

“I Am Definitely Not Leaving without A Degree.”: A View from the Crossroads of Informal and Formal Learning – The Transitional Year Program at the University of Toronto.

A Research Report by

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DEDICATION

To TYP Students
That come to the University of Toronto
With so much Wisdom
Yet so Eager to Learn
May your Lives be a Beacon
For all that Despair;
TYP and The University of Toronto
Would still be an intellectually poorer place
Without your shared stories
Thank You, R.C.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As documented herein, this report is a product of many heads, hands, and hearts. First and foremost to Those that give me the strength to do my academic jostling and searching, words are never enough. To the students of the class of 1999-2000, Thank You so much, without your courage, the stories would have never been told; TYP and The University of Toronto would be an intellectually poorer place without your shared stories - this report is dedicated to you. To the faculty members that participated in this project - Thank you. It was long coming, but here is the first step of the continuation of the documentation of your commitment and dedication to social justice, equity, and access to "excellent" education for all. To my fellow/former student researchers on this project Sheila Batacharya and Carolyn Stallberg-White, you fought a good fight, I wish you every success in your own doctoral research work. To members of this project - Rona Abramovitch, for administrative support; George Dei, for introducing me to the research job opportunity, for literature and critical commentary on the project while in progress; Rueben Roth, for critical comments and so much understanding for student plight and David Livingstone, for literature and conceptual frameworks on informal and formal learning - thank you all so much for giving me the support I needed to believe that this project was worth doing, trying as it was at times. To Keren Brathwaite, whose passion for TYP still burns, 30 years after its foundation, I hope your legacy will be honored someday soon - Thank you for the inspiration you give to students that pass through TYP. To my friend and godchild Chioma Ekpo who stuck through with me in the many (hand) re-writings of this report that she diligently typed - at slave wages from me. Chioma, I thank you my dear, without you, this report would still be a stack of papers on my desk as I despaired after each re-write - I hope you find your dream path soon. And to all my family and friends that heard me mourn about the pains of writing, disappearing from the circuit for weeks at a time, I am back - thank you for being there always.

PREFACE

Salutation to the Ancestors

Imi munondisesedza siku nesikati, rambai makandigumbatira Midzimu Yangu. To the Spirits of the Ancestors of the Native Peoples of this Land, may Your Presence make sacred our endeavors to remember You and ourselves. Remind us constantly, **lest we forget**, that Your descendants even though few due to the genocide meted out to You, their Ancestors, are still rightful heirs to this Land. Remind us, **lest we forget**, that You, through Your descendants have a lot to teach all of us that have made Your Land our home, violently and otherwise. Thank You for Your Presence.

We have not “lost our culture” or had it “stolen.” Much of the information that was available to us through our education process has been expropriated and consigned to deadwood leaves in libraries. The essence of Native culture still lives in the hearts, minds, and spirits of our folk. Some of us have forsaken our culture in the interest of becoming integrated. That is not the same thing as losing something. The expropriation of the accumulated knowledge of Native peoples is one legacy of colonization. Decolonization will require the repatriation and rematriation of that knowledge by Native peoples themselves. (Lee Maracle, 1996: 92).

This report begins with a salutation to the Ancestors (my own and those of this Land) to remind ourselves (reader and author) of the personal and collective histories we have, and bring to Canada, to Toronto, the University of Toronto (U of T) and the Transitional Year Program (TYP). I also begin this report with a quote from Lee Maracle to emphasize the importance of de-victimizing the historically oppressed, to reinstate the agency of the marginalized, and to call the historically oppressed to accountability about our own complicity in our own oppression - *in the name of “integration.”* This is key to realizing, acknowledging, and affirming that “We have not ‘lost our culture’ or ‘had it stolen’” so as to enable our search and demands for justice and equity in the education system and Canadian society at large to take on new meaning. I, therefore, would like to emphasize the importance of keeping this reality in mind in the process of reading this report, because it is conceptualized from a space of spiritual liberation and intellectual resistance in a hegemonic academy and Euro-Canadian culture more broadly.

I would also like to emphasize from the beginning that this report does not in any significant depth engage the conceptual and theoretical dimensions of informal and formal learning as explored by a

myriad of scholars, though a suggestive reference list is given at the end. Rather, this report seeks to capture the uniqueness of these forms of learning (informal and formal) as they have been experienced at U of T's TYP by those that participated in this study. Through a blending of statistics, reflections and quasi-narratives (portraits) of those that participated in the study (1998-2000; faculty; and 1999-2000 students), the report examines the vitality of informal learning (IL) and formal learning (FL) when these two consciously and simultaneously occur. This report attempts to bring forth the energy and dynamics produced at the intersection of IL and FL. That is, the varying renditions of the history and place of TYP at U of T and the Canadian education context, the interconnectedness of formal and informal learning in the life-long journey of learning. These are bold accounts that give their own solos while complementing and complemented by the ensemble of stories herein and elsewhere. But before I go into the mechanics of the product, I would like to contextualize the study and this report in particular, by going through a brief history of this project to the present report – as well as highlighting its layout. And from the onset, I would like to emphasize that even though I became the author of the finished product, the wealth of information herein was made possible by the contributions of various people. Those that contributed written pieces this report are: TYP's current Associate Director, Keren Brathwaite's speech found in Appendix Four (4) , TYP's current director, Rona Abramovitch, contributed a general overview piece on TYP, and this is followed by Carolyn Stallberg-White's statistical report on the first interviews done on TYP in 1998-1999 that gives us a quantitative sense of TYP where the rest of the report gives a qualitative perspective on students and faculty's experience of TYP. To preserve the integrity of the various writers' sensibilities, I have included the pieces in this report with little editorial meddling. This, I believe, allows each piece to blend into the rest of the document without being subsumed and vice versa. The hope is that the reader will find pleasure in reading the document as an ethnographic study of the crossroads of informal and formal learning at the University of Toronto.

In light of the foregoing, this project has been ongoing since 1998 as part of a much larger Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) funded national project on life-long learning - **New Approaches to Life-Long Learning** - led by Dr. David Livingstone of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). This larger project is sub-divided into several projects and this particular project – **Informal Learning at TYP** – was part of Group Three (3) – **Informal Learning Cultures**. Since 1998, this project has been through the hands of at

least three student researchers, including myself. The data contained in this report has been the result of a collaborative effort by Carolyn Stallberg-White, Sheila Batacharya, and myself. I have compiled this report based on data collected by Carolyn in 1998 – 1999 of faculty and staff interviews. The interview transcripts that I used to (re)construct the narratives found here were finalized and signed as accurate (with one exception) by staff and faculty and staff by the summer of 2000. The students' interviews were worked into a report by Carolyn, and as stated before, in also included in this report. In the second phase of the project, Sheila Batacharya conducted the student interviews in the spring to early summer of 2000. These, unlike the ones conducted by Carolyn, were hand recorded and verbally verified by students' participants for accuracy at the end of each interview. By a wide margin (as shall be discussed under methodology), the study has changed hands greatly affecting the final product as conceptual, theoretical, and methodological orientations tended to flow with the interests and strengths of the student researchers - under the general guidance of the project principles of course.

Thus, originally the project was quantitative in keeping with the larger project whose aim was to carry out a survey of how much informal learning was actually going on in the larger Canadian society. However, after the project's first phase, the research committee (which included Rona Abramovitch, project leader; George Dei, professor, OISE/UT; David Livingstone, professor, OISE/UT; and Rueben Roth, senior research officer, OISE/UT; Sheila and myself, both of us OISE/UT doctoral students) decided to make the study more qualitative. This decision was made in order to capture the nuances of informal and formal learning experiences at TYP that a quantitative methodology had not brought forth in the first phase. More importantly the committee agreed that the study had to focus more on TYP research interests in order to facilitate the process of learning what informal learning was brought to TYP by the students, and what this meant for formal learning at U of T and the larger Canadian educational context. Having agreed on this principle, the research design and tools of data gathering were overhauled, and the end product was a two-part questionnaire that accommodated both qualitative and quantitative dimensions – see appendices two and three.

Due to a Teaching Assistants' (TAs) strike at U of T in January 2000, the recruitment of research participants was not possible because the committee agreed to support the striking TAs by not crossing the picket line. This put a dent on the process and progress of the study as not much work

was done during that time. By the time the TA strike was resolved, the semester was well in the middle, and TYP students like all other students, were worried about and deep in their work to want to commit extra time to participate in the project. This meant that the whole process was pushed to the end of the semester. This did not mean that the quality of the information gathered was compromised, if anything, the process was rewarding and worth the wait, as Sheila and myself bought more time to hang out at TYP and get to know students much better. A significant difference worth noting in the dating of the quantitative data included in this report and the faculty and staff interviews were much “older” than the second phase student interviews because they had been conducted in 1998-99, and the class of 1998/1999 had graduated. However, as the report starkly shows, the issues discussed and addressed by faculty and staff were still relevant to the class of 1999/2000. Indeed, if I had not prefaced the report as such, it would be hard to dictate any data “age” difference, as the fundamental issues resonate throughout the different parts of the report – they read as though they were meant for each other. This, however, does not mean that the process of trying to seamlessly weave the report was not trying.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The major goal of the study was to examine and understand the types of informal knowledges TYP students brought and bring to the formal learning processes and spaces. The objectives were to use the information gathered to make a case for the valuing and validation of informally learned knowledges in the academy. It was also to explore possibilities of using students’ informally learned knowledge as resources material for TYP students’ formal learning process. The project was therefore conceptualized from the premise that TYP students brought with them a wealth of knowledge that needs to be valued beyond the add-informal-learning-to-the-formal-learning-process-and-stir standpoint. The informal learning that TYP students brought and bring with them to TYP needed an extensive and intensive appraisal that would encompass the history, philosophy, and sociology of informal and formal learning at TYP, U of T, and the broader Canadian education context. This report brings forth some of these issues, among others, as perceived and experienced by students (1999/2000 class), staff and faculty of TYP.

The Transitional Year Program: An Overview¹

Before delving into the study, it is important for the reader to have a bird's eye view of the Transitional Year Program (TYP) at the University of Toronto so as to enable the visualization its place and function at the University of Toronto and the Canadian education system at large. TYP has its roots in the Black community in Toronto, having developed from two community summer programs in 1969 and 1970. TYP first prepared a group of Black students to gain university access, and then expanded to include Aboriginal students and others who were from groups with low representation in the University.

What is the Transitional Year Program?

The Transitional Year Program (TYP) is an access program at the University of Toronto, for adults who do not have the formal educational background to qualify for university admission. Most students accepted into the program have grown up in communities in which very few people have had access to higher education. Since its inception at U of T in 1970, the program has aimed to attract those who did not have an opportunity to finish high school because of financial problems, family difficulties, streaming, social inequality, or other circumstances beyond their control. The program, because of its history and mandate, actively encourages applications from members of the African Canadian/Black communities, members of Aboriginal communities, from sole-support parents and people from working class families of all racial and ethnic backgrounds. TYP is firmly committed to establishing and maintaining contact with Toronto's diverse communities.

What does TYP offer?

- An intensive, eight-month, full-time course of study to those who would like to enter university.
- A series of courses, which provide students with the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they need to succeed at university studies.
- An opportunity to earn credits towards a University of Toronto Bachelor of Arts degree.
- Academic advisors who provide individual academic assistance, extensive counseling, and small group instruction.
- A multi-racial, multi-cultural environment that promotes equality based on race, ethnicity, religion, physical ability, culture, gender, and sexual orientation.
- Full access to all the resources and facilities available on the University of Toronto campuses.

¹ The current director of TYP, Rona Abramovitch, provided this piece. It is conceived as a brochure that TYP gives to prospective students.

What do students study at TYP?

Students take courses specially developed for TYP students, to build the skills, knowledge, and confidence necessary to manage a university degree program. These include the ability to:

- Read carefully and with comprehension
- Write clearly and effectively
- Think analytically and critically.
- Build skills in numerical and scientific ways of thinking
- Develop skills such as taking notes, managing time and writing exams.
- Develop computer skills needed for writing academic papers and for using the Internet to search the library catalogues and databases.

Who is eligible?

- Applicants to TYP must be at least 19 by September 30 of the year of admission, and must have been away from regular high school for at least one year.
- Applicants normally must be Canadian citizens or permanent residents of Canada.
- Applicants must have left school early for reasons connected with social or economic difficulties, illness or some other personal problem mainly beyond their control.
- TYP must be the only feasible way that an applicant can have access to a university education.

How are students selected?

There is no fixed academic standard for admission to TYP, but applicants must be able to show commitment to education and a level of preparation sufficient for success in the program.

Successful completion of some Grade 11 courses in academic subjects, or the equivalent, usually indicates that preparation may be sufficient. Criteria such as motivation, commitment, academic promise and skills as well as consideration of race, ethnicity, class origins, parental status and community of origin are also used to determine an applicant's suitability.

Where does TYP lead?

Students who complete the program successfully usually enter the Bachelor of Arts Program in the Faculty of Arts and Science at the University of Toronto where they continue their studies. They can also gain admission to many other post-secondary institutions in Ontario and elsewhere. Many TYP graduates have gone to graduate school, to professional schools such as law, education, social work, etc. and to employment in business or public service.

How can students afford to pay for TYP?

The majority of TYP students identify financial circumstances as contributing to the initial interruption of their studies. Almost all TYP students rely on financial aid and almost all borrow the maximum amount of money through OSAP (\$7000) each year. The University of Toronto's Policy on Student Financial Support states, as a fundamental principle that:

“No student admitted to a program at the University of Toronto should be unable to enter or complete the program due to lack of financial means.”

This commitment extends to all students who are Canadian citizens or permanent residents; in good academic standing; eligible for OSAP (Ontario Student Assistance Program), or other government support or Reserve funding.

Having stated the foregoing, the following section provides valuable quantitative information that puts to the test and qualifies TYP's mission statement as an access program for those seeking higher education later in life. The quantitative data provided here enables us to see the cost, particularly to the individual student, of plucking the courage and going back to school. And as the numbers below rightly point out, the cost is not only financial, it is also emotional, psychological, social and spiritual as students grapple with a major adjustment in their lives, an adjustment that transforms their relationships with their circle of friends, their families and ultimately the white supremacist and patriarchal world we live in. It is important to remember these statistics, particularly for later in the report, when student profiles come through in narrative form, allowing for the quantitative to inform the qualitative and vice versa.

COUNTING THE COST: TYP FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF 1998 – 1999.²**Research Sample vs. TYP Population Demographics**Gender

- Female respondents comprised 66.7% of this sample (verses 59.6% of TYP's).

² This section is a contribution from Carolyn Stallberg-White's report on the first phase of the project. It is worth noting that Carolyn is one of TYP's illustrious alumnae, at the time of doing this research for this project, she had enrolled in a doctoral program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). Tom Mathien provided demographics for the 1998/99 incoming TYP class. These (demographics) are valid for the first (Fall 1998) NALL/TYP survey; the second, a follow up survey conducted by Carolyn Stallberg-White, consisted of 10 of the original 15 survey respondents. Overall, Fifteen of the 1998/99 TYP class (N=57) volunteered to be interviewed for the first phase of this study, yielding a fairly representative sample of its 57 students.

Age

- Mean age was approximately 34 years, range 21-47 yrs., SD=9.96 (vs. a mean age of 29 for all TYP students).

Language of choice

- English was the language of choice for 93% of respondents; though 47% spoken at least one other language well enough to conduct a conversation³.

Self-described racial identity (race/color of participants broke down as follows):

- 46.7% Black (vs. 43.9% TYP),
- 40% White (vs.38.6% TYP),
- 13.3% Aboriginal (vs.14%).
- The following groups have not been represented in this study but are represented in TYP: South East Asian (n=1) and Hispanic (n=4).

Relationship status (Respondents relationship status is as follows):

- Single/never married 40% (vs. 72% of TYP),
- Married 7% (vs. 10% of TYP),
- Living together/common law 20% (vs. unknown for TYP) and
- Divorced/separated 33% (vs. 18.3% of TYP).

Parental status

- Eight participants are parents of school-aged children (vs. 23 at TYP). Proportionally, more participants are parents (53%) compared to (40%) of the rest of the TYP student body

Student ResourcesFinancial Support

- Perhaps, surprisingly, **60%** were faring either **“somewhat or definitely better”** financially as a result of their new student status. Most cited OSAP and/or TYP/U of T bursaries as their prime financial source. **30%** believed they were **somewhat or definitely worse** off financially; **10%** believed they were **neither better nor worse**.
- Only **40%** of students felt that they had **friends or family members** that they could turn to for **financial support** in the case of emergency.

Child Care Support

- Of the 5 students who were parents, **2** had **friends or family members** they could rely on for **emergency child care** support.
- Of the 4 students who **required child-care**, **all** felt that it was **adequate/somewhat adequate** to enable them to **attend classes on a regular basis**. This number dropped to **3** when it came to being able to **attend extra tutorials, seminars**, and so on due to the inflexibility of day care center hours. The same finding stood for being able to **adequately**

³ Comparative data was not available.

prepare for essays and assignments but dropped to 2/4 for have adequate child care during test/exam preparation. Participants felt strongly that the needs of their child/ren must come before school, so if their child was sick before a test/exam, the TYP parents' studying suffered.

<i>Academic Support Service</i>	<i>TYP - Yes</i>	<i>TYP - No</i>	<i>U of T - Yes</i>	<i>U of T - No</i>
Individual app'ts with tutor	90%	10%	10%	90%
Subject tutorials	100%	0%	90%	10%
Extra "how to study" tutorials	80%	20%	40%	60%
Financials services/advice	90%	10%	30%	70%
Counseling/social work ⁴	40%	60%	20%	80%
Seek out Profs/Tutors <i>outside</i> class/appointments ⁵	90%	10%	40%	60%
Participate in informal study groups with fellow students ⁶	90%	10%	10%	90%

<i>Access to Academic Role Models Necessary for Academic At/within...</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
Home	40%	60%
Your community	60%	40%
TYP	90%	10%
U of T	70%	30%
Other ⁷	60%	40%

<i>Feelings of Connection with...</i>	<i>TYP-Yes</i>	<i>TYP -No</i>	<i>U of T -Yes</i>	<i>U of T - No</i>
Fellow Students	90%	10%	40%	60%
Faculty Advisors	100%	0%	40%	60%
Tutors	100%	0%	60%	40%
Instructors	100%	0%	40%	60%

⁴ A total of 60% of students surveyed sought this service; two felt more comfortable seeking it outside of TYP because of fear of being labeled/ noticed by others and concerns related to privacy and confidentiality.

⁵ Students reported being made to feel very comfortable by TYP staff about approaching them anytime to discuss formal and informal concerns. Students felt cared for and supported both in and outside office/classroom hours. Knowing the professors now at TYP on a first name basis rather than "Professor this or Professor that" ... at TYP we're all adults there vs. teacher-student at U of T. Also, they know some pretty good jokes [at TYP] too.

⁶ Study groups were formed primarily with TYP students because as this student put it " You get to know people at TYP because you spend more time there and can build better relationships than you do in sociology at U of T where you seem them [U of T students] once a week".

⁷ "Other" included symbolic representation (novels, poems, etc.), celebrities (e.g., Oprah), and anything else that provided inspiration, information, etc., on succeeding with the challenges of transitioning to university.

- 70% feel that their connections with others have deepened over the course of the school year. Because of because of time and being with that group constantly, students did develop a sense of (almost being) family.

<i>Feelings of Belonging at/within...</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
Home	100%	0%
Your community	80%	20%
TYP	90%	10%
U of T (n=9) ⁸	77%	11%
Other	30%	70%

Extracurricular Activities

- 90% of students took advantage of the many extracurricular activities offered at TYP, while 70% did the same within the rest of U of T. Reasons for participating:
- The sole student who did not participate, lacked “childcare after class and on weekends, but did attend a couple of TYP award ceremonies”.

Student Plans for Next Year

University Bound

- **100%** plan to **attend university next year**. Of those, **20% did not plan definitively to attend university when they began TYP**.
- **100%** plan to **earn a university degree**.
- TYP gave students confidence and the opportunity to prove that they can perform academically as shared in the following quotes:

Motivation to succeed next year

- This group of respondents is **highly motivated to succeed**. When asked “how motivated are you to succeed next year” (1=not at all to 10=totally motivated) the average response was **8.6** (range 6.9-10.00, SD 1.35).
- 90% believe that their experience at TYP will help them to succeed – for a wide variety of reasons (support, assertiveness, increased personal knowledge, confidence:
- One of the important lessons that TYP exposes its students to – both formally and informally – is that “professors are people too” and that the university is a place where they can learn to feel comfortable:
- The student who does not think that his/her TYP experiences will help them next year still acknowledges the opportunity given by TYP:

Staying in touch with TYP

- 90% plan to stay in contact with TYP. Reasons for intending to do so ranged from the desire for continued tutorial assistance, need for computer resources and the opportunity to

⁸ One student was not sure of their feelings on whether he/she felt a sense of belonging at U of T.

partake in pizza lunches. Most notably, each student expressed a desire to stay in touch in order to continue the special relationships formed while at TYP:

- ❖ *My tutor who I developed an extremely close relationship with, whose support and guidance were phenomenal. All the staff right down to office staff and students who I laughed and cried with. Everyone. For the support both personal and academic.*
- ❖ *I'd like to keep the connection with the TYP program, the faculty and for advice and help; hopefully a little bit of tutoring maybe. And also the students that I met this year. It would help to keep in touch with them.*
- ❖ *Yes, with anyone that will stand seeing me for moral support, looking over my papers and so on.*

And maintaining contact for some more altruistic reasons:

- ❖ *My faculty advisor and the Director to continue the relationships established. I will feel forever indebted to them for letting me into university. I wish to give of my time and eventually financially.*

The student who did not want to maintain contact with TYP gave the following reason:

- ❖ *I feel that the cliques within the program and its alumni were overwhelming and it was a real turn off.*

The foregoing quantitative glimpse into TYP gives us an understanding of the gritty realities of what most students have to go through to get an education, which, according to the United Nations Charter for Human Rights, is a right and not a privilege. What the foregoing picture also gives us is the magnificent satisfaction that TYP students get out of the process, particularly the laying of a firm foundation for future success for its alumnae. These issues are particularly fleshed out in the five students portraits that come later in this report.

METHODOLOGY

As mentioned in the introduction, this study is part of a larger project – New Approaches to Lifelong Learning (NALL) – and has been on going from 1998 – 2000. Three student researchers worked on the project since its inception, Carolyn Stallberg-White, Sheila Batacharya and myself. In 1999, Carolyn won a SSHRC grant to carry out research for her doctoral dissertation (TYP related) and had to leave the project. Sheila and myself continued with the project from the fall of 1999 through the winter and spring of 1999/2000, Sheila and I worked on what Carolyn had left in terms of report from the first phase of the student interviews she had conducted. In consultation with the aforementioned research team, we modified the research design in response to the foregoing findings of the first phase of the research Carolyn had done. In the following sections, I (in considerable and possibly tedious detail) chart the process that will make clear why this report is conceptualized and presented the way it is. The detail is also important in that it will facilitate the reader's engagement with the report on its terms.

Student Portraits⁹

As part of our data collection, Sheila and I often “hung-out” at TYP and met with students informally. Prior to that the director, Rona Abramovitch, had formally introduced us to the students, staff, and faculty. We attended a class session for the introduction to students, a faculty meeting and had a tour of TYP as a whole to meet staff. As part of our research strategy, Sheila and I took turns and shared notes on our informal visits to TYP. The visits were not meant to generate ethnographic data, but more to make ourselves “known” to the student body and in the process recruit interested research participants. By the end of the fall semester (1999), we had gathered a significant list of names of interested students, and were ready to conduct interviews at the beginning of the winter semester (2000). This did not happen as planned due to a strike that stopped all work on the project in solidarity with the picketing T.As. By the time the strike was resolved, the term was well in the middle, and TYP students, like all other students on campus were busy with their work, mid-term exams, and papers. Mindful and sensitive to the reality that TYP students by and large have more responsibilities over and above their schoolwork unlike their counterparts in the general student

⁹ All student names are pseudonyms to protect their identities. And please note that the following information is based on a synthesis of part two of the questionnaire that was filled in by the participants themselves.

population, we decided to move the interviews to the spring when exams would be over and students would have time to spare. By the response we got overall – five participants out of a class of sixty – our timing did not work well. Of those that had signed up for the interviews, only five actually participated in the process. Others either never returned calls or could not find time to participate for one reason or another.

Participants were initially recruited through our informal visits to TYP. These lists collapsed due to the time span between commitment and the actual interview, such that even of the last five, three were recruited through the snowball method. The only criteria or screening device for our participants was that they be TYP students of the 1999/2000 class. In order to be representative of the social heterogeneity of the TYP student body, we sought to have a person from each group represented at TYP, that is, Native, African descent/Black, women, gay/lesbian/bisexual, white (or Other) working class and immigrants. While the sample is significantly small and the findings cannot be easily generalized, it is fairly safe to say that from the stories gathered (factoring in the faculty and staff's perspective on the issues) the data is representative – by at least an 95% margin – of the profile of TYP students. Quantitatively, the study is statistically insignificant to warrant generalization and tabulation, but qualitatively it is very significant.

Sheila conducted all the student interviews using a structured but open-ended questionnaire that was in two parts; part one had an ethnographic orientation while part two was quantitative. In fact, in the absence of a variety of groups (other than staff and faculty) participating in the study, thereby triangulating the information given by the students, the two-part questionnaire served as a triangulation tool (please see Appendix 2 for the questionnaire). I coded and analyzed the data over much of the summer of 2000, the fall, and well into the winter. The process turned out to be more arduous than I had initially bargained for as I thought that there were only student five interviews to work with, and that would not take up as much time and energy – spiritual and emotional as well.

As it turned out, Sheila had to leave the project for personal reasons. The project leader decided that I would do the rest on my own, and I decided to work on the project full time for two months of the summer. As the writing progressed, quite a few exciting issues were emerging and so were some gaps. In an effort to explore these issues and fill the gaps, I tried consulting the students with not much luck. After a few attempts, I knew I would not be able to pursue the issues adequately, if at all

because I had not been the initial interviewer. Research experience (on both sides of the microphone/ clipboard) had taught me the importance of rapport and a connectivity that happens between interviewer and interviewee that cannot be easily (if at all) translated to another person. If anything, it seemed an intrusion, if not a violation of “trust” for me to seek a second interview with them. Plan B was to try and recruit more students, there were some attending spring and summer school. This did not yield results as those that signed up did not follow through even after several attempts to get hold of them. Summer school is so pressured and in retrospect, I realize it was too much to ask from them. At that point, I decided to convert the data available from the two parts of each participant’s interview into some kind of narrative or educational journey reflection – a portrait. This turned out to be the best option. I was able to recreate the profiles into coherent individual wholes that were simultaneously connected to each other, and dependent on each other as portraits or parts of a mosaic, and also allow the narrator’s voice to connect the issues raised to broader educational issues and literature.

Thus the portraits do not read as strictly life stories because the data was not gathered in that manner, and to do so would have jeopardized the anonymity of the participants. I took on the narrator’s voice – a very dangerous decision considering that I had not been the interviewer and could only read between the lines of each script – it was a space I could afford to bring the interviews to some kind of vitality. I relied on both my formal training and experience in writing narrative (history) to be able to narrate and simultaneously analyze the data. The scripts therefore went through a minimum of six completely different re-writings; part of the dilemma was that the sample was too small to warrant generalizations, neither was the data “thoroughly” ethnographic to warrant biographical portraits or an ethnographic rendition that would have served the purpose even better. The process of choosing the most appropriate medium of communicating this data posed many ethical issues as I had to work with the data in such a way that my (narrator’s) voice still kept to the grind of the scripts that provided the substance of the issues under discussion.

The profile of the student research participants was four females and one male. Three were parents (single or otherwise) with children living at home and of school going age. One was openly lesbian. The average age was 34.6 years, the youngest being 24, and the eldest 42 years old. Three were immigrants with a combined fifty (50) year experience of living in Canada, giving an average of 16.6 years of Canadian residency. Two were born in Canada, one Native, and the other of European

descent. Three were Black, one male, and two females. Two were from working/poor backgrounds, two from the middle class while one grew up in a foster home. Three lived with partners or significant others while two were single, one never married the other divorced. The (income levels) financial resources available to them rose for two, fell for another, and remained the same for the other two. This, however, was hard to determine as the information was ambiguous in two cases. But overall, factoring a limited margin of error (3-5%), the students' income significantly dropped the year they were at TYP compared to the year before. Most quit full-time jobs to concentrate on their studies, and this significantly affected their financial resources. Before TYP the overall annual income average was between \$10,000.00 – \$15,000.00 while the year of TYP it dropped to \$5,000.00 - \$10,000.00.

Informal learning occurred in different places, with the home/household and volunteer activities taking the bulk of the time. What was also significant to note was that in trying to tabulate the time spent in different informal learning activities, the figures did not tally. Time, it turned out, was conceptualized very differently, such that on the surface, some figures read as exaggeration, but on a second and deeper analysis, it was obvious that some participants did not conceptualize time in the “regular” Euro-sense of 24 hours a day. To the question why had they quit school, the following were the reasons (from a series of choices) explaining why they decided or were forced to discontinue school or formal courses in their lives:

I left school because I needed to make money/had no financial support (#505, 4, P2).

I felt I had all the schooling I wanted or needed courses were at inconvenient times and places lacked family support.

