

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

**by
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Abstract

The number of international students in tertiary education has soared in recent decades, driven by rising student demand and countries competing to boost their economic and human capital. International students are often considered “ideal” migrants, yet they are frequently overlooked in the integration literature despite having the same vulnerabilities as other immigrants. This exploratory study investigates what integration means according to 16 Indian students who studied at Canadian postsecondary institutions. Via interviews and a survey, it found participants had a multicultural understanding of integration that emphasizes sociopolitical and, secondarily, economic dimensions. This understanding differs from dominant conceptualizations of multicultural integration as it underscores the role of the immigrant in being open to other cultures, and considers “horizontal” processes of integration to be as important as “vertical” factors such as immigration policies. Participants’ adjustment strategies and trajectories were affected by their views on what integration should mean; their existing economic, social and cultural capital; and their original motivations for moving to Canada. Highlighting how integration is highly context-dependent, this study reveals processes that are commonly overlooked by theories and measures of integration.

Keywords: international students; integration; multiculturalism; immigration; Canadian immigration; Indian students

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Chapter 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 both 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, after the US, UK and China, and ahead of Australia (International Institute of Education, 2019). Foreign students pay nearly four times more on average for tuition than domestic students in Canada.¹ In British Columbia (BC) they contribute almost half of universities' tuition fee revenue whilst comprising one fifth of university enrolment (BC Federation of Students, 2019, p. 7). 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). The impact of the pandemic is threatening the financial viability of educational institutions, with some universities warning that there will be a sizeable drop in domestic and international student enrolment, and therefore income (The Globe and Mail, 2020).

¹ The 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 full-time undergraduates (Statistics Canada 2018).

Canada is actively promoting itself as a destination of choice for overseas study, especially to students from India, China, Vietnam and the Philippines.² Canada's recruitment of foreign students is part of the country's immigrant-fuelled economic growth strategy (Royal Bank of Canada, 2020). International students are considered "ideal" candidates for permanent residency because of their Canadian educational qualifications, in-demand labour skills and proficiency in official languages (Government of Canada, 2019). The number of study permit holders in Canada increased to 642,480 in 2019, an 82 percent increase since 2015 (Canadian Citizenship & Immigration Resource Center, 2020). However, due to travel restrictions and border closures in response to COVID-19, the number of students entering Canada on study visas fell 45 percent in March 2020 compared to a year earlier (Royal Bank of Canada, 2020). In response, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) announced in May 2020 that online courses will count towards the Canadian study requirement of the Post Graduate Work Permit, aiming to ensure that Canada remains attractive to foreign students to discourage them from deferring their studies (CIC News, 2020).

Although international students are generally classified as temporary residents, their integration is a relevant discussion in Canada. Many foreign students transition to become permanent residents; 36 percent of Express Entry invitations to apply for permanent residency issued by the IRCC in 2017 were to former international students (Polestar Immigration Research, 2019). Although international students are considered "ideal future Canadians" according to Federal Immigration Minister Ahmed Hussen (St. Catharines Standard, 2019) they typically experience the same vulnerabilities as temporary immigrants (Clibborn, 2018, p. 2). These vulnerabilities commonly include financial hardship (Sherry, Thomas, & Chui, 2010; Calder, et al., 2016, p. 109), labour exploitation (Nyland, et al., 2009; Clibborn, 2018), and mistreatment by landlords (A. Sayed, personal communication, April 16, 2020). It is important to understand newcomers' experiences adapting into life in Canada and other host nations as their integration is a welfare issue, and one that has implications for policy development to build inclusive and cohesive communities. Although international students as a group are often studied, there is comparatively little literature on their integration into Canada,

² 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).

and especially little regarding students from India. This is surprising given that Canada explicitly aims to attract former students to become permanent residents (Government of Canada 2018) and that India is the largest source country of international students to Canada.³

This exploratory study investigates what “integration” means for current and former international students who studied at Canadian postsecondary institutions. More specifically, it explores how a sample of students from India experience the process of adjusting to life in Canada as a host country during and after their studies. The aim is to understand integration from the point of view of immigrants themselves, whose voices are often missing from the literature. In Chapter 2, I review various theories of integration—a term which varies considerably in meaning depending on different national, social or political viewpoints (Kindler, Ratcheva, & Piechowska, 2015, p. 7)—and outline the increasing attempts to measure levels of immigrant integration. In Chapter 3, I introduce the mixed research methods employed in this study. A critique of a current integration measurement framework, the IPL Immigrant Integration Index, follows in Chapter 4 using data from this study. Presenting the research findings, the chapter contrasts survey and interview responses, and describes what integration meant to participants in this study. Chapter 4 then compares the emergent definition of integration with current conceptualizations, and outlines participants’ integration trajectories and adaptation strategies. Finally, Chapter 5 highlights the implications of this research and possible future avenues of investigation.

³ In 2019, 219,855 students with Indian citizenship held a study permit for Canada (BC Council for International Education, 2020).

Chapter 2.

Literature review

This chapter introduces dominant theories of integration and key dimensions, outlines prominent frameworks designed to measure immigrant integration, and summarizes existing research on international students' integration.

2.1. Prominent integration theories

“Integration” can be described as “the process of settlement, interaction with the host society, and social change that follows immigration” (Penninx & Garcés-Masareñas, 2016, p. 11). I intentionally used this broad definition to inform my study, given that there is no unanimous agreement on what “integration” means, or on how the process of settlement and adjustment into a new country works. As this study is exploratory, it was appropriate to start with a rudimentary definition rather than a conceptualization informed by a specific integration theory. 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 of assimilation is that it requires immigrants to relinquish their existing cultures, which some commentators 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-Mascreñas, 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 possible outcomes (Brown & Bean, 2006). As argued by Portes and Zhou, the context in which immigrants find themselves in the receiving country plays a decisive role in their integration trajectories. Immigrants' "modes of incorporation" depend upon a range of contextual 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). Illustrating the theory, 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). Portes and Zhou suggest that selective assimilation may be preferable for immigrant minorities, but stress that whether it is possible depends upon the specific immigrant group's vulnerabilities, resources, and "history", presumably meaning the history of their co-national group in the receiving society (Portes and Zhou, 1993, pp. 96).

Assimilation and segmented assimilation are commonly associated with the US, whereas multicultural theory is associated with Canada. Multiculturalism means that immigrants retain their own unique cultural identities and contribute 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, where

newcomers can become full participants in the host country whilst retaining their own cultural identity (Wong and Tezli, 2013, p. 14). In Canada, "multiculturalism" is used to describe both demographics of the population and also national-level public policy (Tremblay, 2019, p. 83). The policy began officially with the Multicultural Act of 1971⁴ (Tremblay, 2019, pp. 89-90), with Pierre Elliott Trudeau declaring that:

“National unity if it is to mean anything in the deeply personal sense, must be founded on confidence in one’s own individual identity; out of this can grow respect for that of others and a willingness to share ideas, attitudes and assumptions. A vigorous policy of multiculturalism will help create this initial confidence.” (Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau, 1971, cited in Tremblay, 2019, pp. 90-91).

“Confidence in one’s own individual identity” as the basis of national unity is a strong theme in the writings of Charles Taylor, despite the fact that Taylor was Trudeau’s political opponent.⁵ Taylor, a philosopher who has been at the frontline of Canadian

⁴ The Multicultural Act was the response of Pierre Elliot Trudeau’s government to the final report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, also known as 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 the peaceful co-existence of the Francophone and Anglophone communities and also, later, of the Indigenous populations and new 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, where Canada’s national ethos and institutions were changed to reflect multiculturalism within a bilingual Anglo-Francophone framework (Tremblay, 2019, p. 83). This framework was defined in as follows:

1. The government of Canada will support all of Canada’s cultures and will seek to assist, resources permitting, the development of those cultural groups which have demonstrated a desire and effort to continue to develop, a capacity to grow and contribute to Canada, as well as a clear need for assistance.
2. The government will assist members of all cultural groups to overcome cultural barriers to full participation in Canadian society.
3. The government will promote creative encounters and interchange among all Canadian cultural groups in the interest of national unity.
4. The government will continue to assist immigrants to acquire at least one of Canada’s official languages in order to become full participants in Canadian society.

