How do international students understand the concept of "integration", and how does this relate to their experiences settling into life in a host country?

1. Introduction

The higher education system has become increasingly internationalized in the last few decades, with the number of foreign students in tertiary education worldwide rising from 2 million in 1998 to 5.3 million in 2017 (OECD, 2019, p. 229). This growth has been driven by rising student demand and intensifying competition among nations to attract international students to help meet their economic goals (Kwak & Kim, 2019, p. 4). Student mobility has intensified due to budget cuts to the higher education sector in many high-income countries following the financial recession of 2008, and due to demand from the growing middle classes in emerging countries such as China and India (Choudaha, 2017). Postsecondary institutions in Canada and worldwide have come to rely on international students to boost enrolment and revenue (Royal Bank of Canada, 2020).

Canada is one of the top five destination countries for international students (International Institute of Education, 2019). Canada is actively promoting itself as a destination of choice for overseas study, especially to students from India, China, Vietnam and the Philippines.[1] The number of study permit holders in Canada was 642,480 in 2019, an 82 percent increase since 2015 (Canadian Citizenship & Immigration Resource Center, 2020). Foreign students pay nearly four times more for tuition than domestic students in Canada.[2] Prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 coronavirus, international students were contributing $22 billion to the Canadian economy and supporting around 200,000 jobs (CIC News, 2020). In British Columbia (BC), they were providing almost half of universities' tuition fee revenue while comprising one fifth of university enrolment (BC Federation of Students, 2019, p. 7). Due to travel restrictions in response to COVID-19, the number of students entering Canada on study permits fell 45 percent in March 2020 compared to a year earlier (Royal Bank of Canada, 2020). The impact of the pandemic is threatening the financial viability of educational institutions, with universities warning of a sizeable drop in income due to lower domestic and international student enrolment (The Globe and Mail, 2020). In response, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) announced in May 2020 that online courses will count towards international students' eligibility for Post Graduate Work Permits, seeking to ensure that Canada continues to remain attractive to foreign students (CIC News, 2020).

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[1] India, China, Vietnam and the Philippines are the target nations for the IRCC's Student Direct Stream (SDS) study permit service. This fast track service is explicitly created to complement the Express Entry immigration system, enabling students to progress smoothly to permanent residence or Canadian citizenship after completing their studies should they wish (IRCC 2018).

[2] Average annual tuition fees for full time international undergraduates in Canada were CAD $27,159 for 2018/2019, compared to an average of $6,838 for domestic students (Statistics Canada 2018).

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International students are considered "ideal" candidates for permanent residency because of their Canadian educational qualifications, in-demand labour skills and official language proficiency (Government of Canada, 2019a). However, foreign students are not officially classed as immigrants, and therefore are not eligible for integration settlement services funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (Government of Canada, 2019b). Nonetheless, their integration is a relevant discussion, especially as recruiting foreign students is an explicit part of Canada's immigrant-fuelled economic growth strategy (Royal Bank of Canada, 2020). Many foreign students transition to become permanent residents; 36 percent of Express Entry invitations to apply for permanent residency issued by IRCC in 2017 were to former international students (Polestar Immigration Research, 2019). But despite being viewed as potentially "ideal" immigrants, international students typically experience the same vulnerabilities as temporary immigrants (Clibborn, 2018, p. 2), including financial hardship (Sherry, Thomas, & Chui, 2010; Calder, et al., 2016, p. 109), risk of labour exploitation (Nyland, et al., 2009; Clibborn, 2018) and lack of access to safe housing (A. Sayed, personal communication, April 16, 2020).

While international students as a group are often studied, there is comparatively little literature on their integration into Canada[3]—and even less on Indian international students in Canada. This is surprising given the high number of international students transitioning to permanent residency and that India is now the largest source country of foreign students to the country.[4] It is important to understand newcomers' experiences adapting to life in host nations as their integration is a welfare issue that also has implications for receiving societies.[5] Therefore, my study investigates what "integration" means according to current and former international students who studied at Canadian postsecondary institutions, building upon existing studies and addressing some gaps in the literature. More specifically, it explores how a sample of students from India have experienced adjusting to life in Canada during and after their studies. The first aim is to understand integration from the point of view of immigrants themselves, whose voices are often missing from the literature. The second objective is to compare how their understandings of integration differ from current conceptualizations and integration measurement frameworks.

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3 There is a small literature on students' transition to become post-graduate workers and permanent residents in Canada (Arthur & Flynn, 2011; Dam, Chan, & Wayland, 2018), but the literature is largely silent on their status as workers. It is unknown how many international students participate in the local informal labour market (Sondhi, 2019, p. 163), although local media and informants in BC's Lower Mainland suggest some are working full time under-the-table to finance their studies, with some Indian students sending money overseas to their parents (Vancouver Sun, 2018; A. Sayed, personal communication, April 16, 2020).

4 In 2019, 219,855 students with Indian citizenship held a study permit for Canada (BC Council for International Education, 2020).

5 Australia spent a decade rebuilding its reputation following high profile racial attacks and workforce exploitation of Indian international students (Nyland et al., 2009; Clibborn, 2018), which led the Indian government issued a travel warning for students planning to study in Australia. This created a major drop in Australia's international enrolment, with income from foreign students falling from $17 billion AUS in 2009 to $14.5 billion AUS in 2012 (British Columbia Federation of Students, 2019, p.10).

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2. Theories of integration

"Integration" can be described as "the process of settlement, interaction with the host society, and social change that follows immigration" (Penninx & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2016, p. 11). There is no unanimous agreement on what "integration" means, or on how the process of settlement and adjustment into a new country works. The theories of integration fall largely into four main camps: assimilation, segmented assimilation, multicultural theory, and—in recent years—super-diversity. The dominant theory varies in different countries and regions; assimilation and segmented assimilation are most prevalent in the US, whereas multicultural theory dominates in Canada and Europe (Wong and Tezli 2013, p. 14; Crul 2016, p 55).

Assimilation is typically defined as the process by which the characteristics of immigrants and host societies come to resemble one another, as a linear process that can be complete or incomplete (Brown and Bean, 2006, para. 1, 3). Although the term "assimilation" is sometimes used interchangeably with "integration" (Brown and Bean, 2006; Morawska, 2018 p. 764), not all scholars or policymakers accept that assimilation should be the goal of integration. A major criticism is that assimilation requires immigrants to relinquish their existing cultures, which some view as unnecessary or even as an unjust form of impoverishment (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 85). Another critique is that assimilation assumes "that immigrants must conform to the norms and values of the dominant majority in order to be accepted, elevating the dominant cultural model of the host country, whilst simultaneously failing to clearly define the 'mainstream'" (Penninx & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2016, p. 12). Many scholars argue that the view of integration, according to the idea of assimilation, as a one-way process of absorption and conformity does not recognize that newcomers also exert a change within the host society (Wong and Tezli, 2013, p.14; Penninx and Garces-Mascarenas, 2016, p.12).

The criticism of the idea of "one-way process" according to the theory of assimilation led to the development of the more nuanced segmented assimilation theory, which describes integration as having different pathways and diverse outcomes depending on the context in which immigrants find themselves in the receiving country (Portes and Zhou, 1993; Brown & Bean, 2006). Immigrants' "modes of incorporation" depend upon a range of factors, from the economy to the political relationship between sending and receiving countries, to existing social inequalities, the size and structure of pre-existing co-ethnic communities, and whether immigrants experience racial discrimination (Portes and Zhou, 1993, p. 82). To illustrate, Portes and Zhou outlined three distinct integration outcomes for second generation immigrants in America: assimilation into the white middle class, as the "time-honored portrayal of growing acculturation and parallel integration"; assimilation into an "underclass" of marginalized ethnic minority groups in inner cities, which can lead to downward mobility and permanent poverty; or selective assimilation, which deliberately preserves the immigrant community's values and tight solidarity, for instance, gaining fluency in the host country's language and abiding by all rules but without forgetting one's cultural roots (Portes and Zhou, 1993, pp. 82, 90).

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Assimilation and segmented assimilation are commonly associated with the US, whereas multicultural theory is associated with Canada. Multiculturalism advocates for immigrants retaining their own unique cultural identities and contributing to a cultural "mosaic"—a pluralistic state comprising of many distinct elements which encourage the preservation of cultural diversity within the context of overarching values (Prato & Blackwell Echo, 2009, p. 5). Multiculturalism considers integration to be a two-way or multidirectional process involving the immigrant and receiving communities (Wong and Tezli, 2013, p. 14). In Canada, "multiculturalism" is used to describe both national-level public policy, which began officially with the Multicultural Act of 1971[6] (Tremblay, 2019, pp. 89-90), as well as the demographics of the population (Tremblay, 2019, p. 83). The theory has been articulated by Charles Taylor, a philosopher at the frontline of Canadian politics since the 1960s (Laforest, 2016) who continues to exert a strong influence upon Canadian conceptions of multiculturalism. In his essay "The Politics of Recognition", Taylor (1992) famously theorized why different groups in democratic nations were seeking recognition of their distinct cultural identities. According to Taylor, an individual's identity is not formed in isolation, but negotiated in dialogue with others (p. 34) and subjugating a person's identity be harmful. Although "difference-blind" state policies may in principle afford equal respect, treating everyone in exactly the same fashion can also be viewed as being discriminatory, "by forcing people into a homogenous mould that is untrue to them" (p. 43). Taylor argued that every culture should be approached with a presumption of value (Taylor, [1992] 1994, p. 69)[7] and that recognizing distinctiveness is crucial for adherence to the principle of universal equality, to act against discrimination and oppression, and to reject the relegation of minority groups to second-class citizenship (p. 39).

Following Taylor's arguments, Canadian academic Will Kymlicka (1995) developed the most influential liberal theory of multiculturalism, connecting the values of equality and freedom with cultural membership (Song, 2017, para. 10). Kymlicka believes that group-differentiated rights are necessary to accommodate national minority groups such as Indigenous Peoples within a multicultural society, whereas for immigrants it is necessary to create "equal access to mainstream culture" by rigorously enforcing the common rights of citizenship to include newcomers (p. 113). Kymlicka outlines the ingredients of multicultural integration primarily in civic terms, describing integration as requiring the following: strong efforts on the part of the state in fighting prejudice and discrimination against minority groups through laws, the media and educational curricula; a requirement

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[6] The Multicultural Act was the response of Pierre Elliot Trudeau's government to the final report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism ("the Laurendeau-Dunton Commission"). The Commission outlined how the Canadian confederation could ensure equality between Canada's Anglophone and Francophone "founding races" and to ensure the continued societal contributions of the country's "other" cultural communities (Tremblay, 2019, pp. 89-90). The aim was to guarantee peaceful co-existence between Francophone and Anglophone communities and also, later, with Indigenous populations and immigrants of neither English nor French descent (Prato & Blackwell Echo, 2009, p. 8). A period of multicultural nation building followed in the 1970s and early 1980s, when Canada's ethos and institutions were changed to reflect multiculturalism within a bilingual Anglo-Francophone framework (Tremblay, 2019, p. 83).

