/institutes and secondary schools to offer clear career information in addition to program related information. Recruitment efforts should include or be followed by assessment of such factors as language capacity, prior learning, and academic skills. The assessment process would identify appropriate wrap-around support services students would benefit from at program inception, and the college/institute would offer a college-wide orientation to ensure students have the information they need to integrate into college life. The inclusion of work practicum or co-op experience in certificate, diploma, or degree programs is an additional element that facilitates success at the program level. This must also be supported by a policy framework and administrative structures that foster student success (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, p.61).

**Recommendations for Further Research**

1. Carry out more detailed research in the area of admissions, prior learning, and credential recognition as well as diversity and curriculum delivery techniques.
2. The study might have been more attractive to participants if focus groups were used instead of interviews. Peters (2004) recommends using an open-ended question style when interviewing to encourage respondents to give broader answers. This approach was utilized in this study. Questions were left for the student to interpret and no limit was placed on the length of the answer given. However, this researcher would recommend that this open approach be taken one step further through the use of focus groups for this type of participatory research.

3. The question “Are you successful?” was not asked directly of the students. To gain a better understanding of the relationship of the utilization of services to a successful outcome, more indirect questions were utilized. It has been suggested that the direct question may have been useful to ask. In future research pertaining to student success it is recommended that the question be asked, but that it be asked after answers have been provided to less direct questions concerning student success including questions about the utilization of those services that affect students’ success at college. Success depends on social inclusion, social integration, and academic achievement. As can be seen from the research findings in Chapter Four, students are successful by the virtue of being engaged, using services, and demonstrating integrity and commitment. This is also consistent with the research findings in the Pan Canadian Reports 1 and 2.

4. Do a comparative study using an all white student sample and compare the answers to those given by students of a diverse ethnic background to see if or how they differ.
5. One expert panel member (EP1) commented on the possibility of a comparative study into the views of minority students and non-minority students to see how each considers the question of mentors.

6. Based on recommendation 4, further research might also include a comparative student study, isolating minority and non-minority students with respect to answering all of the interview questions asked in this study.

**Implications**

Over the last 20 years, the GTA has experienced significant changes in its demographic profile to the extent that the three participating GTA community colleges have been recognized as the most culturally diverse PSE institutions in Canada. According to Statistics Canada, the GTA is the fastest growing region in Ontario. It is predicted by Statistics Canada (2007) that by 2031, the GTA population will be 8.3 million.

Toronto, where over 140 different languages are spoken, is considered to be one of the most multicultural cities worldwide. Half of the population of Toronto was born outside of Canada (as of 2001) and the city welcomes over 55,000 new immigrants annually.

In 2009, the number of international students attending community colleges in Ontario numbered 9,991. The three GTA community colleges participating in this study enrol 48% of this total international student population (OCAS, 2009). With an increase in immigration, there are more ethnically diverse student populations attending PSE. These students, together with increased international enrolment, and the already present first generation student population, demonstrate that the educational landscape will continue to diversify.
The importance of this issue has been highlighted in the Vision 2000 Steering Committee (1990) Report recognizing that with the changing “multicultural face of Ontario, there is increased demands on the colleges to improve accessibility for special communities ... such as members of minority groups ... More active intervention is necessary to provide equitable access” (p. 6).

With this information in mind, it is the purpose of this study to investigate the experiences of the ethnically diverse students attending three GTA community colleges, in particular their engagement with student services. It is the hope that through this study and those similar, that the ethnically diverse student population be provided the opportunity to speak out about and seek assistance with student services concerns, and overall college processes and practices that these ethnically diverse students feel can assist them in their overall success at college. This study gives the ethnically diverse student a voice. But this voice must be heard.

In the course of the study, a number of themes that serve to organize the issues that the ethnically diverse student faces in the educational environment were identified and measured against the overarching research question and subsidiary questions: Are GTA community colleges meeting the challenges and opportunities of diversity to facilitate success for all students?

These themes are descriptive and through sharing these themes with college administrators, faculty and staff, it is the hope that this research will assist in providing these college professionals, the means to ensure that the needs of the ethnically diverse student are being met. These themes include (but are not limited to) the following:
1. **Eurocentric curriculum and delivery.**

With a more inclusive pedagogy, students will be less likely to experience the negative effects of language barriers and cultural differences. In addition, through orientation of new faculty, the provision of examples of effective classroom management, and demonstrations of effective delivery techniques, administrators can assist faculty in increasing inclusiveness. While the students participating in this study did not raise this as an issue they did comment that there should be a more ethnically representative faculty, and that the more diverse the student body, the more students are satisfied.

2. **School structure / organization not working.**

It is apparent that the way a school is structured can have a great impact on one’s experience in learning there. That is why administrators must take care to ensure that the structure of the school, its policies, and processes do not foster an environment of discrimination and inequity.