I had poor grade/lack of qualifications, school was boring or too narrow.

I preferred to learn outside school. (#504, 4, P2)

Lacked family support

I left school because I needed to make money/had no financial support

I had poor grades/lack of qualifications

School was an unfriendly place and/or hostile environment

I preferred to learn outside of school

Was kicked out of foster home (#503, 4, P2)

I left school because I needed to make money

School was boring or too narrow (#502, 4, P2)

Courses were at inconvenient times and places

I had family duties/lack of childcare

I left school because I needed to make money/had no financial support (#501, 4, P2)

By and large, therefore, TYP students have had serious financial problems that had a negative effect on their formal learning process at some point in their lives. As their portraits demonstrate, even though classified as middle class, the students have not been able to make ends meet, and the strain has had ripple effects on the rest of their lives. Most utilized services available at TYP while a few ventured into the larger university to study in groups with others or to participate in various activist type activities and were planning on going to university the following year. All found their TYP experience affirming and said they would keep in touch with TYP after their stint there, and wanted to be part of any further consultations that might result from this study.

Faculty and Staff Portraits¹⁰

Carolyn conducted faculty interviews in the 1998/1999 calendar. These were taped interviews that were not transcribed verbatim. To this end, the transcripts read more like reports instead of personal accounts even though I have tried to render – whatever was possible – in the first person voice. Once transcribed, the transcripts were passed to each research participant to ensure the accuracy of the information. While a very important part of the research process, this exercise produced a very complicated process as numerous corrections – for clarity or otherwise – shifted the transcripts from the “original” form. Here the same process happened as I had not interviewed the faculty and staff, but had to request the handing back of corrected transcripts so I could work with them (transcripts) and produce a coherent report along with student’s interviews done in the spring of 2000. In some ways this slowed the process significantly and again as I had to be sensitive to the ethics of doing research. After a few attempts to work with the transcripts, I, again, I decided to use the narrator’s voice, inserting (sometimes interrupting the portrait with) my own thoughts and commentaries. Some transcripts lent themselves well to first person accounts, and I worked with them as such, while others worked better as a dialogue or third person account. I also let each one stand on its own instead of trying to create a “full” story, to highlight the fragmentation of the process of collecting, analyzing and recording the research findings, and maybe highlight the possibilities and hazards found at any crossroad.

¹⁰ Faculty interviews were done without the need for anonymity hence the full identity disclosure. Unless otherwise specified, italics are commentary not the narrator’s thoughts or questions.

However, having said the foregoing, it is absolutely important to highlight that the staff and faculty portraits are very important to this process as they highlight, validate and challenge some of what the students share as their experiences at TYP. (Student portraits do the same for faculty, so one could loosely say there was some triangulation going on.) Most importantly, both groups speak powerfully to the importance of history and resistance by marginalized groups in the process of searching for accessibility and equity in education; this is also clearly articulated in Keren Brathwaite's TYP 20th anniversary keynote address, which is included in this report (see Appendix 3). In summary then, this report is a combination of two to three years of work. Some of what is articulated here could have been overtaken by events, yet the information remains invaluable in understanding the dynamics produced at the crossroads of informal and formal learning at the University of Toronto – TYP. The report concludes with findings and recommendations.

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

I made a potentially hazardous conceptual and theoretical choice not to delve too much into the literature as is the custom in this kind of work. Instead, I chose to experiment the notion that book-knowledge or formal learning is not the only way of knowing by using the literature as I (re)constructed student portraits in particular. To this end, I have only utilized the literature here to make clear how key concepts and terms were understood and utilized in this study. In the faculty portraits, I commented as I went along because what they said was affirmed, refuted, and presented in the students' portraits, and so I did not want to repeat themes, as this would be redundant. Also, to some degree, the faculty portraits speak for themselves and have a debate going among themselves, a debate I did not weave together to draw "common" themes in the hope that these are self-evident. And since the objective was to examine the dynamics of formal and informal learning at TYP, I have left it open so that there can be a window of working with this report into further research or academic writing - the text is rich.

This study hinged on two key concepts: **informal** and **formal learning**. These two were intercepted and expanded by notions of Indigenous knowledge and spirituality; equity issues in education; and the real and symbolic meaning of formal university education whose ultimate goal is the attainment of a degree.

Informal Learning

According to Livingstone (1994:14):

Informal learning refers to all those individual and collective learning activities that we do beyond the authority or reinforcement of any educational institution. Any deliberate effort to gain new, understanding, knowledge, or skill to which we devote a discernable amount of time and recognize as such may be considered to be an informal learning project.

Livingstone's definition speaks to the intrinsic need and drive to learn something new free of extrinsic requirements to do the learning. Individuals, groups, or both, therefore, embark on a life long journey of learning that they consider important because they devote their time to the process of learning. On the other hand, Garrick (1996:22) defines **informal learning** as:

the truly life long process whereby every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience and the educative influences and resources in his or her environment – from family and neighbors, from work and play, from the marketplace and the mass media.

Garrick, while speaking of similar conceptual experiences that Livingstone defines, his definition represents informal learning as mainly an individual (conscious and subconscious) activity, actively and passively engaged by the person interacting with her or his environment. Livingstone sees it as an active individual and collective process of life-long learning. Thus, while both allude to a sense of agency on the part of the (informal) learner, Garrick's perspective is more implicit about the role of the learner in the acquisition of life long knowledge. However, Livingstone's definition masks the fact that even though informal learning is an intrinsic force, external realities that impinge on the "uninformed" (individuals or groups) propels the informal learner(s) to engage in some individual or collective learning activity in order to keep "well adjusted" in their environment.

Other authors, like Livingstone and Garrick, have also defined informal learning in similar fashion. Based on empirical research, they generally strive to bridge the formal and informal learning dichotomy that has held the field at ransom for a long time (see among others, Strauss, 1984; Greenfield and Lave, 1982; Antikainen, 1996; Collins, 1998; Freire, 1970; Mayo, 1999; Hardway, 1999).

Formal Education

Formal learning on the other hand has been defined by as:

full-time study within state-certified school systems. Modern formal schooling has been restricted almost exclusively to young people who had been expected to proceed through extensive graded curricula in lockstep fashion prior to achieving complete adult status. (Livingstone, 1994:14).

The hierarchically structured, chronologically graded “education system,” running from primary schools through the university and including, in addition to general academic studies, a variety of specialized programs and institutions for full-time technical and professional training (Garrick, 1996:22).

Formal education (which I also refer to as formal learning in this report) is thus a very structured process, taking place in socially sanctioned spaces/institutions called schools. In this space, which is very age defined and regimented, the process of socializing the young is the aim of “education.” Those that fall in the educational cracks, however, find themselves in a lifelong battle to legitimize the knowledge they acquired outside these sanctioned spaces. With a few exceptions of those that make it in life without formal learning, the vast majority of those that fall in the formal learning cracks find themselves confined to a particular social class, job, paycheck, neighborhood ..., due to their limited or lack of credentials that are awarded to those that go through the “state-certified school system.”

Another form of learning important to this discussion, is non-formal or further education, which is “...all organized educational activities, including further courses or training programs offered by any social institution” (Livingstone, 1999:14). This form of learning is what most TYP students (of this study and previous phases of the project) bring and brought with them to TYP over and above their informal learning as part of their portfolio and credentials back into the formal learning system. As shall be explored in the portraits, it is ironic that the very unrecognized (informal) knowledge that TYP students bring, is also the very knowledge that allows them to excel in fields like sociology. Those with formal learning have studied lives similar to those of TYP students for the benefit of the young who make the bulk of the student body, yet the same experiences do not count for much in the formal learning scheme – till legitimized by an institution. This is not to dismiss the importance of formal learning, rather, it is to raise the issue – how is knowledge valued in Western societies like Canada?

Indigenous Knowledge

Indigenous knowledge was included as an element of the study, partly to tease out the possible conflation of informal knowledge/learning and indigenous knowledge. This was because the student profile at TYP and in this study included First Nations peoples, immigrants from cultures that have different knowledge systems than the dominant Euro-Canadian. **Indigenous (knowledge) in this study was defined as:**

A knowledge/consciousness arising locally and in association with a long-term occupancy of a place. Such consciousness emerges from an awareness of the intellectual agency of local subjects and the capacity to use knowledge to challenge, rupture, and resist colonial and imperial relations of domination and, as well, to resuscitate oneself from mental bondage. Indigenousness also accords a broader definition of identity to local subjects (Dei, 2000:130).

Indigenous knowledge, therefore, includes TYP students' intellectual agency in summoning the courage to "challenge, rupture, and resist colonial and imperial relations of domination and ... resuscitate oneself from mental bondage" (Ibid.). Because of their long occupancy in the Euro-Canadian context, TYP students have produced their own brand of Indigenous knowledge on how to cope in this hostile environment predicated upon racist, classist, sexist, abilist, and homophobic realities. However, I would like to stress that this definition of Indigenous knowledge as it pertains to the participants of this study is **not** to be confused with the Ancient Indigenous Knowledge(s) of the Native Peoples of this space called Canada. Native knowledge is unique to the larger socio-political survival and agency of the First Peoples of this Land. While there are commonalities shared across the board, the knowledge acquired by those of us that came later should not subsume that of those Native to this Land. It should not drown nor erase the knowledge of those whose Ancestors' Bones we have desecrated by our paved concrete sidewalks where we walk/march unconsciously in our quest for "social justice" – or a piece of the Euro-Canadian pie? The (Indigenous) knowledge of those of us that have figured how to survive a capitalist social structure through a blending of different realities from our different histories should be understood in relation to the resistance of Aboriginal peoples of this land. This way, the struggles of "us newcomers," will not supercede those of the Native peoples. Because if they do, our struggles will be in vain as they will not be watched over by those that lived here for millennia, and on whose own dis-remembered genocide we make Canada our home.

Western/Euro-Canadian/Eurocentric Lenses

By Western/Euro-Canadian/Eurocentric frameworks I mean those frameworks that utilize lenses of a European heritage to interpret First Nations, African, Asian, Latina/o realities. In the academy contemporaneously, this does not necessarily translate to a racial divide that all white people read these realities one way, and all Else in another. I am particularly referring to dominant and dominating readings that impose alien meanings to experiences that have totally different social and cultural registers. In other words, a First Nations, African, Asian ..., person can also bring Eurocentric readings to non-Western social realities because through colonial and colonizing formal learning, they erroneously imbibed notions of the “superiority” things European and the “inferiority” of all Else. In this report, I utilize Samir Amin’s definition of Eurocentrism which he states is a:

Culturalist phenomenon ... that assumes the existence of irreducibly distinct cultural variants that shape the historical paths of different peoples. Eurocentrism is ... anti-universalist, [because] it is not interested in seeking possible general laws of human evolution. But it does represent itself as universalist, for it claims that imitation of the Western model by all peoples is the only solution to the challenges of our time. Eurocentrism is a specifically modern phenomenon, the roots of which go back only to the Renaissance, a phenomenon that did not flourish until the nineteenth century. In this sense, it constitutes one dimension of the culture and ideology of the modern capitalist world (1998: vii).

Equity

Equity is important to this study because those that came to the formal learning setting of university or college via TYP dropped out of school due to one form of social inequity or another. Equity in Canada and other western liberal countries is defined as:

the rights of individuals to an equitable share of the goods and services in society. In order to ensure equality of outcome, equity programs treat groups differently when the situation in society precludes equal treatment. Equity programs are more inclined to accept the priority of collective rights over individual rights (Henry et al, 2000:407).

TYP having been established to correct injustices in the inaccessibility and inequity of formal education for historically marginalized groups in Canadian society, it has to be recognized that there are also inherent problems in definitions of equity and equality programs. For while the notion of equity comes from a place of knowing and experiencing injustice, if uninterrogated, it can also become a ghetto that the marginalized are shoved into and trapped in by the dominant discourse and their own jostling for a piece of the pie. Bobiwash (1998:1) articulates this reality eloquently when he tells the following story, problematizing the meaning of equity for the Native peoples of this country. He says:

A few years ago, in an effort to create access for people with disabilities a major public institution in Toronto decided to install a wheelchair ramp. After several weeks of construction and some promotional fanfare, the ramp was ready to be unveiled at a ribbon cutting ceremony. A wheelchair bound client was recruited to wheel up the ramp and cut the ribbon. To the embarrassment of all assembled the door at the top of the ramp opened in such a way as to prevent the wheelchair's access once it reached the top of the ramp. This story has always symbolized to me the major problem with access and equity programs – you get to the top of the ramp and you still can't get in. The reality of equity programs in Canada is that they conceal racist and discriminatory practice – they promise equality yet deliver grudging accommodation; they deal with systemic inequity while leaving the systems and structures responsible for those inequities intact.

Cognizant of the real gains TYP has made since its inception thirty-one (31) years ago, the struggles and triumphs of those that have gone through TYP speaks of the structural power of those who can and do let the marginalized “get to the top of the ramp but not [easily] in.” TYP students' realities as expressed in this study raises critical issues about the constant need (by the marginalized) to stay alert, even when they have made significant gains into the corridors of (academic) power. For instance, by being accepted into TYP, but having little access to financial, emotional and other resources that would enable the students to concentrate on their studies, TYP students find themselves up against a multitude a wall doubting their own capabilities throughout much of their tenure at the institution. The need to get “a degree” or an “education” as students expressed, while very important and the right decision for them, when the stakes were high, became an added (yet paradoxically necessary) strain in their lives. Just as TYP as a program had to fight its way into the university space as attested by Keren and Tom's reflections for instance, the fight to claim legitimacy and destigmatization by TYP students has been a struggle. While they would not give up on the concept and reality of TYP, students spoke of a sense of stigma that they felt as TYP students in the larger university student body.

This is not to say TYP or equity as a concept and reality at U of T should not be a goal and objective for fighting discrimination in Canadian society. Rather, I hope this report will show that equity should not be an industry that academics, researchers and other interested parties profit from while those directly affected are recycled through the formal education system. It is my hope that this report will make it possible to find ways of valuing the sacrifices made by those that seek to bring systemic and systematic change in this society. I emphasize this at the beginning so as to highlight the need for long-term support for TYP students after their stint at TYP, whether they continue at U of T or at other institutions of higher learning. The lack of support systems for students once they enter the

mainstream university body means they run the risk of “getting to the top of the ramp and still not be able to get in.” The emphasis should therefore be at ensuring a systemic and systematic breaking down of barriers rather than an add-equity-program-here-and-there and let business roll as usual approach. To this end, it is important to recognize the role of those that pioneered the idea of TYP, to honor their legacy by allowing the program to grow and respond to the needs of present realities as cut backs globalization and neo-liberalism reign, to find other ways of resisting hegemony.

To conclude this section, I would like to highlight that TYP is a crossroad where formal and informal learning intersect, collide, and most importantly produce positive social change for those involved in the process. The notion of **crossroads** is very important because it highlights the dangers and exciting possibilities that lie at any crossroad. If one is not careful, crossroads can be very dangerous because the vulnerable run the risk of being run over, or pushed aside. Yet by the same token, crossroads offers an opportunity to face new challenges other than the monopoly of one’s lone(ly) road and isolation; it offers the opportunity to test one’s strength; and also it offers opportunities to try something new and possibilities of taking on a totally new route. What is important then is the ability to read the road signs, to travel with seasoned travelers who will be there should the volume of traffic at the crossroads become overwhelming for the new comer.

TYP students, as their portraits reflect and hint at in this report, bring with them a wealth of knowledge; a substantial amount of insecurity about their (in)abilities to do well in a formal learning space; and an immeasurable willingness to learn, a drive and determination that only comes with having life experiences wider than the home-to-school-to university life trajectory of their counterparts in the larger student body. TYP students have had a life, and coming back to school is a statement that they demand to be taken seriously, and if being taken seriously means getting a degree, then they are “definitely not leaving without a degree.” To this end, it is important to recognize the individual and collective knowledges that these students bring to the formal learning process. It is therefore very critical to acknowledge and validate the endeavors of those that work with TYP students as tutors, advisors, and administrative staff. The energy that goes into ensuring that TYP students “get through the door once they get to the top of the ramp” is valuable because it is an essential – but not the only ingredient – needed to ensure the success of TYP students, whether they continue at U of T or go elsewhere.

FRONTLINE RENDITIONS OF EQUITY IN EDUCATION – FACULTY PORTRAITS**Keren Brathwaite – English Coordinator And Associate Director***Personal History and First Contact with TYP.*

I was born in Bolans Village, Antigua, a much more culturally rich country, and came to Canada in 1967 on a scholarship to pursue a Master's Degree in Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). I also taught high school and adults in Antigua, before coming to Canada. I was also educated at the University of the West Indies in Jamaica, where I obtained a B.A. and Diploma in Education. My teachers, family, and country considered me a brilliant student.

I came to Canada from a sound educational experience, and through a prestigious scholarship furthered my studies. As a foreign student – as they were called then – I hung out with students from other countries at the University of Toronto's (U of T) International Student Center (ISC). It was during these “hang out” times that I noticed the non-mixing of the general campus population with those at the ISC – a situation that remains unchanged thirty something years later, and decided that something needed to be done about this. I also noticed that most of the students I hung out with (and who were in the majority) at ISC were from Africa and the Caribbean, and I wondered where the African/Black Canadians and the First Nations students were? Besides not seeing them at ISC, they were not in the general student population either. These observations led to spirited discussions with other students at ISC on issues of access to education in Canada and community involvement. This involvement had begun in Antigua. I became involved in community groups in Toronto, in an effort to understand the barriers African Canadians and First Nations students were facing in accessing university education in their own country. From this community involvement, I got immersed in community development projects, especially in a project aimed at increasing participation of Black, Native and other marginalized groups at U of T, which later became a full-time Transitional Year Program (TYP) as shall be elaborated later.

I met, learned a lot from, and shared a lot with the people in the Black community. I met, learned from and shared a lot in common with Gwen Johnson and her late husband Leonard Johnson who later owned and operated the “Third World Bookstore,” Marg Lewsey, Ed Clarke. These people were examples of where I got my understanding of the Black community's lived realities in Toronto

and the desperate need for increased access – not only access to university but the quality of education in public schools, and opportunities in higher education for Black people in this country. This contact with the Black community in Toronto evoked memories of home for me. I realized that my feelings of alienation in a foreign country and in predominantly white institutions were not unique to me, but shared by other international students, and by the Black community in this country. The Black community in Toronto, and the small group of foreign students I met reconnected me to the kinds of informal learning I grew up with in Bolans Village, Antigua. There, I had been involved in many community development projects such as literacy projects, drama, music, cultural programs, church groups, and some such community activities. This knowledge became invaluable for me when I got involved with the African Canadian community in Toronto. My dreams of serving my people back home took on a new meaning, as lived realities of the Black community here in Canada presented themselves as needing urgent redress. Putting community first has and is very important for me. Originally, I did go back to Antigua after completing my studies, and came back to pursue a doctoral degree, and this got shelved as I became intensely involved in lobbying for access to university education for Black students, the birth of TYP, and other pressing community issues.

The History of TYP: A Perspective

The Transitional Year Program (TYP) began in Toronto's Black community in 1969 – first summer programmed for university access, and the recognition of this reality is pivotal to the acknowledgement of the history, presence and contributions of African Canadians in this country.

As I put it,

Blacks haven't been given credit for the ... contributions they have made and the great things they have done in the university and the larger community; the media tend to focus on the negative black life. The black community has taken great pride in its contribution to TYP. (p.3, July 2000).

TYP began on Bathurst Street in the Home Service Association Building (north of the subway stop). The first class was held in the summer of 1969, and was designed as a very intensive program for only Black adult students who were recruited and prepared for entry into the university in the fall of the same year. The first students were admitted into York University. The recruitment process was largely a snowball/word of mouth technique that was circulated within the Black community only.

As mentioned earlier on, I spent time at the ISC, met, and shared ideas and visions with other international students, mainly from Africa and the Caribbean. Among these students was Horace Campbell, a Jamaican born young man who was pursuing his undergraduate studies at York University at the time. Horace Campbell was pivotal in the founding of TYP, and in the process of recruiting students for the TYP program in those early days, and the success of the two summer programs. He put a lot of hard work into getting the program running because Campbell, myself and other co-founders who worked in the early project had a very strong interest in education, and helping those who could not further their education through conventional channels. Horace stayed with the program through its initiation process, and its entry into the university. He went on to finish graduate studies and has taught in Tanzania, Zimbabwe, and is currently a professor of Political Science at Syracuse University in the United States. Also, instrumental to the process of founding the program in its initial stages was Elaine Maxwell, a recruiter, instigator, and **student** of the first TYP class. Elaine worked hard to get other people interested in registering in the program, and was an important political force and student voice in the program. She was the only student from the first two summer program to be admitted to U of T. Other students were accepted at York University.

From inside the University of Toronto, Professor Charles Hanley, a professor of philosophy, and other supporters from within, helped to negotiate the entry and opening of TYP at Innis College, U of T, in September 1970. “At the time we were all starting and working from scratch as it were, that is, with no prior experience of such a project. No one could predict the outcome, but one thing was sure and true; there was a need for such a program at the university if Blacks and other marginalized groups were to increase their access to institutions of higher learning.” After lengthy negotiations, the U of T Senate (now the Governing Council) accepted the TYP proposal as a program of the university and it was launched as a full-time programmed at Innis College, U of T in September, 1970. Despite this breakthrough, TYP was put under much surveillance and evaluation in its early stages. The media readily reported any problems in the program in its embryonic stage, but the Black community rallied around it, giving TYP the much needed support, and thereby giving it a chance to “prove” itself.

The first six to seven students recruited by TYP summer programmed in the Black community in the summer of 1969 were tested, found ready for university and were admitted into various undergraduate programs at York University. This entry into university of the first group set a

precedence for what was possible. In the summer of 1970, the second summer of the program, the program was operating from the University of Toronto's Innis College, and it opened its doors to other marginalized peoples like the First Nations, working class white people, and women. At this point, the program ceased to be a program exclusive to the Black Community in Toronto, it was now open to students of all ethnic groups who experienced barriers to university entrance due to their race, class, gender, single-parenthood, and other social categorizations. *It would be interesting, to further investigate the gains and challenges this widening of scope presented to TYP, and its role in the community and the university.* However, I also noted that even after this open-for-all policy for all who needed TYP services, more than half of the student population remained Black, and most of these students went to great lengths to recruit others for subsequent years. They even went further, out of the Greater Toronto area/boundaries as far as Windsor (Ontario) to recruit new TYP students in the 1970s. I emphasize that these winds of change on access to higher education for Black and minoritized groups were not confined to Toronto only. At Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, a similar group of activists was in contact with the happenings in Toronto, and the activism there resulted in the institution of a TYP in 1970 at Dalhousie University through the efforts of the Black community in Halifax. *Indeed it was and is ironic that a province such as Nova Scotia that carries more than three centuries of African Canadian history had to have a TYP in 1970 to ensure a critical mass of African Canadian representation in the academy. Because of the history of the province and access to education, the program has remained open only to Black and Native students.*

When TYP was established as a new program at U of T, a new policy committee consisting of academics and community members supported it. The latter were highly critical of the university's discriminatory practices and policies that did not promote equitable access to university education to and for all. The community wanted to maintain a strong voice in the direction of TYP. The policy committee wished to ensure that the Black community would always have input and not lose its sense of history and ownership of the program as TYP developed into an integral part of U of T. The committee worked through ideas of what the structure of TYP would be, that is, its administration and management. It also made two important rulings about its student intake and its operations:

- (1) There would be a limit of fifty (50) students admitted each year.
- (2) TYP would be reviewed every year to monitor its progress.

In those early days (of TYP), student political consciousness and activism were a common phenomenon. For instance, students were active members of the Black Students Union (BSU), among other campus organizations and associations, and BSU was a strong supporter of TYP. Some TYP students were members of BSU and also the Black Education Project in Toronto. TYP students were also very active community members involved in varied Black community development projects like literacy, music, drama,, and other cultural and other projects. It was a time of working together to make a difference, to make a change in one's community and society. Students in those days were highly politicized and political, and were very vocal in keeping the history and Black and Native community connections of TYP alive. This raised suspicion among some administrators at TYP and U of T who felt that TYP staff were the ones politicizing the students; they raised "concerns" that the staff at TYP were not teaching students academic skill; like grammar, writing skills, and so on, but political rhetoric that would not serve them well in their academic careers.

It is important to note that this dis-ease among policy makers about students' politicization reflected the dominant culture prevalent in the academy, that is, the "average" age of the student body was late teens early twenties, most of whom had very little life experiences, informal learning and were by and large from dominant and/ or privileged backgrounds. TYP students on the other hand (and as is attested in this report), brought with them a different set of values and experiences, a combination that unsettled the status quo. By insisting on "academic skills" training over "politicization," the policymakers pointed directly to the loopholes in a liberal education that taught and teach students that the dominant culture (of liberalism) is fair and just. The marginalized, minoritized and oppressed of this "liberal" society know otherwise, and they bring this knowledge with them when they enter TYP at U of T. In spite of this chilling atmosphere, TYP continued to have its strong advocates in the program and community and also allies from within the university system itself.

For instance, 1971 – 1974 Jack Diamond's years of TYP directorship (he is now Secretary General on the University of Toronto Council) illustrates some of the challenges the program faced. Jack was well liked by the students, and encouraged the recruitment of students beyond Metro Toronto (e.g. students from Windsor). He also introduced tutorial classes for TYP students, and this brought in some young and progressive faculty to TYP. Toward the end of Jack's term of office, however, some hiring decision were made by a faculty selection committee which were heatedly contested by some TYP faculty, student body and members of the Black community. The tension build up was so

high that negotiations were introduced to ensure the hiring decision would not jeopardize the running and continuation of TYP at U of T. David Nimmo assumed the post of TYP Director after Jack Diamond, from 1974 to 1976. During this period, there was much unease at TYP, particularly around issues of race and class, with Black and working class students expressing that they were not being well attended to. Tensions developed in the program, around issues of representation in the curriculum, in TYP staff and faculty, at the time, conflicts were either not understood or left to fester. Some of the tension in TYP during the 1974 – 1976 period was generated by poor administration on the one hand, and on the other, it was fostered by the presence and teaching style of a certain professor. The course the professor offered did not use a representative curriculum; moreover, according to complaints by many Black students, the professor did not understand or respect TYP students' backgrounds and their right to access to university education.

The program review of 1976 noted a “student revolt, especially against the English instructor.” The student revolt was recorded in this report as “racial tension at TYP,” and the Reviewing Committee noted that part of the “solution” would be to teach students about Sir John A. Macdonald instead of Karl Marx or about Marxism. The evaluation report of that year, laid blame on racial tension, allegedly instigated by Blacks, subversive teaching styles at TYP, and the kind of curriculum offered. The Review Committee recommended that TYP as a program at U of T be suspended. The Governing Council accepted this recommendation and suspended the TYP for one year. However, this recommendation (among others) and action thereof, did not go uncontested by the community, tutors in the program and other allies within the university community. A petition was put through the Black community, and many TYP students put their names on a speakers' list at a forum set up to oppose this recommendation. The students spoke of what the program meant to them, how the professor made them feel, demeaning their culture(s) and backgrounds as though this had no relevance to a university education. The community representatives, on the other hand, stressed that TYP was important for them as a means of community development, and not for the students. TYP stood as a symbol of how far the community had gone to gain access to higher education for those of their community who did not get the conventional opportunity to take the university route through high school highway.

While this lobbying did not stop U of T from suspending TYP for the 1976/77 academic year, U of T did concede to amending the recommendation to include a clause stating that there would be another Review Committee in the ensuing months to evaluate the program and its future at U

of T. It would therefore depend on this new committee's recommendations, whether the program would be revived or eliminated all together. About this turbulent period, the university neither acknowledged nor understood the value of informally learned knowledge and personal experience(s) to the formal learning process(es) that TYP students brought into the University, and that the TYP curriculum had sought to respond to and nurture these rich knowledges. Along with the recommendation to suspend TYP during the 1976/77 academic year, the (same) committee recommended that all faculty be let go, with the exception of myself as I was a TYP co-founder and would be valuable should TYP be re-opened in the future. At this point, the then principal of Innis College asked me to document my reflections on TYP, and that I continue in the role of Coordinator for TYP. During that year, I continued to counsel TYP alumni who had gone into university those in their first year, and those well into their programs. I offered counseling, support and tutorial services to the students, however, I experienced isolation and loneliness as my TYP network had been eliminated, but I received support from the Black and First Nations communities and from a few colleagues at U of T who continued to have faith in the program.

Things were set to change, however, as a new review committee was appointed in the fall of 1976. The late Father John Kelly Principal of St. Michael's College headed it. He was a man fearless of the university administration, due in part to St. Michael College's autonomy within the university structure. Along with Father Kelly, Professor George Bancroft was also appointed and this pleased the (Black) community, as they felt that Professor Bancroft had always strongly supported the program. From this point on, I worked with the Kelly Committee, as it was later known, to prepare materials and testimonials of students' success, including those who were now in the mainstream student body. In the spring of 1977, community members (especially from the Black community), those from the suspended (TYP) program, the Native Community and other supporters such as U of T faculty rallied together and were willing to testify before the Kelly Committee. TYP alumni were a particularly strong and highly articulate group; they spoke in front of the committee about the importance of TYP to their lives, and to the larger community. That TYP was an important equity and access institution at U of T, and it should not be allowed to wither away. These testimonials were very important evidence that the committee had to consider in making a decision about the future of TYP. They were impressed and moved by the level of intellectual engagement TYP alumni approached the issues at hand, and when it was all over, the Kelly Committee made the following recommendations (among others):

- a) That TYP be reinstated and continued at U of T in the academic year 1977/78.
 - i) That there be a tightening of the TYP structure.
 - ii) More funding for the program.
 - iii) The instatement of two positions of English Coordinator and Social Sciences Coordinator.
 - iv) A continued and strengthened focus on language, literature, and social sciences.
 - v) Six tutors to continue part-time in the program.
 - vi) That the program move out of Innis College, and operate as an autonomous unit reporting directly to the Vice President and Provost, (who was then Prof. Don Chant).

