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We are "Brown Money Bags":
Thoughts of Education and Learning among Indian International Students
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Introduction

This study focuses on international Indian students attending a college in Vancouver, Canada. Through this research, I will examine the experiential accounts of the students living abroad while situating their academic decision-making in a western Canadian context.

My intention is for this article to contribute to the understanding of student learning for this population. It provides useful knowledge for educators about their rapidly changing student demographic, and reasons to adapt modes of teaching to better serve both instructors and students. It will also assist post-secondary institutions to deploy their resources more effectively to enhance student experience and facilitate academic success.

Over the last decade increasing numbers of international students have enrolled in colleges and universities in western countries such as Australia, Canada and the United States (Lee, Ko & Johnstone, 2020; Zhou & Zhang, 2014). International student enrollment has led to a rapid "internationalization" of many institutions (Bond, 2019; Brooks & Waters, 2011) which has shifted institutional culture. Institutions which once saw international students as "an interesting component" now see them as a central element in post-secondary education and finance (Klafter, 2018; Rumbly, Altback, & Reisberg, 2012).

India is one of most significant sources of international students, and it has been frequently prioritized in the strategic plans of many higher education policies of many host countries (Hercog & Va De Laar, 2017). According to the Canadian Bureau for International Education (2018), Indian students have represented over 30% of all international students since 2017, the most significant demographic in Canada. The site for this research is one of the largest colleges in British Columbia with almost 23,000 registered students. During the 2013/2014 academic year, the academic institution had enrolled 1,309 international students and 71 of these students came from India. In 2019/2020 the number of international students has rose to 6,526, with 3,509 of international students from India. This is an increase of over 500% in enrollment of international students, and over a 5,000% enrollment increase in of Indian international students over a period of seven years. Currently, Indian international students account for over half of the international student enrollment at the college.

Given these numbers, it is not surprising that international students have altered the learning environment of colleges and universities at socio-cultural levels. In spite of this change, few studies have focused on the experiences of the international student themselves (McCrohon & Nyland, 2018; Zhao, Kuh & Carini, 2016; Zhou & Zhang, 2016). Faculty and staff who are employed at colleges and universities with high levels of international enrollment have an obvious need to understand their students. It is vital to the success of both the institutions and the students themselves to understand the challenges of students as they transition into a new culture and a new learning environment (Freeman & Li, 2019).

Gualee (2018) argued that education systems must adapt and function more effectively in order to accommodate the large number of students from different cultures. This research was conducted specifically to provide Indian international students an avenue to communicate their complex processes of meaning-making and self-identity in their migration across national and institutional borders.

A review of the extant literature on this subject and justification of the research method used to generate knowledge serve as an entry to the analysis and development of the key arguments and conclusions which concern the experiences of Indian international students within a western context. Research on the international student experience is limited in academic literature, and much of that simplifies the diverse experiential narratives of international students.

The foundation of this article is based upon 27 Indian international student interviews. From the student transcript analysis, the three most frequently occurring coded themes were: the agents who helped to facilitate the process of students arriving into Canada; problems with course registration; and students' experiences of working in Canada.

The Undifferentiated Indian International Student

As mentioned, the academic research on international students is sparse. Gradually, there has been a shift in the literature from large-scale quantitative studies to more qualitative approaches, shifting the focus from the structure of the institution to that of the individual (Page & Chahboun, 2019). Nonetheless, international students are essentially othered. In spite of their importance to education as an institution, very little research has been conducted from the students' perspectives (Lee et al., 2020).