Aside from the aesthetic appearance of the school, one must also consider the internal school programming and its inclusiveness of students of minority backgrounds. Introducing apprenticeship programs, employment opportunities with minority employers, and building relationships with the minority communities, their associations and organizations, will assist in building quality programming accessible to all.

3. **Poor socio-economic status.**

The more opportunities we can provide to students to access assistance, and the more awareness of these opportunities we can provide, the quicker the barriers of socio economic status will be removed. Student participants in this study did not see their socio-economic status as a barrier to applying to college, but they did see a lack of finding employment (on or off
campus) as a barrier to complete their studies. Without an income, they commented that they would not be in a position to pay their tuition and continue.

4. **Lack of social integration.**

Tinto’s (1975) model of student departure emphasizes the role of social integration (interaction with peers and faculty) on campus. The greater the level of social integration the more likely a student is to persist (Human Resource Social Development Canada, Report 1, 2007, p.52). Students saw the greatest barrier to their success (and to social integration) as balancing the demands of their studies with those of work and family. Students in this study commented that social networks, that is, friends and group memberships, were by far one of the most important factors in their enjoying their college experience and being successful in college.

5. **Lack of diverse faculty / administration (role models).**

All can benefit from diversity within the staff, faculty, and administration in a college. They “not only provide role models of minority youth, but bring diverse teaching styles, modes of communication and knowledge into schools for the benefit of all students” (Dei et al., 2000, p. 176). By increasing diversity through hiring plans, succession planning, and recruitment plans, colleges can better represent the communities they serve.

Changes are already taking place within the GTA community colleges studied. These include the creation of a “Student Success and Engagement Coordinating Committee” to conduct research into why students withdraw, the creation of clearer retention rates, and to assist in the development of an enhanced academic advising model and in the creation of a new survey to replace the current FITS survey to a more streamlined questionnaire. Other colleges are working to facilitate better collaboration between student service personnel and full- and part-time faculty
to improve the impact of registration, financial aid, academic advising, program transfer
advising, peer tutoring, and the use of the writing and math centres. While others are redrafting
college values to reflect the changing face of the student body, and still others are embarking on
the creation of a larger and permanent prayer room to accommodate a growing number of
Muslim students who need to pray throughout the day.

As the statistics tell us, diversity in the GTA will continue to increase and with this
comes challenges such as ensuring that the campus environment in our GTA community colleges
embraces diversity to ensure students feel welcome and have the right tools to be successful.
This study can be used as a tool to assist the college professional (administrator, faculty or staff)
in assessing the gaps that need to be filled in order to assist the ethnically diverse student to
achieving his/her goals and to be successful.

It is hoped that the results presented in this study along with the results of the Pan-
Canadian reports will help to increase understanding of the pathways that students from these
underrepresented groups have taken to get to college, their attitudes and perceptions towards
their learning experiences and needs, and the support services that will help these students to
overcome barriers, enhance their experience at college, and contribute to the successful
completion of their programs. The results also inform colleges and institutes of the need to
increase the effectiveness of services and programs offered to students from these
underrepresented groups. Furthermore, this study and these reports contribute to the pool of
research that will allow provincial and federal governments to create policies and programs for
increasing access to post-secondary education.
Limitations

A limitation at the conclusion of this study presents itself in comparing identified needs from a limited number of students not chosen at random may not generalize or transfer to experiences of the general population. As such the recommendations made as a result of this study are more “ideas to consider.” The findings of this study were drawn from colleges in the region of Toronto with a relatively small purposeful sample size of 25 participants. Thus, because of the small sample size and the utilization of purposive sampling techniques, generalizations to the larger population cannot be made. However, it is assumed that this study will serve as a jumping off point for further research in this area.

Also, only a small segment of a much larger group of ethnically diverse students was examined and did not engage Aboriginal student participants or students with disabilities and therefore is a limitation in that findings cannot be generalized.

Thirdly, a limitation has been observed in that the focus of this study is only on community colleges and not other post-secondary institutions.

Final Comments From the Expert Panel

This expert panel enhanced the study’s practical focus and contributed to a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by the ethnically diverse student.

The use of an expert panel has not only assisted in refining the research questions, but they also served in providing a gap analysis and helped define the findings in a broader context. For instance, one panel member found the basis of the study to be “a very important subject and the questions have succeeded in soliciting significant results.” Another panel member explained that the answers students gave in relation to questions asked, must be examined in light of the
particular students’ own perceived biases and cultural differences. Another panel member challenged my ‘whiteness’ in conducting interviews with ethnically diverse students. As Helms (1992, p. 61) states in introducing her psychosocial White Racial Identity theory, “to raise the awareness of white people about their role in creating and maintaining a racist society and the need for them to act responsibly by dismantling it.” This challenge forced this researcher to take a look within myself and question my own beliefs, actions and biases, and most importantly, my naivety.