[7] However, Taylor does not believe that we should automatically judge that every culture has equal value. He argues that to do so would be condescending, given that we do not have a universal "fused horizon of standards" against which to judge the relative worth of diverse cultures (Taylor, [1992] 1994, pp. 69-71).

for immigrants to learn official languages, but without the "deeply misguided" policy of impoverishing immigrants by expecting them to lose their mother tongues; and potentially some modification of state institutions, for example to respect religious differences (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 96). Although debates on multiculturalism in recent years have evolved to include whether it is under "threat" or even dying due to its supposedly "vexed relationship" with integration (Prato, 2009; Joppke, 2017, p. 3),[8] Kymlicka has argued that a commitment to multiculturalism is "a shift in *how* immigrants integrate into the dominant culture, not whether they integrate" (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 77).

A key critique of Taylor and Kymlicka's understandings of multiculturalism is that "difference" is over-emphasized and immigrants' integration is weighted heavily upon one component—incorporation,[9] or the inclusion of immigrants into the state (Morawska, 2018, p. 765). The emphasis on incorporation underscores the role of host societies' legal systems, political policies and institutions more than the agency of individuals (Morawska, 2018, pp. 765-766).[10] Offering a wider conceptualization of multicultural immigrant integration, Ewa Morawska (2018) articulates "horizontal" processes as being as important as "vertical" processes, as immigrants' incorporation into a host society takes place through everyday intergroup relations on personal and local levels, as well as at broader society levels (Morawska, 2018, p. 765). Morawska notes that mainstream multicultural theory tends to essentialize ethnic membership, viewing it as fixed upon a dual home- and host-country identity (p. 765). Instead, she argues that identities should be recognized as potentially incorporating multiple cultures and changing over time (p. 765).

Since 2007, the theory of superdiversity has been gaining traction, which relates to the hugely increased diversity of populations living in major cities (Crul, 2016, p. 54). Superdiversity recognizes that migrants in highly diverse situations integrate into a mix of groups rather than into a majority population[11] (Crul & Lelie, 2019, p. 193). Whilst the term is mostly used in relation to European cities, it is relevant to superdiverse Canadian cities including Toronto and Vancouver (Spoonley, 2014, pp. 6-7). Like multiculturalism, superdiversity recognizes that integration is a multidirectional and multidimensional

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[8] In these discussions, "integration" often refers to immigrants' participation in mainstream state institutions. This understanding of integration has led some Western European countries to develop assimilative politices such as obligatory courses and tests for newcomers on cultural norms and values (Joppke, 2007). These discussions respond to the growth of nationalist right-wing parties in liberal democracies, where some see multiculturalism as privileging group or collective rights over the individual, leading "ordinary people" (normally considered to be white non-immigrants) to become disillusioned with or disenfranchised by immigration policies, affirmative action in favour of minorities, and multiculturalism's associated political correctness (Prato & Blackwell Echo, 2009, pp. 6, 15). However, Kymlicka (1995) contends that group-differentiated rights are not only consistent with liberal values, but promote them by providing all individuals choice in how they define their identities and values (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 104).

[9] Morawska calls this "civic integration" (2018, p. 765). However, the standalone term "incorporation" is used here to avoid confusion with the concept of "civic engagement", discussed later in this chapter.

[10] Taylor recently stated that "the whole point of Canadian multiculturalism is to produce equal citizenship" (Huffington Post, 2016), which can be read as a "civic incorporation" view of integration considering that citizenship is bestowed on immigrants by the state.

[11] The inclusion of the word "super" reflects that the diversity includes differences in generations, gender and education, as well as nationality and ethnicity (Crul, 2016, p. 54).

process, but also considers the "dynamic interplay between different characteristics of individual members of ethnic groups and the fluid relationships between them" (Crul, 2016, p. 54). However, some scholars view (super-) diversity as an integral feature of contemporary societies and a prerequisite for multicultural integration trajectories, rather than as a separate mode or theory of integration (Morawska, 2018, p. 765).

Despite an emerging consensus in the literature that we are in a post-multicultural era (Kymlicka, 2018, pp. 133-134), public support for multiculturalism in Canada—for immigrants as well as Indigenous Peoples and sub-state national groups—is at an all time high (Kymlicka, 2018, p. 140). Canada's points-based system means that immigrants are not generally perceived as an economic burden as they tend to be highly skilled and educated (Kymlicka, 2018, p. 145). Nevertheless, there are signs that multiculturalism in Canada is not yet ensuring equal citizenship for immigrants; since the 1980s immigrants have not enjoyed the same economic success as citizens despite having higher levels of education and training than previous immigrant cohorts (Banting & Kymlicka, 2010, p. 53). Some analysts are concerned that second generation racial minorities are less socially integrated than their immigrant parents, reporting a lower sense of attachment to Canada and higher levels of perceived vulnerability and discrimination (Banting & Kymlicka, 2010, p. 55, citing Reitz and Banerjee, 2007). Nonetheless, international organizations often describe Canada's multicultural immigration policies as best practice for integrating immigrants (Kymlicka, 2018, p. 145); OECD has stated that Canada's "carefully designed" and long-standing skilled migration system is a benchmark for other countries (OECD, 2019). Immigrants report a strong sense of belonging to Canada and naturalization is high, with 84 percent of eligible immigrants being Canadian citizens in 2001 compared to 56 percent in the UK and 40 percent in the US (Banting & Kymlicka, 2010, p. 56).

2.1 What integration requires

The literature identifies numerous dimensions that play a role in immigrants' integration at both community and individual levels. The most prominent are as follows: economic integration, usually measured in terms of income and labour market participation; linguistic integration, or proficiency in the receiving country's primary language(s); immigration status; political integration, often measured in terms of voting in elections for naturalized citizens or interest in politics for temporary residents; duration of residency; and familiarity with the host country's systems and institutions, such as knowing how to see a doctor. Health and educational integration measures are also common, typically analyzed at the community level by comparing immigrant data with domestic populations. Other dimensions are more conceptual, with less agreement on how they should be defined. These include cultural integration, such as how immigrants' norms and values compare to those of domestic populations; psychological integration, which may include feelings of belonging or connection with the host country; civic engagement, and social integration. I will discuss the last two in more detail, as they are especially relevant to this study.

Civic engagement is a contested term and one that has been criticized for being unhelpfully vague, overlapping heavily with political participation (Ekman & Amnå, 2012).

Ekman and Amnå have addressed this concern by defining civic integration as "activities based on personal interest in and attention to politics and societal issues" as a form of latent political action (Ekman & Amnå, 2012, p. 292). *Social integration*, meanwhile, is often operationalized in terms of immigrants' connections with citizens in the host country (Harder, et al., 2018) and their social capital. The social capital literature can be broadly divided into two strands: first, that social capital is possessed by the community (or nation) and that it affects social development, and second, that it is possessed by the individual and affects a person's wellbeing. With regard to the first idea, two prominent authors are Robert D. Putnam (1995) and Michael Woolcock (2001) who operationalize social capital primarily in terms of formal memberships of groups or organizations, or feelings of trust and reciprocity between communities which lead to collective action, better social outcomes and societal cohesion (Putnam, 1995, p. 66). Although Putnam describes social capital as facilitating collective "civic engagement", his definition of the term has been criticized by Ekman and Amnå (2012) among others for being overly wide.[12] According to the second idea of social capital, it is conceptualized in terms of inter-relational ties or networks which are "more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" which "entitle the holder to various forms of credit, both social and potentially economic" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248). Regarding immigrant integration, social ties can facilitate migrants' adjustment into the host society (Joseph, 2016, pp. 171-172) by providing practical help in securing access to resources, or in intangible ways such as creating feelings of acceptance in the community. Loose or weak social ties are believed to matter to social mobility at the individual level—for example helping people gain information from outside their immediate social connections (Granovetter, 1973, p. 1373).

Social ties or networks are not always a positive resource for an individual. Although the literature frequently conflates co-ethnic ties with positive social capital, there are potential risks and downsides to migrants' co-ethnic social networks (Nyland et al., 2009; Joseph, 2016, p. 172). Whilst informal co-ethnic (or "bonding") ties can be beneficial and helpful in addressing labour market disadvantages—for example in establishing ethnic businesses—migrants in irregular situations can be in a vulnerable position, as their lack of security and status can make them overly reliant on ethnic migrant enclave networks which can be exploitative (Joseph, 2016, p. 172). Co-ethnic connections tend to be "close and tightly knit groups of mutual acquaintances, governed by norms and values enforcing compliance and possible obligations" (Joseph, 2016, p. 172), which may also gloss over

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[12] Putnam's "civic engagement" model of social capital is highly influential, but his argument has been criticized as overly simplistic (Ekman and Amna, 2012, p. 284), as his theory does not sufficiently address the crucial role that political and economic factors play in integration and development (Harriss, 2002). What Putnam refers to as a lack of "social capital" can also be understood as an expression of historic and ongoing social inequality between groups (Portes & Vickstrom, 2011, pp. 469, 472). Supporting this argument, social inequalities facing "visible minorities" in Canada do not appear to be due to a lack of civic mindedness; membership of organizations—what Putnam considers markers of high social capital— reportedly does not differ across ethnic communities in Canada and there is only a small racial gap in the level of volunteering in non-profit organizations (Banting & Kymlicka, 2010, p. 56). Nonetheless, second generation racial minorities in Canada still report higher levels of perceived vulnerability and discrimination than non-immigrants or first-generation immigrants (Banting & Kymlicka, 2010, p. 55).

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or enforce unequal power dynamics that exert pressure to conform to cultural norms and expectations within the diaspora (Qureshi, Varghese, Osella, & Rajan, 2012).

2.2 Current measurement frameworks

Although integration is a contested concept, there are growing endeavours to measure integration and/or assimilation in liberal democracies. These measurement frameworks have mostly been developed in the USA and Europe (Wong and Tezli, 2013, p. 13) and are sometimes viewed as a response to concerns over immigration and increasingly multi-ethnic and multinational societies. In Canada, although the context is different,[13] measuring integration is assumed to be helpful to highlight economic, educational, and social disparities between immigrant and non-immigrant groups.

Worldwide, integration measures primarily use census and country-wide data to compare immigrant outcomes with the general population. Numerous frameworks and measurements have been developed in different regions; the most prominent being the OECD's Indicators of Immigrant Integration (OECD & European Commission, 2018); the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX), and the European Commission's "Zaragoza" Integration Indicators (European Commission, 2016). In Canada, the Canadian Index for Measuring Integration (CIMI), funded by IRCC and overseen by the Canadian Institute for Identities and Migration, seeks to provide a framework for ongoing assessment of immigrant integration by evaluating the economic, social and health outcomes and political and civic participation of immigrants compared to the Canadian-born population (CIMI, 2020). Similarly to the integration measures listed above, CIMI draws upon census and other large survey data including the General Social Survey and the Canadian Community Health Survey to assess the "success" of newcomer integration and social inclusion in Canada, using indicators like labour market participation, employment status, income, educational level, and knowledge of official languages (Jedwab & Soroka, 2016, p. 1).