The increased numbers of international students can be explained by two main principles: cosmopolitanism and neoliberalism (Arkoudis, Dollinger, Baik & Patience, 2019). The cosmopolitan rationale for academic research is derived from the recruitment needs of higher education institutions asserting that a more international campus will promote cross-cultural skills (Page & Chahboun, 2019). The ideal of cosmopolitanism is a respect of cultural differences; wherein people value culture, and thus, diverse culture has significance (Appiah, 2006). International students invest considerable resources to attain a transnational perspective and a cosmopolitan education, as well as a degree from a reputable institution (Gribble, 2014). Thus, international students pursue global education to prepare themselves for success in the knowledge society. Arkoudis, Dollinger, Baik & Patience (2018) argue that the neoliberal and the cosmopolitan approaches to studying international education are not mutually exclusive but rather complement one another. However, I find that there is peril in presupposing neoliberal and cosmopolitan approaches existing in a mutually beneficial iterative cycle. Specifically, assuming a symbiotic relationship between cosmopolitan and neoliberal approaches to education is reductive, when the gatekeepers to western international education are not those who pursue international education, (i.e. not the international students themselves); but rather the administrators within both academia and governmental institutions who may not necessarily be as concerned with accessing greater cultural knowledge as they may be with their neoliberal agendas.

Under the neo-liberal rationale, governmental financial support for public education has decreased (Mathews & Sidhu, 2005). This has resulted in a reduction of funding for academic institutions, which has lead academic establishments to seek other alternative revenue streams. Consequently, the number of international students at educational institutions has increased, because higher international student fees are used to make up the deficient for funding shortages (Zhang & Zhou, 2014). For example, in 2018/2019 British Columbia universities and colleges posted a record $340 million dollar surplus attributed to international students, more than double the recorded $144 million from 2015/2016 (Olsen, 2019). Canada-wide, international students accounted for $21.6 billion of Canada's GDP (Carr, 2019).

The decrease in state financial support for education has resulted in a paradigm shift from educational institutions treating international students as individuals to instruct, to international students as a group of homogeneous economic agents (Gaby, 2021; Hamilton, 2018). International students are identified as a market which colleges and universities must extract new sources of revenue (Jin & Schneider, 2019). Countries such as Australia, Canada, the United States and United Kingdom actively recruit international students for economic reasons, charging international fees that are often three to four times domestic tuition fees (Page & Chahboun, 2019). Because of the exorbitant fees they must pay, international students are assumed to come from the emerging middle class, arriving with sufficient funds to pay for their education (Larmer, 2017), and to be recipients of the host countries' generosity (Lee et al., 2020).

However, these assumptions and not based upon actual interactions with the students or knowledge of their experiences (Page & Chahboun, 2019). The majority of academic studies focus on factors such as language proficiency and academic expectations from a faculty perspective (e.g. Cao, Li, Jiang, & Bai, 2014; Jin & Schneider, 2019), rather than the experiences of students. Many scholars argue that academic research needs to move from international students' perceived language and literacy deficits to their personal experiences, and the institutional deficits these may highlight (Freeman & Li, 2019). Montgomery (2010) has argued that there needs to be a methodological shift from large-scale quantitative studies to qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews and ethnography, which will focus on the experiences of the students themselves. Student voices can provide "insights into how students construct new identities in global contexts where assumptions from others regarding their skills and knowledge may have already been culturally determined" (Freeman & Li, 2019: 22). A focus on the social realities that the students create for themselves changes them from passive subjects to social actors (Yang, 2018; Page, 2019).

Many of the qualitative studies of international students to date have consisted of small sample sizes with a diverse student population. For example, Freeman & Li (2019) conducted a study based upon six interviews with international students from various countries. They found commonalities among the international student experience, such as feelings of isolation in classrooms, fear when communicating with domestic students, and insecurity about their intercultural competence. However, these experiences are not necessarily broadly determined. While this general scholarship is important, it leads to the reduction of the international student experience into a single homogeneous entity. In addition, the diversity of these small sample groups makes any generalization based on cross-comparisons or consistencies difficult.

The challenges that students face are related to the inherent conflicts between different national and institutional cultures (Eland & Thomas, 2013). There has been a strong call among scholars to engage in qualitative research "to explore more information about the variation in engagement among international students from different countries and regions" (Wang & Brckalorenz, 2017: 24). Such approaches may also help to illuminate how students' diversity provides a site for the mutual exchange of primary experience that arises from differences in religion, politics, and sociocultural practices in different countries (Ramachandran, 2011). In turn, understanding international students allows educators to more effectively capitalize on the culturally diverse strengths and experiences that the students bring (Gualee, 2018).