After reviewing the results of the interviews, one panel member commented that the interviews helped identify needs in the areas of administrative support services, job referral services, faculty support, cultural adaptation, future research in the area of mentoring, and an examination of religious differences.

With reference to administrative support services, it was recommended that focus groups be conducted among administrators to determine why support services and access to counselors may not be as accessible as they should be.

It was also recommended that job referral services could benefit from more awareness and more resources for students in terms of a more reasonable cost for books and more computer time. Recommendations concerning cultural adaptation include more ethnic foods (a possible project for the colleges’ culinary schools) and more outreach such as providing more speakers on outreach strategies to improve participation and representation of minority students in student government.

A recommendation for comments concerning religious differences includes accommodation in the form of more prayer rooms.
Conclusion

This researcher has always had an interest in culture and its relationship to education. Having explored culture in prior research on curriculum development and conflict resolution models in the elementary school and legal context, it was natural to want to explore such concepts in higher education, informed by the following definition of culture:


With these characteristics of culture in mind, it becomes even clearer that culture can have a powerful effect on how one is socialized in the school environment from pre-kindergarten to post-secondary. After all, as Cartledge (1996) points out, “next to the family, the school is probably the most important socializing agent in our society and is viewed as having considerable influence on the development of the self” (p. 20).

Based on an examination of the literature, to ensure student success, administrators and leaders of colleges must create a learning environment that is:

1. welcoming;
2. respectful;
3. provides a classroom experience that reflects the diversified cultural environment;
4. addresses the lack of cultural diversification in faculty teaching in the classroom; and
5. addresses the lack of diversity of those in the administration to improve the level of understanding of issues, race and culture.
Future research needs to focus on experiences intrinsic to the ethnically diverse student as well as how institutions cope with diversity. To accomplish this, future research should involve a longitudinal component. Only then can we hope to understand in some greater measure the experience of the ethnically diverse student in college.

Due to the lack of specific demographic data on the ethnically diverse student participating in this study, it is not possible to pinpoint whether specific services are successful or not. Through the use of more student surveys, we are gaining more data, and over the next 5 years, we should be in a better position to predict the changes to programs and services that may be needed to better meet the needs of our diverse student body. However, we should be cautious about survey fatigue, a condition that is also becoming well known amongst our college communities today.

Similar to the work of Peters (2004), this study examines the experience of the ethnically diverse student at the community college level in addition to their utilization of student services offered at each of their respective colleges. Because of the dearth of information on this topic, it is hoped that the present study will stimulate discussion and provide the basis for more in-depth study of the very important issues involved.

A number of important points emerged from this study. First, students are concerned about their future. Whether it is the international student seeking immigration status, or the permanent resident in the final year of his or her program, all students are concerned about finding work placements, co-op positions, and jobs upon graduation.

In addition, students genuinely enjoy their experience at college and find the applied and hands on nature of their study as well as small class sizes and the social networks they build to
be vital to their success. They also feel that they have great teachers who serve as mentors and facilitate the establishment of job connections.

The majority see having a career path in mind, being dedicated, getting good grades, and working hard as important factors for success. These factors were also mentioned in the context of the role models each discussed. The common characteristic of these role models was that they are hard working. However, they do have concerns about the availability of space to study, to socialize with friends, and to pray.

It is promising to see that some changes are occurring in the three GTA community colleges that participated in this study already. One of the colleges has put in place a plan for renovating their existing prayer room to make it larger and plans to make it available for more hours during the day. It was reported that students were using bathroom stalls to pray due to the lack of available space. Also, one of the colleges has expanded the services of their international office to serve students at two campuses associated with the college and has begun building a website to meet these needs. Another of the colleges has moved to the forefront of diversity training by instituting programs for faculty to help them meet the diverse needs of their students. And yet another college has recently completed renovations to its student designated space, where students can just sit and relax or do homework, eat lunch or socialize, to include an open area in which students can socialize and relax.

However, it is this observer’s view that leadership must be initiated by the administrators within the college. Administrators should model the action of embracing diversity. Only then can both faculty and administrators take on a leadership role in this changing educational environment.
Based on the preceding examination of the factors that inhibit and assist in student success, there is a great deal that faculty and administrative leaders can do to provide leadership in the area of meeting the needs of a diverse student body. This includes ensuring the college environment is welcoming, respectful, and provides a diverse classroom experience and diverse role models in the classroom and in administration. To be effective leaders in this context, faculty and administrators need to improve their knowledge of the culture of the community college as well as engaging in their own professional development in regard to issues of race and culture.