The Governing Council, and the Vice President of the university extended the position of English Coordinator to me, if I would accept it, and they passed this recommendation. In the summer of 1977, TYP was reinstated and moved to a building next to Robarts library before settling into the Koffler Center, where the current U of T Bookstore resides, and was there for several years. Being the only one who has been with the TYP from its inception, through its crises and revitalization, I was able to evaluate the entire span of the program, and consider it a milestone in the fight for equitable access to university education for all. I particularly commend the support of the Black and Native communities, during the difficult periods. I acknowledge the contributions of TYP provided by Professors Charles Hanley, Frederick Case, Jack Diamond, Marty Wall, Keith Allen, Martin Klein, Jack Wayne, Janet Salaff, Frank Cunningham, Bruce Kidd, and in recent times of current director, Rona Abramovitch. However, I was disappointed by the lack of support from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), my alma mater, the English Department, and others from whom myself and those who worked for the survival of TYP had hoped to get support in those trying and critical times.

Over the years, there has been some change in the political climate at U of T. There is now more “interest” in knowing about the histories and cultures of non-dominant groups, with the increase in the diversity of the student body (unlike the 1960s and 1970s), and TYP has gained acceptability in the University community. More and more students are coming to TYP from “non-traditional” groups for TYP, including displaced people/refugees who are making Canada their new home. By opening its door wider for all this diversity, U of T, is opening itself to the notion that a university

education is not only about “knowledge,” but also about what the world has to offer. Those who passed through TYP found their transitional year particularly important as it stressed the value and importance of one’s history, culture and prior knowledge as critical in the education process, and this is what the TYP curriculum has been about. The university has been learning to realize and be sensitive to the fact that some students, especially the First Nations students, feel that university credentials take away their culture. And in order to respond to this, the curriculum has to speak to the realities of First Nations and minoritized groups, otherwise education continues to be a form of colonization that students and their (groups) people resist by disengaging from the school system, or not participating in it in the first place.

The TYP Experience And Informal Learning

As mentioned earlier TYP was accepted by the U of T Senate (and now Governing Council) and opened at Innis College in 1970. In the summer of that same year, TYP switched from being a community summer program to a full time university program at U of T. I was its English and Writing Instructor at the time of its inception and later English Coordinator, a position I hold to date. As I had done in the previous year, 1969 and 1970 TYP summer course, I chose for my 1970 English reading course the book “The Wretched of the Earth” by Frantz Fanon. This book, was chosen to facilitate the processes of critical reading and thinking, skills students would need in their university career after TYP. It was a difficult but relevant book and it spoke directly to the experiences of many students. This book along with references to other books like “Black Skins, White Mask,” also by Frantz Fanon, were pivotal in getting students to think critically about their social position and their future. This emphasis on the condition of colonized peoples around the world, the psychological impact and consequences of colonization, sought to facilitate students’ understanding of their own marginalization and help them realize that it was deeply connected to the horror of colonialism, and not what the media portrayed about First Nations, Black and other marginalized groups in Canadian society - as a burden to society.

The use of “The Wretched of the Earth” as text, though admittedly dense for entry students, was very pivotal in unlocking the wealth of informal knowing and knowledge that TYP students brought with them. Students’ informally learned knowledge was intricately tied to their histories, and the knowledge of one’s history was and is vital to the understanding of one’s place in the world they live

in. Thus, I set up classes so that students would factor in their informally learned knowledge, as well as their personal experiences to the issues under discussion. This way, students (most of whom were and are adults) found the learning very relevant, their knowledge and wisdom validated their knowledge, thereby increasing their self-esteem and confidence, and this had a direct impact on the success rate at TYP. It's very important to use what students bring as informal knowledge; it is very necessary to the (formal) learning processes. I also used Native Literature to illustrate the importance of history, and culture, but mainstream Canadian history does not include Native history in its history and other university courses. This facilitated the understanding of Canada as a country with a colonial history of exploitation that needed to be fully recognized in order to understand the position of First Nations people on the land of their ancestors.

My involvement with informal learning, apart from its roots in my country of origin, Antigua, was with the Toronto's Black community, which was also shared with educators like Allan Thomas and Hilroy Thomas. Allan (a retired professor at OISE/U of T) and Hilroy members of the Prior Learning Assessment Committee (PLAC) in 1991-92. Ontario's Ministry of Universities and Colleges established the Prior Learning Assessment Committee in 1991 and I was invited to be a member of this committee, which investigated the role, and assessment of Prior Learning in post-secondary education. For me, this was an important eye opener on the potentials of informal learning in the formal setting. I was a member of this committee, the Minister of Education's PLAC of 1991-92, and this put me in a position of networking with people from different communities. Informal learning happens in all communities, and I benefited a lot by networking beyond TYP and the Black community, into the Native, Portuguese, Chinese, Greek, and other communities I encountered and came into contact with. I also learned a lot from my involvement as a parent with PTAs, a member of the public school system, Organization of Parents of Black Children, and through countless advocacy forums. The knowledge I gained from my involvement in these varied spaces and communities has become valuable in my concretizing the impact race and class has on students' educational attainment.

Even though the University of Toronto is **now** proud of TYP, during the early years, the struggle to gain acceptance for the program at the university was through the "rejection" process that TYP, and I in particular, learned the power of forming alliances. I learned a lot from other marginalized groups and was an active member of other diverse groups, other than my own community. For instance, I

served on the first Women's Studies Committee at U of T, back then, there very few women students and faculty; I also served on the first African Studies Committee, as well as the first Caribbean Studies Committee. To this end, my knowledge of the university system vis-à-vis equity issues (of race, class and gender...) has been of immense benefit to TYP and vice versa. I commend the university for taking the chance thirty (30) years ago, to "try the TYP experiment," even though no one knew where and how far it was going. Then, the university administration did not understand the importance of equitable access to education for all, it did not understand the importance of a representative curriculum, but over the years and through the hard work of many groups, the university is opening itself to the heterogeneity found in society at large. What has made TYP prevail over the years has been the strength of its curriculum. This is a strong aspect that has been worked on and evaluated over and over again to ensure that it responds to the needs of the students. It is particularly geared to facilitate the process of helping TYP students overcome their fears and build their confidence, so they can enter the larger university community with an I-can-do-it mindset. TYP teaches the University of Toronto and others what is possible when a university/institution of higher education, opens its doors to under-represented students. I had seen this through students who have passed through TYP and have gone on to gain (graduate) degrees and move on and up and outward in the world. This has been deeply satisfying and encouraging, especially the factor that many students have given back to their communities. For example, I recently attended a seminar that was organized by a TYP alumnus in their community. If TYP did not have the curriculum it has, the success rate might be a different story altogether. Every subject area/course at TYP has aimed at incorporating students' informally learned knowledge and experiences. For instance, in my English language and literature classes, I always encouraged the inclusion of informal knowledge into the formal learning context because the two feed off of each other. This aspect has had a ripple effect into the larger university atmosphere, where TYP students have participated in many other courses. For example, Professor Janet Saleff (Sociology) has publicly remarked on the quality of class contributions made by TYP students to her first year Sociology class. She referred to TYP students as a "rich vein of understanding" in her class (SOC 101Y).

Marilli TYP Staff Member And TYP Alumni

Marilli's narrative comes from a place of being an "insider/outsider" at TYP. To this end, she and Carolyn shared similar experiences of being TYP alumni that went to university, and could therefore (and do) speak from a place of

knowing. Marilli's story allows us a glimpse of being on both sides of the table as it were, and by so doing weaves into the narratives and reflections of both student and alumni and clarifies some issues while contesting others. I left the narrative/reflection in original form as the interviewer's voice is also very important, as she also came from a place of knowing like the interviewee.

Carolyn: Marilli, could you share with me how TYP changed your life, as a student back then?

Marilli: In the most extreme positive way possible. It gave me self worth, it allowed me to grow, proved to be a springboard for me as I was the first honored TYP alumni, and since then it has continued to be a springboard. At TYP, no one made me feel dumb for not knowing something, both staff and students provided huge amounts of encouragement. Being here allowed me to differentiate realistic and non-realistic problems in life. I had Hartford, Guy, and Maureen along the way, all of whom proved to be invaluable. Along with the foregoing, I had Keith, Marty, and Rosanne who were very helpful, for example, Rosanne would lend me her typewriter. People at TYP also understood the pressures of being a parent and a student at the same time. I used to bring my kids to class with me, something the professors understood.

Carolyn: So what effect do you think the program had on those that failed or didn't complete the year or who were not recommended to go onto university?

Marilli: I have gotten a lot of positive feedback from a lot of them, like, 'Too bad I did not make it, but having gone through the program has changed my life and made me whole' and some such comments. The program gave them a lot of respect, like they said other people now saw them as people who can think. A lot knew they either weren't ready for TYP/University and therefore did not appreciate it, or had other things going on that did not allow them to take it all in. It is too bad we can't keep track of students once they leave us, it would be good to do so. A lot of former students also continue in community colleges, for example there is a TYP alumni that graduated with Honors from Humber College. I still hear students say they used to read the Toronto Sun and can now read the Globe and Mail. It all came out of the tools they learnt here, tools they now can use on a daily basis. A lot say they used to be told things by other people, now they can tell others things too.

However, there is negative feedback as well, such as taking too much sociology – the only class offered at the time – because they cannot stop themselves from analyzing everything in terms of class/gender/race/etc. A student told me that their only regret is that TYP can't be used as a bases for the rest of the school career, that is, it is not a college or department that they can be affiliated with for the rest of their academic career. We all realize(d) how busy the tutors were/are and even though the door is always open, current students get priority, and tutors barely have enough time for all of them. This excludes alumni from accessing their former teachers, and getting the support they need, to go on with their studies. For those that go elsewhere it is a lot harder because one has to get familiar to and ask for help from new people; the comfort that goes with familiarity is gone, and this is hard. A lot I know do not ask for help when they go elsewhere, a lot fall out and get lost because they are not comfortable appealing grades, asking for extra time for assignments – and such procedures and services.

Carolyn: What you speak to, reminds me of a presentation I recently gave on my own project on TYP, and in it, I noted that 60% of the students failed on average. The audience I was giving the presentation to (other graduate students) heard this and concluded that the program (TYP) doesn't work, the students can't make it. I explained and pointed out some of the issues you raise, but it all goes to show how the outside/larger university community don't fully understand/see what is going on at TYP.

Marilli: Yeah, a student recently called me and described how bogged down they are with work, school, family and other obligations. They did not think they would make it. But I pointed out to the student the fact that students who do not have to juggle anything don't have what this student had, that's ambition, drive, knowing where they want to go. Putting things into perspective always sheds light onto a problem. There are students that dropout too, and a lot have strong family ties, and those ties put them on the defensive, constantly. Because they have to go to school everyday they get statements and remarks such as 'So you want to be better/smarter than

everyone else, huh?.' They have to defend themselves everyday. Family also provides a strong influence on those from other countries and/or with large families.

There are also those warned against getting "frivolous" degrees, such as those in the Arts, for example, some of the following remarks are common; 'Why don't you take computers instead, what are you going to do with an Arts degree?' On the other hand, there is guild to deal with for some statements like 'can you afford to take a loan?' are common, especially when they have kids who are either in school, such as high school where they need money for trips and so on, or who are going into post-secondary education. They question and are questioned whether they are being selfish by not allowing their kids to have more because they are using the money to come here [TYP].

Carolyn: What you say resonates with me; and hearing students' voices has been vital, both from inside and outside TYP, like the example I gave earlier on about reactions/feedback I got from my presentation. Also, being from a sociology background, the focus seems to be on the end result, GPA for example, and not on other factors that may affect the end result, issues like family responsibilities, children and so on.

Marilli: I've also seen a lot of this, for example, there was a woman who was suspended due to her low GPA, and she eventually dropped out. What wasn't obvious to the outsider is that she sacrificed her education in order to take care of her three brothers, she became the 'mom.' Knowing this, I don't think anyone would deem her a failure. Plus, in situations like this, the student's self-esteem goes back to where it was before they started the program. If the time comes when they can return, it's much harder because of what they've gone through.

Carolyn: How do you think the woman in the example you just shared interpreted her situation?

Marilli: Badly. Her brothers saw her as a failure, adding to her own hurt feelings about it. They felt she screwed up, yet they failed to see that it was partly because of them that she was unable to continue. I think it may have been due to cultural factors too.

Carolyn: Could you elaborate on that?

Marilli: I can't generalize, it depends. But I've seen and see similar traits in First Nations and some European students and their families. Family values, religious values, and so on, can be very strong and all can have an effect on the individual. For instance, the support from First Nations House, on campus, isn't always there for TYP students. Many feel discriminated against by their own people, and a lot get out on the defensive too. An example is giving First Nations students a choice of taking a Native Studies course instead of the regular TYP option courses. By being singled out, they felt defensive towards others. It was a case of being further segregated from the rest of the class. People don't want to be singled out, they want integration, to be part of the group. It's also difficult for First Nations students because they have to defend themselves to their peers, for example, not needing OSAP because the government has a funding scheme specifically for them. Because they have other stuff going on, and then get this kind of stuff said to them on top of it all, it is too much and they feel like leaving the program. They get this kind of attitude all the time and don't need to get it from here as well.

Carolyn: How does what First Nations students grow up with, conflict with what goes on at University?

Marilli: Well, they feel like they have to defend what they grew up with. Everything you have known starts to wobble and then there is the tendency to go to the other extreme and completely reject what you had been taught growing up. It's very frustrating for all TYP students, seeing what the university has to offer, seminars, concerts, etc., and not being able to take advantage of it because you have kids, or have to go to work and so on.

The other thing is that many TYP students don't want to be linked to TYP due to possible stigma from the larger student and faculty body. Actually, a lot of the university doesn't even know that the program is 'not for typing.' I was thirty-six (36) when I was in my first year, many thought I was the teacher. The other first-years

seemed so eloquent and knowledgeable, but by the end of the year, I saw that they weren't so much more than I was, they hadn't experienced what I had. It balances itself out you know. Also, sometimes professors don't want to be interrupted by people with some "obscure" question(s), by people trying to link what is going on in the class with their life experiences. Talking in that kind of atmosphere can make you feel stupid, you open yourself to being ridiculed and are sometimes told to 'shut up' – by both students and profs. – or you feel you should shut up. It's a matter of either asking the right question or not asking a question at all. Sometimes the professor will ask you to ask your question after the class is over, but when you hear classmates snickering at you, you don't go to ask after the class is over. You just want to leave. The other thing I should mention, however, is that I feel fortunate about my time at TYP. Then, we had grants, bursaries, etc., and we worked. I, for example, scrounged to pay my own way, I didn't use financial aid until the final years. I was terrified of accumulating a debt. How would I pay it back, especially with a history of low paying jobs, it's a scary thing to face for anyone; and you feel intimidated to find out and what financial aid consists of, like people don't read the fine print on these forms.

Carolyn: Should these forms be verbally explained?

Marilli: It's all explained during orientation, and the explanations have gotten much more detailed now, there are workshops, a financial advisor on the staff (Bill Beyea). Students don't have to go 'outside' to get information, but as they get busier, they don't have time to attend workshops. Also, the loan documents aren't easy to read, some students have never seen a loan document in their lives. [So much impinges on TYP students experiences here that they battle with a sense of identity and belonging, even when they have made it into the mainstream student body.] For example, I did not want to go to my graduation when I completed my degree after five years at U of T. My sister talked me into going, and when I went up to get my degree, I got so much clapping, yelling and cheering from my peers. They knew what I had gone through to complete my degree as a single parent, etc.

Carolyn: Why didn't you want to go?

Marilli: I still felt like a fraud going from grade eight to TYP, with one year of George Brown College, didn't seem like enough. I actually wanted to drop off before my last exam. I didn't think I would do it, my sister talked me into finishing. I didn't think I deserved it, I had done so much hard work yet I just wanted to stop. After five years of pushing, you have to find a job, people look at your age, your degree and they do not tally, and this is hard to deal with. Unless you volunteer like I did and got a job with TYP as the secretary – lousy pay but it allows me to give back some of what I got.

I have to credit my sister for not giving up on me, she was the first in our family to graduate from university, actually it was my brother who graduated from York University, at the age of 26. He lived in residence, he had grade 10, or 11 from Canada, and he worked in the Dean's office. I went to university at 36, had two kids, and a grade eight education in another language and totally different circumstances. Because of my own experiences as a TYP alumni, I have now been advocating for our students to go to the general university orientations. It would give them a chance to see that others (mainstreamers) are just as scared as they are. They'll also make new friends or at least get to know some faces around campuses, since it is unlikely that they'll see other TYP students. Our students need to know that they have a right to be here, just as much as any other U of T student.

Carolyn: Now I'd like to turn to informal learning, how is it brought together with formal learning at TYP?

Marilli: It was very difficult for me to change from informal learning – very hands-on, you see, you do it – to formal learning, that is book learning and I wasn't the only one. With informal learning you see, you copy it and you do it. Whereas with formal learning, you see/read it, copy/study it, are tested, and then forget it. You thus need to find things that will work for you. I wanted to get an education that I could use, and I found in Drama and English Literature. Even though it may seem like a luxury, but I did it myself, I deserved it and had to allow it all to sink in. What's important with informal learning is persistence, one has to keep trying, keep learning, and not

give up. Initially I took Psychology and couldn't handle it – concert hall with so many people, having to run to get there on time, just couldn't have it – I dropped it and had to pick up a half course, or lose my subsidy. I picked Classical Mythology and loved it! It had the same workload as the Psychology course, but it didn't intimidate me like Psychology did, with multiple choice tests and so on. Drama and English gave me insight into all of the disciplines.

Carolyn: What are some of the barriers you encountered in allowing such knowledge to sink in?

Marilli: Money and the time it takes. [TYP] students are seen as leeches of society. The value of a certain education – such as those found in the Arts – is not seen by many people. For example, I grew up in a carnival and therefore traveled a lot. My education was like Swiss cheese – full of holes – and I used university to fill those holes in order to make a whole piece. I went through moving around a lot, having a family, having it break up and getting accepted into university. The movement and all the experiences I had were part of growing up, and coming to university was a way for me to express and prove [that I was somebody]. Going through this process gives people strength, one has to work than everyone else does because everywhere you turn, and you have to defend your existence. The TYP experience is different because it is people from different age groups, class backgrounds, and value systems. TYP students have to work harder at learning to be a students [in a formal setting]. Students come in and don't know two thirds of what they are reading; they have to learn how to learn. After TYP, many feel they can do almost anything, such as college. I recall being scared/nervous when I called Keith about applying here. I originally wanted to get into Ryerson's Hospitality program, but it was full, and a woman whose child knew mine from daycare suggested I try applying here [at TYP]. I have to say that being [formally] educated is better for one's kids too, it gives one validity, one learns to communicate, and discuss things with one's kids. However, I have to also say I'd never give up informal learning. For instance, I would listen to my profs. and know that they were smart, but also realize that their knowledge was limited. TYP students are experienced in so much more. They are

experienced in life. The downside of informal learning is that it doesn't teach you to reason and question things like superstition. It's hard to give up those things and replace them with facts; all our lives we have made decisions on what we've learned without questioning. Formal learning gives you a backup.

Carolyn: How does informal learning get used here?

Marilli: By way of class discussions, comparisons [between Literature and Lives], topics discussed, writing about something you know, then working to compare it to a book or article being used. Some are harder for TYP students than others because they have to learn how to use them and what they know. Giving life example, instead of text examples, helps. The lives lived by TYP students can differ markedly from that of non-TYP students. For example, many mainstream students don't see drug pushers on a daily basis, don't have family members who have been in and out of prison and so on, and this has an effect on ones' learning.

Marilli's story, gives us a unique perspective on issues touched on by professors and students thereby add value to the importance of taking studies such as these more deeply and as longitudinal ones in order to tap from the experiences of former students, whatever and however they become after TYP.

TOM – SENIOR TUTOR**Personal History and First Encounter with TYP**

“I got to TYP because of desperation and [by] pure accident. I got my Ph.D. in 1978 and was teaching at the Community Living Program at Innis College – it was a term job coming to an end. I knew Marty Wall, who was then director, and through my wife ended up getting a job with the program, grading the weekly quizzes (they’re no longer done, but did serve to reduce exam anxiety by getting students used to taking tests).”

Tom has, over the time he has been at TYP, been involved in both academic and administrative activities. Administratively, he has been involved in the admissions process when Keith, the Registrar, has been away. His duties included setting the calendar and timetable changes. He was involved in the “Steps to University” program that was being run in high school(s). Tom has also been actively involved in the committees that catered from TYP students, namely the Academic Standing and Petitions committee and the Bursary committee.

However, Tom did point out that he was still at TYP “because of lack of career alternatives and the extra-ordinary teaching endeavors I’m exposed to here. [Here, at TYP] I work with students who want to be here [who] are interested in what you’re doing, I get direct feedback and I feel like I am making a difference (and I think I have). There is a lot of non-financial reward.” And even though the teaching experience has been one that has had an impact on his life, Tom remarked that he “did not get to do a lot of research (partly because I am so busy), yet the things I have worked on have often been stimulated by what my students have been interested in. I get ideas often because of my experiences in teaching here.” For instance, a conference paper titled Philosophers Autobiographies was stimulated by his involvement in the admissions process, his students’ interest in autobiographies and other teaching and administrative processes. This has also led to a series of conference papers and presentations as well as courses he taught, and a series of other talks. Another example is a paper he published in The Monist: An International Journal of General Philosophical Inquiry, titled “History and the Moralist.” This was partly stimulated by a course he taught at TYP entitled “Social History.”

From a variegated past Tom has found his activities very satisfying for him as a professional, because as he put it, at TYP “there is a lot of non-financial reward.” As pointed out by other faculty

and by Tom, TYP students bring with them a wealth of knowledge that the average undergraduate student does not, they are at university because they want to be there and take their studies seriously. To this end, Tom expressed that he could not share his perspective on the history of TYP because “...I don’t have a perspective. I’m too close to it all. I can however discuss my view of the informal learning process [at TYP].”

Informal Learning at TYP

In my experience, TYP students have a different repertoire than mainstream students partly because of age as well as what they have been through over the years (children, relationships, etc.). Because of such a wide life experience that TYP students bring, I learned not to assume anything about the students. The common factor is that they all want to learn. Otherwise, they are individual people. For what you assume about one student, may not be appropriate to assume about another. For example, I have learned that when teaching a class that is so varied in experiences and background, you have to approach it slowly; I assume that what I am teaching is partly written in Martian, that is, in a form unfamiliar to them. I also have to remember that it is a form that was once foreign to me as well – although it may have been a different experience under different conditions. I have learned over the years, that every new group that comes at TYP has ingenious adaptation techniques, something that is required of the instructor as well. There are regrets of course, as the first encounter might find you totally unprepared, one’s adaptations change and improve over time a trial and error process, one learns as one goes along, what works and what doesn’t. Most of all, one learns the importance and indispensability of strategy. For example, Jack Wayne and I once taught a Social History course which included a large amount of reading on capitalism and slavery by Eric Williams, a former Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. The book is written in a detached and academic manner. The textbook was not yet available for purchase, so we gave the students Xeroxed copies of the chapters. There was an extremely negative response from Caribbean students who did not know who Williams was and due to the writing style, thought he was writing from the point of view of looking down on what happened to them. I ended up having to explain who Williams was, thereby putting students’ fears to rest. This problem came as a complete surprise to me; the lesson, again, was – don’t assume anything. However, students also learned the value and utility of academic detachment. This was definitely an example of informal learning – it was an experiment that they all learned from. This experience/experiment also brought to the fore one of similarities that are there

in TYP students, that is, their willingness to speak their minds, something TYP certainly as a program encourages.

It is important to pause for a moment and ponder the issues academic detachment that Tom highlights here. Many academic studies and other writings, point to the complications of academic “detachment” as part of the reason why so many students disengage from the school system – it is alienating (see among many Dei, 1994, 1996, 2000; Kedi, 1996; Lutrell, 1996; Livingstone, 1999, Collins, 2000; Charumbira , 1999; hooks, 1984, 1994). Academic writing comes from a privileged histories of white middle and upper – class men that started and shaped academia for close to a millennium. This writing was based on the study of “other” and therefore the “detachment.” What needs to be unpacked in this process at TYP, is understanding why students negatively respond to certain types of writing. Does it mean they do not understand “detached” writing, or is academia detachment masquerading as “objectivity”? Can there be subjective objectivity, and objective subjectivity in the process of academic writing? These are key questions to ask when talking of equitable access to university education for all. They are key in understanding and searching for entry points for making the university open to multiple ways of knowing, producing, and disseminating knowledge.

Tom also expressed that he has learnt a lot from TYP students and his colleagues, and particularly those foreign to him. For example, I now have an amateur’s interest in Caribbean and African History. I can actually take lessons from students. One of the things I have learned about students is that they can delight me whenever I encounter sparks of interest and expertise. They already know the stuff. In addition, they want to learn, it’s beneficial in that respect. Enthusiastic colleagues have done the same. One of the delights of dealing with students (and one of the reasons I’ve never left the university) is being able to talk about neat ideas, interesting facts, trends, and history. It’s all here. In addition, at TYP, it’s surely more broadening than what I would be experiencing in the Philosophy department. I removed myself from the department partly because of this fact.

As I mentioned earlier on TYP students speak their minds, and while the program encourages this, it is also part of their adaptation process to university life; and I think this is due to a number of factors. First, they are at an age where they don’t (necessarily) feel inferior to the professor. Second, the fact that they have self-selected to be here, and not because it is the “next step” after high school. They’re anxious to get hold of the learning. Thirdly, because they have been divorced from the school culture for a significant time of their lives; they haven’t learned to sit down and shut up. And fourth, modeling. If they’re vocal, we try to make it well received. In addition, TYP is a little more egalitarian than their memories of schooling. It’s common knowledge that some of the

students will outstrip us someday. We (at TYP), have the ability to help them, but not much more than that.

Asked how he saw TYP students' informal knowledge and learning as contributing or hindering the development of their academic ease and the fulfillment of their student role, he had this to say:

We don't discourage their willingness to question and I don't know how/where they've learned this trait, but it's informal, and it is a great help when it develops. Those who don't develop it, I think, suffer and experience difficulties, at least partly because of that. Life experiences can and do provoke life interests. What the students do when they leave here is to a large extent dependent on their previous life experiences and histories. This is clear from their (course) choices. For example, (Sociology) SOC 101 used to be the only official TYP course choice, students could register in other courses, but they would be on their own. Very few selected other courses. This was because there were many first year SOC 101Y time slots/selections and it allowed for the spreading of the TYP class throughout the sections. Putting them together was thought to be not so good for the SOC 101Y class nor for our students. Another factor was that other courses tended to have too many prerequisites for our students; sociology had no prerequisites.

More importantly, perhaps putting the entire TYP class in the same section was thought not to be beneficial to our students because they'd be identifiable to the rest of the student body. There'd be chances they'd face a stigma effect, especially because what they did and didn't know would be different from what other students did and didn't know. There's also the matter of the Teaching Assistant (TA's). The TYP students might have a particular difficulty, such as a writing difficulty, but they might be writing on a topic that they know a lot about...., perhaps, more than the TA to the extent that the TA wouldn't believe what the student was writing – because the TA would be drawing conclusions based on their limited writing abilities, about students' general capacity, and about student's past. For example, a student wrote an essay on agriculture in the Caribbean using some of her own experiences as reference material. She got a D minus (D -) because the TA thought she was making it up. Instead of helping her or inquiring about where the information came from, and encouraging her to validate them with written sources, the TA chose not to believe her at all. The linguistic and academic limitations of our student and ignorance on the part of the TA contributed to this situation.

Spreading TYP students into different sections of the SOC 101Y course also ensured that they would not be the target of students with strong academic skills but limited life experiences, and be touted for it. TYP faculty worried about dropping a number of TYP students who aren't that academically polished into a group of mainstream students, as this would produce unanticipated responses. Anonymity seemed the best strategy, and therefore spreading them out the "ideal" way to go. So we'd drop the students in different sections and members of our faculty would be delegated to keep track of a section. There was one year when there was one SOC 101Y section and we had to put all in one class, which proved okay, as the regular class was so much larger. However, we are still concerned about the evaluation process, which relied heavily on multiple choice tests. We've learned over the years that non-North American students have difficulty with multiple choice, especially those that have been away from school for a long time. They haven't got an ear tuned to ambiguity, haven't learned the skills for multiple choice tests, might forget that often, the best answer is required not the right answer, and so on. They generally don't do well (fall far below the curve). To do multiple choice tests well, I think a third of doing it right is knowing how to do it. Many don't know how, and it is a hard skill to teach. There are always many opportunities to show how one's weakness and limited opportunities can show one's strengths. This led us to believe that sociology might not be the only course we should be directing them to.