International student transnational movement and mobility have become important global phenomena (Madge, Raghuram & Noxolo, 2014), that raise critical questions regarding the larger role that educational institutions play in the students' integration. Munck (2010) argues that new geographical locations will subvert current structures and strategies. This in turn leads to the formal learning environment and the individual determining each other in an iterative process of knowing and learning (Wolff-Michael & Jornet, 2014). Student demographics have shifted the learning environment, which must adapt to accommodate students from different socio-cultural backgrounds. Higher education institutions often group all international students together as a single entity; therefore ignoring their various backgrounds, language skills, knowledge, motivations and goals (Soiferman, 2020). For example, Netierman et a. (2021) found that in their analysis of participants, ranging from 23 different countries, there was considerable variation in the decision making of international students. Consequently, educational institutions have been slow to adapt to these changes. Failure of the academic institutions to meet the needs of the new demographic of students creates difficulty in both student achievement and faculty success.

Research Methods

The research this article is based on adopted a qualitative, interpretivist approach to understanding the educational experience of the international Indian student. An interpretivist approach hypothesizes that social actors are competent, but not infallible, interpreters of their experience. Indeed, Michal Lynch (2000) on reflexivity argues that interpreting is a general skill practiced by everyday actors living in and having to negotiate complex societies. This approach allows for the gathering of rich data on experiences and interpretation and this creates a detailed image of the contextual world of the Indian international student.

All interviews were transcribed verbatim. Pseudonyms were used in the final transcripts to preserve anonymity. The transcripts were imported into NVivo for analysis and to establish a coding framework. A coding framework using thematic analysis was developed based upon multiple readings of the transcripts. The purpose of thematic coding is to identify themes and categories that emerge from the data through readings of the transcripts (Burnard et al., 2008: 430). The transcripts were analysed for both the frequency of the themes and their conversational context. As codes were generated, transcripts were read multiple times by me, the principal investigator, and the research assistant, Christy Leung.

This research project is guided by three main open-ended questions:

4

1. To what extent does the students' narrative of attending a Western educational institute align with the envisioned notion of going 'abroad'?
2. How do students navigate the formation of identity with academic consumption?
3. What challenges and issues do international Indian students encounter while studying in the West?

Interviews were conducted, from 2017 to mid-2018, with 27 Indian international students in their first or second year of full-time college enrollment. The participants were recruited through departmental/college-wide emails, posters, and by a research assistant. The student participants interviewed were selected from a diverse range of educational disciplines, so that no more than three students in any one discipline were selected to participate in the research project. The interviews were qualitative with semi-structured and open-ended questions varying in length from one hour to two and a half hours. All interviews were conducted on campus in either a faculty office or an unoccupied classroom. Situating myself within the research project, I am a South Asian Sikh male. I shared an ethnic identity and national origin with the Indian international students, which mitigated the power asymmetries with myself as an academic and the interview participants as students.

I. Participant Interview List

	Name	Gender	Age	Discipline	Year
1	Charmanjit	Male	19	Computer Science	second
2	Akashdeep	Male	20	Kinesiology	second
3	Hrishikesh	Male	23	Computer Science	second
4	Gurjot	Male	19	Computer Science	first
5	Baljit	Male	20	Physics	first
6	Harsavek	Male	19	Anthropology	first
7	Kirin	Male	26	Post Diploma – Business Administration	second
8	Shagun	Female	18	Health Sciences	first
9	Surjot	Female	19	Computer Science	first
10	Anmol	Female	19	General Arts	first
11	Jagdeep	Female	20	Health Sciences	second
12	Mehtab	Male	22	Economics	second
13	Jagmeet	Male	19	Biology	first
14	Harjinder	Female	23	General Sciences	first

	Name	Gender	Age	Discipline	Year
15	Jaswant	Male	19	Chemistry	first
16	Japjot	Male	19	General Sciences	second
17	Mandeep	Female	22	General Arts	first
18	Gursewak	Male	18	Psychology	first
19	Ranvir	Male	25	Business Administration	second
20	Anooj	Male	25	Post Diploma – marketing management	second
21	Gaganpreet	Male	19	Health Sciences	First
22	Navjot	Female	21	Marketing Management	second
23	Pardeep	Female	22	Post Diploma - Business Administration	first
24	Sreedhu	Male	22	Economics	first
25	Sukminpreet	Female	19	General Biology	second
26	Sandeep	Female	25	Post Diploma – Preparatory Nursing	second
27	Kawal	Female	19	General Sciences	second