Source: Library and Archives Canada. Canada, Parliament, House of Commons, Debates, 28th Parliament, 3rd Session, Volume 8 (October 8, 1971): 8545–8548, Appendix, 8580–8585; cited in Tremblay, 2019, p. 90.

⁵ Taylor was a candidate for the moderate Left New Democratic Party (NDP) at federal elections four times in the 1960s, famously losing to Pierre-Elliott Trudeau in 1965. During Québec's Quiet Revolution of 1960-1970, when French-Canadian nationalism (previously largely rural, conservative, Catholic and apolitical) was transformed into an assertive and sovereignty-seeking Québec nationalism, Taylor was a proponent of an asymmetrical Canadian federalism which

politics since the 1960s (Laforest, 2016) continues to exert a strong influence upon Canadian conceptions of multiculturalism. In his 1992 essay, "The Politics of Recognition", Taylor famously theorized the trend of different groups in democratic nations seeking or demanding recognition of their distinct cultural identities. Taylor reasons that the state can engage with a public conception of "the good life" without discriminating against minorities who have a different view of what that means (Arrese Igor, 2019, pp. 305, 310) and that every culture should be approached with a presumption of value (Taylor, [1992] 1994, p. 69).⁶ According to this understanding of multiculturalism, recognizing distinctiveness is crucial for adherence to the principle of universal equality, to act against discrimination, and to reject the relegation of minority groups to second-class citizenship (p. 39). As identity in Western societies today is rooted in the notion of authenticity and being true to oneself rather than upon the rigid social hierarchies of the past, if a person's identity is recognized incorrectly or as inferior by others it can cause harm and oppression, negatively impacting the person's self-worth (p. 36). This is because, according to Taylor, an individual's identity is not formed in isolation, but negotiated in dialogue with others (p. 34).⁷ Although "difference-blind" state policies may in principle afford equal respect to every person, treating everyone in the same fashion can also be viewed as negating identity and being discriminatory, "by forcing people into a homogenous mould that is untrue to them" (p. 43).

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

would grant special status to Québec. Meanwhile, Trudeau opposed this view, instead preferring a rejuvenated constitution that favoured bilingualism and multiculturalism alongside a new Charter of Rights but without granting special status to any province. In 1980, at the referendum on Québec independence pushed for by René Lévesque's sovereigntist Parti Québécois, Taylor successfully campaigned alongside Pierre-Elliott Trudeau for a united Canada (Laforest, 2016).

⁶ 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).

⁷ Taylor is often considered to be a communitarian, as he insists on the importance of communal or collective forces in explaining individual identity and social life, rather than seeing society as "an aggregate of cooperating and competing individuals" as liberalism traditionally has (Abbey, 2000, pp. 101-102).

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 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). In recent years, the debate on multiculturalism, especially in Western Europe, has 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 However, 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

⁸ In these discussions, “integration” often refers to immigrants’ participation in mainstream state institutions, and this understanding of integration has led some Western European countries to develop assimilative politics such as obligatory courses and tests for newcomers on cultural norms and values alongside official language tests (Joppke, 2007). These discussions respond to the growth of nationalist right-wing parties in liberal democracies, especially in Europe, where some see multiculturalism as “a disguised form of dictatorship” which privileges group or collective rights over the individual, leading “ordinary people” (normally considered to be white non-immigrants) to become disillusioned with or even 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 that protect minority cultures are not only consistent with liberal values, but promote them by providing individuals choice in how they define their own 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.

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 (Crul & Lelie, 2019, p. 193). Whilst the term is mostly used in relation to European cities, it is also relevant to Canada as the home of a number of superdiverse cities including Toronto and Vancouver (Spoonley, 2014, pp. 6-7). Like multiculturalism, superdiversity recognizes that integration is a multidirectional and multidimensional 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). 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). 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 immigration points 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), and the OECD has stated that Canada's "carefully designed" and long-standing skilled migration system is considered a benchmark for other countries (OECD, 2019). Immigrants report a strong sense of belonging to Canada and naturalization of newcomers 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). However, Canada's unique set of circumstances mean that its policies cannot be straightforwardly replicated in other countries; for example, the lack of illegal immigration to Canada is due to the country's geographical location more than any other factor (Kymlicka, 2018, p. 145).

2.2. What integration requires

The extensive integration literature identifies numerous dimensions that play a role in immigrants' integration at both community and individual levels. The most prominent of these 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 and whether immigrants have temporary or permanent visas or citizenship; political integration, often measured in terms of voting in elections for naturalized citizens or interest in politics for temporary residents; duration of residency in the host country; and familiarity with the host country's systems and institutions, such as knowing how to see a doctor. Health and educational integration outcome measures are also common, typically analyzed at the community level by comparing immigrant data with domestic populations. Other integration dimensions, meanwhile, 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 pertinent 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). Addressing this concern, Ekman and Amnå define 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, the most 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 wide definition of the term has been criticized by Ekman and Amnå (2012) among others for its overly broad conceptualization.¹¹

According to the second idea of social capital, it is conceptualized in terms of inter-relational ties, or social networks which are “more or less institutionalized

¹¹ Putnam’s “civic engagement” model of social capital is highly influential, but his argument that civic engagement correlates with a functioning democracy and market economy has been criticized as overly simplistic (Ekman and Amna, 2012, p. 284). Putnam’s understanding of the term “civic engagement” focuses on the “engagement” rather than civic or political aspects, as he views it as incorporating everything from reading newspapers to political participation, social networks, to organizational membership and interpersonal trust (Ekman and Amna, 2012, p. 284). A further criticism of Putnam’s civic engagement and social capital theory is that he does not sufficiently address the crucial role that political and economic factors play in integration and development. His theory implies that individuals are to blame themselves if they have low social capital, suggesting that they could reduce the social inequalities facing them if they could only “lift themselves up by their bootstraps” (Harriss, 2002, p. 114). Furthermore, what Putnam refers to as “social capital” can also be seen as an expression of historic and ongoing social inequality between groups rather than depending on individuals’ degree of civic mindedness (Portes & Vickstrom, 2011, pp. 469, 472). Illustrating this criticism, social inequalities facing “visible minorities” in Canada does not appear to be due to a lack of civic mindedness. Although second generation racial minorities report higher levels of perceived vulnerability and discrimination than non-immigrants or first-generation immigrants (Banting & Kymlicka, 2010, p. 55) membership of organizations 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). According to Putnam’s conceptualization of social capital this would seem surprising, given that they use membership of groups and organizations is a key indicator of high social capital.

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), helping newcomers to integrate into a new country by providing practical help in securing access to resources, or in intangible ways such as acceptance into the local community. Loose or weak social ties are believed to matter to social mobility at the individual level—for example in helping a person to gain information from outside his or her immediate social connections (Granovetter, 1973, p. 1373). Nonetheless, social 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 or enforce unequal power dynamics that exert pressure to conform to cultural norms and expectations within the diaspora (Qureshi, Varghese, Osella, & Rajan, 2012).