There are increasing attempts to measure or score integration at the individual as well as the community level, including the individual-level "Integration Index" from researchers at Western University in Ontario, which also relies upon large datasets to assess individual integration[14] (Ravanera, Esses, & Fernando, 2013), and the Immigrant Integration Index (IPL Index). The IPL Index, developed by political scientists at the Immigration Policy Lab (IPL) at Stanford University and ETH Zurich in 2018, is designed to be used "off the shelf" across diverse groups and contexts in different countries without relying on large-scale

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[13] The context is different in Canada compared to the USA and Europe as multiculturalism has become part of the country's national self-definition (Joppke, 2017, p. 2) and there remains high public support for multiculturalism (Kymlicka, 2018, p. 140).

[14] The Integration Index uses data from Statistic Canada's 2008 General Social Survey on Social Networks, drawing upon the indicators of employment, income, voting in elections, membership of organizations, feelings of trust and belonging at three levels – to the local community, province and nation (Ravanera, Esses, & Fernando, 2013, p. 18). The study found immigrants were less integrated than non-immigrants across most indicators. Immigrants in paid work were slightly more integrated, but their incomes were lower than non-immigrants (p. 19). The researchers have suggested that the Index could be employed more widely at the individual level if data could be collected via a large-scale survey (p. 21).

survey data or comparison with non-immigrant groups in the receiving country. In doing so, the IPL Index aims to provide a pragmatic tool for researchers and also, more ambitiously, to create a common measure of integration to allow for comparison across studies, locations and time (Harder, et al., 2018).

Despite the diverse attempts at measuring integration, the premise is contentious. Critics argue that even "highly refined reformulations of immigrant integration" attempt to solve inequalities while doing little to address the power differentials that cause them (Meissner & Heil, 2020, p. 2). More scathingly, some assert that the preoccupation with measuring integration and the effects of "diversity" detracts from more urgent problems, like how to fashion immigration policies that effectively incorporate newcomers (Portes & Vickstrom, 2011, p. 476). The project of integration measurement itself has been condemned as neo-colonial by some, as it seems that often the main thing considered relevant is "not the difference between the 'well integrated' and the 'less integrated'; it is the difference between those for whom integration is not an issue at all, and those for whom it is" (Schinkel, 2018, p. 5). This condemnation views integration measurements as racist for treating racialized minority groups as "immigrants" over generations, considering them to be durably different, when second generation white immigrants are more likely to be counted as part of domestic populations. Additionally, a critical question is what exactly immigrants are integrated into; "society" is often referred to but almost never conceptualized, although the implication is that it is white (Schinkel, 2018).

3.   Research design and methods

This study included a survey and 16 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with international students of Canadian postsecondary institutions, conducted between January to March 2020. The combined methodology was employed to gain further insight and to enable a comparison of participants' self-reported feelings of integration versus a current standard measurement framework, allowing for comparison between methods. The survey was conducted after the interviews so that interviewees had not been primed to think of integration according to the questionnaire's questions. Conducting interviews first also helped to build rapport and ensure a higher survey completion rate.

3.1   Sampling methodology

All participants were residing in the Lower Mainland of BC and had studied or were studying at postsecondary institutions in Canada. Inclusion criteria were as follows:

- Adults aged over 19 years old
- Indian nationals, or Indian nationals who have become Canadian citizens in the past 1-5 years
- A student or an alumnus of a Canadian post-secondary institution

- Resident in Canada for under 10 years[15]
- Currently resident in Metro Vancouver, BC

The selected study population was Indian nationals, given that India is now the biggest source country of international students to Canada (BC Council for International Education, 2020). The Lower Mainland of BC was chosen for relevance and feasibility. BC is a highly popular study destination; it ranks second in Canada for its number of international students, and Metro Vancouver attracted 22% of all foreign students in Canada in 2017 (Heslop, 2018, p. 10). The location was also chosen for practical reasons, so I could easily travel to interview participants in person. For recruitment, I identified five initial individuals via my own extended social network as I was an international student myself. I then used the snowball sampling method to recruit others. All participants granted informed consent. The research was conducted in English.

Table 1 presents a summary of the 16 participants. The intention had been to recruit 30 international students or graduates from various postsecondary institutions in Canada, balanced evenly between universities and technical or community colleges. However, as the research phase overlapped with COVID-19 lockdown measures in Canada and India it became increasingly difficult to recruit participants within the available timeframe. There were some limitations concerning the small sample; the breakdown of participants was weighted roughly 2:1 towards master's graduates from Canadian universities, rather than students of shorter one- to two-year programs at community colleges or technical institutions in Canada. This weighting meant that the sample was a highly educated and relatively older and wealthier group of students.

Table 1.   **Summary of the sample of participants**

Characteristic	Participant profiles
Gender	11 male, 5 female
Age range	22-37 years old; 75% between 24-29 years of age (12)
Marital status	75% unmarried (12) of whom 1 engaged; 25% married (4) among whom 1 was a parent
Place of birth	81% north India (9 Punjab, 4 Delhi) 18% south India (1 Kerala, 1 Karnataka, 1 Andhra Pradesh)
Years resident in Canada	<1 to 9 years; Mode 2-3 years (50% of participants)

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[15] Initially criteria were limited to participants who had been living in Canada between 1-5 years, as time is recognized as an important factor in the process of settling into life in a new location. However, it proved difficult to recruit participants within this limited time period, so the criterium was adjusted to include individuals resident in Canada for under 10 years.

Characteristic	Participant profiles
Immigration status	50% Permanent Residency (8) 31% Post-Graduate Work Permit (5) 19% Study Permit (3)
Type of Canadian post-secondary credential	63% master's (10, of which 7 MBA) 31% 1-2 year diploma or certificate programs (5) 6% undergraduate university degree (1)
Study program status	15 completed; 1 currently studying.

3.2 Interview development

Interviews were one-to-one, and between one to 1.5 hours long. Questions were open-ended to elicit detailed and personal responses to provide participants a channel to voice their views. The questions operationalized "integration" across the following themes:

1. **About the past:** Personal background and reasons for choosing to study in Canada; whether participants had existing connections in the country. *Rationale: To build rapport and learn about participants' lives and backgrounds.*

2. **About the present:** Present occupation, what the participant's average day is like; what participants' study programs are or were like. *Rationale: To discover whether decisions to move to Canada were linked to established patterns of chain migration,[16] such as from the Punjab region to BC (Judge, 2015), or more dependent upon factors like immigration policies or the economic context in India.*

3. **Social ties:** Whom participants spend time with; main friendship groups; family connections; membership of any organizations and groups; how participants found their current job; whom participants ask for help. *Rationale: To identify participants' primary social networks, existing ties to Canada, frequency of contact with family and friends in India, and participation with local groups or organizations in Canada. These questions were informed by social capital theory, especially the works of Pierre Bourdieu, Mark Granovetter, Robert D. Putnam and Michael Woolcock.*

4. **Finance and basic needs:** How participants supported themselves through their studies; how they navigated initial bureaucratic tasks in Canada; how they found their jobs; where they lived during their studies, current living arrangements and how they found them; satisfaction with accommodation and work. *Rationale: To understand how participants' economic capital affected their experiences in Canada, and where and how participants found information and resources.*

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[16] Chain migration can be understood as the process where migrants from a particular city or region follow others from that location to a particular destination.

5. **Culture:** The main cultural differences that participants observe between Canada and India; what they like and dislike about life in Canada; what they miss about India. *Rationale: To learn how participants responded to cultural differences. Despite the large literature on immigrant "culture shock", this term was intentionally not used as it implies that cultural differences are innately difficult to navigate.*

6. **Thoughts on integration:** What life has been like for participants since they moved to Canada; challenges faced and strategies employed to overcome them; whether participants feel accepted by others, how "integrated" they feel and what "integration" means to them. *Rationale: To investigate participants' subjective experiences. The final question asked what integration meant to them, as this is rarely included in measures of integration.*

7. **Future plans:** How settled participants feel; intentions to stay or leave the country; whether family members may immigrate to join them in the future. *Rationale: To discover settlement plans and understand personal attachment to Canada.*

Following a coding method by M. Q. Patton (2015, p. 598), interview transcriptions were coded according to the dimension above. I then re-coded interviews with inductive, generative coding based on further themes emerging from two or more interviews. I used these to create categories and then develop aggregate dimensions, discussed in interview findings below. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to confer anonymity.[17]

3.3   Survey development

The survey[18] questions and scoring calculations were based upon the Immigration Integration Index[19] developed by the Immigration Policy Lab (IPL) at Stanford University and ETH-Zurich. The IPL Index was chosen as it is a current integration measure designed to be used at the individual level and across contexts, from different countries to diverse immigrant groups (Harder, et al., 2018, p. 11487). Following the conceptualization of integration as "the knowledge and capacity to build successful lives" in the host society (Harder et al, 2018, p. 11484), the IPL Index operationalizes the process of integration as comprising the following six dimensions (Harder, et al., 2018), summarized below:

1. **Psychological** – a feeling of connection with the host country, the desire to continue living there, and a sense of belonging;
2. **Economic** – employment, satisfaction with employment, level of income, and the ability to meet different levels of unexpected expenses;

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[17] Participants were invited to choose an alias themselves, as a respectful gesture and recognizing that assigning names has meaning and is not a neutral or technical procedure (Allen & Wiles, 2016). A quarter of participants chose their own names, and the remainder opted to be assigned a pseudonym.

[18] Survey data were collected via SurveyMonkey software. All identifiable information was removed.

[19] See the IPL Integration Index website for more information or to download the standard survey materials: https://www.integrationindex.org/theintegrationindex

3. **Political** – political knowledge (i.e. an understanding of the pertinent political issues facing the host country), and the degree to which respondents engage in discussion and political action;
4. **Social** – social ties, interactions with host country citizens, and bridging social capital as evidenced by participation in organizations with natives;
5. **Linguistic** – the ability to read, speak, write, and understand the dominant language of the host country or region;
6. **Navigational** – the ability to manage basic needs in the host country, such as how to seek medical help and where to look for work.

Using the short form of the IPL Index questionnaire ("IPL-12") as the basis for my survey, I made minor adaptations to the language to suit the Canadian context. This included changing "American" to "Canadian", which I defined in the survey as someone who was born or brought up in Canada. This definition intentionally excluded naturalized citizens, who in most cases would have grown up overseas in a different cultural environment, whilst including individuals who grew up in Canada but may not have official citizenship.

4. Survey findings

I used the survey data to examine how the IPL Index works in practice, comparing respondents' integration scores from the survey with their lived experiences as related in interviews. Weighting each dimension equally, IPL-12 survey questions are intended to be used to calculate a total integration score for respondents,[20] as well as scoring respondents across six dimensions of integration. Firstly, I calculated aggregate scores for my 16 participants (Table 2, below). In my sample, the average aggregate score was 43/60 (72%). The highest participant total score was 51/60 (87%) and the lowest was 31/60 (52%), with a range of 35 percentage points between all participants' aggregate scores. To give a sense of whether this is high or low, the sample chosen by IPL Index creators Harder et al. to represent a "well integrated" cohort scored 80% average, whereas the sample selected to demonstrate "low integration" scored 46% average (Harder, et al., 2018, p. 11485).[21] The reason the entire distribution of my data was higher than Harder et al.'s samples seemed to be due to the high English proficiency of my participants; 14/16 scored maximum points (5/5) for both linguistic indicators, and 10/10 for the dimension. The lowest participant score was 4/5 for each indicator and 8/10 for the dimension.