This article is guided by the three most prevalent codes that occurred through the thematic analysis of the student transcripts. The purpose of thematic coding is to identify key terms and phrases through close readings of the transcripts, and to relate them to broader conceptual themes and categories. From the analysis of the transcripts of the Indian international students the three most prominent themes were: agents who assisted the process of students arriving into Canada; the issues with course registration; and students' experiences of employment in Canada.

Analysis: Agents

All participants stated that Indian international students struggle with the process of obtaining their student visas and acceptance into a higher educational institution in the west. All of the 27 participants, except one, enlisted the aid of an agent in order to select both a post-secondary institute and an educational program. The term "agent" is used in India to refer to visa consultants. Agents assisted students in gaining admittance into the academic institutions and obtaining the necessary study permits. The exception to this, who had not sought the aid of an agent, was a mature 26-year-old student, Kirin, who was six years older than the average interviewee age of 21 years. Furthermore, prior to coming to Canada, Kirin completed an undergraduate degree in computer science and worked as a computer programmer for several years. Thus, both Kirin's education and his experience provided him with practical and technological knowledge far above that of the average Indian student seeking higher Canadian education at the college. Kirin acknowledged that even though applying to a Canadian college

was not difficult for him, the application process would be daunting for most Indians, particularly, the process of applying for a western student visa.

Unsurprisingly, 26 of the 27 participants stated that the process of obtaining admittance into Western post-secondary institutions is stressful. It is common for potential students seeking education abroad from India to obtain guidance from agents. Due to the growing demand of Indians seeking admission into Western colleges and universities, there has been a surge of new agencies opening in India in the last decade. I witnessed the phenomenon of foreign education agency expansion myself during my visits to India in 2013 and 2017. I was surprised by the inescapable number of advertisements for foreign Western education, and the long queues of potential international students at the ILETS testing centers. Furthermore, many agents target foreign education in Canada specifically. Immigration from India to Canada began to increase in 2012 due to changes in Canada's permanent residency policy. These changes have made it less difficult for foreign students coming to Canada to obtain a work permit after they complete a two year academic program, as an interviewee stated:

> People want to be an international student in a country where they can get a visa easily. So even for if you want to continue studying or if you want to work after studying in a particular country, it's a lot easier here than any other country. Because other countries, maybe they will give you a student visa, but they won't give you a work permit to study, to work after doing that study, I think. If you are done with that study, you won't be able to get any experience by working there. Maybe that would be the factor, and there is a lot of craze there, as I told you, about Canada (Charmanjit, Computer Science).

Echoing Charmanjit's concern about the visa process was also expressed by 24 of the 27 interviewees, who communicated that the visa application process was difficult for them because they either did not have access to the technology required (i.e. a suitable computer with a high-speed internet connection) or they were afraid that they would make a mistake which they thought may void either their education visa or their post-secondary education application. Consequently, parents often insisted that their children use agents to apply to a western post-secondary institution.

The aim of both the parents and the students was for the students to go abroad to a Western country where permanent residence could be obtained, in most cases, the specific educational program itself did not matter; as education was regarded essentially a vehicle to entry, and ultimately, residency into the west.

> We [parents] just want our kid to be, you know, abroad, that's it. They don't even ask how, what, where, will they get PR [permanent residence] from this course, is this course beneficial for them, they don't even ask anything, not even the career opportunities, or any job placement, they don't even ask anything… He's [the agent] stupid. He didn't tell me anything. He just said okay. It near to your house. You'll have nursing program and all that, but when I came here, it was really opposite to whatever he said … He just said it's in Vancouver, near to your sister's house. He didn't even tell me that it's going to take 1-1/2 hours and that it's really far away. I said okay, and I applied and got admission and came here. After coming here, I realized.

(Cheema, Post-Diploma Nursing).