2.3. Measuring integration

Although integration is a contested concept, there are extensive and 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,¹² measuring integration is also assumed to be helpful

¹² 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).

by many commentators and governmental agencies 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) created by the Immigration Policy Center, the British Council and the Migration Policy Group in 2011 to rank integration and compare policies for legal immigrants across Europe and North America; and the European Commission's "Zaragoza" Integration Indicators, adopted in 2016 to support the integration of third country nationals into member states (European Commission, 2016). In Canada, the Canadian Index for Measuring Integration (CIMI), funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada 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. For example, researchers at Western University in Ontario developed an individual-level Integration Index to work alongside a community-level measure called "the Welcome-ability Index" which assesses communities' ability to integrate newcomers (Ravanera, Esses, & Fernando, 2013). The Integration Index, however, still relies upon large datasets to assess individual integration (Ravanera, Esses, & Fernando, 2013, p. 18).¹³ Meanwhile, the similarly-named Immigrant

¹³ The Integration Index used 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 in others and feelings of belonging at three levels – to the local

Integration Index (“IPL Index”) developed by political scientists at the Immigration Policy Lab (IPL) at Stanford University and ETH Zurich in 2018, proposes another way to measure integration at the individual level. Unlike other frameworks, the IPL Index is designed to be used “off the shelf” across diverse groups and contexts in different countries without relying on large-scale survey data or comparison with non-immigrant groups in the receiving country. In doing so, the IPL Index aims to provide a pragmatic questionnaire tool for researchers and also, more ambitiously, to create a common measure of integration to allow for comparison across studies, locations and time for the shared accumulation of knowledge (Harder, et al., 2018). Harder et al.’s test surveys with different immigrant groups found that the measure distinguished successfully between diverse immigrant cohorts with differing expected levels of integration, providing results that correlated with “well-established” predictors of integration (Harder, et al., 2018, p. 11483). The IPL Index is discussed further in chapters 3.3 and 4.1.

Despite the numerous and diverse attempts at measuring immigrants’ integration worldwide, the very premise itself 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 researchers assert that the preoccupation with measuring integration and the effects of “diversity” with commonly-used indicators such as feelings of trust in others or participation in local associations and groups detracts from more urgent problems, such as 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 that is 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

community, province and to Canada (Ravanera, Esses, & Fernando, 2013, p. 18). The study found that immigrants were less integrated than non-immigrants across most indicators; immigrants in paid work were slightly more integrated, but their incomes were lower than those of 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 survey of immigrants and non-immigrants (p. 21).

populations. Additionally, a critical question is what exactly immigrants are being integrated into; “society” is often referred to but almost never conceptualized – although the implication is that it is white (Schinkel, 2018).

2.4. Literature on the integration of international students

Having reviewed the literature relating to the integration of immigrants in general, it is also relevant to consider research on the integration of international students specifically. This literature broadly covers four areas: challenges facing the students’ adaptation, psychological reactions (or “culture shock”) as the students experience a new culture, the cultural learning process, and the influence of social interaction on students’ adaptation (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001, p. 143).

International students are believed typically to be embedded in three main types of social networks: monocultural, with co-nationals, helping to affirm the student’s cultural identity; bicultural, with significant host nationals, believed to be useful to help with academic and professional aspirations; and multicultural, with other international students, considered to be less valuable (Bochner, Mcleod, & Lin, 1977). Existing research indicates that international students often find it challenging to make friends with domestic students due to different cultural norms, language barriers or disinterest from the local population (Smith & Khawaja, 2011, pp. 703-704; Williams & Johnson, 2011). Further challenges identified in the literature include homesickness and loneliness, and experiences of discrimination and prejudice. There are few studies on foreign students’ economic integration, although a recent study conducted in Canada with international graduate students found many had financial difficulties due to currency fluctuations and problems in finding paid employment and adequate, affordable housing (Calder, et al., 2016, p. 98). Foreign students in Canada commonly underestimate the cost of living and often have to make a choice between rent and food (Calder, et al., 2016, p. 99).

The literature tends to view international students as sojourners rather than immigrants who may settle permanently, which means that their needs or vulnerabilities can be overlooked—especially when it comes to their participation in the labour force. This is surprising given that “international students possess many of the classic vulnerabilities of temporary migrants: temporary migration status, using a second or

other language, distance from support networks, unfamiliarity with local laws and institutions and the risk of deportation if caught working beyond their visa limits” (Clibborn, 2018, p. 2). Although some studies over the past decade have examined the international student workforce in Australia, bringing to light frequent illegal underpayment and exploitation¹⁴ (Nyland et al., 2009; Clibborn, 2018), it is unknown how many students participate in the local informal labour market in Canada where they potentially face similar conditions (Sondhi, 2019, p. 163). There is a small literature on students’ transition to become post-graduate workers and permanent residents in Canada and some of the barriers they can face (Arthur & Flynn, 2011; Dam, Chan, & Wayland, 2018), but the literature is largely silent concerning international students’ status as workers.

The local media and informants in the Lower Mainland of BC suggest that some international students are working full time under-the-table to finance their studies, with some Indian students even sending money overseas to their parents (Vancouver Sun, 2018; A. Sayed, personal communication, April 16, 2020). Furthermore, a lack of adequate housing is causing profound vulnerability and exploitation of many foreign students, exacerbating financial challenges and even leading to sexual exploitation and mental illness. Most educational institutions in BC do not offer student housing, and due to a lack of enforcement of tenancy laws some unscrupulous landlords are charging unfair rent or properties are being illegally overcrowded with up to seven students in one room (A. Sayed, personal communication, April 16, 2020). However, there is no literature on this. This study aims to investigate the lived experiences of a sample of international students, building upon existing studies whilst also addressing gaps in the literature.

Summary

In sum, despite the width and depth of the literature on immigrant integration, some gaps remain. Integration theory is typically concerned with “vertical” processes of

¹⁴ Australia spent a decade rebuilding its reputation following high profile racial attacks and exploitation of Indian international students, 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).

integration where the receiving country directs immigrants' experiences, more than the "horizontal" processes of individual integration into local communities. Furthermore, operationalizations of integration appear not to consider how immigrants themselves experience integration and what they deem relevant, although intuitively this would seem a useful way of seeking to understand the lived experiences of newcomers. Although Canada is often considered a model for best practice in multicultural integration, there have been comparatively limited studies of international students' integration trajectories. This is surprising considering the size of the cohort, Canada's aim to attract international students as "ideal future Canadians", and their potential vulnerabilities as temporary migrants.

Current integration measurement frameworks impose a "top-down" understanding of integration upon immigrants, rather than investigating what immigrants themselves believe matters. This exploratory study sought to take a more balanced approach by inviting immigrants to relay the factors of integration that they deemed most important, as well as investigating their integration according to a current measurement framework. The research methods are discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 3.

Research design and methods

This study included 16 in-depth, semi-structured and anonymous interviews with international students of Canadian postsecondary institutions. Interviews were conducted between January to March 2020. Each participant completed an online survey following the interview. This combined interview and survey methodology was employed for two reasons. Firstly, this approach was to gain further insights; interviews provide depth, but it can be more difficult to obtain specific details, such as precise numbers, when a participant is engaged and talking freely about their experiences. The more restricted format of a multiple-choice survey elicited responses that were more exact, such as the number of connections participants were frequently in touch with. Secondly, the mixed methods enabled a comparison of participants' self-reported feelings of integration with a current standard measurement framework, allowing for a critique of the measurement approach.

The survey was conducted following the interviews for practical as well as theoretical reasons. Practically, it was to help ensure a higher completion rate by building rapport in interviews first. This order seemed effective, as all interviewees completed the survey. Conducting interviews first also meant that participants were not influenced by the survey questions to think of integration according to the questionnaire's framework.

3.1. Sampling methodology

All research participants had studied or were studying at postsecondary institutions in Canada and were now residing in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia (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).

Inclusion criteria were limited to the following:

- 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 years¹⁵
- Currently resident in Metro Vancouver, BC

The Lower Mainland of BC was chosen for relevance and feasibility. BC is a highly popular study destination and ranks second in Canada for its number of international students, with 22% of all foreign students in Canada enrolled in metropolitan Vancouver in 2017 (Heslop, 2018, p. 10). The location was also chosen for practical reasons, so that I could easily travel to interview participants in person.

For recruitment, I initially identified five individuals via my own extended social network as I am an international student myself. I then used the snowball sampling method to recruit further participants. I provided initial contacts and existing participants with a one-page overview of the study to share with potential respondents before they introduced me to a new contact. If the potential respondent was interested in participating, the mutual contact put us in touch directly and I shared a digital copy of the consent form. If recipients were happy to sign and proceed, we scheduled a one-to-one interview. All participants granted informed consent. All interviews were recorded (audio only) apart from one, according to participant preferences. The research was conducted in English.