The results of the integration survey with my sample appeared highly ambiguous. The top three "most integrated" participants in my sample according to total IPL-12 scores indeed

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[20] IPL-12 assigns participants a total integration score between 12 and 60 points (where 60 represents 100%). Each of the 12 questions (or indicators) has a minimum score of 1 and a maximum of 5. As there are two indicators for each of the six dimensions, the minimum score per dimension is 2 and the maximum is 10.

[21] IPL Immigrant Integration Index questionnaires were administered to four different groups who were expected to differ in terms of their average levels of integration, including a sample of high-income, white immigrants in the US (who had an average aggregate IPL-12 score of 0.8 or 80%), a sample of immigrants in Germany (average score of 0.69), participants from a program in New York that assisted low-income immigrants eligible for naturalization (average score of 0.55) and finally a sample of recent immigrants enrolled in English classes in San Jose, California (average score of 0.46; Harder et al, 2018, p. 11485).

seemed very well-settled and satisfied with life in Canada based on interview responses. For example, one of them described himself as feeling "100% Canadian" and was planning to apply for citizenship. However, the IPL-12 results for most others did not seem to correspond closely with how integrated they said they felt in interviews.

Table 2. **Individual participant scores for the IPL-12 questionnaire**

Participant	% score	Total score (/60)	Psycho-logical score	Naviga-tional score	Economic score	Linguistic score	Political score	Social score
P1	87	52	8	7	10	10	9	8
P2	85	51	9	9	9	10	8	6
P3	83	50	8	8	8	10	9	7
P4	80	48	10	5	8	10	8	7
P5	78	47	7	4	8	10	10	8
P6	77	46	8	4	10	10	7	7
P7	75	45	8	6	9	10	4	8
P8	72	43	6	5	9	10	6	7
P9	68	41	7	5	10	10	4	5
P10	68	41	7	6	10	9	6	3
P11	68	41	6	8	2	10	10	5
P12	68	41	9	6	3	10	8	5
P13	65	39	7	6	7	10	6	3
P14	63	38	8	4	2	10	7	7
P15	60	36	7	5	7	8	5	4
P16	52	31	7	4	6	8	3	3

In my sample, four participants (P9 to P12) had identical aggregate scores of 41/60 or 68%, suggesting at first glance that their integration experiences may be similar. But despite all having the same total score, their component scores were quite different; for instance, P9 and P10 both scored full points (10/10) for economic integration, whereas P11 and P12 scored 2/10 and 3/10 respectively for this dimension. The disparity in these component scores compared to the identical overall scores raises questions about construct validity. Indeed, when comparing survey results with interview responses, it was evident that the identical aggregate IPL-12 scores disguised a range of experiences. To illustrate this by contrasting two of the participants with identical scores of 41/60, in interview P10 appeared comfortable and confident with life in Canada, with a secure and well-paying professional job. He had a wide social circle, few reported challenges in settling and had gained permanent residency. P10 was not an active member of any

groups or organizations, but this seemed to be due to having a demanding professional job involving long work hours. In the survey, he scored middling to low scores for the following responses: feeling only "moderately" connected with Canada, finding it "somewhat difficult" to see a doctor in the country, considering it "neither easy nor difficult" to find a job, and for low engagement with Canadian politics. In comparison, another participant with the same score ("P11") appeared less settled based on interview responses. He reported socializing infrequently and having one friend in Canada after three years of residency, from the same city and community in India as himself. P11 had experienced practical and financial difficulties during his study program and expressed concern about being culturally assimilated into Canada. P11 was highly politically engaged, with a strong understanding of the Canadian political system. He was actively engaging with mentorship organizations and aimed to lead a social justice campaign for immigrants. In the survey, he scored low points for social integration and income, and mixed scores for psychological integration, reporting "often" feeling like an outsider, but scoring highly for feeling a "very close connection" with Canada. Meanwhile, P11 scored top points for "navigational" integration, finding it "somewhat easy" to find a job and to see a doctor, and for political integration—understanding Canadian politics "very well" and discussing them "almost every day". While the IPL Index was not necessarily "wrong" to give these participants the same ranking, the identical aggregate score was misleading.

Harder et al. (2018) found the six dimensions of integration to be mostly positively correlated, with immigrants who scored highly on one dimension tending to score highly on the others, although they acknowledged that some relationships were rather weak (Harder, et al., 2018, p. 11486). There are some obvious discrepancies between the bivariate correlation coefficients for my survey compared to Harder et al.'s data. Table 3 presents the pairwise correlations between the six dimensions of integration from my survey data[22] compared to Harder et al.'s data for reference. Cells in the lower left diagonal of Table 3 show, in black, the bivariate correlation coefficients from my study, whilst cells in the upper right diagonal show, in blue, the bivariate correlation coefficients for Harder et al.'s data. The four correlation coefficients from my data that vary considerably from Harder et al.'s are presented in bold; these are the correlations between economic and navigational integration, linguistic and economic integration, economic and political integration, and social and navigational integration. If the IPL Index were generalizable across different populations as it intends to be, one would expect more consistency. Moreover, based on my data, there was a significant positive relationship between only two pairs of dimensions, indicated in bold in Table 4. These pairs were linguistic and political integration ($p = .031$), and linguistic and social integration ($p = .01$). Other dimensions do not appear to be significantly correlated with each other. Whilst my sample is small, the pattern of these anomalies challenges the construct validity of the IPL Index.

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[22] I calculated the bivariate Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficients (PPMC or "Pearson Correlation") between pairwise dimensions using Microsoft Excel's CORREL function.

Table 3. **Correlation between dimensions of integration (Pearson's r)**

	Psychological	Navigational	Economic	Linguistic	Political	Social
Psychological	---	.28	.03	.17	.23	.27
Navigational	.14	---	.31	.45	.39	.27
Economic	.05	**.01**	---	.37	.4	.24
Linguistic	.27	.29	**.03**	---	.46	.34
Political	.21	.42	**-.23**	.54	---	.39
Social	.33	**.01**	.20	.62	.45	---

Cells in the lower left diagonal show the bivariate correlation coefficients for my data, in black. Cells in the upper right diagonal show the bivariate correlation coefficients for Harder et al.'s data, in blue (based on the IPL-12 scores for Harder et al.'s pooled sample of 784 respondents, as presented in Harder et al. 2018, Supplementary Appendix, Fig. S10). Coefficients from my data that deviate considerably from Harder et al.'s data are in bold.

Table 4. **P values for bivariate correlation coefficients**

	Psychological	Navigational	Economic	Linguistic	Political	Social
Psychological	---					
Navigational	.605	---				
Economic	.854	.971	---			
Linguistic	.312	.276	.912	---		
Political	.435	.105	.391	**.031**	---	
Social	.212	.971	.458	**.01**	.08	---

Cells in the lower left diagonal show the p-values for my data. Statistically significant p-values are in bold.

Despite the limited size of my sample, analyzing the empirical survey data makes me question the cogency of the IPL Index's aim to calculate one unitary measure of integration by adding six dimension scores together. Rather than observing that the different dimensions varied together, only two pairwise dimensions were significantly correlated according to my data. This is less consistent than could be expected for a generalizable measure based upon aggregate dimension scores. Whilst the survey data was useful to compare findings versus interview responses, for example by gaining specific answers to questions such as respondents' incomes, I would be wary of using the IPL Index as a standalone measure of integration. I am sceptical that the IPL Index can deliver a common

measure of integration that can be used to compare immigrant groups "across studies, countries, and time" (Harder, et al., 2018, p. 14483). The survey analysis provided good reason to investigate individual integration experiences in more detail.

5. Interview findings

5.1 How international students understand integration

Responses to the open-ended interview question "what does integration mean to you?" were nuanced, and personal. Nonetheless, some strong themes emerged (Table 5):[23]

Table 5. **Participants' understandings of integration according to interviews**

Key themes	Number of participants that mentioned	Dimension
Being open to and connecting with people from different cultural backgrounds	11	Sociopolitical
Feeling you can be yourself and not treated as an outsider	6	Sociopolitical
Civic engagement and political representation	4	Sociopolitical
Being integrated economically	4	Economic

The majority of participants primarily understood integration on a personal level in sociopolitical terms. The most common responses related to adjusting to the multicultural host society by connecting with others from different cultural backgrounds, followed by feeling that you can be yourself and not treated as an outsider. Participants' conceptualization of integration placed emphasis on the importance of being "open to other cultures" oneself and to making the effort to connect with others:

> Integration means accepting and being open to different cultures, and respecting each other's opinions. (Jyoti, who studied for a master's at a world-ranking university in BC; resident in Canada for two years)

> I would not use the word "integrated", I would use the word "connected". And the connection can be both social and economic... To feel connected you have to experience the diversity out there. But if you're just in your own silo, in your own way of being, then it doesn't matter where you are—you're disconnected. (Gurdip, who studied for

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[23] Themes were considered to be strong if they were shared by a quarter of participants or more.

an undergraduate degree at a public research university in BC; resident in Canada for seven years)

It was notable that participants in my study did not view integration as necessitating assimilation by relinquishing their cultural identity, seeing that as unnecessary or undesirable. This seemed to strongly reflect Canada's official policy of multiculturalism, suggesting that participants felt secure that their culture was valued and respected.

> I believe that when you haven't interacted too much, the natural tendency is just to be a part of everyone else [the majority in the receiving country]. But over time – and I've seen that with the diaspora here as well – that integration dynamic shifts. Like, I'm not going to erase myself and build a new personality. It's more like nourishing your culture and values, and at the same time respecting the norms and systems, and kind of channeling yourself [into them]. (Hardeep, who studied for an undergraduate degree in BC followed by a part-time MBA at a world-ranked university; resident in Canada for eight years)

Although a couple of participants seemed to associate being Canadian with being of white European descent, most evidently did not view being Canadian as meaning having one specific cultural identity, ethnicity or religion. Participants were more likely to raise the question of who "counts" as Canadian than refer to Canadians as a homogenous group. Several mentioned how many Canadians are naturalized citizens, with a couple also highlighting how First Nations people have been marginalized by Canadian systems.

> Canadians could be anyone. That's the thing. They could be any nationality right, originally. (Kailash, who studied for an MBA at a world-ranking university in BC; resident in Canada for three years)

Secondary to these themes were the importance of civic engagement and political representation, and economic integration. I follow Ekman and Amnå's (2012) conceptualization of civic engagement as "activities based on personal interest in and attention to politics and societal issues" as a form of latent political action (Ekman & Amnå, 2012, p. 292).[24] The broader dimension of "sociopolitical" is more appropriate than "social" and "political" separately, to encompass civic engagement and political representation. These activities were primarily community-level action via non-profit organizations to help and advocate for South Asian international students. These organizations overlapped with friendship networks, as participants befriended other members.

