
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF EDUCATION POLICIES BETWEEN BRITISH COLUMBIA AND ONTARIO

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INTRODUCTION

- From a 4-year SSHRC funded Gateway Cities Project
 - Post-secondary education (PSE) crucial to socioeconomic mobility
 - determining factor in enhancing the sense of “self-worth and belonging” among youth (Hausmann et al., 2007; Nora et al., 1996)
 - Analyzes MOE policies in British Columbia and Ontario
 - how do these policies facilitate /deny access to PSE for marginalized youth?
 - Education is a provincial government responsibility in Canada (comparative lens is needed)
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WORKING DEFINITIONS

- Marginalization involves social exclusion. Individuals or groups are denied economic, political, and/or symbolic power and pushed towards the 'margins' becoming 'outsiders' (Edgerton, 2010; Chandler and Munday, 2011)
 - We focus on the ways that particular racialized minority and immigrant youth are differentially positioned or absent in policy
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KEY WORDS

- Post-secondary education /PSE
 - Access
 - Equity
 - Language
 - Barriers
 - Race / Ethnicity
 - Special education
 - Socio-economic status
 - Intersectionality
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METHODOLOGY

- Content analysis
 - NVivo software to analyze BC and Ontario policy documents
 - Critical policy sociology (Ball, 2003; Gillborn, 2015; Giroux, 2013; Henry, 2011).
 - Policies are treated both as social structures and discourses, constructed to address particular issues
 - We examine the texts and their contexts to understand the hidden assumptions behind policy discourses
 - “policies come to be framed in certain ways—reflecting how economic, social, political and cultural contexts shape both the content and language of policy documents” (Taylor, 2006, p. 28)
 - analysis will unveil not only the thick layers of policymaking but also the policy nuances (terminology, contexts and discourses) between Ontario and BC
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POLICY CONTEXT (BC)

- “The Liberals came to power in 2001 with an initial agenda that marked the most radical shift in both substance and philosophical orientation in 40 years” (Fisher & Rubenson, 2013)
 - End the 6-year tuition fee freeze
 - Total deregulation of PSE fees
 - Strong business influence
 - Focus on Internationalization
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POLICY CONTEXT (BC)

- Curriculum Changes (focus on technology- oriented subjects – career education) <https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/>
 - Change in graduation requirement (the provincial exams , 2 instead of 5) see <https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/>
 - K-12 Context dominant discourses of ‘performativity, accountability’ significant budget cuts , school closures. public money funding private schools
 - Policies are guidelines adopted and updated by the school boards.
 - A government with clear commitments to the Neoliberal Agenda.
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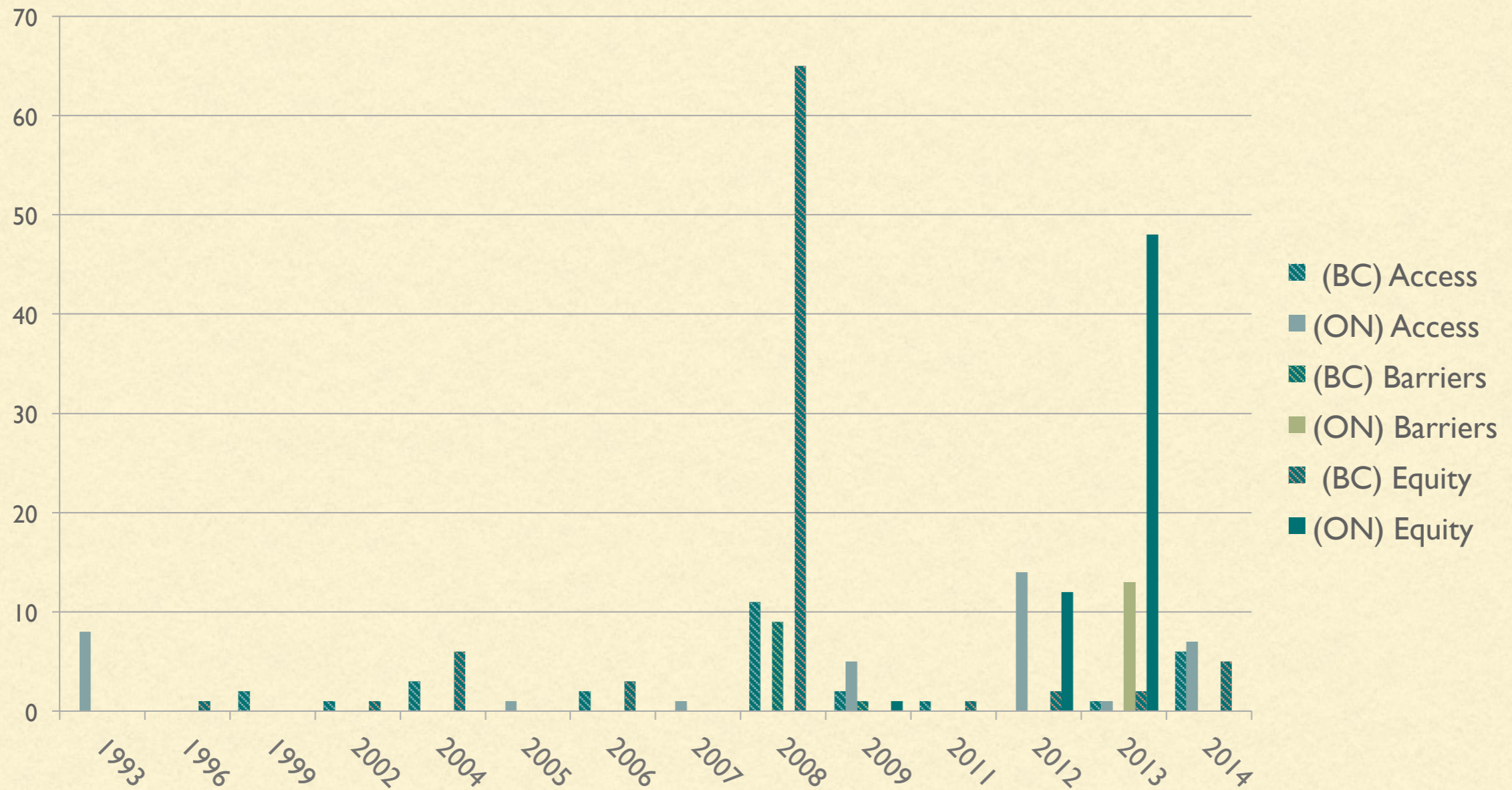
POLICY CONTEXT (ONTARIO)