Table 1 presents a summary of the 16 research participants. The intention had been to recruit 30 individuals who had studied at various types of postsecondary institutions in Canada, ranging from universities to technical and community colleges. However, as the research phase of the study overlapped with lockdown measures in Canada and India to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus, it became increasingly difficult to recruit participants within the available timeframe.

¹⁵ Initially the inclusion 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.

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% from south India (1 Kerala, 1 Karnataka, 1 Andhra Pradesh)
Years resident in Canada	<1 to 9 years; Mode 2-3 years (50% of participants)
Immigration status	50% Permanent Residency (8) 31% Post-Graduate Work Permit (5) 19% Study Permit (3)
Type of Canadian post-secondary qualification	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.

There were some limitations concerning the small sample of 16 participants. Whilst the aim of the study was qualitative depth and not generalizability, the original intention had been to recruit a balanced spread of students or graduates from a broad range of educational institutions. As this was not viable in the timeframe available, the breakdown of participants was weighted roughly 2:1 towards master's graduates who had attended Canadian universities, rather than students who had studied for short, one- to two-year programs at community colleges or technical institutions in Canada. The weighting towards master's graduates means that the sample was a highly educated and relatively older and wealthier group of students. Participants' profiles are discussed further in chapter 4.3.

3.2. Interview development

Interviews were one-to-one, and between one hour to 1.5 hours long. The questions (Appendix A) aimed to elicit detailed and personal responses relating to participants' experiences, in their own words. Questions were open-ended to provide a channel for individuals to voice their views and describe their experiences in detail. Participants were encouraged to introduce other topics that they considered to be relevant. The interview questions operationalized the concept of "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.
2. **About the present:** Present occupation, what the participant's average day is like; what participants' study programs are or were like.
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.
4. **Finance and basic needs:** How participants supported themselves through their studies; how they navigated initial bureaucratic tasks in Canada; current employment and how they found their jobs (if applicable); where they lived during their studies, current residence and how they found the accommodation.
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.
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.
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.

The themes about the past and present aimed to build rapport whilst developing an understanding of participants' lives and personal backgrounds. Questions on the past also sought to discover whether participants' 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 whether the decision was more dependent upon recent social or political factors, such as international immigration policies or political or economic factors in India.

The questions on social ties sought to identify participants' primary social networks, any existing family ties in Canada, frequency of contact with family and friends in India, and how active participants are or were 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, discussed in chapter 2.

The thematic questions on finance and basic needs were intended to understand participants' economic capital and how this affected their experiences settling into life in Canada, as well as asking where and how participants found required information and resources. These questions were also about participants' employment and housing, and how satisfied they were with their jobs and living arrangements.

The questions on culture asked respondents to describe the main cultural differences that they had noticed between Canada and India. Despite there being a large literature on immigrants experiencing "culture shock", this term was intentionally not used in the questions as it implies that cultural differences are difficult to navigate.

The "thoughts on integration" theme investigated participants' subjective experiences in more detail. A series of direct and indirect questions sought to elicit respondents' personal views on their lived experiences. Less direct questions, such as participants' satisfaction with life in Canada and whether they felt accepted by others, were asked first to put participants at ease whilst gaining a deeper understanding of their feelings and experiences. The final two questions directly asked for their thoughts on their personal integration experiences and what integration means to them, as this is rarely included in measures of integration. These questions were intentionally asked

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.

towards the end of the interview to provide time for participants to relax and become more comfortable speaking freely.

The final theme questioned participants about their future plans, seeking to discover whether they had short term or permanent settlement plans in Canada. These questions also aimed to gain a sense of how attached participants felt to the country.

Following a coding method described by M. Q. Patton (2015, p. 598), interview transcriptions were coded individually according to the thematic framework of the dimensions described above. Interviews were then re-coded with inductive, generative coding based upon further themes that had emerged from two or more interviews. These were used to create categories and then to develop aggregate dimensions, which are discussed in Chapter 4.2.

Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to confer anonymity. Participants were invited to choose an alias themselves, recognizing that assigning names has meaning and is not simply a neutral, technical procedure (Allen & Wiles, 2016). The aim was to ensure that participants were named respectfully and according to their own preferences. A quarter of participants chose their own names, and the remainder opted to be assigned a pseudonym.

3.3. Survey development

The survey¹⁷ questions and scoring calculations (Appendix B) were based upon the Immigration Integration Index¹⁸ 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). Unlike most measures, the IPL Index does not require comparison with host national

¹⁷ Survey data were collected via SurveyMonkey software, which has been approved for research surveys by SFU IT Services and SFU Privacy Office and data is stored in Canada. All identifiable information was removed, and questions were phrased to avoid collecting personal information unnecessarily, for example, participants were asked to provide their year of birth but not the day or month. See SFU's Terms of Service for SurveyMonkey:

https://www.sfu.ca/itservices/publishing/surveys/surveymonkey_terms_of_service.html

¹⁸ Please see the IPL Integration Index website for more information or to download the standard survey materials: <https://www.integrationindex.org/theintegrationindex>

participants, meaning that it was usable with my sample population. The creators of the IPL Index justify this design choice as follows:

In our view, immigrants need not shed their own culture to live successful and fulfilling lives in the host country. Therefore, our measure focuses exclusively on capturing the degree to which immigrants have acquired the knowledge and capacity to build successful lives rather than the degree to which they have shed their cultural heritage. This is the reason we do not use the scores of native-born respondents as a benchmark for our measure. (Harder et al, 2018, p. 11484)

Following this conceptualization of integration as “the knowledge and capacity to build successful lives” in the host society, 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;
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.

Weighting each dimension equally, IPL Index survey responses are intended to be used to calculate an overall integration score for participants. Dimensions can also be compared so researchers can examine the interplay between them (Harder, et al., 2018, p. 11487). 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 (see Appendix B). 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.

I also added some further questions to the survey to enable a comparison of participant responses with interview data. These additional questions included basic demographic information such as gender, age and immigration status as well as further precise questions on social connections, informed by the literature on social capital given that it is frequently cited in discussions of integration. However, only the “IPL-12” questions were used to calculate an integration score for each participant, in line with the design of the IPL Index.

Chapter 4.

Findings

This chapter analyzes and interprets the survey and interview results. Firstly, Chapter 4.1 describes participants' integration levels according to the IPL Immigrant Integration Index, critiques the measure and compares the survey data with interview findings. Chapter 4.2 discusses what "integration" means according to participants' interview responses. Chapter 4.3 explores the lived experiences of the international students who participated in this study, the similarities and differences in their integration trajectories, and how the findings relate to existing theory.

4.1. Survey findings and critique of the IPL Immigrant Integration Index

I used the survey data to examine how the IPL Immigrant Integration Index works in practice. Below, I describe how respondents' IPL Index integration scores were assigned, and how participants' scores compared to their lived experiences as related in interviews. The results of the integration survey appeared highly ambiguous and did not seem to correspond closely with how integrated participants said that they felt, according to interviews. Scores implied that respondents were similar even when they had very different lived experiences of integration, providing good reason to investigate participants' experiences in more detail in interviews.

Calculating and interpreting scores

Firstly, I calculated aggregate integration scores for the cohort of 16 research participants, as well as each individual's total integration score (see Table 2). The scores were based upon responses to the twelve questions taken from IPL-12, the short form of the IPL Index questionnaire developed by Harder et al. (2018).¹⁹ 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

¹⁹See Appendix B for the specific questions and detail of how the IPL scores were calculated.

maximum score of 5. As there are two indicators for each of the six dimensions of integration, the minimum score for each dimension is 2 and the maximum is 10.