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[24] Ekman and Amna's definition of civic engagement is part of their detailed and nuanced typology of latent and manifest political action. This typology addresses the conceptual confusion in the literature between "civic engagement" and "political participation". Ekman and Amna consider both concepts to exist along a continuum ranging from "pre-political" or latent political activities (including attentiveness to political issues and identity-related politics) to manifest political participation (such as formal political behaviour as well as protests and other forms of political action; Ekman and Amnå, 2012).

> Integrated means you connect with every people, you connect with every aspect of society… I want to know the kind of work the government is doing for BC residents and throughout Canada – I want to get to know about that and be a part of that as well. And at the same time, if my community is doing good, I want to help other communities to get up and involved. (Raj, who studied for a master's at a public research university in Ontario; resident in Canada for three years)

Concerning political representation specifically, a theme emerging in several interviews (5) was that international students lack a political voice in society due to their temporary resident status, enhancing their vulnerability and making them less integrated.

> We pay tuition fees, we pay taxes, we do everything, the normal things that a Canadian does, and it's alright to talk about our responsibilities towards state and what are the policies out there and how the government is treating us, and how are these policies working… If we have the support of students, we can go to lawyers, we can go to psychologists, we can get their advice and then we can recommend amendments or policies, changes. We can give recommendations to government. (Paramjit, who studied for a two-year associate degree in BC following high school in India; resident in Canada for three years)

Regarding economic integration, some participants stressed the importance of having a job that pays a decent salary as a "practical" form of integration. It was interesting that three of the four participants who underscored the economic dimension had not struggled financially in Canada, while several other participants who faced financial challenges did not mention economic integration. This may be as those who were not well-integrated in economic terms pursued different integration trajectories; discussed below.

> If you move to a new place and it's very happy but you don't have a job, you're hand to mouth all the time, you'll never stay. Whereas, if you go to a place that you don't like a lot, but you have a job, you'll probably stay there forever. (Joseph, who studied for an MBA at a world-ranking university in BC; resident in Canada for two years)

Surprisingly, familiarity with how to manage basic needs in the country, such as how to get a Social Insurance Number (the IPL Index's "navigational" dimension) was mentioned by just two participants, and only as a secondary point. Also, the importance of linguistic integration was also only mentioned by two participants as a key component of integration. Although another two respondents described how they had been self-conscious of their accents when they first moved to Canada, they did not discuss this in relation to what integration means. The lack of emphasis on linguistic integration is perhaps not surprising considering that the majority had not experienced language barriers in Canada; many of the participants had attended English-medium schools as it is an official language of India.

5.2   An emergent definition of "integration"

Based upon participants' interview responses, an emergent understanding of "integration" could be defined as follows:

> Integration is a two-way process. It involves an individual adjusting to life in a new host country by being open to connecting with others from different cultures, and being accepted by others without having to lose one's own cultural identity.

> Integration also means having a decent job and enough money to support oneself, civic engagement to help others in your community, and having political representation.

The first paragraph represents participants' core understandings of integration from their own perspectives, based upon the two most common types of interview responses. The second paragraph introduces the secondary themes—civic engagement and political representation and economic integration—which, whilst less prevalent, were still notable. The emergent definition sees both the newcomer and the host society as playing a role in integration. The emergent definition compares as follows with that currently used by the Canadian Index for Measuring Integration (CIMI):

> Integration is a dynamic process that we envision as an interaction between immigrants and non-immigrants along a metaphoric "two-way street." Achieving integration requires that there be relative parity between immigrants and non-immigrants in several key areas (i.e., economic, social, civic and democratic participation, and health). Reducing disparities for societal participation and ensuring equitable access to services are also fundamental to achieving successful integration. (CIMI, 2020).

Both the definition above and the emergent conceptualization use the analogy of integration as a "two-way" process, which is a description commonly used in relation to multicultural theory. Whilst CIMI's definition stresses egality of outcomes for immigrants and non-immigrants, parity with non-immigrants was an aim of integration discussed only vaguely by my participants, and only in sociopolitical and economic terms (i.e. feeling accepted by others and being treated fairly). Meanwhile, Harder et al.'s (2018) conceptualization which informed the IPL Index, places the onus for integration primarily on the immigrant, rather than considering it to be a two-way process:

> We defined integration as the degree to which immigrants have the knowledge and capacity to build a successful, fulfilling life in the host society. This definition recognizes the dual importance of knowledge and capacity. Knowledge entails aspects such as fluency in the national language and ability to navigate the host country's labor market, political system, and social institutions. Capacity refers to the mental, social, and

economic resources immigrants have to invest in their futures. (Harder et al., 2018, p. 11484).

The emergent definition did not place equal weight upon each dimension as the IPL Index does, but placed more emphasis on the sociopolitical than the economic. Furthermore, the "emergent" political dimension was primarily concerned with civic engagement as a latent form of political participation, whereas political IPL Index indicators were limited to participants' engagement with national-level politics in the host country.[25]

Of all the integration frameworks reviewed to inform this study, the closest existing definition comes from sociologist Ewa Morawska. Countering an understanding of multiculturalism that focuses primarily on the state's role in incorporating newcomers (a "vertical" process), Morawska (2018) views "horizontal" processes as equally important, with adaptation evolving primarily in local settings through immigrants' immediate experiences (Morawska, 2018, p. 772), discussed below.

5.3   The lived experiences of international students

Participants' integration experiences appeared not to be strongly dependent on seemingly obvious variables such as duration of residency or even immigration status. While measures of integration frequently seek to streamline immigrants' processes of settlement into a single-dimensional scale of integration, participants' lived experiences were naturally messier with a nuanced range of integration processes. Their diverse experiences highlight the subjectivity of integration; it cannot be analyzed based on unitary measures that seek to encode multiple trajectories into high or low integration outcomes. Their lived experiences need to be unpacked to be understood.

One factor that appeared strongly to affect participants' integration trajectories was the type of academic qualification pursued in Canada; specifically, whether it was a master's or bachelor's degree, or a diploma or a two-year program at a college. The type of credential chosen appeared to be linked partly to the economic capital available to them, or rather the tuition fees that parents could afford to pay, although a minority received scholarships. All participants were supported by parents during their studies, at least with initial tuition fees. Studying for a one- or two-year college program rather than a university degree was more affordable and selecting these programs did not necessarily mean that participants had lower existing levels of education. For instance, one participant who was studying for a technical certificate at a polytechnic institute in BC already had a master's of Mathematics, whilst another who opted for a post-graduate diploma at a Canadian college already had a bachelor's degree in Computer Science from an Indian university.[26]

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[25] The IPL-12's specific questions to indicate political integration were, "how well do you understand the important political questions facing Canada?" and, "In the last 12 months, how often did you typically discuss major political issues facing Canada with others?". See Appendix B for the other survey questions.

[26] Despite their existing qualifications, one participant wanted to gain a different kind of educational experience by studying abroad, potentially leading to exciting overseas work opportunities. The other said his main motivation was finding a decent job and permanent residency in Canada following his studies.

Although linguistic integration was not part of most participants' personal understandings of integration, it was evident that English fluency had provided them with considerable advantages compared to international students with lower proficiency. Several respondents mentioned that they had an English-medium education, and three explicitly stated that fluency in English made things easier for them compared to peers:

> My struggles were still a lot less compared to other international students, because I didn't have any language issues. I already had good English; I went to a good school back home where everything was completely in English. I didn't have any language barriers. That's one of the reasons I was very confident; I got a job easily at the office. Otherwise I see most of the other international students do general labour jobs – doesn't matter what they studied. (Simran, who studied for a diploma at a college in Ontario; resident in Canada for five years)

The type of study program pursued and participants' English proficiency, can be seen partly as reflecting the economic and cultural capital of their families. English proficiency shapes the social mobility patterns of students in India as well as Canada, as without proficiency you cannot compete for a "good" job (S. Routray, personal communication, April 21, 2020). Cultural capital such as educational attainment—and ensuing social mobility—is a product of various intersecting factors, with multidimensional aspects in India including caste, income, educational attainment, linguistic backgrounds, class, and the type of region a person is from (S. Routray, personal communication, April 21, 2020).

While this study did not specifically ask participants about their families' income, class or caste, participants' existing economic, social and cultural capital evidently played key roles in their integration trajectories. Drawing upon Bourdieu's theory of the forms of capital, cultural capital—such as academic qualifications and, in the case of India, the ability to speak English fluently—"can be derived from economic capital, but only at the cost of a more or less effort at transformation" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 252). Although it may be possible to convert economic, cultural and social capital into one another, cultural and social capital cannot be simply reduced to the economic either (p. 252). Moreover, they are most powerful or valuable when they appear to have no connection to the economy, and have the ability to "conceal (not least from their possessors) the fact that economic capital is at their root" (p. 242). Social capital, as the aggregate of social ties or the "more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248) also had an affect on participants' trajectories. For example, whether or not there was a large diaspora from their region of India already living in the area appeared to be an influential factor, as did whether participants had existing family connections in Canada. As theorized by Bourdieu, the "three fundamental guises" of capital—economic, cultural and social—function together, making the games of society "something other than simple games of chance" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 241).

Participants' integration trajectories were also influenced by participants personal motivations for moving to Canada. These motivations were based primarily upon social

mobility ambitions, as is frequently the case in decisions to pursue higher education. Therefore, although structural factors appeared to influence integration experiences, individual agency—their original motivations for deciding to move to Canada and their integration strategies—was also a determining force.

Comparing integration trajectories

There were some commonalities across trajectories. All participants said that they generally felt accepted and found Canadians to be welcoming and polite. However, several described some difficulty in getting to know Canadians, and a few related experiencing some prejudice, stereotyping or sexism. Nonetheless, participants who mentioned having experienced discrimination were quick to add that they felt that racism was relatively uncommon in Canada, with a couple stating they had seen or experienced worse examples in India relating to ethnicity or caste.

Primary friendship networks in almost every case included peers in the same educational cohort; typically, other international students, many of whom were also from India. This partly reflected the demographics of the study programs in which the sample students were enrolled in Canada, where international students or even Indian students specifically often comprised one third or more of the cohort.[27] The majority of participants' closest connections in Canada were Indians or Indo-Canadian family members, and all participants with housemates lived with other Indians apart from one. The tendency towards co-national friendships also appeared to be related to a key cultural difference between the host and home countries; half of participants described Canada as highly "individualistic" compared to India's "community-driven" culture. While this individualism could mean freedom from judgement and less enforcement of Indian cultural norms, some participants also associated it with loneliness and depression. Co-national friendships helped the students with cultural transition, making them feel less like outsiders at the beginning. These friendships offered familiarity and comfort amid the different culture, especially helping students experiencing homesickness or mental health challenges.