This experience reflects the commodification of the Indian international student; agents are business people less concerned with education than earning high profits. Most agents were not knowledgeable concerning Canada, and several participants stated that they had doubts about whether the agents had ever been to Canada, or even travelled out of India. 19 of the 27 participants interviewed wished to live in Surrey, a city approximately 34 kilometres from Vancouver. The students chose Surrey as a desired place of residence for three reasons. First, Surrey has the highest concentration of Indians in the Greater Vancouver area. Hence, the students felt that they would be able to garner more support in that region. Second, housing is cheaper in Surrey than in Vancouver; therefore, the cost of rent would be significantly less than Vancouver. Last, 13 of the 27 interviewed participants had extended family living in Surrey. 11 of the 13 students with extended family stated that agents exaggerated the proximity of the college to the location where their extended family resided. In most cases the agents failed to mention the distance from the college to the students' desired residence.

When arriving in Canada, the participants expressed that the long distance between college and residence was particularly frustrating because there were other post-secondary educational institutions much closer to their residence:

> Even he [the agent] didn't tell me, like, other opportunities. Because most of the agents, they have tie-ups with some of the colleges, so they get commission out of it.
> (Sukminpreet, General Biology).

In circumstances where the agents promised some support to the student once he or she was aboard, these promises were often not honored.

> Most of the agents, like IDP and all others, they just help people over there, just in India. When we come here if we have any problem and we call them, they don't take our call. So that's a problem with IDP and other agents.
> (Pardeep, Post-Diploma Business Administration).

Consequently, upon arriving in Canada the Indian students often felt isolated and confused within a foreign education system that they did not understand. In the majority of cases, the agents, due to either not understanding the western educational system or not being concerned for the students once they had left India, neither offered support to the Indian students, nor any guidance towards the types of educational programs that they should enroll in. This greatly contrasts with the experiences and expectations of domestic students, where the cultural importance of individual choice is socialized at a young age. For example, most domestic students in the west need to register for high school electives, while in India most high schools have fixed rosters with often minimal, if any, elective courses. Such cultural educational practices foster expectations for the students as to the support expected from a higher education institution. This suggests cultural and economic barriers to understanding. Consequently, it follows that support and services need to be improved to address the commodification of the higher education systems.

Registration

In 16 of the 27 Indian international student interviews, participants expressed concern and frustration with college registration. Agents did not communicate to students that registration, prior to attendance, was a requirement for the college. Consequently, students often arrived in Canada not aware that they needed to register for courses prior to the beginning of the semester. This may be because, in many cases, agents were themselves not aware of the registration process for classes. This also suggests a consequence of a commodified higher education system, where all students are regarded as interchangeable products, irrespective of their individual socio-cultural needs.

> Because I got an e-mail from here [the college] to register for courses. Then I asked [the agent] what, what should I do, and he had no idea about that.
> (Harjinder, General Sciences)

In some cases where agents were aware of the course registration procedure, they did not understand that registration was mandatory. Some agents assumed that the college would register students when they arrived to campus in Canada, transferring the responsibility of registration onto the college to expedite the agents' processing time and increasing the agents' commission. Consequently, according to the participants, registration was viewed by the agents as an optional task which could be completed later by the college, which was not easily accomplished when the students arrived, as a participant discusses below.

> He [the agent] was good but he was not aware about the structure of education here …
> Yeah, he said it's okay, you don't want to register, it will be okay, it will be fine when you reach [Canada].
> (Anooj, Post-Diploma Marketing Management).

The western model of registration was unknown to the participants, because in India the majority of post-secondary institutions do not have course registration for programs.

> In India, you do not register for subjects. You sign up, and then okay, you have a subject block and not like this elective stuff. They just give the courses to you. It is so different here. (Kawal, General Sciences).

Therefore, because registration does not exist for Indian students in their own home country, it is not a task students expect to address when applying to a western, post-secondary institution. This cultural misunderstanding, based upon a lack of knowledge about Indian educational contexts, has led to educational difficulties in higher education. Although the Canadian college sent emails with reminders and instructions on how to register for courses, most of the participants either relied upon their agents for registration or had limited access to the internet. In the majority of cases, the emails were sent to the agent on behalf of the student. Often the agents did not communicate the registration information to their clients so the students were not aware of the registration issue until they arrived to Canada.