In my sample, the average aggregate integration score for the cohort was 43/60 (72%). The highest total score for any one participant was 51/60 (87%) and the lowest was 31/60 (52%), meaning that there was a range of 35 percentage points between all participants' aggregate IPL-12 scores. To give a sense of whether these scores are high or low, the sample chosen by Harder et al., creators of the IPL Index, to represent a presumably "well integrated" immigrant cohort scored 80% average, whereas the sample selected to demonstrate "low" integration levels scored an average of 46% (Harder, et al., 2018, p. 11485).²⁰ The reason the entire distribution of my data was higher than the distribution of Harder et al.'s combined samples seemed to be because of the high English proficiency or fluency of my research participants, many of whom had English-medium educations. 14/16 respondents in this study scored maximum points (5/5) for both the linguistic integration indicators, and therefore 10/10 for the dimension. The lowest participant score was 4/5 for each linguistic indicator and 8/10 for the dimension.

²⁰ 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 (Sample A, who had an average aggregate IPL-12 score of 0.8 or 80%), a sample of immigrants in Germany (Sample B; average score of 0.69), a group of participants from a program in New York that assisted low-income immigrants eligible for naturalization (Sample C; average score of 0.55) and finally a sample of recent immigrants enrolled in English language classes in San Jose, California (Sample D; average score of 0.46; Harder et al, 2018, p. 11485).

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

Participant	% score	Total score (/60)	Psychological score	Navigational 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

The top three “most integrated” participants in my sample according to total IPL-12 scores had indeed seemed very well-settled and satisfied with life in Canada, based upon their interview responses. For example, one of these individuals described himself as feeling “100% Canadian” and was planning to apply for citizenship. However, the IPL-12 results for most other respondents did not seem to correspond closely with how integrated they said they felt in interviews. 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. However, 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, “P10” in interview

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 in the country 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 aiming 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”. Whilst the IPL Index was not necessarily “wrong” to give these participants the same integration ranking, the identical aggregate score was somewhat misleading.

Although a deeper comparison between participants could be achieved by looking at each dimension in detail, participant responses still seemed somewhat unreliable as they were highly dependent on how an individual interprets a question. Regarding the “navigational” question of how easy it would be to find a job in Canada, by comparing P10 and P11’s interview and survey responses it appeared that P10, an MBA graduate, was responding to how long it would take to find professional work in his desired sector in Canada, and said it was “neither easy nor difficult” (scoring 3/5 for that indicator). Meanwhile, P11, who was 10 years younger, had graduated from college fairly recently and had been working part-time in casual roles. He reported that it would be “somewhat easy” and scored 4/5 points for the indicator. It seemed that P10 was

responding to the question of how easy it would be to gain a specific professional role whilst P11 appeared to interpret the question to mean casual employment. In the long form of the interview, the researcher can ask probing questions to glean a deeper sense of how a participant understands a topic, gaining an understanding of how questions are interpreted and clarifying if needed. Meanwhile, surveys are more reliant on respondents understanding and interpreting questions in the same way, without further clarification possible.

Not all IPL-12 questions appeared to be contextually relevant. For instance, most participants in my sample (10/16 or 62.5%) reported that it would be somewhat or very difficult to see a doctor—a question intended to assess “navigational” integration (i.e. the ability to meet basic needs). The IPL Index assigns immigrants lower scores for reporting difficulty in seeing a doctor, attributing it to a lack of knowledge. However, this difficulty seemed to be simply reflecting a reality in Metro Vancouver, where many residents are unable to register with a family doctor;²¹ a couple of participants had complained about this problem in interviews. Although Harder et al. sought to choose widely applicable questions in line with their ambition to develop a universal integration measure to facilitate comparability across diverse groups (Harder, et al., 2018, p. 11383), it nonetheless seemed that it could be beneficial to adapt dimension indicators to local contexts.

In Harder et al.’s study (2018), the researchers 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

²¹ The difficulty of being able to see a doctor in Vancouver is an issue that has been discussed frequently in the local media. Here is a short selection of articles on the topic:

Lau, L. (2019, October 8). Why Is it so Hard to Find a Doctor in Vancouver? *Vancouver Magazine*. Retrieved from <https://www.vanmag.com/Why-Is-it-so-Hard-to-Find-a-Doctor-in-Vancouver>

Kines, L; Harnett, C. E. (2019, June 23). Why can't you find a doctor? *Times Colonist*. Retrieved from <https://www.timescolonist.com/islander/why-can-t-you-find-a-doctor-1.23863824>

Karstens-Smith, B; Mangione; Kendra. (2018, July 4). 'It's a crisis': Patients in need of family doctor wait hours in line. *CTV News*. Retrieved from <https://bc.ctvnews.ca/it-s-a-crisis-patients-in-need-of-family-doctor-wait-hours-in-line-1.4000350>

dimensions of integration from my survey data²² compared to Harder et al.'s (2018) 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 data 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 of integration 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. This provides good reason to investigate participants' individual integration experiences in more detail, rather than relying on the survey scores alone.

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.

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

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.

Summary

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.

Although being able to calculate aggregate scores and rank participants according to integration levels seems a satisfyingly clear measure, its apparent straightforwardness is misleading. The seeming clarity of participant integration scores was achieved by omitting valuable nuance, and by using indicators that were open to interpretation and not necessarily contextually relevant. The ranking approach itself is built upon a low-high conceptualization of integration, which offers a level of simplicity, but at a cost; it obscures and over-simplifies a wide range of different experiences and integration trajectories. Rather than providing reliable insights on an immigrant's integration level, the indicative findings from my empirical data suggested that survey responses were highly ambiguous. The data had the potential to imply that immigrants

were similar in terms of their lived experiences when this was not the case. Therefore, 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).

4.2. How international students understand integration

Responses to the open-ended interview question “what does integration mean to you?” were varied, nuanced, and personal. Nonetheless, some strong themes emerged, outlined in 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 [Joseph, Gurdip, Hardeep, Amarjit, Jyoti, Raj, Ravi, Ajay, Simran, Mandy, Darshi]	Sociopolitical
Feeling you can be yourself and not treated as an outsider	6 [Joseph, Kailash, Hardeep, Ravi, Ajay, Mandy]	Sociopolitical
Civic engagement and political representation	4 [Gurdip, Hardeep, Raj, Paramjit]	Sociopolitical
Being integrated economically	4 [Joseph, Gurdip, Amarjit, Nilesh]	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 the 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 outside of one’s own cultural group:

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

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 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 "confidence in one's own individual identity", described in 1971 as the foundation of Canadian unity by former Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau (Tremblay, 2019, pp. 90-91), 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)

However, one participant had feared that he would be "profiled" while studying in a predominantly white area in Ontario, which led him initially to stop wearing a turban. He later felt that this was damaging from a mental health perspective and reaffirmed his Sikh faith and identity:

When you move to a new country, if you try to blend in and you are away from your roots, then if something bad happens because you have given up your identity just to blend in, then you will have to give up so many other things just to go with the flow. And eventually you will lose yourself and forget who you actually are. Eventually you will go into depression, and there are so many things that can happen as a result of this thing. Initially I never used to wear a turban to go out and to apply for jobs. But then, after a while I was like, what are you doing? This isn't me! (Ravi, who studied for a master's at a public research university in Ontario; resident in Canada for four years)

Whilst three participants described integration as “blending in” or adjusting to a new environment, these participants also described how the large Indo-Canadian community in Metro Vancouver had reduced their difficulties with cultural—and culinary—adjustment. It would be interesting to see whether Indian international students studying in other countries would define integration in a similar manner, to discern to what extent this view of integration was dependent on the political policies of the receiving country, but that investigation is beyond the scope of this study.

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, with a couple also highlighting how First Nations people have been marginalized (and “not integrated”) 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, so as to encompass civic engagement and political representation. These activities were primarily community-level action via local non-profit organizations to help and advocate for South Asian international students which overlapped with friendship networks, as participants became friends with other members and enlisted friends. Concerning political representation specifically, a theme emerging in several interviews (5) was that international students lack a political voice in

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).

society due to their temporary resident status, which enhances their vulnerability and makes them less integrated.

