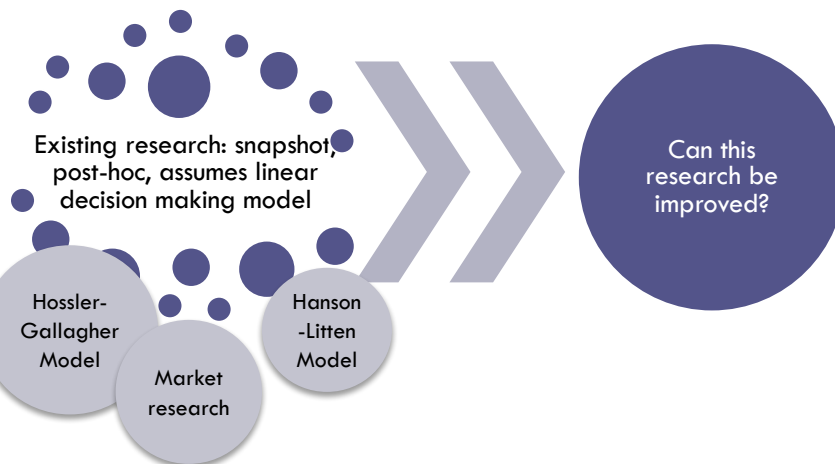


# The PSE Decisions Project SEM FORUM 2017



## Background



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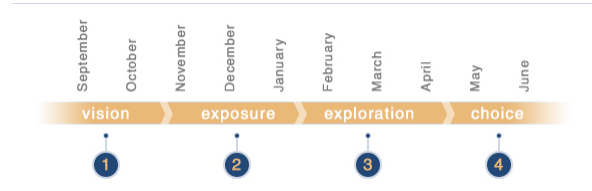
- How do high school students choose a field of study what institution to attend?
- When do they make their decisions? How do choices change over time?
- What resources do they rely on?
- Whose opinion influences their choices, and when?
- Specifically, how do parents
- What marketing materials are the most impactful?

## Program of Research

- Student Decisions Project (SDP) (gr. 12, longitudinal)
- Prospective Arts Student Survey (PASS) (gr.11-12)
- Early Interventions Project (EIP) (gr. 11)
- Parental Influence Project (PIP) (gr 11-12)

## SDP Methodology

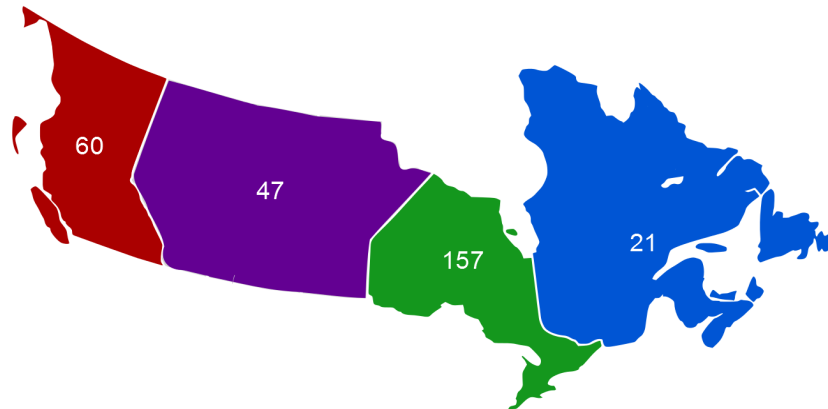
- The Decision-making process
- 350 Qualitative interviews
- Longitudinal
  - Wave 1 – Vision (September/October)
  - Wave 2 – Exposure (November/December)
  - Wave 3 – Exploration (February/March)
  - Wave 4 – Choice (May/June)



## Later Projects

- Continue use of qualitative methods
- PASS: 200 interviews, summer between grade 11 and 12
- EIP: 200 interviews, midway through grade 11
- PIP: 225 interviews, mostly late in grade 12

## SDP Sample



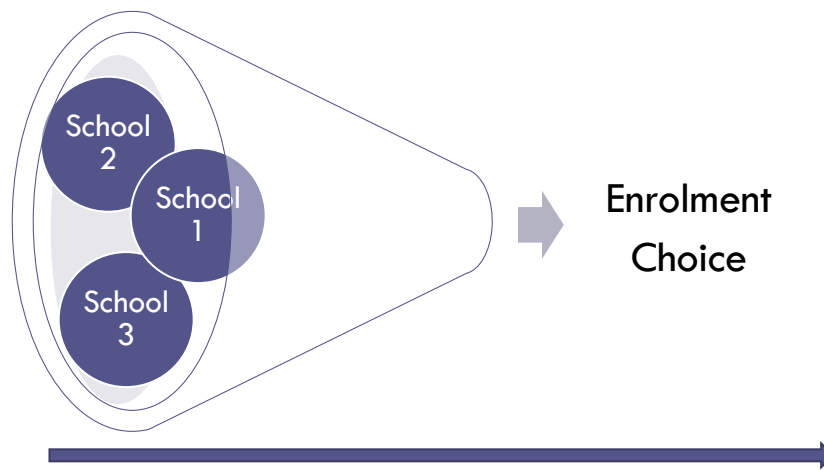
## SDP Findings: Program First

- The vast majority of students (9/10) did not change their intended program of study (if they had one), while over 2/3 changed the institutions they were considering
- Program availability is essentially the first choice filter