Additionally, many of the Indian students lacked the technological means to navigate in the online environment. For example, a participant stated that she thought the internet was just

"Facebook and WhatsApp" before coming to Canada. Geographically, 21 of the 27 interviewees came from rural farming areas, where the participants often lacked the infrastructure necessary for online registration. This made the students dependent upon agents to complete their online application process.

> My village is probably close to 1,000 people … There was broadband but it costs too much compared to here … there is electricity, but it's not like 24-hour service. Basically, there are phone plans, not Wi-Fi much, but now, like, two or three houses, they have Wi-Fi connection, but the connectivity is not very good. (Jagdeep, Biology)

Consequently, the lack of support from agents and the participants' ignorance of the registration process entailed that the majority of the participants encountered a great deal of frustration on arriving.

> …the fault of an agent actually. He didn't tell me anything regarding the registration process and all these kinds of stuff, because I was new to a country, I have no idea about any course, any education system so I ended up getting like two courses, or four credits. I have no idea about credit also because in India you are getting courses from college. (Surjot, General Arts)

A clear majority, 16 of the 27 students reported arriving at college without having registered for any courses. Compounding the registration issue, the Indian students often arrived only a few days before the start of the semester. Their last minute arrival is due to the added expense of living in a western city as compared to India. By arriving close to the beginning of the semester, students saved one to two months' rent in Canada. But arriving only a few days before the semester often meant that, if the Indian students had not registered for classes, there would be very few course places available.

> And then that guy [college registrar staff] told me like there are no such [science based] courses left right now, seats are full. I said so what can I do? Which courses I am going to study then, this semester? He said, there are no such seats, man, all seats are full. At that time, actually what I felt was, it wasn't my fault. (Jaswant, Chemistry)

The Indian international students were seeking a full course load, not because it was necessarily a requirement for their study permit, but rather, because international students who are registered in full-time education are able to obtain a Canadian work permit, which allows them to work for a maximum of twenty hours a week, as long as they fulfill the criteria of being enrolled in full-time education for two of three semesters per academic year. Canadian international students are legally allowed to work 20 hours per week if they fulfill their academic course requirements. Because international students must be enrolled in full-time education, to meet the restrictions on their study permit to work part-time, the Indian international students would register for any available courses in order to keep their legal status and work permit. Often this led to the participants enrolling in classes where they either had no interest or lacked the academic background to be successful in the new course.

…the college guys [staff] ended up like getting me two hard courses which I have never studied back in my life, whole life. I don't know about Aboriginal studies, what is it, right? I said what is aboriginal? There's no such a thing in India, like that.

Interviewer: How did you do in the indigenous class?

I failed.
(Baljit, physics)

The possible consequences of international students failing courses due to registering in classes that they are ill prepared for extends beyond success in a single course; student development and satisfaction with the higher education institution is also negatively affected. A further registration related issue for students was the low availability of courses and the required pre-requisites. For instance, all participants expressed frustration about the registration of second-year courses. Second-year courses are dependent upon prerequisite courses that were often not available.

And if you are not getting that course you won't be able to get other courses or you will be a part-time student. You won't get even in one course if you are done with electives. So, for international student, we have a particular study permit, is only 2 years study permit, so it is kind of difficult for that.
(Sukminpreet, General Biology).

Unlike domestic students whose residency in Canada is not course dependent, international students must enroll in courses to remain eligible to reside and work in Canada. Several Indian students said that they felt that the college did not understand the importance of their gaining admittance into courses, and how crucial this was in comparison to domestic students:

Because the domestic students can do a lot of stuff, they could do a part-time thing, or increase their job or work time if they are not getting courses. They have that comfort zone, but for the international students who have a limited period of temporary residence here, so they need to be doing it as strictly as possible.
(Anmol, General Arts)

Seven of the participants stated that while they were in India they had family or friends in Canada who had communicated the Canadian registration process to them. Additionally, as the new students became accustomed to western education, they would explain the process of class registration back to the Indian students who were coming to Canada. Four participants indicated that, in Canada, they had registered friends who were in India, who had recently been admitted to the college.