TYP students at their best can take theory, take what they know, and contribute a perspective on the world. When they are able to do this, they are excellent at sociology. This is not available to mainstream students because TYP students bring to the learning of sociology a wealth of informally learned knowledge. It's sort of an unstructured participant observation, but they've participated in life in a way their colleagues have not. One of the average 19 year-old biggest life experiences is school. What they have experienced at school is variable, but it isn't even close to the breadth of what the TYP students bring. TYP students' trump card, that which dictates study and course choices, is informal learning. A lot of our students still take SOC 101Y, it is of great interest to them because it contributes to greater self knowledge, which is a great motivator. It is a course that can be perceived right away to assist students in figuring out what they are about. Many thrive in it and love it, even if their grades aren't that great.

Tom did, however, emphasize that by and large, TYP and mainstream students' motivations and attitudes to their annual reports was of no statistical significance. As he put it, from the questionnaires about what they thought of their education, TYP students' motives were no different. Any one of the motives listed

on the questionnaire had about the same results for both groups, so I don't think our students are any more or less instrumental in this regard, and remember that instrumental concerns dictate, to a degree, what they want to be. When students take sociology, for example, they are all hooked in, in a way, to the reality that what they are learning has a bearing on their past, that is, they can place themselves in a context as a result of what they learned in the first year sociology. This is also the year where there are a higher problem cases of professors being more enthusiastic about teaching sociological methods and this is hard for students. The best results come from students seeing the full picture and finding their place in it. As for what draws students to other course options, I could say immigrants seem to be more often attached to Third World History due to their origins, compared to Canadian minorities who go for sociology. And/or you see students, for example, who want to take something else but want to be in a sociology-related career and therefore take it because they think they should. The option of taking it later doesn't seem to be a factor in this process; whether they are conscious or not in choosing their courses, is a very complex issue. If one were to ask them, although it has never been done one, would probably get a cluster of motives for their choices, ranging from; they want to study it, fear of the unknown, career goals among such responses.

Reality Checks And Challenges at TYP

Asked if he thought TYP students' experiences as they progressed through the year helped them make the strategic study/course and career choices more conscious, especially understanding that part of succeeding in academia is merging one's self-history and what the university has to offer. This question came from a TYP alumni (Carolyn who conducted the interview/s), who noted that from her own experiences, while at TYP, she

“took certain courses with no intention of continuing in them out of ignorance. I thought that was what an educated person knew about, that is, economics, history, etc. I thought I should know something about everything, that that was what a student was supposed to know. I thought my informally learning and knowledge base were somewhat meaningless in this academic environment. I rebelled against TYP's encouragement to speak in my own voice. I thought mine wasn't good enough.”

Tom responded to Carolyn's questions and remarks by pointing out that it was really hard to generalize whether students' experiences as they progress had an impact on their choice of study goals and career options. He elaborated that: some students do very well in certain subjects, which often gives them direction. Others may have the same experience and decide if they're so successful at this, then I can do anything. This can

lead them to take Economics 100, for example, partly because they believe pragmatism is the way to go, that is, for a job in business, courses/a major in economics will help. There have been similar experiences in Psychology 100, where the information in the first half of the course is of less interest to our students than the second half. This leaves students high and dry, as they need the first half to proceed to the second half, and the first half deals with more technical aspects of the subject which students have little background in, except those (other) students that have their OAC year to fall back on. So often when situations like those I have highlighted arise, students either drop or have to drop the course, and this raises a lot of issues about informal learning as you so rightly pointed out from your own experiences as a TYP student. Moreover, some students do feel that despite TYP's value, it's really an artificial situation, which it is in some ways. They, therefore, draw the conclusion that what they've learned about themselves and their strengths while at TYP has to be put aside because they want to be like the rest of the students in the university. *To this, Carolyn noted that from her own experiences, in an English class, "I wouldn't write about my experiences but instead about something else that I thought had more merit. I wasn't tapping into my informal learning."*

Carolyn's commentary is very important to take note of here, as it echoes what students in this study shared, to varying degrees, about the problematic of what it means to be a TYP student, at the University of Toronto. Some of the issues and questions that come to mind regarding the courses students take, the course of study they pursue, and what their career goals and options are:

- *What are some of the barriers that connect and diverge formal and informal learning?*
- *What are the power dynamics embedded in the curriculum that lends one subject/discipline as being "popular" among TYP students, when others are so inaccessible such that they have to drop them as they cannot relate to the material, or have "no background" in them?*
- *Could the inaccessibility of certain subjects to TYP students, at the first year level, be interpreted as structural barriers to education that TYP students still face even when they come to university because the university is still very much structured around the experiences and needs of the dominant and dominating race, class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality among other social differences?*
- *How can the practice of multiple ways of knowing and learning be brought into the university so that "ghetto" and "elite" subjects are not created in a university that prides itself in excellence, and creating a great future for great minds?*

To some of the issues and questions raised above, Carolyn noted also that we've been hearing from different faculty that some students take their informal learning and really embrace it to bridge the gap between what they have learned from informal learning and their life experiences, and what they need to learn in academia. Some use it to the exclusion or division of what they need to know in order to be an academic. Tom reiterated this and observed that some don't use [their informal learning] at all, and they go off on their own, and you [Carolyn] did. We [at TYP] would like to tell people that there are certain things you shouldn't take, perhaps, because we can't promise them with enough background for it. We have seven and a half months to compensate for a lifetime of limited or oddly directed or absent academic preparation. We do what we can, but we can't do everything. You want to tell them to stay away from certain courses, because their backgrounds did not prepare them, and therefore they're going to find it difficult, tedious, and/or discouraging. "[Yes]...and some students may take that to mean they are not good enough to be considered 'regular' students" Carolyn responded.

What we at TYP have to get across to our students is that the reasons they shouldn't take economics, for example, is the same why they shouldn't take physics. No one's good at everything, and everyone should, to a degree, play to their strengths. I too, have a bizarre habit of wanting to know about many things, maybe that is why I am still here. And one of my own informal learning experiences as a result of being a teacher here (at TYP), is that the things you want to know may actually differ from what you actually get from a course. The time will come when the knowledge one wants and needs will be available and accessible, therefore one should not put one's self in 'harms' way as it were. The other side of this, is to encourage students to broaden out, something one has to do in order to graduate, and there's a really fine line between these two sides. Different students will go different ways in selection(s) and in the end really one can only suggest to students, but cannot prevent them from making their own choices. And as far as follow-up goes, it's important to be there, that is available, with timely advice about damage control, assistance where one can give it, and reassurance – such as stressing that the only loss one gets from dropping a course is mostly a financial one, not a spiritual, academic or intellectual one. And really, that is what TYP does by and large – to reassure. Lastly warn them – because it must be their decision – then be ready to help, and to reassure – something that can only be done if they come around for it. As you know, this program was designed with a particular view of how it would fit into a whole university career only in mind. In my view this was the wrong view and the whole idea that students

will be adequately prepared to enter university after just one year is nonsense, because it doesn't work well more often than not. For instance, we are still assisting some of our former students, many faculty members here are involved in this, and all students need it. And I should point out that our students' struggles pretty much mirror those of mainstream students, and we do our best to help our students and alumni as best we can, and for as long as they need it.

*Tom raises critical issues here (dealt with at length in the introductory section), particularly the meaning of TYP as a process more than as a program. What needs to be critically assessed and evaluated is, should TYP remain a transitional year program, or should those involved in it think of expanding this visionary dream of 30 years ago in-to a Transitional Program period. This means the program ruptures the fast-track-one way-to-university-highway and allows students to proceed at their pace. After all a liberal education is about the space to learn at one's pace, especially when one is not a "regular" student, and is finally opening itself to historically excluded social groups. The *modus operandi* has to change to ensure that equity does not translate to a feel-good, or goodwill exercise on the part of the university but a taking serious of rights of the groups and descendants of those that have always been seen as chattel by the dominant.*

Tom also expressed that he could not say if students always utilized their informal knowledge base, because the university is a world of disciplines. For instance, there is sometime talk of breaking down disciplines – some of which aren't even that old – and writing styles. Our students here enter with excellent yet undisciplined minds by university standards; they haven't been domesticated. This can be a strength in that it can give them a wonderful perspective of each field. However, within the culture of each specific course, I'm not sure what our students can bring to help them learn that culture except flexibility and willingness to learn, a reality that isn't accepted in every area, but is more often than not accepted than asking questions. For when you ask questions, you force people to make their assumptions clear, over and over again. That can be helpful, but as they walk in with informal learning styles, can that help them learn in the academic style?

Regarding flexibility, that is, whether TYP students were more flexible than the average student, he said: Some were and some weren't. Perhaps because of different informal learning processes, some people are more inclined to be flexible than others. For it's not all that one learns, but how one has oriented oneself to what is happening around oneself that makes the difference. Whether this flexibility or lack thereof, is also informally learned is really hard to say. This also extends to your question about whether students use their informal learning with and between each other, I'd still say some do and

some don't. There are two people that come to mind who did use their informal knowledge/learning with other students, namely, Paul, a leader figure now completing his MA in History (TYP graduate 1995/96 or thereabouts). Both were influential on other students. Claude's love of debates and animated discussions motivated him a lot. Paul on the other hand had a strong community orientation from the start, and his part of "giving back" to the community was making the community a big part of his university experience and by fully engaging in TYP academic and other activities.

These two, apart from positively sharing their prior informal learning with other students, were also helpful in many ways. They offered humorous observations about the student experience, and this greatly helped others adjust to what they were going to face or were already facing. In this way, yes I think students did access and tap from each others' informal learning – if only in this way. We have also tapped into this as a way of making students aware of the students services available, and have gone on to invite TYP alumni to come and share their experiences with current students. We really can't tell how it has paid off, but students weren't bored, they were intrigued, engaged and did ask questions. I believe it is good and useful that people who are still around come back. What they've learned by being students and now as former students is very important information that current students can and will access. It's all informal, and we have students and alumni working in the computer lab as modeling and indeed informally learning. We have learned a lot over the years, and I cannot document what things because I'm only at the level of "seat of the pants," that is experimentation. Over the years, we have devised records such as annual reports (1989 and on), charted success rates, and formulated statistics from questionnaires that we have administered. All these were designed and compiled to make sure we were reaching who we wanted to reach.

MAUREEN FITZGERALD TYP SENIOR TUTOR

Personal History and First Contact with TYP

Maureen did her undergraduate degree at the University of Toronto. After her studies, she taught, did several jobs, which included teaching at a Teachers' College for two years in Nigeria. After that, she worked as a volunteer with CUSO, a non-governmental organization (NGO), and both these experiences (teaching and volunteering) gave Maureen valuable experience in language and teaching relevancy. Maureen has been a tutor at TYP since the beginning at its second phase in the mid to late 1970s. Working at TYP is very important to Maureen as she believes in increasing diversity in

the university student and faculty bodies. For instance, she worked on a Management Committee that facilitated the establishment of Aboriginal Studies at the University of Toronto.

Maureen came to TYP via Innis College where she taught for the first while in the Community Living Program, and later on she doubled at Innis and TYP. At Innis, she taught a course which participants/students were mainly mature, single parent women, and this created similarities between this group and TYP students, for example, shared disadvantages. Maureen also got more involved with TYP when she worked as a seminar leader, teaching courses as well as conducting group work/tutorials for much needed university skills such as reading, writing, composition and summarizing. These experiences with TYP students exposed her to diverse adults with rich life experiences which proved refreshing in many ways from the usual middle class student body.

With regard to the History of TYP, Maureen had more questions to the reality of TYP as a program at U of T, and referred questions of the program's History to archival material available.

To preface her questioning and the issues she raised regarding TYP history, Maureen highlighted that there was a group called PRAXIS that was a very active left wing organization on the Toronto scene. It was raided by the RCMP and burnt down in around 1971. Howard Buckbinder (a Sociologist at York University) was head of Praxis then. Abe Rotstein was also active, and according to a "chat" Maureen had with Abe, he and PRAXIS participated in lobbying U of T to take on the TYP. Abe is now a professor of Political Science at U of T. Having said that, Maureen asked and raised the following questions and issues about the "origins" of TYP (in no particular order):

- What happened at U of T to let them let the TYP in? Was student activism a factor? Was it the vocal Black Students of the time?
- What causes a very conservative institution like U of T to be open to such a program? – Things like pressure from both outside and inside the university always exist for a number of reasons, but what keeps persisting is why did a program such as this one prevails?
- Who were the movers and shakers who got the U of T Senate to approve TYP?

Informal Learning Brought to TYP

Maureen said her teaching experiences at TYP and at Innis College made her realize the importance of using (course) material that has impact on students' lives, as this was, and is crucial to the learning process, especially for TYP students. For instance, a lot of the TYP students really connected with topics taught in Sociology 101. While it was not the only access course at the time, there was also

anthropology, history and political science, sociology allowed students to almost immediately assess (at least for themselves) that they had a richness of background knowledge due to their life experiences, and could and therefore understand the material and contribute as much as others. Sociology was more relevant and more applicable, and therefore more interesting to their lives both inside and outside of class. This immediate self-recognition through sociology as it were is because TYP students were and are different from the regular student body because of what they had already been through in their lives. One could therefore draw a parallel between students' immediate taking to sociology and their progressive grasp of other disciplines to their lack of basic academic skills that they did not have from high school. The basic skills of reading, writing, learning, and other analytical skills for the academic space is what others students had as an advantage over TYP students. TYP students did (and do) possess many life skills that made them keenly aware of the social universe around them, as well as their place in it. Such skills were stressed over and over again (at TYP) as key assets to their formal learning processes. Many, even in classes with mainstream students were often able to assess their knowledge within the context of the class as both valid and useful. What they now needed from the TYP experience, was learning the skills now needed to articulate this informal learning into the university setting/context – a sort of an academic ESL training as it were. Maureen emphasized that it was not letting TYP students off the hook, but a matter of possibly making allowances or other contingencies that were and are going on in their lives that other students at their academic level probably did not and do not have to deal with. This would include things like giving them extended time assignments versus easier marking, so that TYP students would be assessed in the same manner as any other university system is fine, but they should never be let off the hook.

Another important aspect to always remember is that seemingly little things and detail like using a red pen for marking can have an incredible effect on the students. For instance a (TA?) used a red pen with disastrous effects, she didn't realize the stigma that many attached to the red pen from their previous formal (school) learning experiences. Maureen believed that credit should be given for what the student knows as opposed to what do not know; for what they have as opposed to what they do not have. This, she emphasized, is a highly important starting point for the enhancement of the students, one that she has also personally learned from, the students taught her how to learn – informally. TYP students need to be validated, and their knowledge needs to be validated in the academy. They have ideas but are not confident enough about them to pursue them with

confidence. One has to start with what they already know and work with them, questioning them about what they know, and pulling out and together the important connections. Letting them talk it through often reveals that they knew the answer(s) or direction(s) all along, what is key is to let them let it out first, then the editing and finessing can come later.

For example, many people have been taught that writing an essay first requires an outline, but that method doesn't work for many people. For those that do not (or cannot) utilize this writing method, feelings of self-doubt creep in. They may feel inadequate because they cannot conform to this method. They need to be told/taught that their way of writing is fine, for whatever works for them is what they should use – I learnt with relief that my writing style was not deviant, Maureen quipped. People can get blocked from writing because of too many rules, and getting help has been stigmatized as a weakness in our society, so people do not seek help. It is almost expected for one to do the work, and perfectly, on their own. Having been out of the formal learning system for a very long time, it takes time for TYP students to learn to be students, and too many rules can inhibit and/or slow this process. Moreover, coming to TYP was an act of courage and self-determination to go back to school for most of these students and as it is, there are already powerful outside forces that make the commitment to TYP all the harder, like limited funding from the government and the university, and increasingly, it is becoming less. Learning and understanding what students go through in order to be at TYP has been a valuable learning experience for Maureen. They face so many barriers that can be detrimental to their studies, and so many are not even in a position to use her expertise and services due to a number of factors like working, sickness, bills, and family commitments (children, elderly, siblings), among other obligations, commitments and obstacles. Often times, what should be a support group is in reality a net drain on the student. That is, the money they get for school (or from working), goes not only toward their education, and living expenses, but to extended family as well.

Maureen raises fundamental issues about making university accessible to all, and breaking down as many barriers as is possible. While student debt is a common phenomenon across the spectrum of students, it is key to note that lack of funding particularly affects those who are starting out on a new career and life path. And maybe more importantly, it is key to interrogate further why TYP students share their finances. Some of the issues/questions that come to mind are:

- a) *On average is a “regular” student’s needs (and debt thereof) comparable to the needs of the average needs (and debt thereof) of TYP students?*
- b) *Since TYP students have had a life prior to coming to university, this translated to probably having more of a collective approach to life and money compared to the average 19/20 year old who thinks more individualistically.*
- c) *Since some TYP students were born and raised in different cultures, would their access to money for their own education without sharing it have an impact on their support network from whom they draw much needed spiritual and moral support in order to keep their nose on the grind as it were?*
- d) *How do TYP students prioritize their lives, is it family first or children first or something else? (Some of these issues are discussed in students’ narratives, and are entry points into some of these issues).*

Maureen went on to express that as part of her job at TYP, she learned two important things:

1. Do not take students’ not utility her personal skills and expertise personally, for TYP students have so many other things to content with in their lives.
2. Do not take on students’ baggage that, do not let their burden be yours.

The sad irony in all of this, she observed, is that TYP students are going to school to better themselves and increase their chances for getting better jobs, but they have to work a lot to stay in school in order to support themselves (and sometimes others), and therefore cannot commit time to their studies as do other students. Seeing these holes in the academic system has been a very politicizing experience for Maureen who resents the lack of a support mechanism, which would allow TYP students to be students like any other student. This politicizing experience made Maureen encourage TYP students to take advantage of their differences and use them to further their formal learning experiences, and to form support groups among themselves.

One of the important issues that Maureen reiterated over and over was the vital importance of confidence building for TYP students. Confidence, she elaborated, cumulatively increases over the years depending on how their first year is going – if they are struggling, it will take a little longer to get their confidence stabilized – it also depends on the student and how much they put into it. As their professor, she too had to learn how to increase their confidence. It is a step by step process; the goal is to get as many students through the gate – with the necessary skills to survive – as possible. It is important not to just get them in (and out), but to allow them to survive (and thrive).

Students are encouraged to drop by her office, a space that she has created so that it is welcoming not intimidating.

Confidence building is pivotal for TYP students because biases were and are still present among because biased were and are still present among TYP students, mainstream students, and faculty. For example, sociology tends to put forward a viewpoint consistent with TYP students' understanding of the social world – that is, social disadvantage and their place in society with regards to race, class, gender, sexuality and so on. There are a number of privileged students on campus that are so far removed from the hardships of real life. Such students could “paper over” such issues as only textbook case studies, whereas TYP students were and are often living the very same scenarios depicted in the textbook(s). The prejudices and biases of other U of T students shocked both Maureen and TYP students, and although she is used to it now, she knows what TYP students are up against. She is on the lookout for different course contents, which professors are supportive and in what way, and which ones are not. This is important in the confidence building strategy because a lot of professors and students in the wider university community often assume that students of color and/or special access students at U of T are TYP students, whether or not they are.

The last sentence Maureen makes offers very keen observations into the issues of social stigma and the ghettoization of particular racial groups and other discriminated groups in the academy. Here is a program meant to be an equity bridge to higher education, yet the larger society continues to sling mud at it. What needs to be done and by whom, to get beyond insidious racism and stigmatization? Or alternatively, could it be that the impact TYP is having at U of T over the last thirty (30) years is reverberating and shaking the Eurocentric structures of the university to its very core? Is TYP gathering momentum with each year, that there is real and imagined fear that Eurocentric standards of drawing up curricula and measuring the formal learning process, is flawed, and needs to change as evidenced by the entry of “non-traditional” students into the academy? Is Eurocentric (academic) tradition feeling the heat, or is it giving out heat to drive out “undesirables”?

Reality Checks And Challenges At TYP

In the following section, Maureen clarified some of the issues raised in the interview and opened up new ones which are preserved in the first person here to connect her ideas with the rest of the narrative, and allow Carolyn's voice space to engage with Maureen, as it does with other narratives.

Carolyn: Maureen, why do you think TYP students' confidence is so low?

Maureen: Any number of reasons; they haven't finished high school, and society judges this [negatively]. Living in a society that values book learning over many other skills [is a burden in itself and some of our students] may have been punished at home and/or at school for making mistakes and learning disabilities, either known or unknown.

Carolyn: What portion of TYP students do you think have learning disabilities – including those that may not have been diagnosed until now or may never get diagnosed?

Maureen: I'd say a good ten per cent, or maybe more; and there're barriers to finding this out as well. For example, the testing was once free; it now costs \$600.00. TYP can help with the cost and so can OSAP, by having a bursary for it as well. But, there's again the concern of being labeled, and therefore stigmatized. This alone can impinge on the student's formal learning process. I am confident that the testing done at special services is completely confidential, giving the students total control over who knows the results. I am however, usually very careful on this subject with my students, I slowly suggest that it may be applicable to them, and asking if they'd like to be tested, but at the same time stressing that it does not make them any less than anyone else.

Carolyn: Regarding informal learning and encouraging students to use their backgrounds, how do you find students taking it, if they do? Do they share it amongst themselves? Because of lack of formal education and maybe negative experiences/failing in school, being taught that academia has nothing to do with who they are and what experiences they've had; how quickly do the students get used to the idea that their knowledge is in fact valuable?

Maureen: Many see university as another culture and are embattled with it. Some resist what goes on here, but do need to learn how to [book] study, how to access information, researching and some such academic skills. Some have problems with their own identities, and coming here jeopardizes such feelings. For example, a Native student although smart, had to continually fight for his survival here. Many are angry at the

type of education system they have to go through, for instance, a high degree of memorization; and mind you, sometimes the hardest skills to learn are the basic ones. They need and must hold onto what they know as just as valid, important and enriching from their own source of knowledge that precedes formal education and still be able to take in and learn the necessary skills that allow students to realize what is important. It is necessary for them to find out what is valid to them, to draw on this knowledge, and use it here and now. They have to keep learning this validation of their own knowledge for years and years. I feel it is generally better for a student to engage with their own learning, even if the work suffers a little at first.

For example, in composition writing, students should be encouraged to bring their informal knowledge, expertise, passions, and so on into what they are doing. They should be told that such things are valid in the academic world. The composition should therefore be marked accordingly, and their involvement/engagement in the exercise should be acknowledged as well. Being the students they are, they are constantly perceived as different, and this can be embarrassing, detrimental to one's studies, and an incredible form of negative reinforcement to the notion that they do not belong here. For example, having student numbers that differ from those of the mainstream population. Although other students with certain circumstances may also have different numbers, like transfers from other universities, special access students, it's almost proof that they are considered different from mainstream students. Many TYP students have confessed that they feel like frauds walking around campus. Even in their higher university years, for those that go on, they often half expect someone to realize that they do not belong there and kick them out. The process of learning to be students is a long and hard one, continual adjustment is necessary. If I could change anything about the program, it would be to allow former students to have more access to the staff at TYP for a sense of themselves and their identity. They need to be constantly reminded and taught to lead by and through their strengths. Small classes can scare some students who like the anonymity of larger classes; they may be afraid in small classes because judgment is more likely. However, in most of their experiences, one is as likely to experience rejection as to feel comfortable in such a (small) setting. One last thing I should add is that there may also be other factors contributing to the student's lack of self-esteem and confidence besides their educational background (or lack thereof), such as the perils of coming out as gay or lesbian. There needs to be structures in place to aid students get out of the continued cycle of low esteem they experience despite good marks and being at university for a number of years.

DR. KEITH ALLEN, (THEN) DIRECTOR OF TYP

At the time this interview was conducted, Keith Allen was the director of TYP, and the narrative/reflection has kept the “director’s voice” as it were in order to be faithful to the insights he shared at the time.

Personal History and First Contact with TYP.

Keith graduated with a Ph.D. in 1979 from OISE. He is a certified teacher with thirty-eight (38) years of teaching experience from elementary to secondary school. He taught in Jamaica and (Essex) England before coming to Toronto, and has been a school principal in his 38 years of teaching. Keith said he initially applied to the TYP program out of curiosity about the program. He heard about it, and was intrigued and he thought it might work as a match for him because his career interests lay in working with who face and overcome barriers.

Currently, Keith wears three hats within TYP as an academic, an instructor, and director of the program. He, along with a committee, interview five hundred (500) students a year, and only accept a really small number compared to the number of total applicants. Through the interviewing process, Keith said he learned a lot about life, management, and survival skills and about knowledge itself. His interest in educational equity developed via the TYP. The whole idea of access to all levels of education for all was and is fascinating to him, he now has new academic areas of interest, he has attended conferences, has been studying access at U of T, its policies and so on. For although he had never taken courses in equity issues while at university, through working at TYP, he has learnt a lot, and now publishes works on the subject.

Keith said he has also learned a great deal from others in the general university population, but feels that TYP students have a depth of conviction and context that illuminates the non-abstract levels of learning. TYP students’ presence in the university moves the institution and the students in two important ways: a) it demystifies university and b) it contextualizes the meaning of education.

“I came to this program (TYP) having finished my schooling, but I got my education here. There is nothing like having a theoretical context in which to express knowledge, [and TYP does that for our students]. In this whole process, respect is key. (p1)

History of TYP: A Perspective

The founders of the program were mainly (university) students and volunteers, predominantly from the Black and aboriginal communities. Keith pointed out that it has been a misconception that the program was set up for Blacks when it was really to assist those who have faced some sort of barrier in accessing university education. TYP means social and societal responsibility by an institution (the university). It is for students who have experienced barriers/adversity to accessing university; rural kids, inner city kids, and those without a fair opportunity in the education process.

From the beginning, Keith stated, race was not an issue at/for TYP, socioeconomic factors were the issue. This relates to power and class issues as Blacks are disproportionately represented in the lower socio-economic classes, to that end, they have been over represented in the TYP. Race has been confused with need as the reason for the program. Keith finds TYP fascinating because he feels it represents the boldest attempt by a university to accept social responsibility, not just for the elite. Here he sees a direct link between what one does and the outcome, for example, some of the brightest students he has seen have come through the program. Way back then, the concept of getting people without formal academic training into university was seen as trouble, like any new ideas, it was seen as communist. Now TYP is considered a feather on the University of Toronto's cap. The program's visibility within the community and enrolling students who have something to say, has been the best public relations coup possible. TYP is so heterogeneous that everyone can find themselves here, and this is not necessarily so in the rest of the U of T population.

As pointed out in the first section of this report, and as is evident in the different renditions each narrative gives the history as an event and process is contested. The foregoing insight on the history of the TY program raises some fundamental issues and questions to our understanding of why programs like these exist in the academy. Let us take the notion of power as an entry point. If TYP was set up to balance the issues of power in the academy, is race especially whiteness, not a currency of power? Can the reality that Blacks are the underclass of this society be unproblematized as one of the fundamental reasons they are over represented at TYP? Is race here theorized from the standpoint of the racial privileged or the dis-privileged? This needs to be unpacked so that issues of even needing a TYP are interrogated because some races, classes, and genders disproportionately benefit from the squalor of others, for example, advancing academic careers and interests on the lives of the marginalized.

Informal Learning And TYP

Asked how he thought students' informal learning affected other students at TYP, Keith elaborated that informal learning was embedded in general course material, how students developed coping strategies, life study, that is, all learned from other TYP students. Friendship groups – which don't appear to form along ethnic lines – are formed, they encourage one another, share insights and understanding, family/childcare practices; they learn values motivation and attitudes. TYP students are adults and therefore pragmatic because they are older and have more life experiences. TYP has the most varied backgrounds of the entire university; here exists practical knowledge without formal origins.

At TYP, students are assisted to place the practical context into a theoretical understanding. In other words, we actually tell students that they already know what they are being taught, we label them as already knowledgeable, we say assume you'll pass, no 'what ifs', just show up for class. We stress that they have unique knowledge that no one else knows including the professors, and that which they know will enrich academics, and we therefore encourage them to write what they know. To the foregoing, Carolyn responded by noting: "I remember this message [when I was a student here] but didn't use it because of the shame that what I experienced in life was not good enough for academic writing." We tell our students to use their experiences in order to help them cope with their assignments; knowledge works by sharing it.

Keith expressed that the concept of informal learning matched his basic philosophy, that is, the privileged do not require as much, if any, assistance at all, because they usually don't face the same barriers as the underprivileged. As a teacher and past principal, Keith always felt that knowledge is only acquired formally, supplied by teachers. Now he knows that is not true. This he has learned through his TYP stint because students are admitted on the basis of the knowledge they bring to the program. On what other basis could you admit someone into university who has not completed or attended high school, he asked. Admittance into the program is based on the assumption of some form of informal learning/knowledge. TYP students wrote some of the best essays in Intro. Sociology, and they were competing with 1200 students. Clearly they had something in them before coming to the program/university.

