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**HEQCO Research Conference:
Evaluating the Effectiveness of Ontario Post-
Secondary Student Services on
Academic Engagement of Recent
Immigrant Adult Students
(RIAS)**

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Background

- Many new adult immigrants have prior education and experience but may not be adequate in obtaining employment (Schellenberg & Maheux, 2007)
- 2/3 of adult immigrants seek further education as employment strategy (Stats. Canada, 2005; Annisef et al, 2010)
- Many are enrolled in a variety of programs in Ontario colleges and universities
- Currently, there are very few programs or services designed to meet the unique needs of RIAS



Research Questions

1. *Who are RIAS (24 years and older; less than 10 years in Canada)?*
2. *What is their level of engagement in both academic and non-academic components of undergraduate postsecondary education? Are they 'at-risk' students?*
3. *What major factors influence their ability to be fully engaged in academic life?*
4. *What types of student services would enhance RIAS success in postsecondary education?*



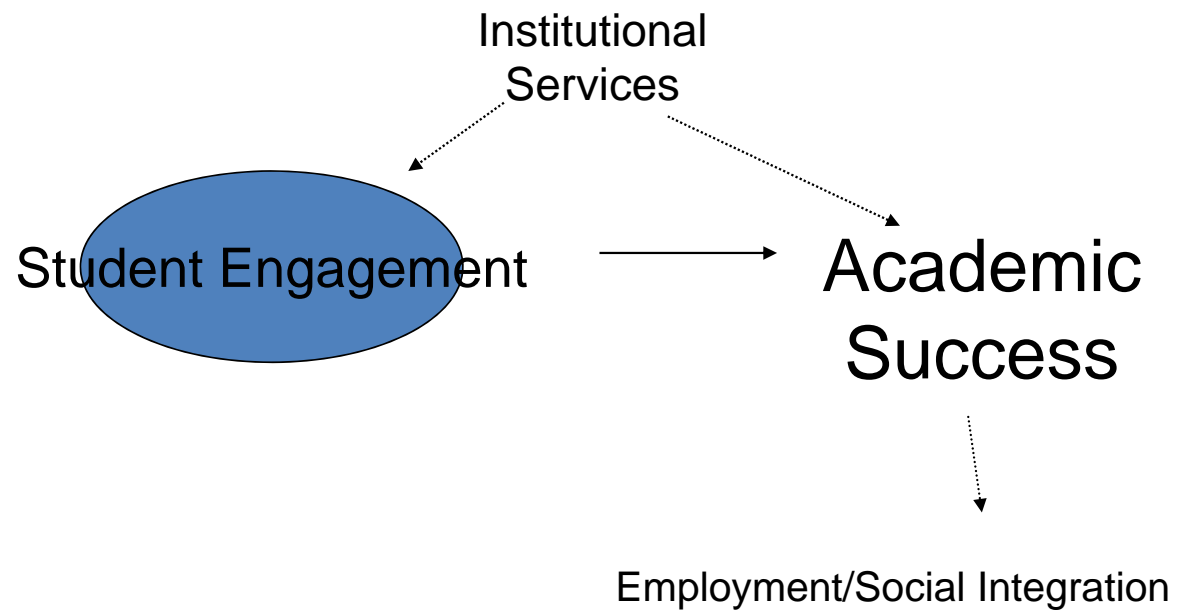
Research Design

- Mixed method, non-experimental study design; data collection from Sept. 09-August 2010
- Self-selected sample from 5 post-secondary educational institutions in Toronto: *York and Ryerson Universities; Centennial, George Brown and Seneca Colleges*
- Structured survey questionnaire and
- focus interviews of RIAS
- Individual interviews of student service staff



Conceptual Framework

Assumptions about RIAS Educational Experience





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Academically Engaged??



Courtesy of Yorku.ca





Student Engagement (S.E.)

- Coates (2006) defines S.E. as students' in-class and out-of-class experiences
- Consists of involvement with academic as well as non-academic, on campus activities (Astin, 1993; Grayson, 2008)
- Levels of engagement can be influenced by personal factors, in the case of RIAs, demands associated with being a being a recent immigrant



Unique Experiences of RIAS

Life Style changes may lead to distress. Sources include:

- *Loss-longing, unresolved attachment to homeland*
- *Novelty-newness, unfamiliarity with living and norms of social interaction*
- *Occupational adjustment*
- *Language-ability to be understood*
- *Discrimination-active or subtle*
- *Not Feeling at Home-feeling like a stranger*

Source: Dimensions of Demands of Immigration (Arion et al., 1998)



Q1: Who are the RIAS?

- Total Sample N=450; Sub-Sample Size: 149
 - university (n= 44) & 2 colleges (n=90)
 - 89.9% full time, in a variety of undergraduate programs; mostly health and business
 - Majority in Canada for 3 years or less
 - Mean age = 36 years
- Three distinct age groups: 18-30; 31-37 and 38-49 years
- Majority females (60%)



RIAS are very multicultural!!

Countries of Origin (N=128)

1. Asian Country origin 65 (50.8%)

(China; Hong Kong; Korea; Pakistan; Philippines; Sri Lanka; Taiwan, Vietnam; India)

2. NON-Asian

- European country origin **7 (.05%)**
- Middle Eastern country origin **9 (.06 %)**

3. Other country origins 47 (36.7%)



Q 2: How engaged are RIAs?