My friends are coming to the college now, I know what courses they need and I register for them, or if we have any friend over here, they register for us.
(Mehtab, Economics)

Employment

It is a commonly held assumption that international students arrive to their host countries with sufficient funds to pay for their education (Larner, 2017). Since educational institutions use international students as a revenue stream and media often depicts international students as "Cash Cows" (McCrohon & Nyland, 2018), many educational faculty and staff assume that most international students are wealthy. However, this assumption proves false in the case of the participants in this study, given that 22 of the 27 participants came from rural backgrounds in India with modest family incomes. In most Western countries, (e.g. Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United States, United Kingdom), university and college international fees are not regulated, but instead the institutions themselves determine the international student fees. Therefore, in the case of the participants, their families were not able to pay the high international student fees at a university and opted for the lower college tuition. The international student demographic may, in some cases, be different in larger educational institutions; nonetheless, at the college where I conducted the interviews, the students do not share the socio-economic backgrounds of students attending larger universities.

This discrepancy is likely due to the differences in tuition costs of a college compared to a large university. For example, international student fees for a full-time general arts program at the University of British Columbia is $39,573.60 ($1319.12 per credit) annually. At most colleges in British Columbia, the tuition cost for comparative general arts program is approximately $18,000 per year ($600 per credit), i.e. less than 50% of the tuition cost of a university. Consequently, international students from modest economic backgrounds are unlikely to select larger universities for education abroad. My research findings support that the Indian international students at the college are under immense personal and financial strain. The participants communicated that if they were not employed it would be impossible for them to attend post-secondary education in Canada.

All the participants I interviewed were employed part-time. 21 of the 27 participants, worked in the hospitality industry, most commonly in fast-food franchises such as A&W, McDonalds, Tim Horton's and Wendy's. The participants stated that it was necessary for them to work in Canada due to the high tuition costs.

> Every international Indian student is having that problem. They work a lot because they have to pay their fees. You know one guy who is working with me at the pizza restaurant [name removed]. He only sleeps for four hours in a day.
> (Gaganpreet, Health Sciences)

To pay for their high tuition the students need to work more than the legally restricted 20 hours. In order to earn sufficient funds to pay for education, the Indian students found work "under the table" for "cash money." It is difficult to assess how many students in my sample group worked above the legal 20 hours or the number of hours that those students worked.

Significantly, once the voice recorder was turned off, several participants communicated their long work hours after the interview. Given the sensitive nature of working beyond the legally sanctioned hours, the participants did not want to discuss their working hours for fear of repercussions, such as deportation, for violating their work permit. For example, Jobandeep

Sandhu, a 22 year-old international student from Punjab, was arrested on December 23 2017 in Ontario for working above his permitted hours during a routine traffic-stop while truck-driving (Hill, 2019) and deported (Imam, 2019). Jobandeep had no criminal record; however, a review of his driver's logbook revealed that he had exceeded the maximum 20 hours per week that an international student is permitted to work.

Regardless of these fears, eight of the students whom I interviewed acknowledged that most Indian international students that they were acquainted with work long hours exceeding the maximum legal 20 hours a week restricted by their study permit. Of those eight students, only four agreed to be interviewed in an informal talk with the voice recorder present. When I asked for clarification as to how many students might be working above the 20 hour student work permit limit, the participants responded that approximately 70% to 80%. Thus, it seems that the majority of Indian international students at the college were working long hours, which impacted their academic performance.

> And if I talk about Indian students, they work so much, like 50 hours a week. And of course, if you work 50 hours, you won't get time to study at all.
> (Gursewak, General Arts)

Many students spoke to the challenges in attempting to work long hours while sustaining grades.