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)

Regarding economic integration, some participants stressed the importance of having a job that pays a decent salary as a “practical” form of integration:

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)

It was interesting to note that three of the four participants who underscored the economic dimension had not struggled financially in Canada, whilst several other participants who faced financial challenges did not mention economic integration. This may be because those who were not well-integrated in economic terms pursued different integration paths in response to the financial challenges facing them, discussed in Chapter 4.3 below.

Surprisingly, familiarity with how to manage basic needs in the country, such as how to get a Social Insurance Number or where to buy goods—the IPL Index’s “navigational” dimension—was mentioned by just two participants, and only as a secondary point. 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.

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 a current and specifically Canadian conceptualization, the Canadian Index for Measuring Integration:

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. Harder et al.’s (2018) conceptualization which informed the IPL Immigrant Integration Index, meanwhile, places the onus primarily on the immigrant:

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).

Regarding integration dimensions, those of the emergent conceptualization (sociopolitical and economic) are similar to CIMI's, although "health" was not mentioned by participants in my study. Whilst CIMI's definition stresses equality of outcomes for immigrants and non-immigrants across these dimensions, parity with non-immigrants was an aim of integration discussed only vaguely by my participants as an aim of integration, and only in sociopolitical and economic terms (i.e. feeling accepted by others and treated the same as non-immigrants and being able to find a decent job). As has already been discussed, the IPL Index's dimensions of integration were far more numerous than those of the emergent conceptualization. In contrast, the emergent definition did not place equal weight upon each dimension, with more emphasis on the sociopolitical than the economic. Furthermore, the political dimension was primarily concerned with civic engagement as a latent form of political participation, whereas political integration indicators in the IPL-12 survey were limited to participants' understanding of and engagement with politics on the national level in the host country.²⁵

Of all the integration frameworks reviewed to inform this study, the closest existing definition comes from Ewa Morawska, Professor of Sociology at the University of Essex. Countering an understanding of multiculturalism that focuses primarily on the state's role in incorporating newcomers (a "vertical" process),²⁶ Morawska (2018) views "horizontal" processes as equally important, with multicultural adaptation evolving primarily in local settings through immigrants' immediate experiences (Morawska, 2018,

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 The publications Morawska references by these authors are as follows:

Alexander, J. (2005). "Theorizing the 'Modes of Incorporation': Assimilation, Hyphenization, and Multiculturalism as Varieties of Civic Participation", in Peter Kivisto ed., *Incorporating Diversity. Rethinking Assimilation in a Multicultural Age*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, pp. 320-336.

Kivisto, P. (2002). *Multiculturalism in a Global Society*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Kivisto, P. (2012) "Integration and Assimilation: The Core Concepts and Three Contemporary Developments," Elliott Barkan ed., *Immigrants in America*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio, pp. 1621-1636.

Kymlicka, W. (1995). *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Taylor, C. (1992). *Multiculturalism and 'The Politics of Recognition'*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

p. 772). Morawska's call to view multicultural integration in terms of context-dependent and flexible, plural trajectories (Morawska, 2018, p. 772) is highly relevant to the findings from my study, explored below.

4.3. The lived experiences of international students

The majority of participants described themselves in interview as “integrated” to a greater or lesser extent,²⁷ although there were large differences in their experiences and everyday lives in Canada. Most participants were adapting or had adapted to their local environments in the Lower Mainland of BC according to their own opinion of what integration should mean. Their diverse experiences highlight the subjectivity of integration. Participants' experiences appeared not to be strongly dependent on seemingly “obvious” variables such as duration of residency or even immigration status. Whilst 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 integration cannot be understood based upon 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 of the factors that appeared strongly to affect participants' integration trajectories was the type of academic qualification that they pursued in Canada; specifically, whether it was a master's or bachelor's degree or a diploma or a two-year course at a college. The type of qualification pursued appeared to be linked partly to the economic capital available to them, or rather the tuition fees that their parents could afford to pay, although a minority had received scholarships. All participants were supported by their parents during their studies, at least with initial tuition fees. Studying for a one- or two-year college course such as a diploma rather than a degree at a university 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 British Columbia (BC)

²⁷ 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.

had already achieved a master's of Mathematics in India, whilst another participant studying for a post-graduate diploma at a college already had a bachelor's degree in Computer Science from an Indian university.²⁸

Although linguistic integration was not part of most participants' personal understandings of integration, it was evident that fluency in English 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 had made things easier for them than peers who struggled with the language:

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 the level of participants' English proficiency can be partly seen as reflecting the economic and cultural capital of their families. English proficiency is recognized as shaping 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). Drawing upon Bourdieu's theories 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.

²⁸ 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.

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 influential effect on participants’ trajectories. As discussed below, for international students from comparatively poorer families, existing family connections in Canada (or the lack thereof) had a considerable impact on their financial welfare when living in the country, and on the level of practical or emotional support available to them. Nonetheless, existing ties did not necessarily lead to better economic integration outcomes over time. Meanwhile, for participants who sought to build their networks and help the community through local volunteering and civic action, the ensuing social capital offered them a greater feeling of connection with others and, for a couple of participants, introduced them to professional jobs following graduation. Whilst 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. As theorized by Bourdieu, these “three fundamental guises” of capital function together, making the games of society “something other than simple games of chance” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 241).

Aside from international students’ existing forms of capital, participants’ experiences also appeared to depend on whether there was a large diaspora from their region of India already living in the area, and on the personal ambitions or motivations behind their moves to Canada. Personal motivations were based primarily upon social mobility ambitions, as is frequently the case in decisions to pursue higher education. Therefore, although structural factors such as participants’ existing capital appeared to influence integration experiences, individual agency—their original motivations for deciding to move to Canada and their opinions on what integration means—was also a determining force on their integration trajectories.

Integration trajectories

There were some commonalities across trajectories. Participants in all groups said that they generally felt accepted and found Canadians to be welcoming and polite.

However, several participants described 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 believed 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.²⁹ 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. Whilst this individualism could mean freedom from judgement and less enforcement of Indian cultural norms, some participants also associated it with loneliness and potentially depression. Co-national friendships helped the international students with cultural transition, making them feel less like outsiders at the beginning. These friendships offered familiarity and a sense of ease amidst the different culture, which especially helped students when experiencing homesickness or facing 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 university in BC; resident in Canada for six years)

Aside from these similarities, differences in integration trajectories appeared to be linked to participants' original motivations for moving to Canada and their ambitions. It is not possible to do justice to each person's experience in this paper; the trajectory groups described below overlap and are not a perfect description of each participant's

²⁹ Foreign students comprise one fifth of BC university enrolment (British Columbia Federation of Students, 2019, p. 7). Several research 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.

experiences, nor is the list 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.

Motivation 1: Lack of opportunities in India and existing community connections in Canada

A subset of participants (5/16) moved to Canada in response to high unemployment or being unable to secure a place in public schools in India. They explained this was because of extremely high competition in India due to its giant population and limited opportunities, and a couple also described corruption and nepotism. Although this group appeared to come from middle class families, they appeared to be from slightly lower socioeconomic backgrounds than those of other participants.

In Canada, experience is worth more rather than whatever education we took or whatever diploma we did at which school. But in India it's all about the person who has higher scores or about corruption where they just look for money. Even to get jobs we have to pay money, and whoever can arrange that much amount, they can get job. There is no way the middle scores or low grades can get any job, but here it's more dependent on a person's ability, his capability to do things, and his experience. (Mandy, who studied for a diploma at a public university in BC; resident in Canada for nine years)

This group were exclusively from Punjab, reflecting established patterns of migration to Canada³⁰ (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; it 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 as well. Members of this group were likely to have moved to Canada at a younger age than other participants, mostly immediately after completing high school in India. Some already spoke English fluently on arrival, whilst two were proficient yet still learning when they moved. None of the

³⁰ 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 Punjab 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.

group had lived away from home before and three of the participants lived with extended family during their studies in Canada. Moving to Canada was self-initiated by almost all of these participants, although their parents supported the idea. Most had studied or were studying for one- to two-year diplomas or certificates in Canada. The study programs chosen appeared to reflect their middling socioeconomic backgrounds, given that shorter durations mean fewer tuition fees to pay.