> With our close group of Indian friends we are more free than with our non-Indian friends from a different culture or upbringing… having that group of friends helped me at least transition into that [Canadian cultural] concept of space and boundaries. (Nilesh, who studied for an MBA at a world-ranking BC university; resident in Canada for six years)

Across participants there were two overarching motivations for why they decided to study in Canada, and these motivations appeared to exert a force upon integration trajectories. Tables 6 and 7 below present an overview of participants in each motivation group and their subsequent trajectories. It is not possible to do justice to each person's experience; the trajectory groups described overlap. They are not a perfect description of each

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[27] Foreign students comprise one fifth of BC university enrolment (British Columbia Federation of Students, 2019, p. 7). Several participants in this study mentioned that domestic students were in the minority on their study programs, and that Indian students were the largest cohort of international students in their classes.

participant's experiences, nor definitive or generalizable to other populations. Nonetheless, the findings suggest that pathways to integration are context-specific, and dependent on immigrants' subjective understandings of what integration means.

Table 6. **Motivation Group 1's integration trajectories**

Motivation: Lack of opportunities in India; existing connections in Canada	
Number of participants:	5
Type of Canadian credential:	1- to 2-year diplomas or certificates
Personal profile and family background:	Mostly Punjabi Sikhs, predominantly Jats (the dominant community in Punjab) Moved to Canada after high school
Apparent capital on arrival to Canada	Economic: middle or lower middle class Cultural: medium – educated but felt blocked from achieving ambitions in India Social: high – most had strong ties in Canada
English proficiency on arrival to Canada:	3/5 spoke English fluently on arrival to Canada 2/5 proficient but still learning on arrival

Trajectory A: Staying with family during studies	Trajectory B: Renting privately, struggling financially
Number of participants: 3	Number of participants: 2
Prominent integration strategies:	
Building upon family ties Co-national friendships Part-time work (supplementary income) Applying/intending to apply for PR	Co-national friendships Part-time work (survival income) Applying/intending to apply for PR Participating in groups and organizations Advocating for immigrant rights

Motivation Group 1 (Table 6) moved due to huge competition in India—where the giant population vies for a limited number of opportunities—and because they had existing connections to Canada. A couple also described corruption and nepotism as a motivating factor. These participants were likely to have moved immediately after high school in India. The move was self-initiated by almost all of them, although their parents supported the idea. None had lived away from parents before and three lived with extended family during their studies in Canada. Most had studied or were studying for one- to two-year diplomas

or certificates in Canada, which reflected their middling socio-economic backgrounds as shorter durations mean fewer tuition fees to pay. Some already spoke English fluently on arrival, whilst two were proficient yet still learning when they moved.

Motivation Group 1 participants were exclusively from Punjab, reflecting established patterns of migration to Canada[28] (Judge 2015). Most were Punjabi Sikhs, and predominantly Jats, the dominant community in Punjab. Canada was the only study destination these participants had applied to, and social ties were the main reason. Some said Canada was the most popular overseas option at the time and they all had existing connections—either extended family members or friends—in their destination city and in some cases other Canadian cities too. When studying, these participants were mostly only friends with other Indian international students. For two, this appeared to be partly linked to self-consciousness over a lack of fluency in English and having an Indian accent. A couple described how there being numerous Indian international students made things much easier for them, especially as they were only 17-19 years old upon arrival to Canada.

Contrasting with the stereotype that international students are rich given their ability to afford higher tuition fees than domestic students, all worked part-time during their studies and this was essential income for three of the five in this group. Two also saw gaining work experience crucial to qualify for permanent residency (PR). The cost of living was a considerable shock to some, who were not prepared for how much money they would need. A couple described difficulty finding their first jobs due to a "catch 22" situation where Canadian work experience was expected, even for part-time unskilled work.

The biggest determiner in Motivation Group 1's integration trajectories appeared to be whether they lived with family members when they were studying. Those in **Trajectory A** (Table 6) lived with aunts, uncles, and cousins during their studies in Canada. These individuals reported few difficulties on the whole, although studying and working part-time was often demanding. While for one working part-time was essential to contribute towards shared living expenses, there was not the burden of paying full rent or preparing meals. Family members also provided emotional support. Without family members to stay with during their studies, those in **Trajectory B** (Table 6) rented privately and faced significant financial challenges. Although only a couple of participants fit this profile, other respondents related that many Indian international students follow this trajectory, experiencing difficulties and integration barriers. Although, like other participants, their parents were paying their tuition fees—at least for the initial semesters—they struggled to pay for rent and living expenses. Work income was crucial, and the stress and time

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[28] Previous studies of Punjabi transnationalism and migration to the UK describe how in Punjab emigration is seen as a primary conduit to success, with entrenched notions of Punjabi mobility being a main motivator for emigration (Qureshi, Varghese, Osella, & Rajan, 2012, pp. 19-20). One participant in this study described how "most of the immigration has happened from Punjabi and there are so many Punjabis, all around the world, in every location". He saw this mobility as being due to Punjab's geographic location and history as a trade route and site of constant invasion.

involved sometimes negatively impacted studies. This could also create social isolation as they were always working, studying, commuting or doing chores, with no downtime.

> I regret that there were so many assignments, so many projects that would have been helpful to understand, not just to get marks and to get better exams… but I couldn't get time to invest on those projects because I had to work. I had to feed myself, I had to survive somehow. So working and studying, it wasn't balanced *at all*… I worked at the airport for one year, and it was night shifts from 2am to 6am, and then I went to college at 8 or 10… I never expected I would have to work in restaurants, in construction, in the airport at the nighttime to get enough money. (Paramjit, who studied for a two-year associate degree in BC following high school in India; resident in Canada for three years)

Furthermore, pressure to earn more money could lead students to precarious situations such as working over the hours of the study permit:

> My parents are not super financially strong so they could not pay for all my expenses here… You're only allowed to work 20 hours [with the study permit] but you aren't able to make enough money in those 20 hours. Then you try to work more hours. That's what I did for a little bit. I was working in an Indian restaurant and he wouldn't care if we worked more than 20 hours—he would adjust the payroll in a way that it looked like we were actually working only 20 hours. So, I used to go to school in the morning and go to work in the evening… practically there was no day off in my school life… our employer wouldn't exploit you in terms of money, but the work was *way* too much. (Simran)

For one participant, the workload created a vicious cycle where he started failing his course so had to enrol and pay for more and more classes, meaning more tuition fees and more work to pay for them. Although this was negatively impacting his wellbeing, his college would not allow him time off as the study permit restrictions enforce continuous enrolment. Luckily, he confided in a trusted professor who helped him switch to a study program more closely aligned with his interests which he could excel at:

> I was *broken* from the inside, like why is this happening to me? Because nothing was on my side, not the financial side, the study side, the educational side. The professor helped me a lot. (Paramjit)

Thankfully, these individuals' situations improved over time, but participants underscored how financial, housing and academic struggles can lead to a host of problems which make students vulnerable to mental illness or exploitation. International students failing in their study programs risk losing their immigration status and the right to remain and work in Canada, which can lead to depression and sometimes suicide. Working illegally, such as over the 20-hour off-campus limit of one's study permit, risks employer exploitation such as withholding wages for under-the-table work. The high cost of accommodation or foreign students' lack of awareness of their rights as tenants leads many to live in overcrowded or overpriced accommodation, such as unregulated basement suites without tenancy agreements or privacy from the landlord upstairs, which can also make students

vulnerable to sexual harassment. International students are often unaware of where to access help. For this reason, after the completion of their studies, the two participants in this trajectory and a Trajectory A participant went on to volunteer or advocate for related welfare issues. Two volunteered for an organization that supports international students, and at this point their integration trajectories overlapped with participants described in Trajectory C, below. The other participant planned to lobby the government to enforce greater regulation of immigration consultants and curb immigrant exploitation.[29] He emphasized that just as international students have the same responsibilities to the state as Canadians, Canada also has responsibilities to its foreign students.

Table 7.   **Motivation Group 2's integration trajectories**

Motivation: Seeking a world-class education and career	
Number of participants:	11
Type of Canadian credential:	Master's, MBA or bachelor's
Personal profile and family background:	From North India (Delhi or Punjab), southern India, or had lived/worked in Middle East Older on average – most had already lived away from home before
Apparent capital on arrival to Canada	Economic: relatively wealthy; parents typically in high-powered careers Cultural: high – several attended prestigious schools and leading universities in India Social: low – few close connections in Canada
English proficiency on arrival to Canada:	All fluent

Trajectory C: Connecting through community action	Trajectory D: International lifestyle
Number of participants: 4	Number of participants: 7
Prominent integration strategies:	
Participating in groups and organizations	Formal peer mentorship

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[29] This participant, as well as a couple of other respondents, described how unlicensed immigration consultants are exploiting international students by charging extortionate fees to find them jobs that will grant access to a work permit and potentially PR—that is, jobs that come with a Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) confirming that no Canadian worker or permanent resident is available to do the job. These "consultants" are reportedly charging exorbitant fees of up to $50,000 to find immigrants such work, which is illegal as Canadian law mandates that the employer covers the costs of obtaining an LMIA.

Advocating for immigrant rights	Making friends with people from around the world
Co-national friendships	Co-national friendships
Applying/intending to apply for PR	Co-ops (internships)
	Networking
	Applying/intending to apply for PR

For **Motivation Group 2** (Table 7) the decision to study in Canada was also influenced by extremely high competition in India for desirable university places and employment, but they had a wider range of options available to them. They chose to study overseas for a world-class education or to pivot their careers or lifestyles in a different direction. Social ties were much less of an influence on their decision; few had relatives in Canada and none lived with family during their studies. Canada was one option among several countries; most of the group also applied to institutions in the US and some to Australia as well. They felt that Canada provided the best offer in terms of the educational institution, specific program of study and tuition fees. Some also preferred Canadian immigration policies, especially its more flexible options to remain and work post-graduation.

> You pay so much money for an MBA program, and then you want to stay in that country afterwards… you need to get that ROI [Return on Investment] again. You kind of think of an MBA or a master's program as a way to kind of get out of a place that you're in, right. So for me it was a way to escape, and in that way I think it made more sense than the US. (Kailash, who studied for an MBA at a world-ranking university in BC; resident in Canada for three years)

These participants' families appeared to have higher economic and cultural capital compared to Motivation Group 1. Their parents and siblings were typically highly educated and worked in high-powered jobs such as headteachers, bureaucrats, bank managers or hotel owners. These participants had grown up in north India (Delhi or Punjab), southern India or the Middle East, and were older on average when they came to Canada. Most had established careers in India already, and half had lived away from family and outside their home culture before, mostly studying or working in a different region of India—typically the IT sector in Bangalore—where they were exposed to a different culture and dominant language other than their native tongues. All were fluent in English on arrival to Canada and half mentioned having attended an English-medium school in India.

This group were unlikely to mention financial challenges. Some described their tuition fees as affordable, especially in comparison to US educational institutions. All were supported financially by their parents during their studies, excepting one who was supported by his savings and his wife's salary. Most participants still seemed cost-sensitive during their studies though, considering the exchange rate between rupees and Canadian dollars. Most did not work part-time during their studies other than taking paid co-op (internship) positions, and some had also taken scholarships, bursaries or loans. Paid professional co-op placements organized via educational institutions' careers services departments were highly valued by participants who had the opportunity**.** Co-ops helped students to

access the local job market at the right level for their experience and education, overcoming the challenge of employer insistence upon "Canadian experience" and the devaluation of foreign qualifications that is commonly encountered by immigrants, while also familiarizing them with the local work culture. For several, co-op placements turned into part-time jobs and then full-time professional roles post graduation.