> People are getting work for hours and hours on shifts, they are working day and night. Then they are coming directly from their work to school. How they can concentrate in the class? How they can get good marks in a course after working so long?
> (Sandeep, Post-Diploma Nursing Program)

> I go to college for three days, then I have to work … I get out of college at 12:30, then I have to go to work at 2:30, and then I have to work till 11 p.m., and another day, I have to start again from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m., like it's working, working, working...
> (Jagmeet, Chemistry)

Overwhelmingly, 24 of the 27 participants expressed that they found their jobs very stressful. Not only were the working environments difficult, additionally, the students were often treated poorly by their employers:

> When I tell my boss one time, I cannot work, I have exam next day, he say if you don't work then I will give my job to someone else. So, what can I do?
> (Mandeep, General Arts)

As previously mentioned, the participants often had long commutes from the college to their homes. Compounding this, the Indian students also commuted daily to their workplace. Working long hours to pay high tuition and living costs meant that participants suffered considerably both in terms of their academic performance but also their identity within Canada. In such a way, the students were forced into a time-poverty; constrained between college, employment, home life, and commuting between the three.

It's so difficult to manage that, 20 hours of class and they'll take, like, one and a half travelling each day or more, and travelling to work, right, so four hours will be gone for that in every day and so if it will be 16 hours for travel, and 20 hours class so it's 36 and again 40 hours of job so it's 76 hours, right?
(Navjot, Biology).

Several students communicated that they felt as if the college and employers treated them merely as "brown money bags" or economic agents. Thus, Indian students believed that their only purpose in Canada was to be financially exploited. For the employers, the students served the informal neo-liberal purpose of providing inexpensive migrant labor.

Conclusion

In this article, I have attempted to explore the Indian students' experiences of higher education in Canada. This research was guided by the need to understand the experiences of a specific demographic of international students. Much of the academic literature on international education focuses on administration and faculty, and thus, overlooks the experiences of international students, despite them being the fastest growing migrant group in Canada (Lee & Ko, 2020), and the recipients of international education. I chose Indian international students for the participant group specifically because they are the largest demographic of international students both in Canada, and at the college where I conducted the research.

Through qualitative interviews of 27 Indian international students in a western educational context, my aim was to understand the experiences of Indian students in Canada. Education research suggests that the interpretation styles of students is culturally situated (Rambla & Valiente, 2008) and without a grounded understanding of student population it is difficult for institutions to develop curriculum and support the new demographic shifts that are occurring. Furthermore, the faculty is often ignorant of the challenges facing international students.

Although cosmopolitan motivations should underpin international education creating conditions for globally oriented subjectivities (Matthews & Sidhu, 2005), the neo-liberal market-based drive ultimately is the essential force for the increased numbers of international students. Thus, the cosmopolitanism discourse of universality is superseded by the practical purpose of discovering increased revenue streams due to decreased educational funding. Treating international students as economic commodities has led to a disjuncture between the students' experiences and the understanding of faculty and staff. The neo-liberal conceptualizing of the Indian international students has an effect on the formation of the students forging an identity in the west, outside of their country of origin, and in many cases away from their families.

The Indian international students communicated that they struggled with agents, registration and balancing employment with academic needs. Essentially, this makes the experiences of the Indian international students more akin to labor migrants, rather than globally cosmopolitan oriented students as often colleges and universities depict. Agents treat students as commodities, and once their services are rendered and the student has left India, agents are usually not concerned with the student's well-being. Often, this may lead to issues with registration where Indian students are in courses that they have either little background knowledge of or little

interest in. The Indian students also came from an educational environment where courses are not selected, but rather, provided to them once they enroll in a program. Having to select courses further complicated how the students navigated the western education system. Lastly, the majority of Indian international students work long hours in order to pay high tuition fees and living costs, which in turn impacts their academic performance. My findings go against the common view that international students come to host countries with enough funds to be self-sufficient.

Ultimately, it is my hope that this research may contribute to the enhancement of student learning as it attempts to examine the motivations of Indian international students. Further research examining the adoption of various strategies that international students may use in order to function and adapt in their host society may help to make more meaningful intercultural engagement with the faculty and other students. Understanding the international student experience better may aid higher educational institutions to position more effectively resources in facilitating success for their students.

The findings from this research were used to create a workshop on Indian international students at the college. Faculty and staff were encouraged to attend the talk in order to learn more about their Indian international students. A video component of the research was also incorporated into the workshop to more effectively present the voices of the Indian international students as they spoke about their particular challenges. A further article is in process, which examines the effectiveness of communicating the international student experience to faculty based upon the workshops situated in this research project.

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