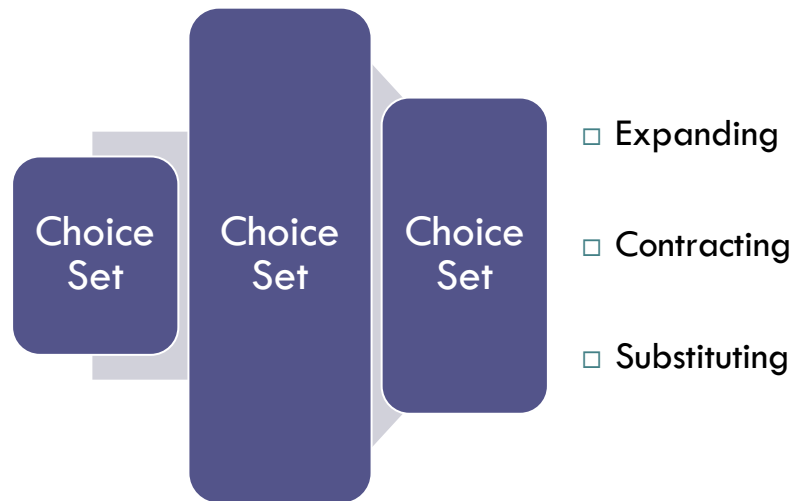
## Later Findings: Program Choice

- In grade 11, considerable confusion about what programs mean. Main understanding: STEM subjects are more demanding, more desirable.
- Parents tend not to interfere.

## Findings: The Choice Set – Assumption



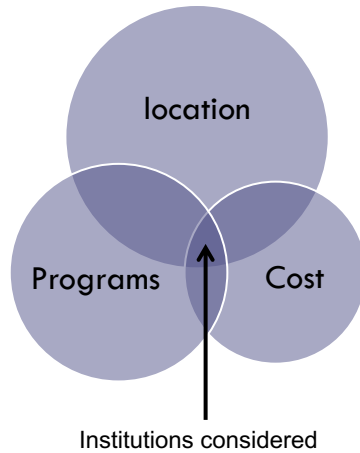
## SDP Findings: Choice Set Reality



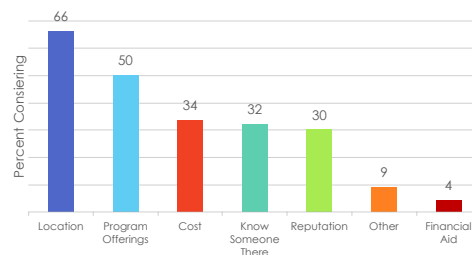
## Later Findings: Choice Set

- In mid-grade 11, rare for students to have more than 2 choices in mind
- Parents role in choice formation is usually to limit, not to grow.
- Parents do not search much, in part because they do not see much variation in quality between Cdn universities

## Findings: choice constraint networks



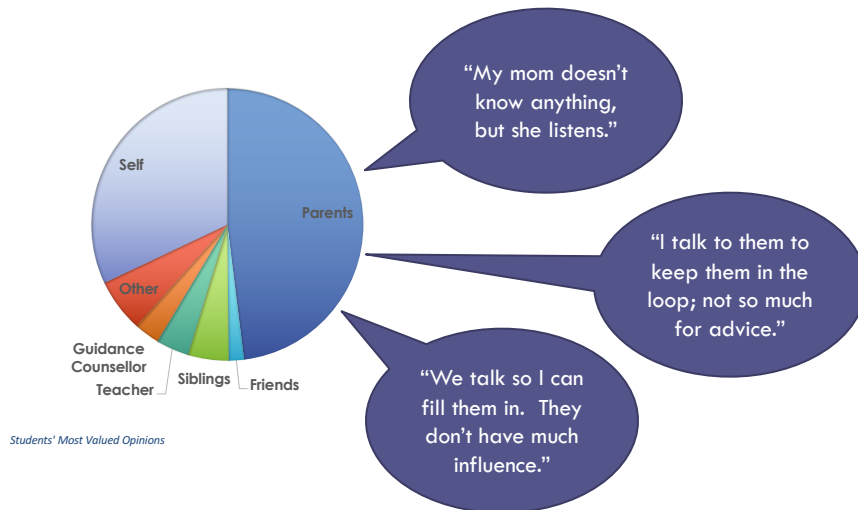
Institutions considered by respondents were **constrained** first by location, then program offerings, and third by perceived cost followed closely by knowing someone there and reputation. Financial aid was considered by a shocking <5% of respondents.



## Later Findings: Parental Constraints

- Parents have an **\*extremely\*** investment-oriented mindset.
- Parents have a very strong sense of childrens' likely level of achievement.
- Will invest heavily if returns seen to be high, otherwise prepared to "make do"

## Findings: Conversations With Individuals



## Findings: Losing interested applicants

- In a surprising number of cases, exposure to marketing activities actively discouraged students from attending. This extends to site visits, high school presentations, email correspondence, and open houses
- THIS GOES TRIPLE FOR WEBSITES.

"People have come our school. And the weak presentations – there were many – eliminated them right away."

"[Institution X's] open house was so bad that I've decided not to be a nurse."

"[Institution X] was my top choice, but .... The lecture halls were dark and dingy. It looks like a prison cell. Overall, it was a bad atmosphere."



## International Findings

- Choice process is highly contingent on local processes, specifically:
  - ▣ Streaming system in HS
  - ▣ Examination system in HS
  - ▣ Structure of HE system
  - ▣ Perceptions of quality in PSE system
  - ▣ Geography
  - ▣ Timing

## Discussion

### Contact:

- Email: [ausher@higheredstrategy.com](mailto:ausher@higheredstrategy.com)
- Twitter: @alexusherHESA
- Daily blog, One Thought To Start Your Day
  - ▣ [www.higheredstrategy.com/blog](http://www.higheredstrategy.com/blog)

Thank you!