Ng et al. (1995), points out:

To serve students best in the twenty-first century, administrative and faculty leadership must outfit their organizations to be able to stand on the foundation of change and make good choices in reaction to the trends that will impact the way community colleges help students learn.

In turn, administrators must coach faculty to ensure student needs are being met in the classroom through a diversified curriculum, appreciation of varied learning, and inclusive pedagogy. Strategies for improved learning may include classroom management tools and delivery techniques. In order to do this, faculty and administrators must examine the diverse ways students learn and communicate today.

Lastly, it is the responsibility of administration to recruit and mentor a diversified faculty and staff. “Employment equity and diversity in schooling is critical … A representative staff can provide role models for students, contribute a diversity of world views to the school culture, and validate difference for students” (Dei et al., 2000, p. 185).

As the Vision 2000 Steering Committee (1990) document tells us, colleges must “develop curricula that meets the combined cultural aspirations and occupational needs of
students” (p. 7). In addition, the document recognizes the significant multicultural changes in Ontario as more immigrants from Africa and other non-European countries make Canada their home. This mandate must be carried out so that people from all cultures will have an “equal opportunity to succeed” (Peters, 2004, p. 11).

Similarly, Levin (1997) contends that,

community colleges in the United States and Canada are expected to be responsive and adaptable…. Community colleges articulated a mission to serve the underserved, to provide education for the disadvantaged, and to offer opportunities for adults to receive education and training. (p. 138)

As this study suggests, there is much work to be done as Canada, Ontario, Toronto, and the community college landscape continue to become more diverse.

In conclusion, there is hope for the students of the future. Every student should have every opportunity to be successful, and be provided with a learning environment that is welcoming, respectful, diversified, and inclusive. And the first step is broader and deeper awareness that adapting to diversity is necessary for our collective survival and the economic progress of the society at large.

With more and more immigrant children arriving in Canada daily, it is imperative that our educational systems be designed in a way that meets their needs. The numbers are not decreasing. To conclude, note the following quote authored by Kai James found tucked away in the inside cover of Carl E. James’ text (1999):

As hard as it may be to believe,
In Canadian society, issues of race and ethnicity are often ignored.
With so little acknowledgement of our diversity,
We will remain blind to our reality.
References


Helms, J.E. (1992). A Race is a nice thing to have: A guide to being a white person or understanding the white persons in your life. Topeka, Kansas: Content Communications.


Human Resources Development Canada (as it was then). (2001). Recent immigrants have experienced unusual economic difficulties. Ottawa, Ontario, Canada: Author


Appendix A
Participant Interview Questions

Principal Researcher: Tracy Ryder
Tel: 416-460-3839
Email: ryderglass@sympatico.ca

January, 2009

Adapting to the Ethno Cultural Differences of Students: Analysis of GTA Community Colleges

Interview Questions

General

1. What semester/year are you in?

2. What have you liked most about attending college?

3. What do you dislike most about attending college?

4. Do you think your experience would be different if you were male/female?

5. Do you think your experience would be different if your economic status were different?

6. What extracurricular activities are you involved in?

7. Who are your role models? Why?

8. Tell me about your most unpleasant experience in college.

9. Tell me about your most pleasant experience in college.
Goals

10. What are your academic and career goals?

11. How do you hope to accomplish these goals?

12. Do you feel your college has been successful at helping you reach your goals? How?

13. Is there anything you feel your college could do to help you better achieve your goals?

College services

14. Have you ever used the services of your college?

15. If yes, which services have you used and were they helpful?
   a. What do you think they could improve upon?
   b. What is missing?

16. If you have not used the services at your college, why not?

17. If you could change anything you want about your college, what would it be?
Appendix B

Wanted

Students to Participate in College Wide Research Project

*Adapting to the Ethno Cultural Differences of Students:*

*Analysis of GTA Community Colleges*

**PURPOSE OF RESEARCH?**

To consider the ways in which your college can better adapt and respond to ethno cultural differences of students

**WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?**

Students that are currently enrolled in a GTA college, are from an ethno cultural background, are at least 18 years of age, and have a desire to help their college help students succeed

**WHAT WILL I BE DOING?**

You will attend an interview with the researcher to which you will be asked approximately 20 questions as to your experience at college as a student from an ethno cultural background

**HOW DO I PARTICIPATE OR FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION?**

Contact Ms. Tracy Ryder, PhD Candidate with OISE/University of Toronto at ryderglass@sympatico.ca or by phone at 416-460-3839

OR

pick up an information sheet at your Student Federation office
Appendix C

Participant Information Letter and Consent Form

Principal Researcher: Tracy Ryder
Tel: 416-460-3839
Email: ryderglass@sympatico.ca

January, 2009

Adapting to the Ethno Cultural Differences of Students:
Analysis of GTA Community Colleges
Information Letter

Dear Potential Participant,

My name is Tracy Ryder (Principal Researcher) and I am a doctoral student in the department of Theory and Policy Studies at the Ontario Institute For Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT), focusing on Community College Leadership. I am independently conducting a research project, which will fulfill my final requirement for my PhD. This research project is supervised by my advisor, Dr. Charles Pascal, Executive Director of the Atkinson Foundation, the Early Learning Advisor to the Premier and Professor and Associate Coordinator of the Community College Leadership program with the department of Theory and Policy Studies.