With TYP students, the knowledge base is already there; we are not creating, or even adding to it, we are just legitimizing it as knowledge, just as being a Doctor (of Philosophy) legitimizes whatever he says. Students have the same validity in their knowledge but they've never been told, Keith informally learned about educational equity issues of which he now has some recognized expertise. He has taught and socialized with students who spoke of things they knew about in the most profound and informative ways he had ever heard. It has surprised Keith that TYP students do not consider their thoughts, opinions, and experiences as knowledge. For example, he said, I remember a brilliant TYP student who did not recognize his own knowledge base despite sharing with me more profound information than I had heard in my own graduate courses he elaborated.

On issues of TYP students' interests, motivation and potential, he expressed it in the following manner: I see disciplines as dependent. We can't integrate past knowledge for cumulative disciplines such as math or chemistry. I believe every individual who can learn, who has the motivation can learn any discipline. For example, the McMaster (University) medical program admits students in high standing with any undergraduate degree. But TYP does not have that kind of motivation. It's just a kind of 'oh, I'd like to go to university' type of thing, versus really having a passion for it. 50 – 60% of TYP students lack this motivation (as do 80% of the rest of the university students). There seems to be a misconception that the majority of TYP students are incredibly motivated, much more than the average student, but this is not necessarily so. They are regular people who have done extraordinary things and/or made great sacrifices. Adult sacrifice is a remarkable thing. There are a number of barriers faced by adult students, not counting what may be going on in their lives. These barriers include society's tendency to look down on adults who forsake work, family and so on to return to school, the loss of income, the loss of time spent with family, loss of status in society, and so on. Returning to school despite all of this (and more), is a prime example of the depths of their motivation. TYP students navigate through obstacles and have come far to get where they are and I have developed a great respect for learners. It has made me very humble to witness what some go through to attain their goals.

TYP students go through a type of culture shock upon entering university, for example, how professors and students speak, write, and carry themselves, university is still more or less a middle class domain. Poverty is not readily visible here. TYP has helped to bring people who live in such real conditions to university. Hopefully, this will help dispel the myths that people are lazy, don't

want to help themselves, only want a handout and so on. A former TYP student provided a “real life” example of poverty..., thereby opening up her young, middle class colleagues’ eyes. TYP students may not get credit for their ideas because these ideas are not presented in “middle class” language and they are often penalized for not having the “right” type of writing – although they do have the insight. To this end, there should be more peer mentoring and tutoring by other students, as this would make the experience less isolating and they would integrate more into the university community.

Thoughts on Future Direction of Program

- Would like TYP to become a center of developmental education, for example, building courses for degree programs.
- Would like to see a much bigger unit/institute serving all of the university, with more staff and space.
- To support students by keeping in touch with them right through to graduation, only once they are in university will it be clear how they are going to do. They need constant support to and development, for example, teaching someone how to swim then throwing them in the pool. You should keep checking on them, don’t just throw them in and leave them. TYP throws its students into their first year of university and then leaves them – unless they come back on their own.

There should be more interaction with colleagues, a kind of informal learning experience that has been profound at both academic and non-academic levels.

HORACES HENRIQUES¹¹

Carolyn: What has been your experience of formal and informal learning here at TYP?

Horace: It's problematic but important to help students help others because of the very individualistic utilitarian notion that "I'll only do what helps me." Why weaker students don't ask for help is they are caught in the competition that also inhibits informal sharing. If we define informal learning to mean networks, not regulated by bureaucratic rules, it's difficult to do in TYP because of students':

1. Beliefs – values, subcultures (e.g., learning to get extrinsic rewards, learn what's important to you only).
2. Skills – discrepant. High achieving individuals reluctant to share because rewards given at the end of the year, etc.
3. Weak – won't ask for help. The last thing you want to do is to let others know what they don't [know]. [This can lead to student] absenteeism, withdrawal because they don't want their weaknesses to be revealed.
4. Informal networks require time because *trust* is *essential* and therefore requires time.
5. Racist and sexist ideas – the program doesn't help that white, working class students are made to feel guilty, defensive and confused about slavery, etc. It is important to include in the curriculum the role of the Irish in the construction of this country, for example, for focus on slavery only can ironically exclude these experiences. So how do students make sense of racism, for instance, Black students' present day experiences reinforced with slavery knowledge. To forge ahead, it would be good to have a sensitive curriculum, one that portrays the good/evil; a curriculum that examine the mechanisms of control comparatively, not just one group (Black vs. White). If you are going to teach about oppression do it in a way that makes all students feel morally responsible – explore the mechanism that makes it happen. If not, one group feels somehow guilty while another gets angry – these are the unintentional consequences of a curriculum that is new to students.

¹¹ Unlike other faculty transcripts, this one had no biographical background to it, hence the interview style maintained here.

Another issue that I wanted to point out on the dialectics of informal and formal learning here at TYP is that the **importance of adequate resources** to make the process successful. Status (other than class) group conflict occurs when resources shrink. For example, gender issues – men can feel dumped upon and this generates anger and defensiveness. How do you teach in such a way that people don't become angry and defensive – for any new knowledge is impervious and creates cognitive dissonance and this closes down learning. The grading system also contributes. There is a conflict between having informal learning on one hand and awards [on the other], that is, individual performance vs. collective learning. On the other side of the foregoing, is the reality that TYP students tend to have weak vocabularies so if they could build it in the TYP program before September, in the summer. Language skills that need developing...are reading, etc., but the way it is done now is not rewarding, therefore, students rationalize it to themselves “oh who needs this anyways”. They need material that relates the world around them to teach even more abstract skills like reading – inductive, ascending to establish relevance; and deductive, descending to prove. For example, land raises/falls, or a roller coaster as metaphor to explain these concepts. I tell my students, when holding a book, look at the title, what comes to mind? Write it down, when you know it, concrete, then see what authors' say – do you agree?” A teacher needs to be a good salesman in order to [sell the concept of learning to students by also recommending books that will reinforce the pleasure of learning.] For example, I highly recommend to students the book Hidden Injuries of Class. I always try to demystify my role as an instructor, as a resource person who doesn't know everything – you go, I'll go, and we'll come together.

There's a fine line to walk (for instructors) between being *vulnerable* (because constantly improving and learning it's important to be vulnerable) but not *weak* – like the relationship between good friends – because you still have to maintain some legitimacy or it will weaken your ability to transmute knowledge. For instance, many men need to maintain hierarchy of control won't ask for help till the last minute, because it's a sign of weakness. So I teach students how to: (1) evaluate information,

identify concepts in an argument, are they clearly defined and this can be transferred to understanding politics, etc., in order to have relevance, not just getting a grade. (2). What alternative explanations are there and evaluate and explain all those other opinions, e.g., listen to radio and ask ‘what is commentator leaving out’ (3). What is the adequacy of evidence (procedure, methods). (4). Logic consistency, things must follow. (5). Normative Rationality – so what? TYP should have a little more of an integrated course -- to see relevance of skills across domains. The “Just enough to get by” is a common attitude that I try to challenge. Many TYP students hate being evaluated because they always have been evaluated negatively and not positively. Never giving up is very important. It’s important to empower the students, educate them on the consumer of education. Some students stand back and break down the suspicion that they (the instructors) do not really care. I make my presence noticed all over TYP, all the spaces between office and classroom encourages informal learning, having meetings outside the spaces bounded by formality. Each meeting with students is very important because it validates them and validates me as someone who can help them, someone who seeks them out, is approachable, and they come for help then. Another very important factor in the informal/formal learning process is that students need to see faculty members mingling more among themselves. This is not done because ideological difference, etc. One way of breaking this is through a biannual journal by TYP faculty. This is the only thing to guard against TYP being only a PR coup for U of T.

Carolyn: How do you help students become self-regulated/self-discoverers?

Horace: Feedback to students should be improved – that is, faculty could get together to brainstorm to improve its delivery. It’s too top-down. How do we make it more interactive, less judgmental where the recipient is passive, faculty discusses them. We need as a group to engage students as a group every 4-to-6 weeks where students can discuss experiences (not too open-ended). Students give feedback to instructors about their own performance every 4-to-6 weeks by filling out a form, for instance. This allows rectification by instructors so they, too improve themselves – give it to

them as the same time as students. How do we come up with a way of grading that simply does not replicate the past year can be integrated with the university system.

BELLE LEON “CONTACT TUTOR” (NEW) REGISTRAR AS OF SUMMER 1999

Personal History and first contact with TYP

At the time this interview was conducted, Belle was a “contract tutor” at TYP, but was promoted to Registrar when Keith Allen retired in the summer of 1999. This narrative is written in the context of her experiences as contract tutor. Belle was born and raised in Zimbabwe. After receiving her Ph.D. at the University of Cape Town in South Africa, she lectured as a tenured professor in medical physiology at the same university. While teaching in South Africa, Belle worked in a program similar to TYP, and was involved in the design and implementation of the program. She continued working in an academic program that supported black students in their medical studies. During the apartheid era in South Africa, ‘Black’ Students could not attend a ‘White’ university if no suitable program was available at the Black universities. Because Black students were ‘separate but not equal’ under the apartheid system, many did not succeed because of the poorer quality of education they received. But some universities did provide extra support for Black students. The medical program at the University of Cape Town, however, had no such support service until Belle and her colleagues established one.

TYP and Informal Learning

Belle contended that TYP students require more intensive assistance because they left high school, a long time ago, their academic skills and their culture of learning needs to be enhanced. It is especially important for TYP students to be able to identify their strengths and difficulties together with their academic advisors in order to ensure communication and promote learning. Belle expressed that the role of informal learning for academically unprepared (TYP) students can be in various ways by utilizing student’s informal knowledge; we allow them a place to show that they have and can use some of their knowledge. This is where the academic advisor’s role becomes central in getting students to realize their own informal knowledge base. Still, people’s strength could be better highlighted or shown at TYP. I am not sure how this can be done, but hypothetically, talking about

what they have achieved counters the whole academic failure aspect. As academic advisor I use this approach more with individual students but some may not access this type of reinforcement if they choose not to meet with their tutor.

Belle has taught math and tutored in reasoning, rhetoric, sociology, and introduction to computers at TYP. She expressed that sociology, computers and to some extent math, contributes naturally to informal learning. As other instructors have noted, life experience(s) can contribute to the understanding and application of sociological theories. Also, TYP does not seem to realize the lack of knowledge base some students have in math. Because the learning of math is cumulative, it is difficult to teach a reasonable curriculum in one short half course. As of 2000, this scenario has changed, however, and there is a full year course of math and science. However, I still believe that some students leave TYP without math skills. At TYP, students use their life experience all the time. However, they are sometimes overwhelmed by the application of their own lives in their assignments, for example, women who write about divorce, children, special needs and so on, have often been deeply involved to an extent that it can affect their ability to think critically about the issue. It has to be noted also, that women with children help each other a lot, and in general, students here tend to help each other through academic and personal problems.

Belle has also informally learned a lot at TYP. For instance, students, alumni, and staff have all engaged her in discussions about South Africa's historical and cultural characteristics. She has also learned from teaching computer literacy, something she had no formal training in, the same with counseling students where she has gained skills by working and talking to students. Belle learned the most from people she has regular interactions with, for example Rona Abramovitch, (current TYP director and Status of Women Officer) for whom Belle works in both offices. She said she also informally learned about equity issues, diplomacy, and how to handle delicate situations, and the general workings of the university. From her colleagues, she has found general support and sharing of information about how TYP and the university work.

Recommendations for TYP staff

- Keep abreast with current publications; staff could regularly discuss journal articles of developmental education.
- There should be more social interaction among the staff.

However, Belle did add that these recommendations are difficult to enact because students take up so much of staff's time. This is not something recognized enough by the university, that is, the

extent to which working with non-traditional students is emotionally draining. For example, counseling, which is very important but a very informal aspect of her job. Belle ended by emphasizing that the value of TYP is not its content nor pedagogy, but rather the human interaction between her and the students.

BARBARA LEW FULLTIME STAFF MEMBER

Carolyn: What kind of informal learning have you been involved in?

Barbara: I'm here because this is where I found the job. I stayed because I enjoy it here. I've gained exposure to a variety of non-traditional university students.

Carolyn: What has this exposure taught you?

Barbara: No comment.

Carolyn: Do you consider informal learning useful here at TYP?

Barbara: Yes. Life is a continual learning experience. I learn everywhere.

Carolyn: How is it useful?

Barbara: I can't begin to tell you. I don't analyze it.
- I've learned a lot about different types of people, especially because we're Service oriented.

Carolyn: Do you think what you've learned here is transferable?

Barbara: Sure. Yes because its applicable – it's applied knowledge (versus formal "book" learning). Students come in here just to get through the year. They don't really think or know about getting a B.A. or afterwards a job. But then they learn a lot of different things and they gain self-confidence.

For example, Barbara has read about bead making and different traditions of Ghana because of a gift she received from a TYP student from that country. She learned a lot informally. Learning how enterprising students are through watching them juggle with childcare and so on has been another experience.

Carolyn: How do you see student's informal learning being used here at TYP?

Barbara: It's used to get here into TYP. It takes an understanding of what they want, but it's a new environment here. They're more naïve about university experience.

Carolyn: What advantages do you think TYP students possess (i.e. compared to traditional students)?

Barbara: I don't think anyone coming through here has any advantages. Those who come through here are at a disadvantage (if they haven't used their minds). I really get a feeling about parent's determination and commitment. It's a generalization, but people with children seem to do better and set an example, to get out of the poverty. Learning disabilities often get noticed here as well. They get treated in tutorial sessions here at TYP. Maturity of the student(s) helps with their success. Having children means taking care of your commitments. It makes one think of other people beside themselves, which in turn makes them more responsible. Also marriages often break down as a result of women achieving intellectual levels higher than their spouses.

Carolyn: What do you think makes a successful TYP student?

Barbara: The key to success is determination and motivation.

Carolyn: How do you think this is influenced by their informal education? Is that something that can be taught?

Barbara: No. Exposure to other people and their ideas is informal learning, as is learning from observing others. It happens with kids all the time, therefore...and parents who aren't educated or can't afford it are at a disadvantage to their children.

FROM THE FRINGES TO THE MAINSTREAM – STUDENT PORTRAITS 1999-2000**MARLEEN****General Informal Learning**

Marleen brought with her, a knowledge of history that was not taught in schools, particularly that there were people before Columbus in North America. She had learnt the importance of learning the history that the textbooks and curriculum did not teach, for example, “While growing up, I knew about Iroquois and Caribbs, but the school did not address Indigenous people, First people of Caribbean. [It is] important to know this history. (# 501: 2000, 1, P1). This knowledge of history that she brought with her into TYP influenced her choice of subject areas, particularly literature and history. She wanted to know more about Indigenous peoples beyond what the school textbook and “TV” images like “Tonto and the Lone Ranger” taught. Because of the knowledge she had actively sought prior to coming to TYP, Marleen shared her knowledge with her peers at TYP by actively participating in classes and a study group that she belonged to. She continued to learn informally as well as she sought answers to questions unanswered in class by speaking to her teachers and academic advisors about it. Marleen believed that if it had not been for the informal learning she did prior to coming to TYP, she might have been too shy to ask questions and seek clarifications. Coupled with that was the self discipline that she brought with her, for “... without discipline, I never would have made it here everyday. To keep up with homework and [the] readings” (#501: 2000, 2, P1).

Along with the general informal learning that Marleen did in the Caribbean where she grew up, she also learnt a lot through household/home related activities. She defined home as “...where I live with my children. [For me,] family life is number one [and] education is immediately after that. If you do not take care of home, then studies are in deep trouble” (Ibid.). For Marleen, therefore, taking care of her children’s health and nutrition, their education and extra curricular activities have been extremely important to her own success. For her “everything else can come after [my children],” and it is key to realize that with parents like her who have to raise their children on their own, they take pride in it more than “standard” feminist theory would accommodate. As Luttrell (1997: 92) points out, the ideal mothering discourse matches middle-class women who can afford to organize their children’s lives not to clash with their own like hiring tutors and sitters, mothers like

Marleen have to take charge of the situation themselves so they can have a life as well.

Marleen has also learnt a lot from her community and community related activities. For her, community is defined as people who live in her apartment building, and this includes people of all income brackets and status. Marleen has participated in a reading club, the Daily Food Bank, the Church, and attends P.T.A. meetings in all schools in the neighborhood. It was from these meetings that she learnt about the TYP program from a neighbor that had learnt of TYP through other networks. Because Marleen had always wanted to do work with children reading and choosing “good” and culturally appropriate books for children. She decided it was important for her to go back to school in order to be more effective in her work with her children. Thus, Marleen’s interest in TYP was inextricably linked to giving her children’s education attention that would have a positive effect on her own school work. Marleen’s agency and taking control of her life has meant living her life through her children, which she articulated as culturally important in sustaining a sense of family, community, and self.

Indigenous Knowledge & Spirituality

The cultural knowledge alluded to in the preceding section speaks to issues of multiple knowledge(s) that non-mainstream students bring into the academy. For Marleen, Indigenous knowledge is that which she learnt from her grandmother and her family about her African and Indian heritage(s). It is to her grandmother that she attributes Indigenous knowledge especially on spirituality. She distinguishes spirituality from religion by saying: “Even though I am Catholic, I have [learned] my spirituality from my grandmother.” This differentiation is in the “Inner voice...that is usually to do with good will, when I am being told to do something, [and this] inner voice is not my conscience” (#501: p3, P1). Here Marleen speaks of spiritual connection, the importance of what could also be called intuition, as a source of knowledge to work with and from. This spiritual knowledge, Marleen asserted is important, to her life and studies: “Everyday I light a candle and say a prayer. When I am doing assignments, I ask for divine intervention to pull me through” (#501, p4, P1). This background spiritual/religious knowledge is important in grounding her so she can cope with the stress of raising her children and going back to school. She has been able to negotiate religious practices – Catholicism and going to church – with her spiritual heritage, so that she can dip from it the power she needs to keep her life together in a manner consistent with her desires for a better life

for herself and her children. For her, going to church is part of the social milieu necessary to keep her connected to society and community, and the two are not necessarily contradictory.

Formal Schooling & Employment

The highest level of formal schooling that Marleen had before TYP was grade 12. She had also taken course in early child education, hoping to get accreditation to go further with her education. However, her dreams were short circuited by the Harris government cuts that affected support for her education and for childcare. Realizing that she would not get anything from the education system without financial support, she concentrated on her job as a “data analysis.” Though Marleen did not specify what she did as a data analyst, other than that she did all types of officer work, she learned the reality that education could get her out of the rut. Her job title was not consummate with what she did. It was a low paying job that battered her self-esteem, and the most important knowledge, skill and insight she informally learnt from that job was that she had to:

Get educated, get the degree and then you will get more respect. People with degrees get more respect and a higher salary; they get away with more. I realized that I can go further if I pushed myself, I could make it happen. (p4, P1)

Here we see Marleen battling with insecurities that come with not having college/university qualifications to get her a better paying job and “more respect” from her peers. Thus ten (10) years in the workforce taught her the rawness of a credentialized workforce, a reality affirmed by various studies (see Luttrell, 1997; Livingstone, 1999; Kadi, 1996), as having an impact on historically marginalized groups getting out of the social margins and the accompanying stigmatization. Yet even as Marleen understood the importance of going back to school, she had to cope with the stress of changing her routine to that of school, a significant change that had implications on child care arrangements. Concomitant with her worry about her children, she also worries about her parents who live far from her, “back home.” Medicare being inadequate for them, means she has to send money for them to get medical attention. Here, the situation of her children getting the flu in the winter also exacerbated her worries, as hospital costs are also prohibitive here. Confronted by all these daunting realities, Marleen said she had to rely on her biggest strength – “discipline” – the apply to TYP. For her, TYP was the most important gateway into university since she did not have an OAC. The TYP program thus stands as a pillar of hope for determined people

like Marleen who have the life experience that drives them to keep focused and to “discipline” themselves for not to do so is tantamount to slipping back to where they were.

TYP, Informal Learning & Schooling

TYP was initiated to address barriers to university education for members of Black, Native/First Nations, and white working class people among other marginalized communities. With intense lobbying from the Black community, and other groups, it became the first access program to engage equity issues at the University of Toronto. This history was very important for Marleen who expressed that, “without it, I wouldn’t have access to a university education. As a full-time program that is OSAP funded [it] is a tremendous opportunity for people, it would be difficult if it were a part-time program” (#501, p5, P1). What has also made TYP tremendously important for Marleen is that the faculty and staff have been very supportive, and so have other professors in programs like Equity Studies, who value personal experiences in and for the learning process. To this end, the informal learning that Marleen got for herself prior to TYP has served as an important starting point for valuing and validating that knowledge, and more importantly helping and facilitating her understanding of what academic career to follow, based on her informally learned knowledges. She elaborates that:

...I chose an Equity Studies course based on the fact that racism, sexism, and classism would be addressed, all of which I had experienced. Equity Studies taught me that personal experience matters, ...that not everything is about Plato and Aristotle, ...my experience counts. (#501, p5, P1)

The importance of the informal learning that took place before TYP, Marleen reiterates, is the driving force behind people bonding and sticking it through at TYP in pursuit of their dreams. She added:

A lot of people [at TYP] are serious about their education. Usually, it is the people who have been out of school the longest that are most serious about achieving and moving on and some are very helpful about readings. (#501, p5, P1)

This helpfulness of some people also speaks of the importance of bonding with others to go through the process, even for the most “disciplined” of students. However, it also speaks to the competitive reality of the formal learning space. Getting ahead and achieving – to destigmatize oneself – can blur the same drive that made TYP students choose to go back to school in the first

place. Marleen was cognizant of this politicking, and said she relied on her informally learnt-survival-knowledge to know how to handle such situations and not let it get to her:

After having seven sisters, I have learned how to deal with the politics that go around. I have stayed focused on why I am here, and what I wanted to accomplish at TYP.

TYP is therefore, still as human a space as any other that one learns to play their cards close to their chest, allowing in only those that will be supportive and not competitive to enter that “private” space of “wanting to achieve and get ahead.” This also implies that the grading system of the formal schooling system has tremendous impact on the students, who tie their self-esteem to their work, and any critique of their work might be interpreted as criticism of their person, not their work. For example, numeric grades were more important and symbolic than commentaries for Marleen, as she expressed: “It was encouraging to know that halfway through, I was attaining my goal just regarding grades, not much else in terms of comments” (#501, p6, P1). The grading system in the school system thus puts a strain on the student who is used to getting feedback on their informal and non-formal learning in other forms besides grades. The grades become important in boosting self-confidence and reinforcing that student is good: “I felt good, I could go the other half” (ibid.). It could be argued, therefore, that the grading system begins to mark the student’s self-perception vis-à-vis what learning and knowledge is. It would be interesting to pursue this in follow up research, that is, how much more valuable does informally learned knowledge remain to TYP students that make it into and through the mainstream system, as grades accumulate with more courses taken?

Resources And Support Network(s).

As mentioned earlier, Marleen did participate in forming a study group with other students at TYP, but not at U of T at large. This group was important in doing the readings together, especially for the Human Nature course. She also participated in extra curricula activities at TYP and the larger of U of T community. At TYP, she participated in a panel discussion on Racism with other TYP students, and was invited to an Equity meeting at OISE/UT. All this activity strengthened her resolve to keep on with her schooling, and consulted her faculty advisor (name provided) to see if the advisor thought she was capable of majoring in sociology.

Outside of TYP, Marleen got the most support from her family, friends, and a neighbor who “...said anytime I need babysitting she would help.” This support network, made her realize that she

was not alone in pursuit of her dreams and goals. Her biggest drawback was her workplace, her colleagues said she was wasting her time, and that she would not make it. This is an interesting dynamic that speaks of the social construction of capability; people at her workplace (of ten years) it would seem, had framed her as “uneducated” and without credentials. Yet when she sought to “correct” this power imbalance, those that had felt “better” than her because of her limited credentials, felt threatened by her agency to do something about her status, low paying job and self-esteem suffered thereof: “In the workplace, I never felt I belonged despite the fact that I was there for 10 years. This urged one to go forward and be successful” (#501, p7, P1). The workplace became a hegemonic space that she decided to defy by going back to school, not only for a Bachelor’s, but for a Ph.D., “...and if I fall short, I’ll get an M.A. I am definitely not leaving until I get a degree” (#501, p8, P1).

This determination Marleen attributed to some degree to her paternal family, whom even though she did not have much contact with, and did not look up to as role models, she felt if they did it, she could do it as well. Her mother’s side being working-class, she felt she would have to be her own role model, and especially for her children, by going back to school, and sticking through with it to the possible limit. To this end, the TYP experience has been an invaluable experience into the workings of the university, and what opportunities and potentials that live within the university and herself. By informally consulting with (all) those people whose job it is to make students at TYP succeed, Marleen felt that “...there is nothing I can’t do. A degree is attainable” (p8).

Plans For Next Year

Marleen’s TYP experience had a lot to do with the kinds of decisions she has made for herself. TYP gave her the experience of knowing the value of organizing her courses and time management. Because of childcare, she could not take night courses, but she could negotiate reasonable babysitting hours so she could attend school. Through TYP, she was able to value her experience and take it as an important source of (informally learned) knowledge that would shape her career choice in either sociology, Caribbean and Political Studies. Racism, Marleen articulated, had put her where she was, and she was going to work against it, as she had learned to do while at TYP, being involved in varied activities on equity issues. For her, particular professors and faculty like Keren,

were invaluable for academic support, and so was Bell on financial information about OSAP and other university resources.

One of the most invaluable informally learnt skill and knowledge for Marleen, was her discipline that carried the day for her: “I am a persevering person. I know the feeling of loss and giving up, and I don’t want that for my academic learning” (#501, p9, P1). As a person who can and likes learning on their own, or getting a friend peer to work through issues, she believed in herself to be capable of more, and the TYP experience validated that self and informal learning and knowledge as key to her success. As she put it:

Life before TYP: I was a high school student, worked for 10 years, had children living in subsidized housing. Black. With not much money in the bank. This doesn’t sound so good. With a degree [I] can get a job and have more income and job security. (Ibid).

In the foregoing statement, Marleen raises fundamental questions about the value of formal schooling, (working) class status, being a (single) parent, affordable housing, race, and financial security, among other (implied) realities. Because of all that she has been, real and imagined, in her own experience and that of the society, she has banked on getting a degree as definitely the most accessible vehicle of her upward (social) mobility. From what she has (informally) learned over the thirty-two (32) years of her life, it has all pointed to the negation of her race, class, and gender. The promise of financial and social security via a degree are very real to her, and being at TYP and having her confidence, self-esteem and dreams positively affirmed has meant that she has gathered every ounce in her to ensure her success. From the wisdom of having discerned why she is where she is at her age, Marleen, it could be argued, knows the hazards of getting an education without security, a job, in these hard times. Yet there is also a danger that is not spoken to in her narrative, that of being (over) qualified and under-employed. This danger can have devastating effects on her if and when she graduates only to realize that getting her “dream” job will not happen easily, as the same social barriers do not suddenly fall away by virtue of one getting a degree. Marleen’s reality is therefore very instructive to educators and policymakers, seeking to make the educational process, one is representative of the Canadian population.

DAVE

Dave is Caribbean by birth. He came to TYP with informally learned historical knowledges about his multiple heritages of African, Indian, and Scottish ancestry. He emphasized, however, that his parents knew that their African ancestry was from present day Ghana in West Africa. It was from his family's oral histories and talking to continental African friends, that he learned the history he had not been taught in the formal schooling system. By talking to continental Africans and sharing their cultures, he made connections with what his parents had taught and shared with him. It was from his informally learned knowledge that he came to realize the historical myth that portrayed African peoples as having been passive and "...happy to be ruled by Europeans" (#501: p1, P1). Learning Caribbean history outside the formal schooling system was important information for him, as it gave him a sense of pride in the Indigenous peoples of the Caribbean's resistance. Learning about all the history he was not taught in the (formal) school system, meant that he was able to share his knowledge with other Black people, discussing the history of Africa, "...countering negative stereotypes and Eurocentrism" (p.2). Dave found this informally learned historical knowledge invaluable for his studies at TYP, engaging different faculty who were very supportive and challenging in their discussions on issues of colonialism and the importance of engaging the formal education system by historically marginalized groups. The centrality of personal experience in understanding issues discussed in class (at TYP) was very important for his engagement with the formal school system. Dave found that the knowledge he had acquired informally from his family; parents, brothers and sisters, were very important in centering him and keeping him focused in his school work. From his family he learned the value of ethics and morals, that is,

"Not to disgrace the family name by getting in trouble with the police or teachers, even if they try and mess with your head. Choose people who make good life choices to be around. Positive people. (p2)

From the foregoing it is interesting to note that Dave's parents' teachings about his historical roots and his engagement with anti-colonial issues negotiate and perhaps conflict with the "morals and ethics" that they taught him, especially that he should not "get in trouble" with authority "...even if they try and mess with your head." This ability to negotiate contradictions and/or live with them is a very interesting one, as he does not speak of it in conflict or a contradiction in terms. This duality, it can be argued, speaks of other forms of knowledge that do not see "good" and "evil" as necessarily separate and opposing entities that have to be kept apart, but as part of life.

The teachings of his parents are still important to Dave who finds them still useful in his continued household learning that takes place in his own home with his wife and children. For him a home is a

two parent household with children, to whom "...you teach morals, what you expect them to be and how to behave. [It is also a] fun place" (p2). Dave's own upbringing by ("strict") parents is one he cherishes, and is a bedrock of his own determination to succeed in his present endeavors at TYP.