Like other participants, most of these individuals' closest friends in Canada were also Indian nationals. However, many in this group said the chance to meet and get to know people of a diverse mix of nationalities was highly appealing, as in India they would have only met other Indians. Interestingly, their emphasis was not on getting to know Canadians specifically. Previous studies on international students' social networks prioritize connections with domestic students as more valuable, considering friendships with other international students as "much less salient" and "recreational" only, that is, providing companionship for non-culture and non-task oriented activities (Bochner, Mcleod, & Lin, 1977, p. 292). These participants valued connections with other nationalities equally. Furthermore, some described difficulty in getting to know Canadians. This seemed primarily due to domestic students' disinterest, or, for a couple, not understanding some aspects of the culture such as the cultural use of language or colloquialisms. Difficulty in getting to know domestic students is commonly highlighted on studies on international students' adaptation, and 56 percent of international students in a national study reported having zero Canadians as friends (Canadian Bureau for International Education, 2015). Some participants reported that other international students of different nationalities were easier to engage with than Canadian students and were more open to becoming friends:

> I would say Canada is an accepting country, but I feel you have to do the work sometimes at least to engage with Canadians. It's not like at the first moment they will become your friends and you can hang out with them. I feel like being the immigrant, you have to put in more time or efforts to become friends with Canadians or North Americans. (Nilesh)

However, when participants were able to befriend domestic students or international peers from cultures more similar to Canada, it could help them to overcome some cultural challenges. For instance, several participants described how the educational system is less hierarchal between students and professors than in India with students expected to debate in class. This was an initial shock for some participants, and having "local" friends helped them to navigate the new educational environment.

For participants in Motivation Group 2, the biggest determiner in their integration trajectories appeared to be whether they were Sikhs, considering the large Punjabi Sikh population in British Columbia, and whether they wanted to experience a different lifestyle. Those in **Trajectory C** (Table 7) primarily sought to integrate through community engagement and action.[30] These four participants were primarily Sikhs from Punjab, most

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[30] After completing their studies, some Trajectory B (Motivation Group 1) participants overlapped with these Trajectory C "community action" participants as they became involved in community volunteering or immigrant advocacy.

of whom with existing connections in Canada but in other cities. Most of this sub-group worked part-time during their studies but the income was usually supplementary rather than imperative, with only one relating considerable financial difficulties while studying. Their friendship networks were primarily other Indian nationals, especially other Sikhs, but they also expressed a strong interest in connecting with other nationalities. Although most lived in areas with large South Asian populations, they generally worked in professional roles after graduation with colleagues from a wide mix of nationalities and ethnicities.

Trajectory C participants' active organizational membership—volunteering with non-profits—was highly beneficial for them; two found professional work post-graduation via extended networks built largely through volunteering, and group membership positively impacted emotional and mental wellbeing. Their civic engagement was primarily motivated by wanting to improve the situation of other Indian students that they saw struggling in Canada. The organizations they volunteered with provided support services to international students, sometimes in partnership with government agencies such as the RCMP, the Mental Health Commission of Canada as well as other local groups. The main focus was aiming to reduce international students' vulnerabilities, educating international students on their rights in Canada and supporting them with their mental health. Activities included seeking to educate local South Asian communities on the issue to address mental health taboos, plus addressing issues of exploitation by writing to exploitative employers or landlords on students' behalf to reiterate the law, and reporting the employers or landlords to governmental authorities if required.

The participants described some tensions in the South Asian diaspora in BC's Lower Mainland, where foreign students were being unfairly associated with the bad behaviour of a minority of young Indian students living away from home for the first time; for example, subletting and overcrowding apartments, or leasing cars and racing them around the neighbourhood. For a couple of participants, advocacy had included speaking to the local media about the violence against and exploitation of foreign students, whilst underscoring immigrants' vulnerabilities and the reality that most Indian students are very hardworking. A couple of respondents commented that international students without existing connections in the local South Asian community were more likely to be criticized than other young people given their lack of family members to defend them. One felt that the criticism was partly due to resentment from older first-generation immigrants whose education and work experience had been nullified upon moving to Canada.[31] As no international study route had been available to them, these older immigrants had had to work in labouring jobs and perceived the "easy" immigration process for international students as unfair.

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[31] Similar criticisms of newcomers from older first-generation Punjabi immigrants in the UK have been reported in Qureshi et al. (2012). The new migration regime "where students are seen as positive economic assets" has opened up migration to groups previously uninvolved in terms caste, class, and gender (Qureshi et al, 2012, p. 25). These students are sometimes assumed to be illegal migrants by the established diaspora, and can be mistrusted as they are presumed to be working in undocumented jobs, supposedly undercutting the minimum wage (p. 42).

Regarding their own challenges, some participants in this group related how religious group membership had offered solace and support when they were facing homesickness or mental health difficulties. Two had even founded a Gurdwara when studying in a part of Canada where there was only a small Sikh population and no existing temple. The project brought international students together with Indo-Canadians in the town whilst forging relations with other religious and community groups in the area.

Trajectory D "international lifestyle" participants (Table 7) chose studying abroad in order to gain international study and work and to experience a different lifestyle, and were mostly very open to other cultures. Unlike other groups, this trajectory included participants from the south of India and those who had grown up or worked in the Middle East.[32] Most of these participants did not have strong existing connections to Canada. All had studied for master's at the University of British Columbia (UBC, ranked number 51 in the QS Global World Ranking in 2020)[33] where five of them had studied for MBAs. Although one had family friends in Vancouver, he viewed these connections as a double-edged sword. These students did not work during their study programs other than paid co-op placements, partly due to the relatively short duration and intensity of the MBA program. Their social circles were a mix of international friends including a minority of Canadians; however, as with other participants, closer friends were more likely to be co-nationals. Most said that that cultural differences in Canada were not a surprise to them and that it had not been difficult to connect with people from other cultures. Some had even intentionally avoided getting to know Indians in Canada as they felt they should move outside their own cultural bubbles:

> I came with an open mind and I really wanted to get into the culture and interact with as many people as I could. So that was one of my goals, because in India everyone is Indian. I might have tried too hard in the way that I stayed away from some of the Indian community a little bit in the beginning. (Ajay, who studied for an MBA; resident in Canada for seven years)

This avoidance of other Indians was primarily because they thought it would hinder them from making friends with other nationalities, although one also wanted to avoid the "cliqueyness" he perceived in some Indians socializing only with other Indians. Another participant, meanwhile, sought to avoid some other Indians including his family's Indo-Canadian connections as he felt that they were interfering in his personal life. However, avoiding co-national ties could also create feelings of loneliness:

> The culture in India is very much more community-driven, so you're always concerned what would my friends think? My immediate family, what would my aunt think, my uncle think? And all of this. Whereas here

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[32] One was from a small town in Karnataka but had studied and worked in Bangalore, and the remaining two were born in Andhra Pradesh and Kerala but had grown up in predominantly Indian communities in Kuwait and Dubai respectively.

[33] QS Global World Ranking 2020 https://www.topuniversities.com/universities/university-british-columbia#wurs [Accessed on April 7, 2020]

it's on you, and you make your own decisions. It's very individual-driven. But a lot of people I know here, they find this gap and they find that community and that's why they stick with Indians, because that's how they are. But I think I've always been very individual… so that's the reason I'm here. When my dad tells me to meet all these relatives, I feel like I'm drifting back into all that. I consciously try to stay away from that, but I have some obligations and I can't just ignore them… I think it's like a double-edged sword. The things I want to escape are the things I miss too. I miss that closeness, because a lot of your friends here are not that close. But if you want to be very individualistic, you have to know what you want, you have to let go of that. (Tyrion, who studied for a master's; resident in Canada for two and a half years)

The participants who had studied for MBAs had had access to a formal peer membership scheme, which they described as highly beneficial. Mentorship was organized via the university to pair junior students with seniors before and upon arrival to the country, to provide practical and cultural information well as advice on the program. It appeared that this mentorship could help students to avoid downward social mobility by building their knowledge of Canadian systems. Networking was also a key integration approach for MBA students, as both an economic and social integration strategy. Networking was strongly encouraged by their academic program, but it had limited effectiveness for these participants in terms of job hunting. The majority of MBA graduates in this study had found professional jobs online following graduation, or via co-op placements. Participants found inviting a stranger to meet for coffee—which they saw as the main networking strategy—culturally awkward and a frustrating hoop to jump through. It was not something they had needed to do in India, where multinational corporations visit top universities to recruit students for graduate roles. Participants' informal networking efforts in Canada appeared more successful; some had become involved with local tech sector meetups and accelerator groups, which introduced them to new contacts whilst familiarizing them with the local business environment, and one found his ideal job that way.

Integration outcomes

The majority of participants described themselves in interview as integrated to a greater or lesser extent,[34] despite the differences in their experiences and everyday lives. Most were adapting or had adapted to their local environments in Canada according to their own opinions of what integration should mean.[35] Regarding immigration status—a "vertical" factor of immigration—half (8/16) had PR and most of the others intended to apply. The majority thought they were likely to settle in Canada. However, for Trajectory D ("international lifestyle") participants, PR status or even an intention to apply for

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[34] No one explicitly said that they did not feel integrated, but this is perhaps predictable as one may feel uncomfortable responding in such a way to the direct question "how integrated do you feel?" For this reason, the question was deliberately asked at the end of the interview and followed by the question of what integration meant to them personally.

[35] To give an example, one participant described integration as meaning adjusting to a new environment without changing oneself, and having the freedom to do what you choose. Her intention for moving to Canada was to gain a better education and more personal freedom and safety than she would have had in India. She had achieved these ambitions and felt integrated.

citizenship did not necessarily mean that they intended to stay permanently; three of the seven said they may move to another nation depending on opportunities, reflecting their overarching ambition for world-class careers.