All of these participants worked part-time during their studies. Contrasting with the stereotype that international students are rich given their ability to afford higher tuition fees than domestic students, some students described profound financial struggles in Canada. Part-time work 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 to earn. A couple described difficulty in finding their first jobs in Canada due to a “catch 22” situation where Canadian work experience was expected, even for part-time unskilled work:

It was difficult to get work in the beginning. Initially I tried at a number of websites, like Indeed. I applied there a lot, including to Amazon also, and Home Depot, but they were more looking at the work experience of Canada. But how can I get that work experience? Now I've got work [via extended family who knew a local grocery store owner], so it has now been good. (Amarjit, studying for a certificate at a public polytechnic institute in BC, resident in Canada for under a year)

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:

There were already a *lot* of Indian international students at my school, so it was very easy... if I just had to meet with people from different cultures, I think that would have been tough for me. Right now, there are so many Indians here it feels like India. (Simran, who studied for a diploma at a college in Ontario following high school in India; resident in Canada for five years)

The biggest determiner in these participants' integration trajectories appeared to be whether they lived with family members when they were studying or not.

Trajectory A: Staying with family during studies

Three participants 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. Whilst for one working part-time was essential to contribute towards shared living expenses, these students did not have the burden of renting or preparing meals for themselves. Having family members around also provided emotional support, even if the lifestyle was quieter than they were used to in India.

Having family here is so much helpful... [my friends] have explained to me how they get homesick, how they struggle to prepare food at times when they are tired with work and studies... For the students who are alone, they surely feel homesick, because mostly they miss their home food also. They miss the food by their mothers. (Amarjit, studying for a certificate at a public polytechnic institute in BC, resident in Canada for under a year)

Trajectory B: Renting privately, struggling financially

Two individuals in this motivation group did not have family to stay with during their studies. They were therefore renting 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, which can create difficulties and barriers to integration. Although, like other participants, their parents were paying their tuition fees—at least for the initial semesters—they struggled to afford the cost of rent and living expenses. Employment income was crucial for them, and the time spent at work and the stress of needing to earn enough money had sometimes negatively impacted their academic attainment. This led them to work long and often antisocial hours. 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)

The workload left one participant struggling to fulfil the academic requirements of the study program. This created a vicious cycle where the student then had to enrol and pay for more courses, meaning he had to earn even more to pay for the extra fees. 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 that 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)

Although thankfully these individuals' situations improved over time, participants underscored how financial, housing and academic struggles can lead to a whole host of problems which make students vulnerable to mental illness or exploitation from others. Failing at one's study program could risk international students losing their immigration status and the right to remain and work in Canada, which reportedly often leads to depression and sometimes suicide. Working illegally, such as over the 20-hour off-campus limit of one's study permit, risks employer exploitation where wages for under-the-table work may be withheld. 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. A couple of participants (described in trajectory C below) explained that this can also make students vulnerable to sexual harassment:

There are so many tenancy problems... The main problem is that there are no tenancy agreements whatsoever. There is no rent control, nothing, there is no paperwork at all... and then there is privacy issues, like so many students complaining that the owners [landlords living in same building] are not giving them privacy, they are coming to their place whenever they want. And there are so many people who are not aware of the fact that they are not allowed to do this, that this is *illegal*... There are so many old people living in Surrey and Abbotsford area who are not aware of what tenancy issues there should be between you and your tenants; what are the boundaries, what are the limits with privacy for them. There are even a lot of sexual harassment cases. It's mostly basement suites where the owners are mostly living in the house, and the basement suite is not really private. (Darshi, who studied for a post-graduate diploma in BC; resident in Canada for three years)

International students are often unaware of the support available to them and where to access help. For this reason, after the completion of their studies when they had available time, the two participants in this trajectory and one who lived with family during his studies 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 in this group planned to lobby the government to enforce greater regulation of immigration consultants and curb immigrant exploitation. He and 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) letter 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 immigrants to find them such work. Canadian law mandates that the employer covers the costs of obtaining an LMIA, and that it is illegal for the worker to be charged for it. The participant emphasized that just as international students have the same responsibilities to the state as Canadians, Canada also has responsibilities to its foreign students:

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)

Integration outcomes for motivation group 1

For participants who were motivated to study in Canada by a lack of opportunities in India, individuals in both trajectories reported feeling settled and satisfied with their lives in the host country, despite some having faced significant difficulties. Three of the participants had PR whilst the other two intended to apply. Each person sought to integrate according to their own views of what integration means and their personal values. For instance, one described integration 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.

This cohort had higher social capital on arrival to Canada than other participants in terms of close existing connections in their study destination. Nevertheless, close connections in Canada did not appear to lead to higher economic integration in terms of salaries. The three participants in this group who were working full time following graduation³¹ were economically integrated according to this study's emergent definition of integration (described in chapter 4.2), "having a decent job and enough money to support oneself". However, two of the three participants were working for lower salaries compared to other employed participants in this study, with salary bands that seemed low for their professions. This could possibly reflect the potential downsides of co-ethnic networks that have been highlighted in previous studies (Qureshi et al., 2012, p. 56; Joseph, 2016, p. 172) but further research would be required to make a judgement.

Whilst participants in this motivation group described feeling accepted in Canada, on the whole they expressed less interest in connecting with people of other cultures compared to other participants. The majority described having a small social circle mostly comprising only family or friends from the same community as themselves. As "being open to connecting with others from different cultures" was one of the sociopolitical dimensions in this study's emergent definition of integration, in this respect they appeared less integrated than participants in the second motivation group. On the other hand, the participants who had struggled financially when renting privately during

³¹ 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.

their studies were integrated in terms of civic engagement as they sought to help others in the community; another sociopolitical dimension in the emergent definition. For one participant especially, his concern for justice and community wellbeing extended beyond challenges facing other co-nationals or immigrants. He described how he feared assimilating into “Canadian” culture as he associated it with a lack of awareness of and unfairness towards Indigenous Peoples:

I’ve been thinking a lot about the specific word “assimilation” for so long... I’ve talked to people who have completed their high school over here, and whenever I’ve opened the topic of Indigenous People, the native people, when I talk to them and tell them in Canada we are privileged because we are getting fresh water and everything, but there are people in Canada who don’t have fresh water to drink, they lack that information. But you have studied here! I have heard from them, we don’t know these things that you are talking about. And I’m scared and I fear – I don’t want to get assimilated into this type of culture. (Paramjit)

Although participants were at different stages in their lives and had lived in Canada for different periods of time, most of this group appeared to be integrating or had integrated into the established Punjabi diaspora in BC. This trajectory fitted participants’ understandings of integration, which were primarily based on adjusting to a multicultural environment and respecting and adjusting to different cultural norms, but “without having to lose one’s own cultural identity” (another sociopolitical aspect of the emergent definition of integration).

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, 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)

One participant pointed out that Punjabis have been in British Columbia for over 100 years. Within the multicultural context of Canada—and especially of Surrey and Abbotsford where this group predominantly lived—integrating into the local community meant integration into the Indo-Canadian diaspora; 33% of Surrey and 26% of

Abbotsford's populations were of South Asian visible minority status according to the 2016 Census³² (Statistics Canada, 2016).

Although a couple of participants seemed embedded in co-national and co-ethnic networks only, the others had come to know people of other background via work. One participant especially appreciated getting to know people from other cultures despite initially socializing exclusively with other Indian international students. This reflects that participants' integration experiences were not static and there did not appear to be a set, durable integration outcome.

Motivation 2: Seeking a world-class education and career

The second subset of participants (11/16) was older on average when they moved to Canada, and most had established careers in India already. They had grown up in north India (Delhi or Punjab), southern India or the Middle East. Half had lived away from family and outside their home culture before, studying or working in a different region of India—typically the IT sector in Bangalore—where they had been exposed to a different culture and dominant language other than their native tongues. There was some overlap in the motivations of this second subset of participants and the group described above; namely, that the decision to study abroad was influenced by the extremely high competition for desirable university places and employment in India.