- Last 20 years have seen Conservatives (95-03) under Harris and Eves and then Liberal (2003-present) under McGuinty and Wynne
 - Common-sense Revolution:
 - cut waste:
 - Public sector/education spending, income taxes, hospitals and social programs
 - removed resources for anti-racist pedagogy under previous NDP government refocusing on merit
 - Eliminated grade 13, changed curriculum, standardized testing (EQAO and literacy test), amalgamation of boards
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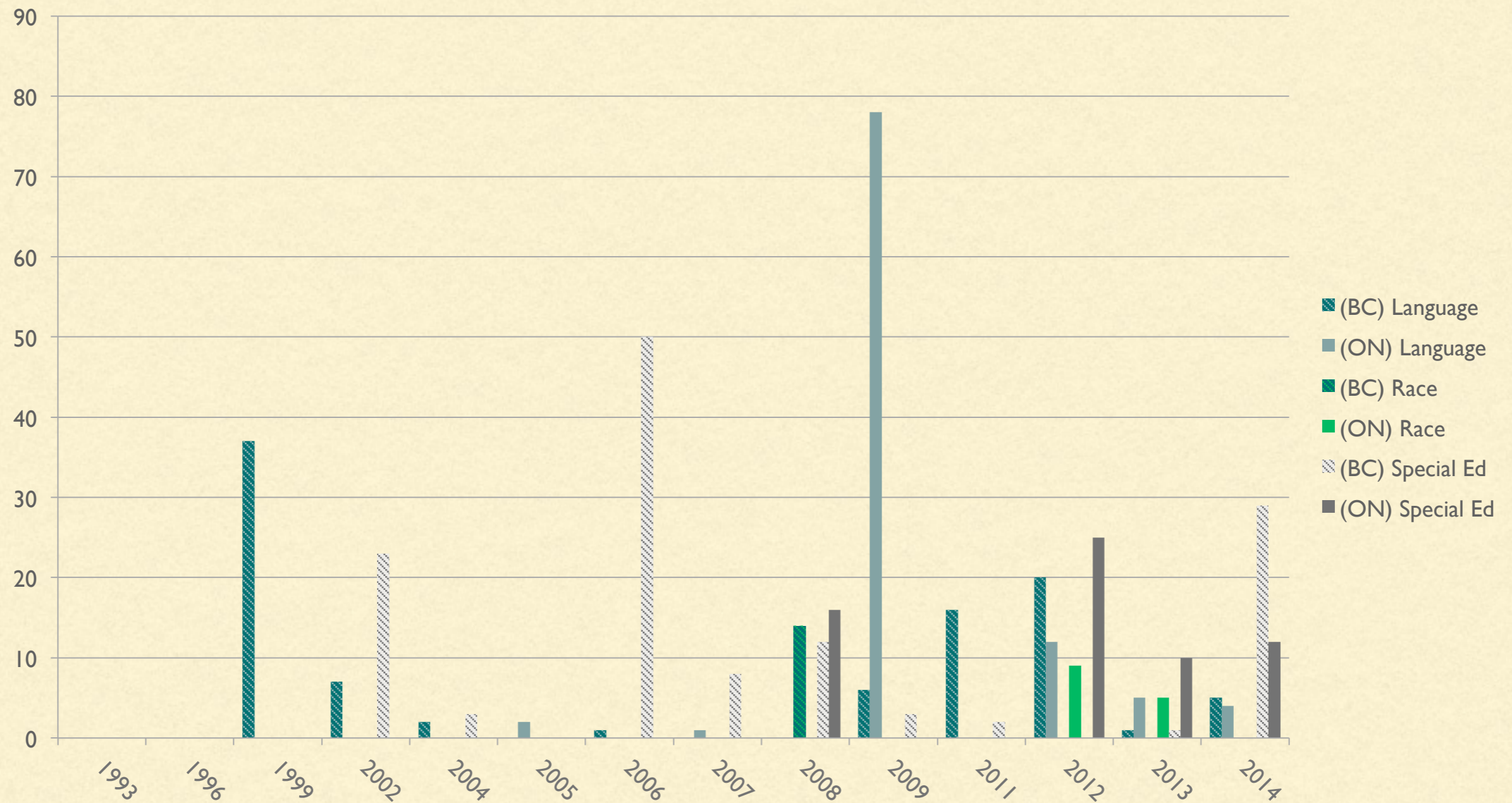
POLICY CONTEXT (ONTARIO)