> I think I am just as Canadian as anyone else at this point... Applying for citizenship just seems like the natural thing to do. And it's just a natural progression of any immigrant. Unless – what I've noticed in some cases, where it doesn't happen, it's if you're from a very affluent family, who doesn't really care about that, and you have a nest to go back on, and a safety net to go back on, then you don't really care. (Hardeep)

Integration outcomes are not static over time with durable conclusions, and participants were at different stages in their lives and trajectories. In comparison with this study's emergent definition, however, participants' integration could be interpreted as follows at the time of interview:

Sociopolitical integration

Regarding *being accepted by others without having to lose one's own cultural identity* all participants were integrated. Although most participants described having changed in some way in response to the new social environment—for example, smiling at strangers despite its not being customary in India or adopting new hobbies such as hiking or skiing—they had made these changes because they saw them as positives and not as they felt pressured to conform. Concerning the second aspect of the social dimension, "adjusting to life in a new host country by being open to connecting with others from different cultures", Trajectory D participants were the most socially integrated, having actively pursued the goal of getting to know people of other cultures. On the whole, Motivation Group 1 participants expressed less interest in connecting with people of other cultures, with most having a small social circle mostly comprising only family or friends from the same community as themselves. Trajectory A ("staying with family during studies") seemed the least socially integrated according to the emergent definition's emphasis on "connecting with others from different cultures", but within the context of Surrey and Abbotsford—where they lived—integrating into the local community for them meant integration into the Indo-Canadian diaspora. Punjabis have been BC for over 100 years, and 33% of Surrey and 26% of Abbotsford's populations were of South Asian visible minority status according to the 2016 Census (Statistics Canada, 2016).[36]

Pertaining to *civic engagement to help others in your community, and having political representation*, Trajectory B ("renting privately, struggling financially") and Trajectory C

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[36] These figures are derived from figures available at the two following sources:

Statistics Canada. 2017. Abbotsford, CY [Census subdivision], British Columbia and British Columbia [Province] (table). Census Profile. 2016 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2016001. Ottawa. Released November 29, 2017 (accessed July 17, 2020).

Statistics Canada. 2017. Surrey, CY [Census subdivision], British Columbia and British Columbia [Province] (table). Census Profile. 2016 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2016001. Ottawa. Released November 29, 2017 (accessed July 17, 2020).

("community action") participants were the most integrated. Trajectory C were likely to discuss integration in terms of outcomes for the South Asian diaspora and other communities in the Lower Mainland, including Indigenous Peoples, and not only their individual experiences. Trajectory D were least likely to be involved in civil society groups, and the least integrated in this regard.

Economic integration

Finally, regarding *having a decent job and enough money to support oneself*, almost all participants were integrated. Motivation Group 2 participants were the most so, with the majority of this group earning above or well above the median salary for British Columbia. Trajectory D participants, who had all studied for MBAs, were the highest earners and much more likely than others to raise the importance of economic integration. Although Motivation Group 1 participants had higher social capital on arrival to Canada in terms of close existing connections in their study destination, it did not lead to higher economic integration in terms of salaries. Of Motivation Group 1 participants working full time following graduation,[37] two of the three were working for lower salaries compared to other employed study participants, with salary bands that seemed low for their professions. This could possibly reflect the potential downsides of co-ethnic networks or 'bonding ties' highlighted in previous studies (Qureshi et al., 2012, p. 56; Joseph, 2016, p. 172) but further research would be required to make a judgement.

Relation to existing theory

Participants' integration experiences relate closely to Morawska's four components of multicultural integration (Table 8) which view integration in terms of context-dependent and flexible, plural trajectories (Morawska, 2018, p. 772). Morawska's first component—*identification with plural national/ethnic/religious groups resident in the host society*—was expressed by some participants simultaneously viewing themselves as Punjabi, Indian, and Canadian, or feeling a very close connection with Canada alongside their other identities. This finding aligns with the second component, *internationalization and practice of cultural aspects of different national/ethnic-religious groups resident in the host society* (p. 765). That many participants sought to build relationships with other immigrants corresponds strongly with the third component: *regular social engagement with members of different national/ethnic/religious groups resident in the host society* (p. 765). Participants' lack of emphasis on connecting with Canadians specifically perhaps reflects the diverse demographics where they lived, as 21.9% of the Canadian population were foreign-born immigrants (Canadian Census 2016) and immigrants represented 40.8% of Vancouver's population in 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2017). Participating in organizations, advocating for immigrant rights and concern for justice for Indigenous Peoples reflected the fourth component, *civic commitment to/responsibility for the wellbeing of the body politic of several national/ethnic/religious communities resident in the host society* (p. 765).

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[37] Of the two other participants in this group, one had only recently graduated and was working part-time in casual employment whilst the other was still studying and working part-time.

Table 8.   Participants' strategies versus Morawska's multicultural integration trajectories

Sociopolitical integration strategies of this study's participants	Corresponding components of multicultural incorporation (Morawska, 2018, pp. 764-765)
Making friends with people from around the world	i) Symbolic identification with plural national/ethnic/religious groups resident in the host society and their traditions
Co-national friendships	iii) Regular social engagement with members of different national/ethnic/religious groups resident in the host society in formal, semi-formal, and/or informal settings including neighborhood public places (such as streets, shops, pubs, and eateries), workplaces, schools, homes and gardens
Formal peer mentorship	
Networking	
Adjusting without "blending in"	ii) Internalization and practice of extrinsic (language, customs) and intrinsic (values, normative expectations, beliefs) components of the cultures of different national/ethnic-religious groups resident in the host society
Applying for permanent residency (potentially leading to citizenship)	i) Symbolic identification with plural national/ethnic/religious groups resident in the host society and their traditions
Participating in groups and organizations	iv) Civic commitment to/responsibility for the wellbeing of the body politic of several national/ethnic/religious communities resident in the host society
Advocating for immigrant rights	

Some participants' trajectories also appeared to relate to the "selective assimilation" integration outcome posited by segmented assimilation theory, where immigrants integrate to aspects of life in the receiving country whilst preserving their own community's values and tight solidarity (Portes and Zhou, 1993, pp. 90-91, 96). Selective assimilation's "tight solidarity" had numerous benefits for participants; strong co-national ties created feelings of belonging, easing homesickness and supporting mental health. Nonetheless, a reliance upon them could have downsides; the "community-driven" culture could mean less personal freedom due to others seeking to reinforce Indian cultural norms. Furthermore, the reported landlord and employer exploitation seemed to be taking place primarily in the South Asian community, although participants had not experienced it directly themselves. The possible disadvantages of these "bonding" ties reflects findings in the social capital literature, especially early studies of social networks (Bott, 1955; Granovetter, 1973) and the literature on immigrants' co-ethnic social networks, which suggests co-ethnic ties can be helpful but also exert pressure to conform (Joseph, 2016, p. 172). Diasporic elites can profit from newcomers' unstable immigration status, and caste or gender can affect the potential for exploitation (Qureshi et al. 2012, p. 55-56).

Whilst "horizontal" aspects of integration (relating to Morawska's multicultural integration trajectories) were highly influential upon participants' experiences, "vertical" processes

were critical too, such as Canada's immigration regime.[38] The policies of allowing foreign students to work up to 20-hours a week off campus, offering post-graduation work permits and pathways to PR were a huge draw and the reason many participants in this study chose Canada over other countries. The desire to gain PR was also a key motivating factor for some integration strategies such as seeking Canadian work experience. The relatively open immigration pathways for international students reflect mainstream conceptualizations of Canadian multiculturalism, and its focus on "citizenisation" or providing pathways to equal citizenship (Kymlicka, 2018, p. 138).

6. Conclusion

In the context of high international competition to attract foreign students, this paper explored how a sample of Indian international students who studied at Canadian postsecondary institutions understand "integration" and how this related to their experiences settling into life in the host country. The participants in this study had a multicultural view of integration as a two-way process that involves newcomers being open to connecting with others from different cultures and being accepted without losing their own cultural identity. It differs from dominant conceptualizations of multicultural integration as it underscores the immigrant's own role in being open to other cultures.

My study suggests that immigrants' understandings and experiences of integration may be shaped by "horizontal" factors such as the immediate surroundings of their daily lives as much as by "vertical" forces such as immigration policies or educational systems. For this study's participants, an important aspect was adapting according to one's own values of what integration should mean. In this respect, my findings are similar to the multicultural trajectories of immigrant integration outlined by Morawska (2018), placing equal weight on micro-level factors alongside macro- (national-) level influences. The findings underline the importance of immigrants' immediate experiences, and locally embedded "prosaic interactions" (everyday intergroup relations) with members of different ethnic, racial and religious groups (Morawska, 2018, pp. 769, 772). Simultaneously, participants' views on integration reflect Canada's policies of multiculturalism. Whilst participants' explicit understandings of integration did not include securing durable immigration status, "vertical" factors like Canada's relatively open policies were highly important and most participants had or intended to gain permanent residency (PR). In this respect, participants' integration trajectories aligned with mainstream Canadian theories of multiculturalism and their strong attention to the civic aspects of immigrant incorporation, as expounded by Taylor (1994) and Kymlicka (1995) who emphasize offering immigrants access to the common rights of citizenship (Kymlicka, 1995).

The exploratory nature of this study helped reveal integration processes that would have been overlooked by most current integration measures, as participants' trajectories were

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[38] I follow Hector Oscar Arrese Igor's definition of "horizontal" forces referring to intersubjective relationships, that is, face-to-face interrelations such as friendship between two people. Meanwhile, "vertical" integration refers to a relationship between a collective (such as the government) and an individual, e.g. granting a pathway to citizenship (Arrese Igor, 2019, p. 312).

affected by their original motivations for migrating and their existing economic, cultural and social capital. How integrated they felt was linked to whether they were achieving the ambitions that led them to move to Canada in the first place. The finding that immigrants' original migration motivations affect outcomes may seem obvious, but it is not considered by most integration theories or frameworks currently employed in Canada or worldwide.

This study highlights how integration is highly context-dependent, even within a small sample like mine where respondents were similar in terms of nationality, age and location. The subjectivity of integration makes it notoriously difficult to measure. As trajectories of integration are highly personal and variable, we should be sceptical that measurement frameworks can transcend the specificities of time and space. Although the apparently simple format of "off the shelf" integration frameworks like the IPL Index are appealing, the data they generate can risk being vague and at worst, misleading. The IPL Index's ranking approach is built on a low-high conceptualization of integration, which offers a level of simplicity but at a cost; it obscures and over-simplifies a range of experiences and trajectories. It may be possible to build flexible frameworks that consider context specificity, for example by selecting specific dimensions informed by local, settled immigrants' insight into what matters for integration in that location, and developing tailored indicators. Whether this would work in practice would need detailed investigation.

My data shows some inadequacies in some of our existing understandings of integration. Nonetheless, this does not mean that the multicultural understanding articulated by this specific sample is how every immigrant thinks about integration. The participants were highly educated Indian international students (current and former) living in Metro Vancouver—a particularly diverse location with a large South Asian diaspora—and it would be interesting to conduct a similar study with different types of participants in various contextual locations in Canada to see how findings differ. It could also be beneficial to carry out a study with a similar sample in other countries that draw large numbers of foreign students but which have different immigrant integration policies, such as the US, UK or Australia, to see how integration is affected by various factors.

Three main implications arise from this study. First, when conceptualizing or operationalizing integration, it is necessary to consider how immigrants themselves experience and understand it. Second, immigrants' original motivations for migrating should be considered more closely when seeking to understand modes of integration. Third and finally, international students in Canada should be categorized as a subset of immigrants rather than sojourners, as many will remain permanently in line with Canada's immigration policy. Indeed, international students' integration is important from a social and welfare perspective even when they stay only temporarily, as a lack of adequate finances or familiarity with Canadian systems can make them vulnerable to abuse and mental illness. There remain large gaps in the literature regarding student exploitation, especially in Canada, and further research would be valuable. As countries seek to grow their economies by recruiting foreign students, states must also ensure that they are delivering fair outcomes to international student immigrants and protecting their welfare.

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