Dave also shared that part of his informally learned knowledge was acquired from the larger communities, where he grew up and in communities where he has lived. However, even after twenty-seven (27) years of being in Canada, Dave laments that his definition of community somewhat shifts, for, "In Canada, you see your neighbors but you may not know them. Community here is not like community in my country" (Ibid). Even with this discomfort of community being differently defined in Guyana and in Canada, Dave still considered church members, the police, small store owners, restaurant owners, people, and friends of different ethnicities part of the community. They share foods, cultures, their values, and their varied Indigenous knowledges. From his experience, Dave's learning of Indigenous knowledge was in environmental preservation to ensure eco-system balance, for example not chopping trees as part of ensuring that the rain cycle would not be interrupted. He also learned a lot from stories and fables that had strong moral overtones emphasizing the importance of hard work, honesty, and some such moral issues. To this end, Dave sees himself as a source of knowledge, particularly for his children, he is their role model and guide:

I teach them what I know. I teach them ambition. I teach my sons, I knew I had to get a degree, I was looking for it for years. [Now with] TYP, I can't think of it as hard. I just have to do it. (p3, P1)

Dave's strong belief in his own self to be an important role model for his children makes him cautious of religion but grounded in a spiritual space that centers him. He expressed skepticism of the "religiously" wise, which in his opinion mislead people, who just follow blindly (p3). For him, 'spirituality makes people stronger and closer to their creator. It prevents them from doing harm to others, gives people morality, teaches the, how to live (p3). What is intriguing of the foregoing statement(s) is that Dave's notion of spirituality are those he learnt from the Native People's literature, he "discusses it in theory, but not in practice" (Ibid). He respects other people's beliefs, asks questions, and does not believe everything that is said to him. Though not an atheist, he said he tries to take a bit from each religion.

Paid Employment And Related Formal Training

Dave worked as a real estate agent and as a courier of infectious substances, from the time he dropped out of school just after he had started grade thirteen (13). In his working career, he learnt that even though there are set rules and guidelines to work places, people broke those rules to get ahead. The work was competitive and even though he started off naïve, he soon learnt that people broke rules and still got ahead.

Having grade 12 as the highest level of education, Dave did feel the social pressure and stigma of being in a certain social location. But “dropping out” of school was the only option he had because he “got nothing out of high school. I didn’t agree with the school teaching about Christopher Columbus. [It was] irritating. Being disengaged is a problem that a lot of students have. It [schooling] did not seem real. No diversity in the teaching. Everything was Eurocentric” (p4, P1). Numerous studies and writings on issues of diversity in western cultures speaks of the perpetuation of the marginalization of minorities and social groups by the hegemonic school system. This scenario Dave describes as his experience with the Canadian school system has been documented through empirical research as the experience of many Black and minority students (Dei et al. 1995, 1996). Scholars and practitioners (Dei et al. 1995; Henry, 1992; Braithwaite, 1989; Mohanty, 1990; hooks, 1993; Livingstone, 1999) have contested the hegemony of the Euro-American education system, calling for a system that does not “push students out” (Dei et al. 1995) and then stigmatizing them as deviants, failures, and drop-outs. TYP is an important site for people like Dave to reclaim their formal schooling career that was cut short by a racist education system. As he asserts,

I felt that [TYP] was my stepping stone to being educated. To get a degree at the best school in Canada. Do the work and you will succeed, learn new words, [for example] George Dei’s book, how can I understand his writing? (p4, P1).

The importance of TYP as a “stepping stone” for Dave and so many that have gone through the institution are grounded in the thirty (30) year history that made TYP what it is today, a history acknowledged by Dave, citing Keren as an important part of that history and the contemporary scenario. He took seriously and as terribly important this historical memory, as it opened previously closed doors to a “bright future” in Canadian society. He values what TYP stands for because he always “thought you had to have money to go to university. No one ever told me about OSAP. TYP has helped many people, and it has certainly helped me” (p5, P1). The curriculum at TYP

encouraged him to understand why things were the way they were, a far cry from high school where he said students learnt what the province wanted. At TYP, “we are being taught truths.... It is good to learn about what [one’s] ancestors did in math, algebra...”(ibid). What Dave alludes to here is the importance of a cultural responsive and insightful curriculum. It is a curriculum that seeks to tap into the student’s informal learning and life experiences, incorporating that knowledge and life experience to enable the student see him/herself in the education system. It allows for learning from the mistakes of previous generations and taking pride in their accomplishments against incredible odds.

By being at TYP, Dave’s horizon has widened, he said his potentials are much more than he had realized. Through sharing different histories and knowledges from his colleagues and teachers, Dave learned the importance of working hard at his studies, to do the best he could so as to achieve his dreams. By mixing with people of different backgrounds at TYP it opened his world and made him appreciate and accept people across differences. It allowed him to be kind so he would not say hurtful things to his colleagues, who like him came from marginalized backgrounds, like class, nationality, race, gender and sexuality. Through the varied mix of students at TYP with similar (minoritized) backgrounds, Dave also realized that his informal learning and experience of social stigmatization was not unique to him alone but was a reality shared by so many TYP students, and as he put it:

If you are not educated, there is only so far you can go. My motivation comes from having seen what it is like to live on fixed income and stigma. (p5, P1)

It is interesting to note that the issue of TYP being a destigmatization space is a very important one for students that pass through the institution. This is also intimately linked to the kinds of academic feedback that they get from their professors. Feedback as Dave put it, “tells you how well you are doing. Mine was good” (p6, P1). What is interesting in Dave’s case (as well as those of others students), is that while TYP offers them the bridge from the “margins” of society it also creates a new type of battle ground, that was not there in their informal learning process, grades as markers of one’s worth as it were. Competition and getting ahead become important, marks are guarded and shared with a “couple of people, those who would not be jealous” (ibid). Grades also affected work ethics, as Dave shared, it made him double up study time in the second semester in order to put more time into his studies because he “wanted to do better” and “integrate” into the formal schooling system. This also sends alarm bells about the transformative nature of formalized

education: what dangers lie ahead for those so deeply stigmatized by society in their quest to succeed in the formal schooling system? How is their power and courage to go back to a formal learning space – in a bid to recover that which was taken from them by dominating ideologies – acknowledged and valued?

Resources And Support Network(S).

Because of the knowledge Dave (informally) learnt about curriculum inequities during his high school years, he took advantage of the resources available at TYP and the larger U of T campus by participating in study groups and being a resource person himself. For instance, he:

Addressed graduate students and teachers at OISE/UT [on issues] of the school curriculum. [I] stressed the importance of being more attuned to new immigrants, equity and community service like the AIDS Walk. (p7, P1)

However, the importance of his studies made Dave find himself less involved in extra curricula activities. He “just focused on getting through TYP.” For him, keeping the focus of why he was at TYP was very important to ensure his success. He kept close contact with his professors at TYP, but not so much with the large university faculty with the exception of George Dei and Shereen Razack at OISE/UT. Seeking supportive networks outside academic circles was also important to him. His friends, family neighbors, and community members participated in making his journey through TYP worthwhile. He said at first they thought he wouldn’t “stick with it” or be “disciplined” enough to go through the process, but he found himself doing it, his support networks, giving him positive support by allowing him the time to be alone to study. He had an extra incentive, about the benefits of TYP for people like him; his brother-in-law had gone through the institution and his current highest level of education is a Master’s degree. This immediate role model fired Dave to want to take full advantage of what TYP and U of T had to offer so as to ensure his success in the program. As he put it, TYP

...motivated me to achieve. [My] goal is to return next year and be in the mainstream, be on an even playing field with other students at U of T. I felt a bit of a stigma about TYP this year, I want to know what it is like to take four [regular] university courses. (p8, P1)

Dave contended that even though he felt a stigma about TYP, it also (and more importantly) contributed to his self-confidence and ability to adapt to a university setting, like how to structure and write essays, how to answer questions in an academic set up (p8). The advantages of being at

TYP outweighed the disadvantages, and even though he still battled his insecurities about his background and the “stigma” of being a TYP student, he still strongly believed that TYP was absolutely important for those that society stigmatized and the inequities embedded in it had dealt a heavy hand. He was very cognizant of the fact that without TYP, university might have remained a pipe dream for him. He has been in Canada for twenty-seven years, and it has taken TYP to hold out the possibility of a credentialized education, credentials that hold the possibilities of getting out of the rut of “living from pay check to pay check, and on a fixed income.” The possibilities are immense, and Dave is determined to succeed, and his going through TYP successfully is a testimony that the best is yet to come for him.

Plans For Next Year

Determination was a term Dave invoked very often. For him success depended on it, as long as one stayed on track and set their priorities right. His plans for the following year were to learn as much as he could on Africa and India where parts of his heritage lie:

I want to learn about Africa. I don't want to learn about Europe right now. I want to learn about where I came from. (p8)

This yearning to learn about where one came from speaks of representation gaps in the curriculum, gaps that the disadvantaged slip through, sometimes unnoticed by the dominant, and more often than not framed to fall through those cracks (Dei et al. 1995). TYP seeks to bridge those gaps and eventually seal the cracks by first ensuring those that are stuck in the crevices of the system, are gorged out, to become powerful voices that can speak and act against a society that thrives on the exploitation of vulnerable groups. The TYP experience, according to Dave, gave him an idea of what to expect in the mainstream, and knowing that he had so much to deal with, the question becomes how will he deal with the reality of racism and Eurocentrism that still permeates the mainstream university culture, including its view of TYP students and alumni? Yet, Dave was ready for the “mainstream” while he intended keeping in touch with his TYP professors like Tom, Keren, and Harris who were supportive of him and other students throughout his stint at TYP. He said he would keep them as resource people who would help him learn more from U of T, since he learnt better through collaborative learning and following guidelines in instructional manuals. Now that he had gone through TYP, Dave felt and believed that he could do so much more than he had ever dreamed of:

I worked before for income. There was nothing specifically I wanted to be I chose things I was familiar with. Now I see more choices. For a lot of people [in the social margins], they don't know what's out there. (p10)

TYP widened Dave's horizon(s), he yearned to know more about himself, his heritage, his identity, and "to be somebody." What lies unexplored is whether his need to want to belong in the mainstream will be a reality, and what hazards come with wanting to belong in spaces that have historically stigmatized the minoritized.

BARBARA

Barbara's most important sources of cultural historical knowledge that she learnt informally was through listening, asking questions of the elders, and working in the Native community. She contended that the knowledge she learned in her Native community was not the same as that which she learnt in the formal school setting:

I was taught that Native people did not exist anymore. I never learned about the circle and the medicine wheel in school. (#503: 2000, 1, P1).

Barbara's foregoing statement speaks of a vandalism and barbarism of mass-murdered Native peoples of North America. The fact that she, as a Native child, could be taught that Native peoples did not exist points to a curriculum that is framed to exclude and erase the history of this space called Canada. In spite of this mis-education in the mainstream school system, Barbara was able to take the knowledge she learnt from her elders and apply it to some of her (TYP) work particularly to philosophy and English literature. She was able to share this knowledge informally with Black women students, especially on issues of cultural differences and similarities, and how the Native people she came from believe in being two spirited. Barbara also found that she had a lot of explaining to do, for instance, sharing with her professors, (the) Native people's history, and culture and view points. She found she had to do a lot of one on one education with one professor that taught an equity studies course (p2). She said she found that informally learnt knowledge about interpersonal skills was very important when she had to make some conscious of a racially biased statement or some such issues. Thus for Barbara, tapping into and utilizing her informally learned knowledge in a formal school setting was very important. The most important lesson being "listening to my intuition, as everybody has a gift and everybody is intelligent. Just because one doesn't have an education doesn't mean a person is not intelligence." Coming to TYP was therefore an important step for Barbara as it was a part of "listening to her intuition," a skill and knowledge she had learnt informally, from her elders and her own curiosities and life experiences.

Barbara defined community as a group of people coming together with a similar background and interests. This group of people comprised of elders, children, lawyers, doctors, professionals, gays and lesbians, mixed heritage people, First Nations people, older women, people with disabilities and street people (p3, P1). It is from community that Barbara said she learnt a lot, through listening and observing the goings on in her community. She also learnt a lot from the elders who taught much of

their wisdom to those that cared to listen and live a life consistent with what they exhorted the young to do. She learnt how to be more generous while working with street patrol, and this opened her eyes to other realities found in her community.

Indigenous Knowledge

To the question, how would you define indigenous knowledge, Barbara said:

When I was little, I always knew that the mountains and the land [were] more powerful than me. I never knew where I got that knowledge till I grew up and realized that it was ancestral knowledge. In dreams too. That's where my poetry comes from. When I listen to the Spirits then my inner voice is usually right on. (p3, P1).

Her definition speaks to the power of ancestral knowledge that the body does not forget. Considering that earlier she spoke of being taught (in elementary school) that Native people did not exist anymore, her definition of Indigenous knowledge speaks to the power of knowing, and self directed (informal) learning that lies in the bodies of those vandalized by colonization. Barbara still held and holds onto her truth as told by her elders, and had reclaimed the importance of the Aboriginal teachings erased by colonialism, for example, the creation story that has been erased by Christianity and its own version of how the world came to be. To this end, Barbara found herself as an important source of knowledge for her peers at TYP who had little knowledge about Canada's Native peoples. She also learnt "...that my voice has power, and people do listen" (ibid), and she used the power of her voice to engage people with conservative ideologies around issues of race, gender, class, sexuality and (dis)ability.

In this reclamation of voice. Barbara took courage and strength from her spirituality, which she defined as follows:

It just is. Spirituality is not found in a building or a church. It is a personal thing, how we live our lives on a daily basis. You can't get it from books, lectures, or TV programs. (ibid)

She pointed out that while she did not practice traditional (Native) spirituality, she relied on it when she was struggling to keep going on with her studies at TYP. She dipped from this (spiritual) well, and trusting herself and her intuition had a lot to do with her spiritual strength. Going through TYP was a wonderful but trying process for Barbara, and when it got particularly rough she willed herself to "...stop long enough to remember,...and to say my name and my clan name. I walked on campus

and said my name, [affirming] which I had every right to be here. I sang spiritual songs to keep me centered” (p4).

Barbara’s own knowledge centered in spirituality, some taught to her (by her elders) and some of her own learning is very important to recognize in the academy when speaking of valuing student’s spiritual and emotional knowledges when they enter the formal school setting. These forms of knowledge are very important in ensuring academic success for students at TYP who come back into the formal school system after many years of being in the social margins, stigmatized for their social location, material condition, academic status, racial and national heritage and sexual orientation. TYP becomes terribly important for people like Barbara who need to know and feel that their “difference” is not deviant, and to gather their self-esteem battered by years of social rejection and colonization.

Paid Employment And Formal Schooling

Barbara had a cumulative twenty (20) year experience of working in different spaces (p2). Her most recent job before she came to TYP was that of a Community Economic Development Initiative Worker. Through this job, she “learned about Economics, bookkeeping, how to write more in-depth proposals. [I also learned] artistic stuff, like how to throw clay on a wheel” (p4). These skills and more importantly the people she interacted with, taught her a lot about herself, and the potential that lay in her community.

The highest level of education Barbara had before TYP was grade eleven (11), though legally she was only considered as having done only up to grade nine (9). It was not this reality that brought Barbara to wanting to go back into the formal education system, rather, it was triggered by a night course she took in accounting that made her realize “...that I could do it. That I was intelligent” (p4). It is interesting to note that Barbara speaks of “intelligence” when the issue of formal schooling/education comes up. This speaks to the depth of the damage the social value of a formal education has, and its attachment to how one is perceived by the larger society. This negatively impacts on those that left the formal school system for one reason or another. For even as Barbara articulated the “cultural differences, extreme racism and homophobia on campus [and how the] university tends to be white, male and old boys network; [the] colonizing attitude that dominated other people’s knowledges...” (p4), she still has to deal with all the social luggage that weighed on

her as a result of her not being “educated.” “People tend to be very classist” (p4), she said, and this classism impacts on how she interacted with the larger university community, and overcoming these classist; homophobic, and racist barriers was very important to her getting ahead, making the most of her back to the university journey. She came to TYP because opportunities for fulfilling employment were shrinking and she could not get a job that would secure her financial freedom. She came to TYP to ensure that she would “...make more money” via a university education (p4). To this end, TYP is an important community and university institution, whose history needs to be remembered and retold. As she articulated,

There has been a lot of blood sweat and tears that have flowed through this building. It shows me the love for community, especially the people that started it and continue to be here. (p5)

This acknowledgment of history is crucial when trying to understand the history of inequity and inaccessibility of university education to certain groups of people in a society. History is also important to learn from as it informs the practice of addressing historical inequities, and rupturing the Euro-American academic canon that has for many millennia dictated what is, and what is not knowledge. Barbara comes from the Native peoples of this country (Canada), yet the knowledge of her peoples has not made it into the academy save as anthropological research for the voyeuristic eye of the dominant culture(s). Barbara came into the academic space with a vast supply of informal knowledge that she found so useful and important to her success. As she put it,

I know that I wouldn’t have done as well as I did without the exposure and experience I’ve had over the past twenty years. That’s basically how I got the scholarship [to come to TYP], it was because of my informal knowledge and training skills. (p5)

This informal learning that took place outside of TYP did not end there. It continued at TYP as she interacted with other students and learnt that

...if there is a will, there is a way. Learning doesn’t only happen in the classroom. I found that I learned more outside of class, having little chats with other people. (ibid)

As much as she learnt from her peers, outside the formal setting, Barbara also shared some of her knowledge with her peers. For example:

That being queer is not as bad as what the media outs out. I think they have also learned cultural stuff that even some of the First Nations students were not aware of. The most important thing is that they can speak out in class, that’s their right. They have a voice too.

Informally learnt knowledge held Barbara in good stead while going through her transitional year. The most important skill she held onto was trusting herself, always, and constantly reminding herself that she had “gotten than far out of nowhere” (ibid). The memory of having made it against all odds thus helped Barbara believe she could do it, she could make it out of TYP into the mainstream university. Positive academic feedback was also important for Barbara as it encouraged her to keep pushing ahead, and if there was a problem, she went to her professors and had it dealt with right away. First semester results/grades that were positive, helped Barbara to relax and not push herself too hard; “At first I wanted to be more gung-ho and set a schedule, [but] after the second feedback, [I felt] I could relax a bit” (p6).

Barbara’s experience about the emotional, spiritual, and psychic effects of grades is very similar to that of her peers, here interviewed and in general at TYP. Her story speaks of a forty-year old woman who has risen against all odds, from growing up in a foster home (p2), dealing with homophobia in the communities she lived in and within, and the racism and classism in the larger society. Being a part of an institution like TYP meant that Barbara could utilize her accumulated knowledge on equity and diversity issues effectively, by challenging other disadvantaged and marginalized groups and people like her to work through their own biases and stereotypes on issues of “difference” and marginality. TYP was also a space that her own assumptions were challenged by others as well, and it was this give and take (of and from “equals”) that encouraged Barbara to believe that she could do anything if she put her mind to it.

Resources And Support Networks

Barbara did not only get encouragement from her peers, she also got it from her professors as well. And of course, it was not all wonderful, there were some professors (and students) who were not as encouraging, she had to deal with the reality that TYP is just as human a space as any other, with its own politics that she had to negotiate on a daily basis. For instance, she expressed that she did not feel very connected with most people at TYP because:

It was cliquish by program, that is, Sociology, Equity Studies, Aboriginal Studies. [I] felt more of a connection with past TYP students and some faculty members. (p7)

This sense of (dis)connection did have some impact on Barbara’s sense of belonging at TYP.

I had moments where I felt I was in the wrong place. Mostly because I am out queer and my lack of high school. I tended to stay by myself, and it would piss me off, and I would feel that I am not quitting, not giving them what they want. (ibid)

Her life experiences and the clarity she had about why she was at TYP made Barbara choose to participate in (social activism) extra curricular activities both at TYP and the larger U of T community by joining study groups in both spaces. She participated as a speaker in such events as the Race, Ethnocultural, and Equity Issues conference hosted by New College (at U of T), First Nations House Events, Drug Culture, and OPIRG-QUEERPIRG action group.

As in the case of Rob and Marleen, Barbara also did have her own insecurities that were exacerbated by social stereotyping and stigmatization of her sexual orientation and “lack of” a high school education. As alluded to earlier on, TYP is just as human a space as any, and those that come to it, bring with them their own social baggage some that does get unpacked and/o off loaded as one goes through TYP process. Barbara’s pain and isolation and feelings of wanting to quit at some point(s) through the process, speak to the importance of a nurturing environment and a strong support network outside this space, that is supportive, challenging, but also competitive. She held onto the fact that most significant people in her life were impressed by and proud of her going through TYP. Their support also helped her overcome the stigma of going back to school at age forty. She took comfort in knowing that her life inspired a lot of people, and her community out of “the fear of academia” closet (p7) that would serve as a testimony to the strength of the human will.

Concomitant with support from her network, Barbara was cognizant of the importance of financial support in the formal education process. This support lent itself to freeing her of worry, so she could concentrate on her studies, and widen her horizon in terms of what academic career/path to pursue/follow. As she put it:

I have a scholarship, I can pick whatever major I want to do. I can think about what to give back to the community. I can think about what I want to learn, not others think I should learn. I’m excited. (p8)

Role models at TYP, also played an important role in helping Barbara keep focused and not to quit her studies. The most important were Keren Braithwaite and Patricia Angus, the latter who had made it through TYP as a homeless person. The sum total of all the financial resources and sources of inspiration at TYP and outside were very crucial to Barbara’s “sticking it out” at TYP; and “I think if I would have gone [straight] into first year [university], I wouldn’t have lasted or gotten the marks I got either” (Ibid). This powerful statement of acknowledgment of TYP is key to

understanding the importance of instituting structures and policies in the academy to address socio-historical inequities. It also speaks to the need to channel more resources to such spaces so more people can access these resources and afford a certain level of academic freedom of choosing what they want to pursue as academic careers, consummate with their life experiences and informal knowledge.

Plans For Next Year

Barbara plans to pursue a first degree at University College (U of T) in the coming year (p2). Her year at TYP was invaluable in teaching her what a formalized education demands of one in terms of time, planning and organization. One of her immediate priorities as she prepares for the coming school year, was to “have a secure home that is more conducive to study. I need to set up a study schedule, to use my academic friends to look over my papers” (p8, P1). TYP as experienced by Barbara, has been a challenge, but more importantly, a foundation stone to her academic career. It also validated her informally learnt knowledge as an important asset to have in the academic process. While her age was a factor, a sense of insecurity, Barbara also acknowledges that “Being a mature student will also help me a lot;” meaning she knows how far she has come to get to her studies, and will therefore push herself to defy social stereotyping and stigmatization about her class, race, sexuality, disability and age “differences.” Barbara’s pursuit of future goals will always be attained to the victory she scored by going through TYP, and while she will not keep in touch with all TYP faculty, staff and students, she would keep in touch with those that encouraged and supported her, and those in charge of administration of her financial support. She also hoped that in the future, TYP would ensure physical accessibility to the disabled by installing ramps and an elevator in the building (p.10). All in all,

Applying to TYP was a spur of the moment decision. TYP helped me focus more, [and most of all] TYP grounded me. (Ibid.).

BRIDGIT

Bridgit said she learned about her ancestry through oral history. She learned about the environment of Ireland, its culture, religion, and the ethnic conflict that has divided Ireland over the past two hundred years in the form of religious differences – Catholic and Protestant. Bridgit realized that the history taught in the final education system was definitely different from that she learned via oral history. This oral history was not only through her family, but through her own research among people, and her study of written texts. She found this (informally learned) knowledge invaluable to her studies of/about “...colonization; in papers and discussions [and] anything that was relevant to history and historical studies (#504, 2000: p1, P1). Bridgit did not, however, share this knowledge with (other) students, faculty, or staff at TYP other than when something came up during discussions, and she shared it. From the history of her people, she learnt the importance of diligence and patience as she went through the TYP process.

To the question how do you define home? Bridgit answered – “Dysfunctionality,” and what she learned was “negativity, mediation, instigation and manipulation” (p2). This over-powering experience, Bridgit associated with constant mobility that she went through since she was a child.

I never really belonged to a community [therefore], I can’t really define it. We moved a lot, we never really settled. Since I was seventeen (17) we moved every year. (p2)

Indigenous Knowledge

Bridgit’s understanding of the concept and term Indigenous (knowledge), is refracted through European eyes that perceive Indigenous as belonging to other cultures, and not hers:

I’ve learned a lot this year [while at TYP], and in previous years about oral traditions, colonization, residential schools, that the First Nations community is very strong. Indigenous cultures throughout have a very close knit community, and that family is very important. (p3)

This constructs European knowledge as universal, meaning European Indigeneity is universalized, thereby ceasing to be tied to a time and space, where Others, particularly colonized people’s knowledge remains localized to particular spaces. This also speaks to what was spoken to by Barbara, that is, even though people came to TYP from disadvantaged and marginalized social locations (class and ethnicity in Bridgit’s case), her own perception of racially minoritized and

oppressed groups speaks of the hegemony of a white European background. To this end, there was not much to learn from stories, fables, and/or proverbs because "...I don't look at stories as learning but more as entertainment" (ibid). However, this does not mean that Bridgit deliberately belittled Indigenous (people's) knowledge, it speaks to (perhaps) the impact her family migration had on her and the negative experience she had in childhood, not having a secure home and not being read stories to, to be able to understand the richness of stories to, to be able to understand the richness of stories and some such knowledge and forms of knowing. It is also interesting to note the contradictory nature of this perception of Indigenous knowledge, when she attributes the knowledge of her own history to oral history more than book learning, – this is a paradoxical reality. For instance, she considers herself a source of knowledge for others, and as a potential carrier of oral history when she asserts:

Definitely, I know I am knowledgeable and appreciated by my friends. I could be knowledgeable in thirty (30) years about what the 1990s was like. I am a product of this time (ibid).

Indeed, knowledge is a constructed site and form of power that plays itself out in different ways. Like defining indigenous knowledge, Bridgit understood spirituality as being "...in the mind, on a higher space of clarity. You have to work to heal your body but I haven't gone there yet (p3). However, even though she feels she's not there yet, Bridgit has learned important spiritual lessons from people she has met in her life. They have taught her compassion and this enabled her to keep strong through her TYP year (p4).

Listening to Bridgit wrestle with the definitions and meanings of indigenous knowledge and spirituality speak powerfully to the importance of what I shall call "appropriate curriculum." Bridgit's definitions of these concepts and realities through other people means that it is not her immediate reality, and to expect her to "have it" at her fingertips, borders on trying to rig her experience to fit a dominant paradigm. This is inextricably linked to how the majority of marginalized groups are coerced by the dominant to assimilate the dominant culture in the name of "education" or formal school knowledge. Bridgit understands what Indigenous knowledge is, and what spirituality is, and these realities are not the sole privileges of Indigenous peoples all over the world; however, because of her European background, she cannot relate to it in the same way. Thus if Indigenous people ever were the "dominant" group and the curriculum philosophies, theoretical frameworks and methodologies were conceptualized from those perspectives, people like Bridgit

would be considered “deviant”, ‘special’ students, drop-outs and some such labels that have stigmatized and devalued the knowledge of people from groups like those that Marleen, Dave, Barbara among other minorities belong to. As Dave’s narrative attests, it is important to have a curriculum that speaks to the realities of those that go through the formal school system otherwise formal learning becomes a hegemonic tool of “keeping people” in their social place.

Paid Employment And Formal Schooling

Bridgit’s most recent job was retail in a clothing store. While at that job, the most important knowledge, skills, and understanding she gained were: “computers, customer service, that the customer is always right. [This] made me want to do something else [and have] a better job” (p4). With grade nine (9) as the highest level of education and the difficulty of her childhood and teenage years, Bridgit realized that she had to do something with her life, or being stuck in a low paying job at twenty-four would be her life-long reality. While the prospect and reality of having to go through TYP promised a “bright” future, Bridgit like other students had to cope with a lot of real and imagined stress about studying again. Some of these stressors were:

Intensive reading. Time and organization. Looking back, I felt that the work was going to be hard. A lot of my stress was thinking I couldn’t do it. (ibid.)

Like other narratives in this study, Bridgit’s anxieties and stresses are symptomatic and signifying of what social stigmatization can and will do to those seeking to enrich their lives through the formal schooling process. Spaces like TYP become very important in affirming people like Bridgit by providing them with a “second chance” in life as it were. For Bridgit, TYP was very important because it was the “only place that would have me, [and] I was always enthusiastic about going to TYP” (ibid). TYP provided her with a “permanence” she had not experienced growing up. To this end, she was appreciative of those that “...brought up equity issues” (p5) so that she and other students could go back to school and make something of their lives.

Bridgit was also appreciative of the support, staff and faculty at TYP gave her. She felt that her informal knowledge was validated and valued, and this made her knowledge a valuable asset in her studies. From TYP and mainstream U of T students Bridgit learned one of the most valuable lessons in her life: “Friendship, I’ve never had friends that were so blatantly honest. [I] definitely learnt honesty “ (p5). The TYP, U of T experience also taught her to be patient and how not to be a

perfectionist. Like other students, Bridgit's response to academic feedback speaks to how much grades affect student's perceptions of their person. For instance:

In the fall, I was worrying my butt off that I had math and I failed. Math is not my strong point. The letter said I wasn't doing well because of my math grade. I was upset because it made it seem as though I wasn't doing well in other courses, high B, and A grades. [The letter] came at such a stressful time. I'm sure if someone was not feeling settled in, it could feel very discouraging (p6).