Dr. Pascal can be reached at anytime during this research project to verify everything that I outline in this information letter, to answer any questions about the project that you may have, and verify that I have received ethical review approval from my home institution for this project. His contact information is as follows: 416-978-1233, cpascal@atkinsonfoundation.ca

I have been granted approval to conduct this research by The University of Toronto’s Ethics Review Board, and [College’s] Ethics Board, which you may verify through [College’s] Research Department. You may also contact [College’s] Research Department to discuss any issues or concerns that may arise regarding your participation in this project. [Note to UT ERB: This statement and the paragraph above is required of the college’s I am seeking administrative consent and ethical review from. Please see protocol submission under “consent process” for an explanation as to why this paragraph is included]

This research project examines how the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) community colleges can step up to the challenges and opportunities of diversity to ensure student success for all students. As a student, one of the first forms of contact you have with your college is through the variety of services available to you. Through a series of questions you will be asked your views on the services that you feel benefit you, those that do not and those that are needed in order to be successful in the community college environment.
Our community colleges continue to grow in both student programming and student body. Our students represent an ever-changing landscape of ethnicity, religion and culture. The purpose of this research is to give serious consideration to the ways in which an existing college must learn to adapt and respond to this changing landscape.

**Who can participate in the research?**
We are seeking students currently studying at your college and that come from an ethno cultural background to participate in this research. Students must be at least 18 years of age and it is preferred that students be in their final year of study in their program area.

The ethno culturally diverse student in the context of this research refers to the student of a racialized group. The term ‘racialized’ is used throughout this study in keeping with the usage suggested by the Ontario Human Rights Commission in its recently published “Policy and Guidelines on Racism and discrimination.” As the policy states, “When it is necessary to describe people collectively, the term racialized person or racialized group is preferred over racial minority, visible minority, person of colour or non-white as it expresses race as social construct rather than a description on perceived biological traits.” (www.ohrc.on.ca).

**What choice do I have?**
Participation is entirely voluntary. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the project at any time without giving a reason. I may also withdraw a participant if it is considered in the participant’s best interest or it is appropriate to do so for another reason. If this happens, the researcher will explain why.

It is the intention that each interview will be audio taped and later transcribed to paper; you have the choice of declining to have the interview taped. You will be given the option of receiving a copy of the transcripts of your interview by checking off the appropriate spot on the attached consent form and providing your email address. Your transcript will be sent to you by email within two weeks of your interview to review in order for you to add any further information or to correct any misinterpretations that could result. You will be asked to return the transcripts with any changes, corrections or deletions within two weeks from the date it is sent to you. The information obtained in the interview will be kept in strict confidence and stored at a secure location (a locked cabinet in my personal residence) Only my supervisor and I will have access to the data collected. All information will be reported in such a way that individual persons, schools and the respective colleges cannot be identified. Participant’s names will not be used in the study in reports, publications and presentations. All raw data (i.e. transcripts, field notes) will be destroyed five years after the completion of the study.

You may at any time refuse to answer a question or withdraw from the interview process. You may request that any information, whether in written form or audiotape, be eliminated from the project. At no time will value judgments will be placed on your responses nor will any evaluation be made of your responses. At no time will you be at risk of harm. Finally, you are free to ask any questions about the research and your involvement with it and may request a summary of the findings of the study by checking the appropriate box at the end of the consent form.
What will I be asked to do?

- attend an interview with me for approximately one hour on a date and time mutually agreed upon
- alternatively, attend an interview by phone and email with me as mutually agreed upon
- provide information pertaining to your experience with college services as a student of an ethno cultural background
- provide honest answers to the questions asked to the best of your ability concerning student services at your college
- consent to me using your answers anonymously as part of a data collection process in order to make recommendations to your college on student services
- provide feedback on the interview process
- consent to having the interview audio taped and transcribed

What are the risks and benefits of participating?

Through participating in this study you will be providing your college and fellow students a service in ensuring that their college is addressing the needs of the diverse student body and ensuring your fellow students can proceed on a path of success.

How will the information collected be used?