Answer: **Moderate academic and low non-academic!** 

Student Engagement Scales

Academic Engagement: 19 items;

*alpha =0.820***, N=124*

Non-Academic Engagement: 7 items;

alpha=0.682, N= 128

- Reliability Measured by Cronbach Alpha

(value above 0.7 suggests high reliability: *** significant)



Student Engagement Scale 'Key learning behaviours'

<i>S.E. Item</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D.</i>
ce1a Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions	2.83	.862
ce1c Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources	2.98	.992
ce1f Worked with other students on projects during class	2.84	.896
ce1h Put together ideas or concepts from different courses	2.73	.912
ce1k Used e-mail or other electronic means to communicate with an instructor	2.90	.927
ce1o Worked harder than you thought you could to meet instructors standards or expectations	2.65	.930

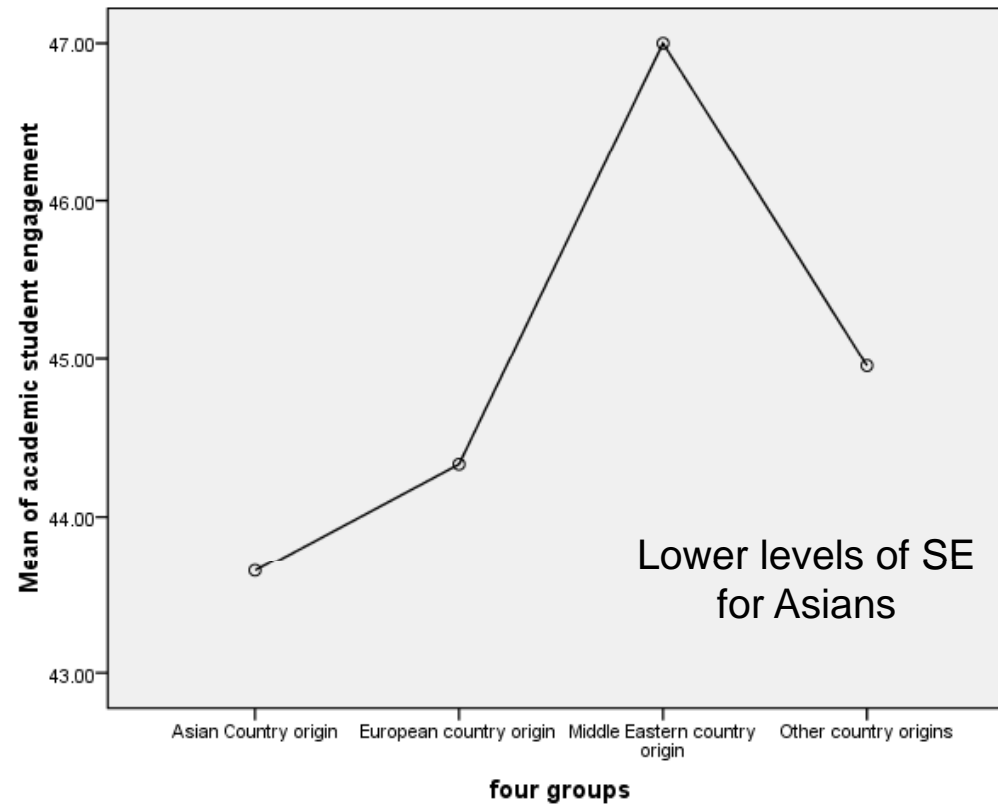


Q 3: What factors influence student engagement?

- Academic engagement not correlated with DI scores
- Females reported higher DI Scores than Males (Arian et. al, 2003)
- RIAS males (15.5) reported higher *non-academic* engagement than females (13.6)
- Country of origin: Asian students report lower levels of academic engagement as well as higher DI scores



Student Engagement * Country of Origin Interaction





Demands of Immigration Scale-key factors

di1a I miss the people I left behind in my original country	1.87	1.098
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di1b When I think of my past life, I feel emotional and sentimental	2.30	1.142
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di1l The work experience from my original country are not accepted	2.62	1.292
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di1g I am always facing new situations and circumstances	2.66	1.107
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Q4: What is the impact of student services?

VII.2 Student Services	Awareness	Frequency of Usage
Libraries and computing	70%	100%
athletics and recreation	90	Low
Counselling	90	Low
Tutoring	90	33%
career coaching	75	Low
international students	96	Low
language assessment	49	Low
assessment centre	47	36
housing	40	Low
child care	40	Low
mentoring	40	Low
diversity, human rights	40	Low
advising	40	Low



Conclusions (tentative)

1. RIAS demonstrate significant different levels of engagement (moderate to high levels of academic engagement; lower levels of non-academic engagement)
2. DI has an effect on only non-academic engagement
3. Gender differences evident only for non-academic engagement
4. Academic engagement may be independent of DI levels
5. RIAS from Asian countries experience higher levels of immigration distress; no age or time effect
6. SE (academic) and DI scales are statistically reliable measures for RIAS



Implications for Enhancing Academic Success

1. Reduce interpersonal barriers related to English language skills, in particular verbal English
2. Increase awareness of student services and availability of 'one-stop' services
3. Reduce immigrant distress via social integration/networks
4. Improve to access to financial assistance