This speaks of the fragility of those stigmatized by society, as "uneducated." Even though Bridgit knew and says math was not her strong point, she still blistered when the grade came. But more importantly, it speaks of the importance of positively critiquing student's work on the part of the faculty. Knowing the kinds of marginalization people like Bridgit have endured all their lives, it seems imperative that they be sensitively critiqued and that feedback be honest but not devastating. This is not to say they should be handled with gloves, it is to say, spaces like TYP should strive to make even those struggling feel that their efforts are good and will pay-off if they strengthen their "weak" areas, if those areas are necessary for their success overall and in their future studies. The stigmatization can color someone's reality deeply to a point where they will hear and retain "negative" feedback over the positive. Because of the constant (social) messages that invalidate their experiences, they will tend to focus on how "imperfect" they are over those areas they have and do well. However, Bridgit did work hard and improved her math grade to a 74% (p6), so the "negative" feedback did pay off in the end.

Resources And Support Network(S)

Bridgit did participate in study groups both at TYP and U of T, because she wanted to get a better knowledge of what was going on. She also participated in extra curricular activities, from conference attendance to working out at the Hart House gym. For Bridgit, TYP (and U of T as a whole) was very important because:

I felt like I belonged at TYP...I felt comfortable, I didn't feel out of place. It has allowed me to create a stable backbone. I know that if I have a problem, I can go to TYP. (p7&8)

Like other students, Bridgit found at TYP, people, and resources that gave her a sense of family and communities, realities she had never experienced in her life. Her academic advisor was a role model and positive authority figure (transference of needed parental guidance), while her friends were like

the family she had not had. They (friends) supported her in her struggles, as they understood what she was going through, some going through the same/similar struggles themselves. Thus the affirmation she got from TYP made the whole process a positive one, one she holds onto as important for her future plans and goals. She learnt the importance of accomplishing tasks that no one could nor would do for her, and that it would take lots of work, time, patience and sacrifice to accomplish her goals. Though she did not explicitly say she would go on to university in the following year, Bridgit knew that in TYP she had a “family and a community,” and would always keep in touch:

[TYP helped me go] from a small ‘a’ to a big ‘A’, or going from small ‘c’ to a big ‘Excellent.!’
(p10)

EDITH

Edith is of Caribbean, Black, and West Indian origins. She came to Canada, from the Caribbean and has adopted Canada as her home. The most important (source of) cultural/historical knowledge she learnt outside of the school setting was

Reading about slavery and the history of Africans' involvement in the slave trade. I would talk about where slave trading came from [but] learning about the involvement of Africans was a shock. The Europeans came in too, but we never learned about Africans who did it for capital. (#505: 2000, p1, P1)

The issue of slavery that Edith highlighted as the single most important form of informal knowledge she learnt out of the school system, speaks to the tensions, and contradictions of African history both on the Continent and in the Diaspora. Scholars and writers have grappled with these realities to varying degrees, ranging from those that advocate notions of slavery having been an African invention to those that have painstakingly researched the subject matter with evidence that points to the contrary while bringing out the complexities of the issues.

Slavery is also doubly complex as it has been utilized as a divisive issue that has kept continental Africans and those of the Diaspora in deep division. It also raises the issues of how African history has always been constructed in dominant discourses and how Africans (or people of African descent) have been portrayed as people that betrayed and “sold” their own people. This is not to say African people did not do bad things, what is important is to also recognize that when issues like the Jewish holocaust are brought up, no one talks about Jews that “told” or “sold out” on other Jews during the atrocities of the mid 1940s European war. This is not trying to “equate” oppressions, but to speak to the inequities embedded in the social construction of knowledge. How are conflicting renditions of history are given voice and space to articulate themselves without subsuming others? How does the voice of those that have been wronged get honored to allow them to heal from the trauma of what their history means?

Edith shared this knowledge with her fellow students, especially those she was working with, helping each other and doing homework together. Outside of the formal class, Edith learnt “how to be assertive and a go-getter; how to be a strong Black woman” (p2). Being around the home and participating in household related activities taught Edith a few lessons about conflict-resolution as she had to deal with teenage children. She also strove to make home a place one could rest one's head, whether that space is here in Canada or her birthplace, back in the Caribbean. Edith also learnt

how to use computers while she was at home, knowledge and skills that came in handy when she came to TYP and had to write/type her assignments.

She also learnt from her community, a concept she defined as a group of people who identify the same way, even though that is not necessarily the case, and there are some groups that are excluded or discriminated against. One of the most important lessons she learnt was that contrary to dominant images of Black people not making it, there were successful Black people, and these were important role models for her; Keren Braithwaite of TYP was one such example for her. What Edith spoke to, is the importance of the presence of bodies that served as positive images of one's heritage and ancestry in public spaces like the academy. That is, to cut through issues of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, (dis)ability, ethnicity among many diversities, the academy has to ensure that people from this diversity in the larger society are represented in the academy so that it serves as a social institution, not a Euro-social institution. If bodies that represent Canada's social heterogeneity are represented through the school system ensures that students from minoritized and oppressed groups find positive role models and do not drop out of the school in the first place and need to come to TYP later on in their lives.

Indigenous Knowledge

Edith did not relate to the concept/notion of Indigenous Knowledge other than what she learnt from her grandmother; proverbs like, there is no smoke without a fire, or every rumor has some truth (p3). Like Bridgit, if the curriculum was spiritually centered, it would automatically place her on the margins of the learning process.

Paid Employment And Formal Schooling

Edith's last recent job before TYP was in telemarketing. She expressed that "there was no demand or challenge [other than] using your interpersonal skills" (p4). Grade eleven (11) being her highest level of schooling, and she wanted to come to TYP because she did not have the prerequisite to enter university. Also, she had financial barriers in coming back to school, and TYP was important in providing financial support. She brought with her to TYP, listening, participation, and enthusiasm, in the hope that TYP would get her the requirements needed to enter university.

Edith acknowledged the importance of the history of TYP as very important and meaningful for her.

[To me] the history of TYP means that we have to fight for what we want. For those that took the initiative to do this, they need to be recognized. It [TYP] has opened doors for Black people. (p5)

The history of TYP thus stands as an important pillar in Edith's journey, it is a place that she knows values her experience as a Black person and a woman. TYP has also become a site of historical memory, reminding the academic community, lest it forgets, that there are social groups that have been historically oppressed, viewed only as chattel in a white supremacist society that Canada is. And it has, therefore, been essential that staff and faculty at TYP be supportive of students that come and pass through TYP. As Edith attests, TYP and U of T faculty were important in affirming the validity of her life experiences, her background and allowing the space for her to share those experiences with other students (p5).

At TYP, informal knowledge was affirmed as important to the formal learning processes. To this end, TYP affirmed students' knowledge in ways that boosted their confidence in themselves, in ways that society had not done before. As Edith put it, fellow TYP students "...were really smart but like me, they didn't have the opportunity to attend university" (ibid). Having similar backgrounds allowed for a sharing of knowledge about each other's cultures and communities, this, however, did not mean there were no contradictions and tensions as they went along. They were there, for TYP is as human a space as any other, what is important to recognize here as Edith expressed, is that when one is more mature and experienced, one has reasons to be committed to their work and to sharing experiences with others. Academic feedback, Edith expressed, did not change anything yet it was important as she shared it with her friends and made her want to do better in future (p6).

Resources And Support Network(S)

Edith did not participate in study groups (only) at TYP, so she could study and do homework with other students (p7). She also did participate in extra-curricula activities at TYP, especially on Fridays after school. By participating in such groups and activities, Edith said she made "...some really good friends," (p7) and faculty members were very welcoming and supportive. Her family, friends, and community outside TYP were also supportive, encouraging her to keep at it. This support network in and out of TYP was good, Edith said, because it was comforting to know that there were friends

to talk to and share ideas with. Edith also expressed that it was important to have role models like Keren Braithwaite, Rona Abramovitch and Bell, Leone, as this contributed to her academic success. Though she was always a confident person, Edith expressed that TYP did make her feel more confident and she informally learnt some important lessons that would come in handy as she furthered her studies.

Plans For Next Year

In order to succeed in the next year, Edith felt that she needed to use the TYP experience to help her plan, take action on issues, and fully utilize the resources available at TYP, and U of T at large. The informal knowledge she shared with fellow students at TYP was going to be useful as she pursued further studies, especially helping her with her writing and choosing topics (p8). Thus even though Edith had earlier on said being at TYP did not influence her future goals, (because she had always wanted to go to university) she shared that the transitional year did put her “on track,” and the faculty were very helpful and supportive. To this end, she would keep in touch with most faculty and staff, but especially Harris for essay writing (p9). As she put it, “TYP has shown me that I can succeed” (p10).

THE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section highlights the issues recurrent in this study, from the first phase right through to the foregoing student portraits, serving as an opening to what is possible at TYP. Please note that these findings and recommendations are in no way exhaustive - rather, they are suggestive:

- This study in its quantitative and qualitative dimensions speaks to the reality that *lifelong learning is at once a formal and informal experience* for TYP students, faculty (at both TYP and U of T), and staff who learn as much as they teach what they know to TYP students.
- TYP, according to this study, is a very important institution for those coming back to the formal space because it provided the safe haven needed to understand the pressures of university education. It is also a space and time that self-confidence and self-worth are validated as one's informal learning is valued by TYP and certain professors in the larger university community, making the formal learning process even more worth the while.
- The study also shows the hazards of grades and credentials. Many students (both in this study and those talked to informally) attached a great deal of importance to marks, particularly numeric grades, more than the commentary that accompanied the grade. Some had a history of teachers that had not been helpful, or had poor grades, such that this was an opportunity to make up, and get back the lost confidence of bygone years.
- Faculty's portraits by and large validate the sentiments expressed by students. They affirm the critical importance of the knowledge that TYP students bring to the formal learning process. By the nature of the composition (especially age-wise) of TYP, faculty facilitate critical thinking and encourage students to speak their minds. The flip side of this, however, is that TYP does not reflect the general culture of the university, such that students find themselves silenced once in the larger setting – the getting-to-the-top-of-the-ramp-and-not-being-able-to-go-in kind of scenario. This is because at the undergraduate level, the majority of students do not have life experiences to speak from as they have been on the from-kindergarten-to-university-non-stop highway.
- Faculty (like Tom) critique the one year stint at TYP as too short to prepare anyone for university as there is so much rope learning to do, before the plunge. Some courses need a

longer time to process than others, and so students leave the program before they are quite ready (see Maureen's portrait also).

- There is a great need to build students' confidence. This is pivotal to their overall learning and success. However, this can also be draining to faculty that are already over stretched, and this calls for teaching assistants who can take on some of this mentoring role to ease the pressure on faculty.
- Issues of identity – racial origin – was important in the student's definition of themselves and their affirmation of their place in the grander scheme of the formal learning process. Thus, historical memory was important to students, as it was key to their own survival in the academy. The Indigenous knowledge they brought (for those that had it) into TYP and U of T saw them through the rough patches. As one student (Barbara) stated, she walked around campus calling out her name, affirming her right to be on the U of T campus, despite its chilly climate.
- The “Nervous Conditions” – to borrow Sartre's phrase – produced because of TYP students' return to the formal learning process late in their lives affected them in different ways. Some enjoyed TYP as a process, while others saw it as the necessary step to their de-stigmatization – as “uneducated.” Thus, TYP students simultaneously and constantly felt like insider/outside at U of T.
- Closely connected to the “nervous conditions” was the feeling of stigma attached to being a TYP student because of age, class, sexual orientation, personal and collective histories of being from a particular race/ethnicity and so on. While they loved the concept and reality of TYP as a stepping-stone into the formal learning space, there was a need to shed that TYP skin as it were, and blend into the mainstream. The question that looms larger to the onlooker is; what happens to those eager to integrate, what is the price paid in the name of mainstreaming?
- The recurring theme of the importance of TYP faculty to students' success in general, and of particular named ones, highlights the importance of role modeling for those immobilized by their marginality. Faculty affirmed the students' dreams that they could not only make it through TYP but into the wider world. It then becomes important TYP faculty and the administration not only shares students' aspirations, but also their backgrounds (of race, class, gender, sexual orientation...).

- Modeling was also important from another perspective, that of the students as parents setting an example for their children by going back to school. By being at TYP, they affirmed the importance of formal education to their children, so the cycle of what Dei et al (1995) call "Drop out or Push out" would not repeat itself.
- The students' portraits also speak most powerfully of the inherent racism, sexism, classism, homophobia and discriminatory nature of a society built on the bones of Native people of this country. Discrimination abounds for the Native, the Black, the women, the gay/lesbian, and the white working class among other social categories. There needs to be more concerted efforts at minimizing the ghettoization of issues of social justice, so that instead of having a TYP, the system seeks to plug the cracks so no one falls through, and should they fall, they should be assisted at getting back to their feet in a space and time that is empowering.
- TYP students have so much to offer the university as they are not green, and do provide new insights on understanding social issues from lived experiences. These experiences while they might not be appreciated in the first year of trying to "de-stigmatize," could be encouraged as important learning material for those who come to join the institution later on. To this end, TYP should find a way of keeping track of its alumni and offering opportunities for those interested in recording their stories as part of the history of TYP.
- The competing renditions of the history of TYP warrant a full study that this project could not fulfill. TYP needs to put a proposal together and a team of researchers; historian, sociologist..., to do an in-depth historical research of TYP to date. There is so much that needs to be told.
- Student researchers need to be paid more than was happening, as the work involved in the project was not reflected in the remuneration. This jaded the process quite a bit. Otherwise, it would be a wise idea that the principal investigator do the bulk of the work and have student researchers as assistants not researchers, as switching roles without switching the pay does complicate the process.
- A longitudinal study would be a much more beneficial process. To this end, TYP needs to seriously consider applying for a larger grant in order to do this as it would be most useful in the long run, partly to document progress and process, and partly to be in more control of its research agenda(s).

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APPENDIX --- INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR 1998**Informal learning experiences and supports for TYP students**

This is a survey conducted jointly by TYP and researchers from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. Your answers are strictly confidential. I'm going to ask you questions mostly about the things that people learn **outside of formal classes**. This could be anything you have learned by reading, listening, practising, and watching television or other methods of learning. It could be either learning on your own, with someone helping you, or together with family, friends, neighbours or other folks you know.

I. INFORMAL LEARNING: HOUSEHOLD-RELATED

First I'd like to ask you about household-related activities.

1. About how many hours a week, if any, do you usually spend in **housework, household tasks, things you do around the home** (This includes household work like cooking, cleaning, home maintenance and repair, shopping, child or elder care, renovations or other do-it-yourself projects, home budgeting)?

2. Think of any learning you have done on your own or with others in relation to work around the home **in the past year**. Have you learned anything that you couldn't do or didn't know the year before related to any of the following?: **READ EACH RESPONSE; ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES**

- a) home maintenance
- b) home cooking
- c) cleaning
- d) parenting and child care
- e) elder care
- f) shopping
- g) renovations or other do-it-yourself projects
- h) gardening
- i) home budgeting
- j) other (please specify)_____

3. Please give me a quick estimate of how many hours you spent in a typical week last year (beyond organized courses) learning anything related to your work around the home.

4. In just a sentence or two, what would you say is the most important knowledge, skill or understanding you gained in the past year through your activities around the home?

II. COMMUNITY-RELATED

Now I'd like to ask you about any other learning activities beyond formal courses that are not directly related to things you do in your household. These can be things you have discovered in response to activities conducted within your community, places of worship and so on.

5. In the past year, did you do any unpaid work or volunteer in any community organizations?

If no, skip to section III.

If yes...

Q. 6 Let's consider any learning at all you might have done in the past year in relation to any of these unpaid voluntary or community organization activities. We're interested here in any new knowledge, skill or understanding that you gained that had to do with any community activities. Did you learn anything by yourself or with others about any of the following: [READ RESPONSES. ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES]

- a) any new skills you can apply to paid employment
- b) fundraising skills
- c) technical skills (e.g. first aid, coaching, word processing)
- d) organizational or managerial skills (e.g. organizing resources, leadership and planning skills)
- e) increased knowledge (e.g. about health, political issues, criminal justice, environment, etc.)
- f) communications skills (e.g. public speaking, public relations)
- g) interpersonal skills (e.g. understanding people better, dealing with difficult situations, etc.)
- h) some other skill or knowledge (please specify)_____

7. Please give me a quick estimate of how many hours you spent in a typical week last year (beyond organized courses) informally learning about these things? Just give me your best guess.

8. In just a sentence or two, what would you say is the most important knowledge, skill or understanding you gained in the past year from these activities?

III. OTHER INFORMAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

9. Now I'm going to read you a list of a whole bunch of **other things** that can generate informal learning. No one is expected to be interested in or have participated in all of them, so just let me know which activities, if any, apply to you. In the past year did you learn anything about ... [READ ITEMS. ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES].

- a) Sports or recreation (such as basketball, hiking, swimming, cards)
- b) Practical skills (such as driving car, gardening)
- c) Leisure or hobby skills (such as arts and crafts, travel, music, collecting, photography)
- d) Social skills/personal development (such as self-help, communication skills)
- e) Health (such as learning about medical conditions/illnesses, medical treatments/therapies)
- f) Finances (such as banking, mutual funds, investing)

- g) Computers (such as software, or Internet skills)
- h) Language skills (such as a new language, vocabulary)
- i) Science and technology (such as physics or biology, electronics)
- j) Intimate relationships (such as love, marriage, sexuality)
- k) Religion/spirituality (such as anything about the meaning of life)
- l) Environmental issues (such as recycling, pollution)
- m) Pet care (such as dog or cat obedience)
- n) Public and political issues (such as current events, history)
- o) Culture (such as history, ceremonies, stories, art, etc.)
- p) Current events (via TV, news, radio, magazines, newspapers)
- q) Any other topic that you learned about either on your own or informally with others?
(specify)_____

10. Please give me a quick estimate of the total amount of time you spent in a **typical week** during the past year informally learning about these activities?

(a) About how much time each **day** would you say you spend listening to music?

(b) About how much time each **day** would you say you spend watching television or videos?

11. Of the learning activities we've just discussed, do you usually do most of this learning on your own, with others, or both about equally?

12. What is the most important knowledge, skill or understanding related to these other general interests that you have learned in the past twelve months outside of formal classes?

IV. PAID EMPLOYMENT AND RELATED FORMAL TRAINING

These next few questions are job-related.

13. Have you had any paid employment in the last year?

14. What was your most recent job?

15. What is the most important knowledge, skill, or understanding related to your most recent job that you learned outside of formal classes within the past year?

16. Did you spend most of this employment-related learning time learning on your own, with others, or both about equally?

17. In your most recent job did you feel pressure from your employer to learn work-related things on your own time?

IV. RECENT EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND COURSES

Now I'd like us to discuss more formal educational experiences. We'll start with the 12 months before you began TYP, and then we'll explore from there.

18. During the past year, did you receive any FORMAL education or training, including courses, private lessons, correspondence courses, workshops, formal on-the-job training programs, apprenticeship training, arts, crafts, recreation courses or any other training or education program anywhere prior to coming to TYP?

If no, skip to section V.

If yes...

19. How many courses did you take in the past year?

20. Could you please tell me what type of programs/courses these were? ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES [READ CHOICES]

- a) job training/apprenticeship certificate
- b) job recertification or career upgrading
- c) other work-related courses
- d) language courses, i.e., ESL or any other language
- e) basic reading, writing and number skills
- f) courses toward a high school diploma
- h) other--specify_____

21. About how many days/weeks/months did you spend altogether in these education and training programs/courses/workshops in the last year?

22. Please give me an estimate of how many hours in a normal week you spent on your studies during these programs/courses, counting time in class, doing homework and course assignments, and any time studying on your own or with others?

23. Were any of these courses required or strongly recommended by an employer or other work-related organization?

V. GENERAL LEARNING

Now I'd like to ask you some general questions about your preferred learning style.

24. In general, when you are trying to learn something outside of a formal course or training program, HOW do you USUALLY work out what you need to learn and how to go about it? [READ RESPONSES. ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES]

- a) I work it out on my own
- b) I rely mainly on programmed instructional materials (like a self-help manual, textbook or set of tapes)
- d) I get a friend, peer or family member with more experience to help me
- e) I co-operate with a group or network of friends, peers or family members who also want to learn in this area
- f) I do no planning at all

25. In which language do you prefer to communicate?

26. What OTHER languages do you speak well enough to conduct a conversation?

27. Do you use a computer at home?

28. If yes, do you access the Internet from your home?

29. Do you have a place in your home where you can study effectively?

30. How much time in a typical day do you have that you can spend on studying effectively?

VI. FORMAL SCHOOLING

31. We all go to TYP because we didn't take the traditional route through school. Here's a list of general reasons that people sometimes give for why they did not actually continue schooling or take more formal courses. Please answer "yes" or "no" if the reason I read applied to you **prior to beginning TYP**. [ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES/READ RESPONSES]

- a) Y/N I felt I had all the schooling I wanted or needed
- b) Y/N I was too busy/lacked time
- c) Y/N There were no relevant courses available
- d) Y/N Courses were at inconvenient times and places
- e) Y/N Lacked family support
- f) Y/N I had family duties/lack of childcare
- g) Y/N I had poor grades/lack of qualifications
- h) Y/N I had a language barrier
- i) Y/N I had health reasons
- j) Y/N I left school because I needed to make money
- k) Y/N School was boring or too narrow
- l) Y/N School was an unfriendly place and/or was a hostile environment
- m) Y/N I preferred to learn outside of school
- n) Y/N Anything else? Please describe _____

32. What was the highest level of schooling you have previously obtained in Canada or elsewhere?
33. What did you get out of formal education that made you want to return (i.e., and go to TYP)?
34. There is a lot that is stressful about going back to school. What would you say are your biggest stressors and/or barriers to academic success?
35. What do you see as your strengths when it comes to learning at TYP?
- 35(b). You have identified a lot of informal learning, to what extent do you think this informal learning is going to be utilized at TYP?
36. Why did you come to TYP?
37. Before you applied to TYP what did you think it took to "make it" in university -- to be a successful student?
38. Now that you are in TYP, what do you think it takes to make it?

VII. OUTCOMES

48. What exactly do you hope to get out of the TYP program?

VIII. EARLY EXPERIENCE OF TYP

39. Do you think you have adequate access to the type of resources and materials (such as computers, money, etc.) you need to succeed at TYP?
40. How would you describe your relationship with other TYP students (especially outside of classes)?
41. What is the most important knowledge, skill, or understanding that you've gained so far in TYP?
42. So far is TYP what you expected?
43. University is pretty expensive these days. If you were to run into financial trouble and it meant the difference between whether or not you could afford to stay in school, is there anyone you could turn to for help?
- 43(b). Is the financial aid you are receiving adequate and timely?
44. What about if things got tough academically. Is there anyone you feel you can turn to for help with your studies?

45. Have you ever thought seriously of quitting TYP? (To be asked in spring or late fall).
46. So far, what has made you feel most encouraged about continuing at TYP/university?
47. So far, what has made you feel most discouraged about continuing at TYP/university?

IX. SOCIAL BACKGROUND

Last, I am going to ask you a few background questions to see how representative respondents are of the rest of TYP.

49. What year were you born?
50. Compared to other people your age, how would you rate your health?
51. How many years have you lived in Canada?
52. To which ethnic or cultural group(s) did your recent ancestors belong? (For example, French, British, Chinese, etc.)
53. How would you best describe yourself in terms of race or colour?
54. What social class would you say your parents belonged to when you were growing up?
55. What is the highest level of schooling your parents obtained?
56. What was your parent's specific occupation(s) when you were growing up?
57. What is your current status in terms of marriage or a significant relationship?
58. What is the highest level of schooling your partner/spouse obtained?
59. What is your partner/spouse's specific occupation(s)?
60. Apart from household duties, is your spouse or partner employed full-time, part-time or not at all?
61. In your household are there any... READ CATEGORIES AND RECORD NUMBERS
 # __ pre-school children
 # __ children in school (include children over 16)
 # __ adults (including you)
62. What, if any, is your religious affiliation?
63. Is there anything I missed or anything else you'd like to say about the learning activities we've been talking about today?

I will be conducting similar, but shorter, surveys in the future. Can I contact you to see if you would be interested in participating? If you say yes now it does not mean that you will have to participate, I'd just like to know if it's alright for me to contact you again.

Thank you very much for completing this survey.

Why do you think that some people fail at TYP/university studies while others succeed?

Are people's beliefs predictive of their achievement at TYP?

Potential samples: 1. NALL/TYP FALL Questionnaire

2. Midterm assessment

3. NALL/TYP SPRING QUESTIONNAIRE

4. Final assessment

If Ss participated in all four conditions, the development and affect of their attributional style could be measured. While conditions 2 and 4 directly measure Ss actual attributional style, conditions 1 and 3 will measure Ss presumed style or attitudes. Therefore, questions in the NALL/TYP Qnt. need to focus on subjects' past or hypothetical attributional style.

APPENDIX TWO

Code # _____

Date _____

PART ONE: Transitional Year Program (TYP) Survey Spring 2000
Informal learning experiences and supports for TYP students

This is a survey conducted by TYP and researchers from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). **Your answers are strictly confidential.** In this survey you will be asked about the things you learn outside of formal classes. This could be anything you have learned by reading, listening, through practice, watching television, or by other methods of learning. The learning you will be asked about could take place on your own, with the help of someone else, or together with family, friends, neighbors, and community members. This kind of learning is sometimes referred to as **informal learning**. Throughout this survey you will hear the words informal learning used to describe the various ways learning mentioned above. Another term that we will use is **indigenous knowledge**. This is the knowledge you have gained through your culture, family, community, and identity. Indigenous knowledge can also be defined as knowledge of the environment and land, as well as spiritual and ancestral knowledge.

I. INFORMAL LEARNING: GENERAL

1. What have been the important sources of cultural/historical knowledge you have learned outside of school (specific people, nature, environment, community, or other sources)?

2. Is this knowledge different from what you learned in school? If yes, how so?

3. Have you used this knowledge in your current TYP studies? Yes No
Please explain:

4. In what ways do you share your knowledge at TYP?

a) with fellow students:

b) with faculty:

c) with staff:

5. What is the most important knowledge, skill, or understanding that you have learned outside of formal classes?

II. HOUSEHOLD-RELATED

6. How do you define home?

7. What kinds of things have you learned about at home? How have you learned these things?

8. In just a sentence or two, what would you say is the most important knowledge, skill, or understanding you gained through your activities around the home?

III. COMMUNITY-RELATED

Now I'd like to ask you about any other learning activities beyond formal courses that are not directly related to things you do in your household. These can be things you have discovered in response to activities conducted within your community, places of worship and so on.

9. How do you define community?

10. Who is a member of your community?

11. Do you learn from your community? How?

IV. INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

12. How would you define indigenous knowledge? (e.g. cultural, historical, community, spiritual, ancestral, identity)

13. What have you learned from stories, fables, tales, and/or proverbs outside of school?

14. Do you see yourself as a source of knowledge? (with whom & regarding what)

Yes No

Please explain:

15. How you understand spirituality?

16. Do you use spiritual knowledge in your studies at TYP? Please explain:

17. Do you use spiritual knowledge to respond to “or “survive” life’s challenges and hardships?

Please explain:

V. PAID EMPLOYMENT AND RELATED FORMAL TRAINING

18. What was your most recent job? _____

19. What is the most important knowledge, skill, or understanding related to your most recent job that you learned outside of formal classes?

VI. FORMAL SCHOOLING

20. What was the highest level of schooling you have previously obtained in Canada or elsewhere? _____

21. What did you get out of formal education that made you want to return (i.e., and go to TYP)?

22. There is a lot that is stressful about going back to school. What would you say are your biggest stressors and/or barriers to academic success?

23. What do you see as your strengths when it comes to learning to TYP?

24. Why did you come to TYP?

VII. TYP, INFORMAL LEARNING AND SCHOOLING

25. TYP was initiated to address barriers to university education for members of Black, First Nations, and working class communities. With intense lobbying at U of T, especially from the Black community, it became the first access program to engage equity issues at the University of Toronto. What does this history mean to you as a student at TYP?

26. In what ways have the TYP and U of T instructors or discouraged you to feel that the things you have learned outside of school informally learned knowledge are resources that you can use in your school studies (formal learning knowledge).

27. Have you felt that your informal learning is an asset in your studies?

28. What have you learned from your fellow TYP and U of T students?

29. What do you think they have learned from you?

30. How do you think that the things you learned outside of school (informally learned knowledge) helped prepare you to succeed in TYP?

Reaction to academic feedback

During the fall and spring you received some feedback on how you were doing at TYP. We would like to know how that feedback affected you, as well as hear any suggestions you may have for improving how it was delivered.

31. What would you say were the main reasons for the feedback you received? (specify either fall or spring feedback)

32. How did you feel about being in TYP after receiving the feedback?

33. Did you share your feelings and thoughts about the feedback with anyone? Yes No

34. Did you want to change anything about how your approached your studies after receiving the feedback? Yes No
Please explain:

35. Do you thing the feedback was delivered in the best way possible? (format and timing). Yes No

VIII. RESOURCES

Supports

36. Did you form or participate in extra study groups (of any size)?

@TYP	yes	no
@U of T	yes	no

Why or why not?