The answers to the questions provided in the interviews will be collected and tabulated for any similarities or differences. This information will then be cross referenced with recent research on student engagement and student services theories to conclude with some recommendations on what services might benefit a student of an ethno cultural background at a GTA community college, what services may be redundant and what services are potentially missing.

All responses will be kept confidential, and they will not be used in publications, reports or conferences. Responses will be kept locked in a filing cabinet by me in my personal residence and only my supervisor and I will have access to the data. It will be destroyed five years from the date of the completion of the study.

What do I need to do to participate?

Please read this Information Letter and be sure you understand its contents before you consent to participate. If there is anything you do not understand, or you have any questions, please contact me directly.

If you would like to participate, please contact me to set up an interview. You can then bring this signed information letter and consent form with you to the interview.

If you would like to conduct a telephone interview instead of in person, please sign the enclosed consent form (be sure to keep a copy along with this letter for your records) and return it via email or mail at the below address: Email: ryderglass@sympatico.ca
Mail: 8117 Main Street, Everett Ontario, L0M 1J0 Attn: Tracy Ryder (stamped envelope included)

Once received, you will be contacted as to potential meeting dates/times so please be sure to include your contact email address and/or phone number.
Thank you in advance for your participation,

Sincerely,

Tracy Ryder
PhD Candidate, Theory and Policy Studies in Education
Theory and Policy Studies in Education
OISE/University of Toronto
Telephone: 416-460-3839
Email: ryderglass@sympatico.ca

Dr. Charles Pascal
OISE/University of Toronto
Telephone: 416-978-1233
Email: cpascal@atkinsonfoundation.ca

By signing below, you are indicating that you are willing to participate in the study, you have received a copy of this letter, and you are fully aware of the conditions above.

Name: _____________________________________
Signed: _________________________________
Date: _________________________________

Please initial if you agree to have your interview audio taped: _____
Please initial and provide your email address if you would like to receive the transcripts of your interview: (email address)_______________________ (initial)____
Please initial if you would like a summary of the findings of the study upon completion: _____
Please keep a copy of this form for your records.
Appendix D
Recruitment Assistance Letter

Principal Researcher: Tracy Ryder
Tel: 416-460-3839
Email: ryderglass@sympatico.ca

January, 2009

Adapting to the Ethno Cultural Differences of Students:
Analysis of GTA Community Colleges
Information Letter

Dear Student Federation,

I am requesting your assistance in seeking voluntary participants from the general college population for my research project titled above. I am requesting your assistance in posting the attached recruitment poster on campus and to be distributed to your clubs.

My name is Tracy Ryder (Principal Researcher) and I am a doctoral student in the department of Theory and Policy Studies at the Ontario Institute For Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT), focusing on Community College Leadership. I am independently conducting a research project, which will fulfill my final requirement for my PhD. This research project is supervised by my advisor, Dr. Charles Pascal, Executive Director of the Atkinson Foundation, the Early Learning Advisor to the Premier and Professor and Associate Coordinator of the Community College Leadership program with the department of Theory and Policy Studies.

Dr. Pascal can be reached at anytime during this research project to verify everything that I outline in this information letter, to answer any questions about the project that you may have, and verify that I have received ethical review approval from my home institution for this project. His contact information is as follows: 416-978-1233, cpascal@atkinsonfoundation.ca

I have been granted approval to conduct this research by The University of Toronto’s Ethics Review Board, and [College’s] Ethics Board, which you may verify through [College’s] Research Department. You may also contact [College’s] Research Department to discuss any issues or concerns that may arise regarding your participation in this project. [Note to UT ERB: This statement and the paragraph above is required of the college’s I am seeking administrative consent and ethical review from. Please see protocol submission under “consent process” for an explanation as to why this paragraph is included]

This research project examines how the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) community colleges can step up to the challenges and opportunities of diversity to ensure student success for all students. As a student, one of the first forms of contact they have with their college is through the variety of services available to them. Through a series of questions student participants will be asked
their views on the services that they feel benefit them, those that do not and those that are needed in order to be successful in the community college environment.

In preparation for this research I have reviewed the college website information extensively. In order to ensure that I have not missed any important programs or services I will speak with the student service personnel, in an informal way, simply seeking institutional information.

Our community colleges continue to grow in both student programming and student body. Our students represent an ever-changing landscape of ethnicity, religion and culture. The purpose of this research is to give serious consideration to the ways in which an existing college must learn to adapt and respond to this changing landscape.

**Who can participate in the research?**
We are seeking students currently studying at your college and that come from an ethno cultural background to participate in this research. Students must be at least 18 years of age and it is preferred (but not required) that students be in their final year of study in their program area.