- McGuinty's Liberals took reparative approach to Ontario
 - considered equity and inclusive education
“reparative”
 - 90k additional HS graduates, higher literacy rates and full-day kindergarten
 - Reaching Higher to increase access to PSE for underrepresented groups (disability, first-generation and aboriginal)
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CONTENT ANALYSIS – ACCESS, BARRIERS AND EQUITY IN BC & ON POLICY (1993-2014)



CONTENT ANALYSIS – LANGUAGE, RACE AND SPECIAL ED IN BC & ON POLICY (1993-2014)



BC FINDINGS

- Visible / Invisible: Policy texts adopts the most “neutral” terminology
 - Students are constructed within the discourses of “sameness”
 - Fragmentation / no intersectional lens
 - Visible : Language (Home language a major identity marker – ELL/ESL major issues)
 - Policies around Special Ed are mostly connected to disability and lack consistency.
 - Less visible as these programs are targeted by major budget cuts
 - Race- Class- SEN (controversial issues , the policy of denial and the fallacy of equity
 - Equity /Access . New meanings in liberal times.
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WHAT IS MISSING?

- “Create an inclusive education system that recognizes and supports the needs of Aboriginal, French-language, English Language Learning (ELL), international, and rural students, as well as students with special needs”(BC Budget, 2016)
<http://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/2016/sp/pdf/ministry/educ.pdf?page=#4>
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ONTARIO FINDINGS

- Language
 - Heavy emphasis on language education
 - Policy revolves around French Immersion and the support for FSL and to a lesser extent, ESL
 - Special Education
 - Focus on access to special education and support for students with special needs
 - Mostly MID, Behavioural and Autism and not gifted
 - Therefore, Equity is often framed around issues of language and special education
 - Race and ethnicity mentioned also, but not in substantive ways (listed with others) and is not officially measured
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COMMON FINDINGS

- **Race is constructed differently in BC vs. Toronto**
 - **Special education is defined in different ways**
 - difference/diversity/race is constructed as Aboriginal or English Language Learners (ELL) in BC
 - When removed, race talk in policy dwindles.
 - Ontario talks about race/ethnicity as we commonly understand it, but don't really address it or have any substantive policy
 - Context and ambiguous language
 - Intersectionality is mentioned in small ways in Ontario, but not at all in BC policy
 - adheres to neoliberal agenda = enhancing privatization, not historicized or contextualized, not specific and ambiguous = lip service, socioeconomic
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CONCLUSION

- Current policy in BC and Ontario uses ambiguous language to address issues of socioeconomic and race/ethnicity inequalities
 - Without explicit addressing of these forms of inequity, these issues go unaddressed and cannot be properly applied and measured
 - Is race/ethnicity truly recognized as a marginalizing attribute?
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RECOMMENDATIONS

- Further research that examines the implementation/evaluation of these policies
 - How they address issues of race/ethnicity/ socioeconomic class?
 - Collect race data (MYAA)
 - Why isn't race/ethnicity counted as an urgent measurable category in provincial policies?
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THANK YOU



<http://gatewaycitiesproject.info.yorku.ca>