37. Did you participate in any extra curricular activities?

@TYP	yes	no
@U of T	yes	no

Why or why not?

38. Do you feel connected with students, faculty, and staff at TYP or U of T? Please explain:

39. What do people in your life outside of TYP/UT think about your pursuit of a university education? (friends, family, neighbors, community members). What impact has this had on your TYP experience and your goals?

40. How did your sense of belonging or not belonging influence your education achievements this year?

41. How has this affected your goals for next year?

42. Did you feel that you had access to role models that have contributed to your academic success?
Please explain:

43. Do you feel more confident as a result of doing the TYP? yes no
Please explain:

IX. PLANS FOR NEXT YEAR

44. What do you think it will take to succeed or meet your goals over the next year?
(supports, planning, action, circumstances, etc.)

45. What impact do you think your informally learned knowledge (things you have learned outside of school) will have on your university/college studies? (course choices, topics for assignments, and participation in classes/seminars/tutorials, understanding and learning of course material).

46. If you are not planning to pursue formal education next year, what are your main reasons for this decision and what are your future goals?

47. Do you think that your experience in TYP will help you pursue your future goals?
yes no

Please explain:

48. Do you plan to keep in touch with TYP next year? yes no

49. If yes, with whom? For what purposes?

50. If not, why not?

51. Do you think that the knowledge you've acquired outside of formal classes (your informally learned knowledge) will help you to succeed next year? Yes No

Please explain:

X. PREFERRED LEARNING STYLE:

Now I'd like to ask you some questions about your preferred learning style.

52. In general, when you are trying to learn something outside of a formal course or training program, how do you usually work out what you need to learn and how to go about it? (circle all that apply to you).

- a) I work it out on my own
- b) I rely mainly on programmed instructional materials (like self-help manual, textbook or set of tapes).
- c) I get a friend, peer, or family member with more experience to help me.
- d) I co-operate with a group or network of friends, peers, or family members who also want to learn in this area.
- e) I do no planning at all.

53. In which language do you prefer to communicate?

54. What OTHER languages do you speak well enough to conduct a conversation?

55. If you had to give a brief synopsis of the story of your life both before applying and as a result of having been to TYP, what would you say?

XI. CONCLUSION

56. Is there anything else that you would like to add about any aspect of your TYP experience or about anything else? Yes No
Please explain:

57. We would like to follow up on your experiences next year. Would it be okay for us to contact you again some time in the future? If you say yes now, it does not commit you to participate in future interviews. Likewise, there are no consequences for saying no.

Thank you so much for your participation in this study and all the best wishes for your future.

APPENDIX THREE

Code # _____

Date: _____

PART TWO: Transitional year Program (TYP) Survey Spring 2000
Informal learning experiences and supports for TYP students

This is a survey conducted by TYP and researchers from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE/UT). **Your answers are strictly confidential.** As you fill out this form please feel free to ask any questions you may have. For each question below please circle your answer, write your answer in the space provided or check the appropriate box for your answer.

I. INFORMAL LEARNING: HOUSEHOLD-RELATED

1. Do you consider your home a place of learning? Yes Sometimes No
2. Indicate any learning you have done on your own or with others in relation to work in and around the home, including the hours per week you spend for each activity:

	Yes	No	Hours
a) Home Maintenance			
b) Home Cooking			
c) Cleaning			
d) Parenting and Child Care			
e) Elder Care			
f) Shopping			
g) Renovations or other do-it-yourself projects			
h) Gardening			
i) Home Budgeting			
j) Other (please specify): _____			

II. COMMUNITY-RELATED

3. How much time did you **spend doing any unpaid or volunteer work** in any community organization in a typical week last year?
 - a) No hours spent volunteering (**skip to section III**)
 - b) Less than 1 hour
 - c) 1 – 2 hours
 - d) 3 – 5 hours
 - e) 6 – 10 hours
 - f) More than 10 hours

4. Please check any learning you have done through unpaid volunteer work and the hours per week you spent on each activity:

	Yes	No	Hours
a) Paid Employment			
b) Fundraising			
c) Technical (e.g. first aid, coaching, word processing)			
d) Organization or Management (e.g. organizing resources, leadership and planning skills)			
e) Increased knowledge about health, political issues, criminal justice, environment, etc.			
f) Communications (e.g. public speaking, public relations)			
g) Interpersonal relations (e.g. understanding people better, dealing with difficult situations, etc.)			
h) Some other skill or knowledge (please specify):			

5. Of the learning activities we've just discussed, do you usually do most of this learning on your own, with others, or both about equally?
- On your own
 - With others
 - Both equally
 - Don't know

III. OTHER INFORMAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

6. Learning takes place in different spaces and ways and no one is expected to have participated in all of the activities listed below. Please check those that are applicable to you and how many hours per week you spend doing each activity.

	Yes	No	Hours
a) Sports or recreation (such as basketball, hiking, swimming, cards)			
b) Practical skills (such as driving car, gardening)			
c) Leisure or hobby skills (such as arts and crafts, travel, music, collecting, photography)			
d) Social skills/personal development (such as self-help, communication skills)			
e) Health (such as learning about medical conditions/illnesses, medical treatments/therapies)			
f) Finances (such as banking, mutual funds, investing)			
g) Computers (such as software, or internet skills)			
h) Language skills (such as a new language, vocabulary)			
i) Science and technology (such as physics or biology, electronics)			

j) Intimate relationships (such as love, marriage, sexuality)			
k) Religion/spirituality (such as anything about the meaning of life)			
l) Environmental issues (such as recycling, pollution)			
m) Pet care (such as dog or cat obedience)			
n) Public and political issues (such as current events, history)			
o) Culture (such as history, ceremonies, stories, art, etc)			
p) Current events (via TV, news, radio, magazines, newspapers)			
q) Any other topic that you learned about either on your own or informally with others? (Specify): _____			

7. Of the learning activities we've just discussed, do you usually do most of this learning on your own, with others, or both equally?
- On your own
 - With others
 - Both equally
 - Don't know

IV. PAID EMPLOYMENT AND RELATED FORMAL LEARNING

8. Have you had any paid employment in the last year?
- Yes
 - No
9. Are you currently working for pay?
- Full-time at one permanent job (30 hours or more per week)
 - Full-time at one temporary job (30 hours or more per week)
 - Part-time at more than one job (less than 30 per week)
 - Part-time at one job only (less than 30 per week)
 - Currently not working
10. Are you currently looking for paid work?
- Yes
 - No

V. RECENT EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND COURSES

11. During the year prior to starting at TYP, did you receive any FORMAL education or training, including courses, private lessons, correspondence courses, workshops, formal on-the-job training programs, apprenticeship training, arts, crafts, recreation courses or any other training or education program?
- Yes
 - No (**skip to section VI**)

12. How many courses did you take in the year prior to TYP? # of courses _____.

13. Could you please tell me what type of programs/courses there were and how much time you spent doing them? (please calculate total hours spent in each program/course).

	Yes	No	Hours
a) job training/apprenticeship			
b) job re-certification or career upgrading			
c) other work-related courses			
d) language courses, i.e., ESL or any other language			
e) basic reading, writing and number skills			
f) courses toward a high school diploma			
g) other general interest (sports, hobbies, computers, cooking, home repair, finances, personal development, etc.) Please specify: _____			

14. Were any of these courses required or strongly recommended by an employer or other work-related organization?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Not applicable

15. Did you spend most of this employment-related learning time learning on your own, with others, or both about equally?

- a) On your own
- b) With others
- c) Both equally
- d) Don't know

VI. FORMAL EDUCATION

16. Please circle any of the following reasons listed below that explain why you either decided or were forced to discontinue schooling or formal courses at any point in your life.

- a) I felt I had all the schooling I wanted or needed
- b) I was too busy/lacked time
- c) There were no relevant courses available
- d) Courses were at inconvenient times and places
- e) Lacked family support
- f) I had family duties/lack of childcare
- g) I had poor grades/lack of qualifications
- h) I had a language barrier
- i) I had health reasons
- j) I left school because I needed to make money/had no financial support
- k) School was boring or too narrow

- l) School was an unfriendly place and/or was a hostile environment
- m) I preferred to learn outside of school
- n) Anything else? Please describe _____

VII. FINANCES

Financial

To understand the level of **financial resources** that students have it would be helpful to collect some number figures. Keeping in mind that this information is completely confidential and that you are under no obligation to reveal any details that you do not wish, do you mind if I ask you for **estimates** as to your annual income during both of these periods?

17. Did you find yourself in a better, worse, or the same financial position during your TYP year compared to the year before you started the program?
- a) Somewhat worse
 - b) Somewhat better
 - c) The same as before
 - d) Definitely worse
 - e) Definitely better

18. Please check the box that is the best estimate of your annual income the year before TYP as well as the year starting from when you entered TYP.

Income	Sept. 1998 – 1999	Sept. 1999 - 2000
\$0 - \$6,000		
\$6,000 - \$15,000		
\$15,000 - \$25,000		
\$25,000 - \$35,000		
\$35,000 - \$50,000		
Above \$50,000		

19. Did you have friends or family members who helped out financially and/or with child care during your TYP year?

Type of Support	Amount in dollars
a) Financial Support	\$ _____
b) Child care (hours of childcare x \$12/hour.	\$ _____
TOTAL SUPPORT	\$ _____

20. If you required access to child care, was it adequate to enable you to:

	Yes	No	Sometimes
a) attend classes on a regular basis,			
b) attend extra tutorials, seminars, etc.,			
c) prepare effectively for assignments/essays,			
d) study effectively for tests and exams?			

21. Did you use any of the following services provided by TYP/UT?

	TYP		U of T	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
a) Individual (weekly) appointments with a tutor,				
b) Subject Tutorial				
c) Tutorials or seminars on how to study & write exams,				
d) Financial services/advice,				
e) Counseling or social work services,				
f) Did you meet with Profs. or tutors outside of classes?				

Supports

22. Did you form or participate in extra study groups (of any size)?

@TYP yes no
 @U of T yes no

23. Did you participate in any extra curricular activities?

@TYP yes no
 @U of T yes no

24. In general, do you feel connected with:	@ TYP			@ U of T		
	Very connected	Somewhat Connected	Not Connected	Very connected	Somewhat Connected	Not Connected
a) fellow students,						
b) facility advisors,						
c) instructors,						
d) tutors,						

25. When you compare your sense of connection in semester one with semester two, do you feel:

- a) Somewhat more connected
- b) Definitely more connected
- c) The same sense of connection
- d) Somewhat less connected
- e) Definitely less connected

26. How many people do you feel that you can turn to for emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and financial support? Number of people: _____.

27. Do you feel a sense of belonging at: Yes No Somewhat

	Yes	No	Somewhat
a) Home			
b) Community			
c) TYP			
d) U of T			
e) Other, list			

28. Do you feel that you have had access to role models/mentors that have contributed to your academic success?

	Yes	No	Somewhat
a) At home			
b) Within your community			
c) at TYP			
d) at U of T			
e) other, list: _____			

29. As a result of doing the TYP has your self-confidence:

- a) increased
- b) somewhat increased
- c) stayed the same
- d) decreased
- e)

VIII. PLANS FOR NEXT YEAR

30. Do you think that your experience in TYP will help you pursue your future goals?

- a) yes
- b) no
- c) don't know

31. Do you plan to keep in touch with TYP next year?
- yes
 - no
 - don't know
32. Please circle on a scale of 1 to 10 how motivated are you to pursue your goals next year (1=not at all motivated, 10=highly motivated):

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

50. Do you think that the knowledge you've acquired outside of formal classes with classmates and colleagues will help you to succeed next year?
- Yes
 - No
 - Somewhat
43. Are you planning to attend university or college next year?
- Yes
 - No
44. Are your plans for next year the same as when you began TYP?
- Yes
 - No
45. If you plan to attend university or college next year
- where do you plan to go? _____
 - do you plan to get a degree or diploma? If yes in what?

IX. SOCIAL BACKGROUND

Last, I am going to ask you a few background questions to see how representative respondents are of the rest of TYP. **Please remember that you do not have to answer any questions that you are not comfortable with.**

51. What year were you born? _____
52. Compared to other people your age, how would you rate your health?
- Excellent
 - Very good
 - Fair
 - Poor
 - Don't know

f) No comment

53. How many years have you lived in Canada? _____

54. Using the following broad categories but limited list of race and ethnicity, how would you best describe yourself in terms of ancestry. Please feel free to check more than one category as well as add any category that has omitted.

- a) Caribbean
- b) African
- c) Inuit
- d) Metis
- e) North American Indian
- f) Aboriginal/First Nations
- g) Black
- h) Mixed Race
- i) South Asian
- j) West Asian
- k) Arab
- l) Asian Indian
- m) Latin American
- n) South East Asian
- o) East European
- p) Jewish
- q) Chinese
- r) White
- s) Italian
- t) Euro-American
- u) Irish
- v) Scottish
- w) German
- x) French-Canadian
- y) Anglo-Canadian
- z) Other, please specify: _____
- aa) Don't know
- bb) No Comment

56. What social class would you say your parents belonged to when you were growing up?

- a) Upper Class
- b) Middle Class
- c) Working Class
- d) Working Poor
- e) Low Income
- f) Under Class
- g) Other, please specify: _____
- h) Don't know

i) No Comment

57. What is the highest level of schooling your parents obtained?

58. What was your parent's specific occupation growing up?

59. What is your current status in terms of marriage or a significant relationship?

- a) Married or Common Law (heterosexual or same sex)
- b) Living with Partner
- c) Separated
- d) Divorced
- e) Widowed
- f) Never Married

60. What is your parent's specific occupation(s)? _____

61. Apart from household duties, is your partner employed full-time, part-time or not at all?

- a) Employed full-time
- b) Employed part-time
- c) Not employed

62. In your household please indicate the number of:

- # _____ pre-school children
- # _____ children in school (include children over 16)
- # _____ adults (including you)

63. What, if any, is your religious affiliation?

Please specify: _____

64. Please indicate if you are a member of any of the following groups:

	Yes	No
a) Youth (under 25)		
b) People with disabilities		
c) Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual, Trans-gendered		
d) Women		

X. GENERAL

65. We would like to follow up on your experiences next year. Would it be okay for us to contact you again some time in the future? If you say yes now, it does not commit you to participate in future interviews. Likewise, there are no consequences for saying no.

- a) Yes
- b) No

Thank you so much for your participation in this study and all the best wishes for your future.

APPENDIX FOUR

The Lessons TYP Teaches Us

(Excerpts from Address on the Occasion of the Twentieth Anniversary the Transitional Year Programmed,

University of Toronto, March 15, 1991)

by

Keren Brathwaite

I consider it an honor to have been asked to address you at this special celebration. It is an honor to share the podium with Horace Campbell tonight, and I pay my personal tribute to him for his vision, which guided us on this path. It is also moving to have my daughter Wendy join in this celebration tonight; she was *only* a thought when we began the TYP project in the Black Community.

The twentieth anniversary of the Transitional Year Programmed (TYP) at the University of Toronto is a momentous occasion, which we celebrate in a spirit of pride and accomplishment. We review the path we have traveled for the past twenty years to bring the programmed to where it is today. We honor the students who have studied with us and have gone on to make their contributions in various communities and professions in Canada and beyond. We acknowledge the commitment of the faculty and staff who have worked to develop the programmed to its present stature. And we pay special tribute to the early pioneers who initiated the concept of the TYP in the Black community in Toronto, and persuaded the University to join in this mission of making itself more accessible to Black, Native, working class, single mothers and under-represented groups.

TYP, we know, is of historical significance in Canadian education in that with the Transition Programmed at Dalhousie, we share the distinction of being the first full-time access programmers into university for the groups already mentioned; thus, we pre-dated by 18 or 19 years the current interest in university accessibility. This point we need to emphasize, for had there been a warmer climate of acceptance for the concept of TYP in its early years, and had *equity of education* (we used

the term *equal opportunity* back in 1969 and 70) been more desired goal, then our programmed would not have had to expend so much energy on survival.

In this regard, we believe that one of the major accomplishments of TYP is that it has been able to prove *convincingly* that when certain financial and educational barriers are removed, motivated students from “disadvantaged”/non-traditional backgrounds can succeed at university far beyond expectations. For TYP, this is an essential part of its experience of 20 years, and should be part of a message (supported by programmed research) which it can share with all those seriously interested in social justice in the higher education arena—with governments and educators, with school drop-outs and alienated students, with parents and various communities. It is a message, which may instill hope in some disenchanted students and groups in Canada at this time.

For those of us who believed in the potential of TYP from the beginning, who challenged the university to serve a more diverse population than it did in 1970, the past 20 years have been a tremendous learning experience. It has indeed been a privilege to be part of this endeavor, for many years ago some of us could never have predicted that we would spend two decades on proving that this experiment works. We have been able to demonstrate that our hypothesis concerning the educational promise of our students is *valid*, for we have tested it with resounded results.

When I came to Canada in 1967 to pursue graduate studies in education, I could not have known that from 1969, I would be committing 20 years to development of a TYP. I came to Canada with the intention of returning home to the Caribbean and using my education in the service of “my people.” “My people”, however, was to take on a new definition when I became aware of the social and educational inequality of black people in Canada who were marginalized, generally denied opportunity and were dismally under-represented in Canadian institutions of higher learning, including the University of Toronto.

Back then in the late sixties, we easily compile the statistics on our students' participation in the university with our eyes, so insignificant were our numbers. We experienced much alienation back then as part of an uneasy minority at the university and with the few graduate and undergraduate students from Africa, 33 St. George Street, the International Student Center, became for us a sanctuary from Toronto's chilly climate. I observed in 1967 that to be born black in Canada, to be born Native, to be born in the working class was a deterrent to completing high school and entering university.

Yet, I had no idea in 1967 that I would remain in Canada for the rest of my life—so it seems—while my peers from high school and University of the West-Indies days remained at home, running education systems and Caribbean governments! So youthful dreams of transforming Caribbean education institutions were replaced by new vision—no less idealistic—of assisting black students, Native students, and other minority students to enter university in numbers more significant than they did in 1970.

Now, 20 years later, there are two programmes to which I feel a sense a deep commitment, and which have affected me in profoundly meaningful ways: One is the Organization of Parents of Black Children (OPBC) which I helped to establish in 1980, in response to an urgent need to improve black students' academic performance in Ontario Public schools. The other, as you know, is the Transitional Year Programmed (TYP), which I have served since its inception and birth in the black community in Toronto in 1969.

My activities in these two spheres, however, are connected, though the OPBC is voluntary and informal with a community base, while the TYP is a formal university programmed, which nevertheless began for the us as a voluntary and community activity. The goals of the OPBC and the TYP are similar: to improve the academic experience and performance of our students through the

removal of barriers such as racism, sexism and class bias, and the inclusion of curriculum, staff and support systems that will help them succeed in elementary school and also in the university.

We have experienced the pursuit of equity, of anti-racism, of pro-diversity, as a huge challenge for those who would make it a vocation in a community setting, but, of course, it is so much more of a challenge in a formal university structure of elitism and conservatism, which caters mainly to the privileged, while the poor, the working class and certain racial and ethno-cultural groups are largely excluded, or are expected to compete by the rules laid down by the privileged. I would add, also, that the pursuit of educational justice is one of the biggest challenges facing the university today. We therefore use this celebration to invite the University of Toronto (and other universities, if they will hear us; and the government of Ontario, if it is listening), we invite the University of Toronto to proclaim our TYP motto “Making Excellence Accessible” as an institutional goal, an objective for our entire institution.

We would wish to move beyond the university to spread this message of equity and justice in education throughout our entire nation just as we used to spread the gospel of the TYP in the black community in 1969 and 1970. But if the university takes us seriously, if it is willing to proclaim “Making Excellence Accessible” as a goal, then the university would have to make some adjustments in its psyche and its structure. The university would have to adjust its values, its style, its system of beliefs, and its expectations of our students. The university would have to adjust its perceptions of racial and ethno-cultural minorities, of First Nations people, of working women. The university would need to go through some structural adjustments also in its faculty arrangements if excellence is to be accessed in larger numbers by students like those who register in the TYP. The university would have to examine its conscience and adjust its sense of morality if it is to pursue our motto with whole-hearted conviction. But the responsibility of government to help the university serve the people must also be noted—our goal would compel the government to increase the level of funding

for programmers as ours, so that the financial stresses of our students can be alleviated and their indebtedness removed. Can you imagine owing \$10,000 or more after one year in TYP and 3 or 4 years in the university? This is not good enough.

As Estelle, a Barbadian immigrant said in Austin Clarke's story, "They Heard a Ringing of Bells," all she was waiting for was a chance, a chance to make a better woman out of herself—but she was being denied a chance in the story which ironically takes place on the U of T campus on the grass near Hart House! We must continue to make possible **this chance**, this opportunity for our students, and at the same time be more sensitive to their financial needs.

In our efforts to provide opportunity, to increase access to the university, in our efforts to open more boldly the slightly opened door of the University of Toronto, what have we learned as a programmed in 20 years? What have we learned from our application of a philosophy of education, which we so passionately espouse? What has our struggle for equal access to university taught us? I submit to you tonight that in our 20 years, we have learned much that should speak volumes to educational thinking in Canada at this time.

Some of our lessons are simple; some are very profound, but all point to a moral imperative of providing opportunity to all segments of our population, not only the privileged groups. ***The Lesson that persuades us most points to the unlimited potential of our students, potential, which might have been wasted had there not been a TYP at the University of Toronto.*** As faculty, we have shared the pride of our students as they walked to the rostrum at Convocation to receive their degrees, for most of them the first in their family to have been thus rewarded.

Last fall, one of our students present here tonight convoked with a four year degree, an occasion which he later celebrated with his family, friends and community in a sumptuous dinner provided by his church. This student remembered to invited faculty members from TYP to this event in order to thank them and not the programmed for the significant change in his life resulting

from the university education. He proudly asked two TYP faculty members to address the gathering. He and the others like him who have graduated, or those who have used their year with us to make important life changes even though they did not continue in university—*these are our success stories*; these are all part of the lesson of what TYP is all about.

Yet, we recognize that our programmed is only a tiny oasis in a huge dessert of educational wastage in Canada. As Hartford Charles (TYP faculty) has said, TYP is like “an accessibility fig leaf on U of T’s elite person.” So we need to push governments to provide a higher level of funding for programmers such as ours, if we are to save more of our students from wastage and under-achievement resulting from obstacles over which they stumble in our education systems. We need to rescue more of them from dropping out of school. We are asking for a higher level of provincial funding than the **.7 Basic Income Unit we have received for 20 years!! For 20 years .7 B.I.U.**

We have also learned that financial problems are burdening our students more and more each year. These financial problems are impeding the progress of many in the university, just as they worked to keep them out in the first place. In the early years of TYP, our students were discouraged from working since their year with us, we expected full concentration on their studies, and they had so many educational gaps to fill. Now, in our changing economy, many students cannot survive except they take a job, thus placing severe stress on their personal and academic resources. We are calling attention once again to all this financial predicament which requires correction if access is a serious goal within the university.

In addition, 20 years have provided us with more and more evidence that not only financial support but also psychological support in a warm climate of acceptance can make the difference between success and failure, between students dropping out and staying in school. ***TYP can make a contribution to the present debate in education about the measures required to keep our students in school***—we can help answer some of the questions raised by George Radwanski in his

study of the drop-out syndrome in Ontario schools. Ours has been excellent instruction in education development for students whose needs are scarcely met in the university and public schools. We have so much to share-so much to tell about the meaning of quality education. In the area of curriculum, I believe we have a sensible, fair, and rational approach to what the content of education ought to be. ***We have learned to put to use the life experiences of our students, for this is a valid resource in education,*** as attested to by those who teach our students. In Soc. 101Y– Introduction to Sociology, Prof. Janet Salaff, as reported by the TYP newsletter of fall 1989,

“remembers well her first encounters with TYP students in the mid-1970s when she taught the Introductory Sociology Course. Course topics focused on the history and sociology of such issues as industrialization, gender, and ethnic discrimination. To Those matters, says Prof. Salaff, “The TYP students brought the wealth of their own world experiences. Their contributions and challenges in class added profitably to our discussions...’ among (her) class.”

This is so very true. This might be the reason why Prof. Fred Case (of the Department of French) often said that if there was one other department in the university where he would like to teach, it would be in the TYP.

For in TYP we have learned to use effectively the life experiences of our students. I recall an incident one of our graduates once told me. She was sitting in a student lounge at Scarborough College exclaiming about the high cost of chicken, which with her OSAP funding she could not afford. The younger students, traditional, some might say, listened to her with bewildered faces, she said, while some admitted that they did not know what the cost of chicken was, since they never did the shopping! ***Our students do know the price of chicken, and the cost of housing—and much more***—so we attempt to reach the total student, including their experiences, which they bring with them to school.

We have also learned in 20 years to incorporate race, class, and gender into our curriculum, with good results. There is some irony here, for the Crowe Report, which the U of T Governing Council used as a weapon to suspend our programmed in 1976, this report seemed to suggest that

*the study of Marxism and the consciousness of race and class in TYP were problems!*I

wonder how the 1976 evaluators would respond to Prof. Jack Wayne's "History and Society" course, or to our Literature course which teaches *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* side by side with Margaret Laurence and Chinua Achebe; Langston Hughes back to back with T.S. Eliot. My belief is that we had chosen to locate our classrooms away from the life of our students, then we would have lost many more of them in the manner in which some have been lost in the high school system which often ignores the validity of their experience; this we recognize as a problem in black students and Native students' schooling, their poor representation in or omission from the curriculum which they study.

In TYP, we recognize in Paulo Freire's terms "the relevant themes" of our time, the issues, which impact on our students' very being which they bring with them to school. Thus, our classrooms cannot be isolated from the social realities of Toronto and Canada and the world, for in TYP, relevance and integration is key to academic success; inclusion is our academic way of life.

We have learned that to teach in TYP is to learn from our students lessons about life and opportunity and social responsibility; lessons about growth, intellectual and spiritual; lessons about the value of culture and identity; about the meaning of self-determination for First Nations in Canada, about Black community development, about unionization and working life, about the real meaning of alienated labor. That is why some of our students have been so uneasy about coming to class while there are three strikes on at U of T. we have had instructions about the value of the communities from which our students come—the variety of cultures which interact in our programmed daily. Above all, we have shared with them vision of what they can become when they are provided with opportunity. To teach in TYP is truly a learning experience.

And in addition to our reflections on our lessons of twenty years, I would be remiss in my duty if I did not take the time to pay tribute to those who have made possible this celebration tonight. We must pay tribute to those who in 1969 had a vision of a better society based more on

the principles of equality and justice. We must honor those whose energetic support even in times of controversy and rejection helped to develop our programmed to its present status. We must thank those who had faith in our project before it had the sanction of academic respectability. This occasion compels me to single out some communities and call some names, though we have been aware from our inception that ours would be and has been a collective work in which all of us have played our parts together.

First, the Black community in Toronto. I will use some sentiments I wrote in a TYP Newsletter in the fall of 1989:

....we celebrate the contributors of the Black community to the Transitional Year Programmed. The Black community has been pivotal in the development of the TYP from its inception at the U of T in 1970, and even before then, in the success of the two summer programmers in the Black community, which preceded TYP or rather developed into TYP. Our community helped to do the recruiting; we helped to provide the student body; we supported the philosophy of the programmed and expected certain returns in terms of development of our community form it.

We recognize also the support of different Native communities, which helped us in recruiting, worked on Admissions Committees, served as a resource to us and helped provide a significant segment of our programmed population for the past 20 years. In addition, we recognize the contributions of all the other communities, which have possible the development of a TYP.

Tonight we honor the early pioneers Horace Campbell, Chuck Hanley, Praxis Organization, Elaine Maxwell, Ato Setu (formerly Ainsley Vaughan), Selwyn Henry, Patricia Hayes, Kathy Searles, Ed Clarke, and others who joined in a community effort to improve educational opportunity for our students. I lauded Horace Campbell for his involvement in the TYP in our programmed Newsletter of fall 1989, I wrote:

Special mention must be made of Horace Campbell who was one of the most passionate contributors to the TYP "idea" in its embryonic stage, who has remained steadfast in his support of our work over the years, even from the distance of his teaching position at the University of Zimbabwe and more recently in the United States. He must be credited for being one of the "founders" of TYP, who helped to articulate the need for the programmed in the black community. In 1969 and 1970, Horace was a young student at York University and black community organizer who shared in the vision of improving

education opportunities for Black, Native Canadian and working class students at the university level. His name, his voluntary contributions, and his energetic (almost missionary) zeal should be written into the history of the TYP at the University of Toronto.

We must pay special tribute to the faculty and staff who have worked tirelessly to build the programmed in times of limited resources, in times of low tolerance for a TYP, and in our present situation of stability, which are well earned.

Now we invite you to join us in this celebration, all those who have supported our work over many years; the Black and Native communities from which our students come. We invite our students and graduates to immerse themselves in this celebration tonight, for this anniversary is yours; you made this day possible, for you have been as much the makers of TYP as the beneficiaries of it.

We thank the directors present for their dedication and leadership in the programmed—Dr. Jack Diamond, Prof. Marty Wall and Prof Jack Wayne. And we thank the University of Toronto for the part it has played in making this twentieth anniversary possible, for having taken a chance on an idea, which was a challenge to its very being. We invite the University of Toronto community to share in this our special moment of achievement, made possible by a vision of university access born in the Black community in 1969.