The ethno culturally diverse student in the context of this research refers to the student of a racialized group. The term ‘racialized’ is used throughout this study in keeping with the usage suggested by the Ontario Human Rights Commission in its recently published “Policy and Guidelines on Racism and discrimination.” As the policy states, “When it is necessary to describe people collectively, the term racialized person or racialized group is preferred over racial minority, visible minority, person of colour or non-white as it expresses race as a social construct rather than a description on perceived biological traits.” (www.ohrc.on.ca).

**Why am I seeking your help?**
As your college’s student federation, you will have a strong sense of the core college environment. As such you will have a better sense as to where the poster may appropriately be posted, have direct access to providing this information to your student run clubs and be able to provide students further information if needed. Additionally I ask your assistance in providing a safe and secure environment for meeting with the students. An office on campus or boardroom would be appropriate.

**What choice do participants have?**
Participation is entirely voluntary. If a student decides to participate, he/she may withdraw from the project at any time without giving a reason. I may also withdraw a participant if it is considered in the participant’s best interest or it is appropriate to do so for another reason. If this happens, I will explain why. They may at any time refuse to answer a question and at no time will value judgments or evaluations be made of their responses.

It is the intention that each interview will be audio taped and later transcribed to paper; participants have the choice of declining to have the interview taped. They will be given the option of receiving a copy of the transcripts from their interview in order to add any further information or to correct any misinterpretations that could result. The information obtained in the
interview will be kept in strict confidence and stored at a secure location (a locked cabinet in my personal residence). Only my supervisor and I will have access to the data collected. All information will be reported in such a way that individual persons, schools and the respective colleges cannot be identified. Participant’s names will not be used in the study in reports, publications and presentations. All raw data (i.e. transcripts, field notes) will be destroyed five years after the completion of the study.

What will participants be asked to do?
- attend an interview with me for approximately one hour on a date and location mutually agreed upon
- alternatively, attend an interview by phone and email with me as mutually agreed upon
- provide information pertaining to his/her experience with college services as a student of an ethno cultural background
- provide honest answers to the questions asked to the best of his/her ability concerning student services at your college
- consent to my using his/her answers anonymously as part of a data collection process in order to make recommendations to your college on student services
- provide feedback on the interview process
- consent to having the interview audio taped and transcribed

What are the risks and benefits of participating?
Through participating in this study the student will be providing your college and fellow students a service in ensuring that their college is addressing the needs of the diverse student body and ensuring your fellow students can proceed on a path of success.

How will the information collected be used?
The answers to the questions provided in the interviews will be collected and tabulated for any similarities or differences. This information will then be cross referenced with recent research on student engagement and student services theories to conclude with some recommendations on what services might benefit a student of an ethno cultural background at a GTA community college, what services may be redundant and what services are potentially missing.

All responses will be kept confidential, and they will not be used in publications, reports or conferences. Responses will be kept locked in a filing cabinet by me in my personal residence and only my supervisor and I will have access to the data. It will be destroyed five years from the date of the completion of the study.

What do students need to do to participate?
If a student is interested in participating, I ask that he/she contact me directly by email or phone as follows: Email: ryderglass@sympatico.ca Phone: 416-460-3839
If a student requests additional information from the Student Federation office, please feel free to provide the student with the attached Information Letter and Consent Form.
Once a student contacts me I will provide him/her with a copy of the attached Information Letter and Consent Form and follow the instructions accordingly. Once I have received the signed consent form I will arrange a time and date for the interview to occur.

Thank you for taking the time to assist me with this research and I look forward to the possibility of working with you.

Sincerely,

Tracy Ryder
PhD Candidate, Theory and Policy Studies in Education
OISE/University of Toronto
Telephone: 416-460-3839
Email: ryderglass@sympatico.ca

Dr. Charles Pascal
OISE/University of Toronto
Telephone: 416-978-1233
Appendix E
Letter Requesting Administrative Consent

Principal Researcher: Tracy Ryder
Tel: 416-460-3839
Email: ryderglass@sympatico.ca

January, 2009

Adapting to the Ethno Cultural Differences of Students:
Analysis of GTA Community Colleges

College A
College B
College C
Toronto, Ontario

Attention: Dr. X, Vice President, Academic

Dear Dr. X,

I am a graduate student in the Theory & Policy Studies in Education Department at the Ontario Institute For Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT), focusing on Community College Leadership and am currently planning a research project to fulfill my PhD requirements that will involve a student sample in attendance at your college. In order to begin the project, and seek ethical review from your institution, I require your written consent.

My advisor, Dr. Charles Pascal, Executive Director of the Atkinson Foundation, the Early Learning Advisor to the Premier and Professor and Associate Coordinator of the Community College Leadership program with the department of Theory and Policy Studies, supervises this research project. Dr. Pascal can be reached at anytime during this research project to verify everything that I outline in this information letter, to answer any questions about the project that you may have, and verify that I have received ethical review approval from my home institution for this project. His contact information is as follows: 416-978-1233, cpascal@oise.utoronto.ca [Note to UT ERB: the college’s that I am requesting administrative consent from require confirmation that I have received approval from my home institution before they will consider my request]
This research project examines how the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) community colleges can step up to the challenges and opportunities of diversity to ensure student success for all students.

Our community colleges continue to grow in both student programming and student body. Our students represent an ever-changing landscape of ethnicity, religion and culture. The purpose of this research is to give serious consideration to the ways in which an existing college must learn to adapt and respond to this changing landscape. As one of the largest (or the largest as the case may be) GTA community colleges, your student body represents this ever changing landscape and as such would best serve the purpose of this research.

As a student, one of the first forms of contact they have with their college is through the variety of services available to them. As a participant in this research project, students will be asked a series of questions as to his/her views on the services that they feel benefit them, those that do not and those that are needed in order to be successful in the community college environment.

It is my intention to provide recommendations to the institutions involved in this research as to the services provided to students of ethno cultural backgrounds in terms of how the students perceive such services.

We are seeking students currently studying at your college and that come from an ethno cultural background to participate in this research. Students must be at least 18 years of age and it is preferred (but not required) that students be in their final year of study in their program area.

The ethno culturally diverse student in the context of this research refers to the student of a racialized group. The term ‘racialized’ is used throughout this study in keeping with the usage suggested by the Ontario Human Rights Commission in its recently published “Policy and Guidelines on Racism and discrimination.” As the policy states, “When it is necessary to describe people collectively, the term racialized person or racialized group is preferred over racial minority, visible minority, person of colour or non-white as it expresses race as a social construct rather than a description on perceived biological traits.” (www.ohrc.on.ca).

The information gathered from the interviews will be kept in strict confidence and stored at a secure location (in a locked filing cabinet in my personal residence) to which only my supervisor and I will have to. All responses will be kept confidential, and they will not be used in publications, reports or conferences. All information will be reported in such a way that individual persons, schools, and their respective colleges cannot be identified. All data collected will be used for the purposes of a PhD thesis. All raw data (i.e. transcripts, field notes) will be destroyed five years after the completion of the study.

In terms of assistance, I am asking for your permission to also speak with your student federation for assistance in circulating my recruitment poster (attached) on campus and to their student run clubs. I would ask for your assistance in providing me with the appropriate contact person that may assist me with this task.
In preparation for this research I have reviewed your website information extensively. In order to ensure that I have not missed any important programs or services I will speak with your student service personnel, in an informal way, simply seeking institutional information.

If you agree to consent to this project, please sign the letter below and return it to me in the envelope provided. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (416) 460-3839 or at ryderglass@sympatico.ca. You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Charles Pascal at (416) 463-0690 or at cpascal@atkinsonfoundation.ca.

I understand that research involving human subjects requires ethical review before proceeding. If consent is granted, I will provide you and your Ethical Review Board with my application for Ethical Review as required.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation and support.

Sincerely,

Sincerely,

Tracy Ryder
PhD Candidate, Theory and Policy Studies in Education
OISE/University of Toronto
Telephone: 416-460-3839
Email: ryderglass@sympatico.ca

Dr. Charles Pascal
PhD Candidate, Theory and Policy Studies in Education
OISE/University of Toronto
Telephone: 416-463-0690
Email: cpascal@atkinsonfoundation.ca

__________________________________________
Administrator’s signature

__________________________________________
Date
Appendix F
E-Mail Script:
Interview Candidate After Expressing Interest

Hello (potential participant),

Thank you for contacting me about the research. I thought I would start off by giving you information as to what it is all about.

I have attached for you here the "Information Letter and Consent Form" that will provide you with further information as to what the research project is looking at. Please feel free to ask me any questions if any should arise after you review the information letter.

If you decide to participate, part of the information letter contains a consent form. The consent form simply seeks your permission for me to conduct the interview with you. I can collect it from you when we meet.

I have also attached for you here the "Participant Interview Questions". You are welcome to answer the questions on the document, save it and simply email it back to me, or I'm happy to meet with you in person to go over the questions. If you need me to explain any of the questions or their meaning, please don't hesitate to ask.

I apologize for using another email address. This email address is easier to attach files to. But you can reach me at either email address (ryderglass@sympatico.ca OR Tracy.Ryder@humber.ca) as I have them both linked.

Your (college student federation/association) has offered space for me to meet with students on campus. So if you decide you wish to participate please let me know and we can book a date/time that is convenient for you.

Thank you again for your help (student participant)!

Sincerely,
Tracy