All of these participants were fluent in English on arrival to Canada, and half of them mentioned having attended an English-medium school in India. Compared to the first group, the families of these participants had high economic and cultural capital; their

³² 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. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=5909052&Geo2=CD&Code2=5909&SearchText=abbotsford&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&TABID=1&type=0> (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. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=5915004&Geo2=CD&Code2=5915&SearchText=surrey&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&TABID=1&type=0> (accessed July 17, 2020).

parents and siblings were typically highly educated and worked in high-powered jobs such as headteachers, bureaucrats, bank managers or hotel owners. These participants seemed to have a wider range of options available to them in India, and were seeking to study overseas as a way to attend a world-ranked university or to pivot their careers or lifestyles in a different direction:

I wanted to gain a different type of experience. Because in India, you just do things the same way as other people – it's more of a kind of rat race over there. I didn't enjoy that life, just working non-stop. I wasn't a big fan of that kind of culture so I wanted to explore outside. And I knew that Asian culture was a similar culture to India. So it was cross-elimination. It was either Europe or North America, and I got accepted in Canada so I moved over here. (Nilesh, who studied for an MBA at a world-ranking university in BC; resident in Canada for six years)

Participants in this group had studied for master's or MBAs at public universities in Canada. Most of them had also applied to institutions in the US and some to Australia as well, but found that Canada provided them with the best offer in terms of the educational institution, specific program of study and tuition fees. Some also preferred Canada for its immigration policies, especially regarding 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)

This group were unlikely to mention financial challenges in relation to their studies. Some participants described their tuition fees as affordable, especially in comparison to US educational institutions that they had applied to. All participants were supported financially by their parents during their studies, excepting one participant who was supported by his savings and his wife's salary. Most respondents still seemed to be cost-sensitive during their studies, however, especially 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 work 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. The placements helped overcome the insistence on “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, however, valued connections with other nationalities equally. Furthermore, some described difficulty in getting to know Canadians even when there were chances. This seemed primarily due to domestic student 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 seemed 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 then 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, where 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, the educational system is less hierarchal between students and professors than in India with students expected to debate in class, which

was an initial “shock” for some participants, and having “local” friends helped them to adjust to the new educational environment.

I didn't really become friends with the profs although a lot of people were, especially people who grew up here in Canada. I think that was a bit of a challenge, to get into the profs' inner circles [laughs]. But although profs didn't know me personally, being in certain friendship groups who were very friendly with the profs would get me more involved. (Ajay, who studied for an MBA at a prestigious university in BC; resident in Canada for seven years)

For participants in this motivation group, a strong influence on 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.

Trajectory C: Connecting through community action

Four participants sought to integrate through community engagement and action. These international students were primarily Sikhs from Punjab, most of whom had existing connections in Canada but in other cities. This group overlapped with participants in the first motivation group who were involved in community volunteering or immigrant advocacy following their studies. However, trajectory C “community action” participants' study destinations were decided more by the study program than proximity to existing connections. Most of this 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. These participants' 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.

A notable attribute of this group was that they sought to grow their social network in Canada by volunteering with non-profit organizations. Active organizational membership was highly beneficial for participants. Two found professional work post-graduation via extended networks built largely through volunteering, and group membership positively impacted participants' emotional and mental wellbeing. Civic engagement was primarily motivated by wanting to improve the situation of other Indian students that they saw struggling in Canada with mental health problems, language

barriers or employer and landlord exploitation. 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. Two non-profits that stood out in interviews were the South Asian Mental Health Alliance (SAMHAA), an organization that supports foreign students and educates local communities on mental health issues, which participants said are often taboo in India. Another was One Voice Canada (OVC), which assists international students facing various difficulties whilst reducing their vulnerability by educating them on their rights in Canada. Its support includes writing to exploitative landlords and employers on students' behalf to reiterate the law, reporting the employers or landlords to governmental authorities if required.

Another way that these participants expressed their civic mindedness and sense of personal responsibility was by advocating for international students amongst the South Asian diaspora in BC's Lower Mainland. Their efforts were partly in response to tensions in the community, where they perceived 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, this 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, and often overburdened by work and study commitments. 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.³³ As no international study route had been available to them, these older

³³ Similar criticisms of newcomers from older first-generation Punjabi immigrants in the UK have been reported in Qureshi et al. (2012). The new regime of managed migration ("where students are seen as positive economic assets") has opened the channel of 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 Punjabi diaspora, and can be mistrusted as they are presumed to be working in undocumented jobs, supposedly undercutting the minimum wage (p. 42).

immigrants had had to work in labouring jobs, and perceived the “easy” immigration process for international students as unfair.

People who move to Canada in their middle age, like in their 40s and 50s, they still haven’t adapted to Canada. They’re still acting and behaving with the same mindset. Their *kids* have a different mindset, but they have the same kind of mindset that they had in India. So it’s like, OK come on – you have to change. The same thing is not going to work over here, because that was the sole reason why people were moving abroad to other countries, because of the political division and everything, what we had in India. If you are pasting the same thing over here – that sucks. So I was like, I’m not going to live in Surrey. That’s why I lived in Vancouver and I lived in Downtown when I first moved here. But eventually I felt, OK this is my community, this is *our* people. If we don’t change it, then who would? (Ravi, who studied for a master’s at a public research university in Ontario; resident in Canada for four years)

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 participants had even founded a Gurdwara when studying in a part of Canada where there was only a small Sikh population and no existing temple, again demonstrating their tenacity in seeking to meet community needs. 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

Most of the seven participants who followed the “international lifestyle” trajectory did not have strong existing connections to Canada. Although one had family friends in Vancouver, he viewed these connections as a double-edged sword. Unlike other groups, this trajectory included participants from the south of India and those who had grown up or worked in the Middle East.³⁴ All had studied for master’s at the University of British Columbia (UBC, ranked number 51 in the QS Global World Ranking in 2020)³⁵ and five of them had studied for MBAs. They did not work during their study programs other than

³⁴ 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.

³⁵ QS Global World Ranking 2020 <https://www.topuniversities.com/universities/university-british-columbia#wurs> [Accessed on April 7, 2020]

in paid co-op work placements, but this was partly due to the relatively short duration and intensity of the MBA program.

This group specifically 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. Their social circles were a balanced mix of international friends which included a minority of Canadians; however, as with other participants, closer friends were still more likely to be co-nationals. Most said that that cultural differences in Canada were not a surprise to them and that they had not found it difficult to connect with people from other cultures. Some had even intentionally avoided getting to know Indians in Canada as they felt they should seek to move outside of their 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 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. Like 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. Because 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)

Regarding adjusting to life in Canada, formal peer mentorship was described as highly beneficial by the MBA students who had access to the initiative. Mentorship was organized via the university to pair junior students with seniors before and upon arrival to the country. Mentors were available to answer questions about how to go about preparing for and settling into life in Canada—providing practical and cultural information as well as advice on the program. It appeared that formal peer mentorship could help students to avoid downward social mobility by building their knowledge of Canadian systems.

Networking was a key approach for MBA students looking for professional work, as both a social and economic 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.

I don't like the networking aspect much. This is not something that I had to deal with back home... it makes the process much longer than necessary to get a job. (Alexis, who studied for an MBA; resident in Canada for two years)

They explained that networking is not a typical form of job hunting for graduates in India, where multinational corporations will visit universities to recruit students for graduate roles, which is how many had found their first professional jobs. The emphasis that elite institutions placed on networking appeared to be aligned with the theory of extended social networks or “weak ties” being a powerful way of finding work (drawing upon Granovetter, 1973). Without disputing the effectiveness of networking, the strong emphasis upon formal approaches seemed to have caused participants unnecessary stress. Informal efforts appeared more successful; some participants became involved with local tech sector meetups and accelerator groups, which introduced them to new contacts whilst familiarizing them with the local business environment. Membership of such groups helped one to find a job with his target company in the year following graduation.

Integration outcomes for motivation group 2

Like the previous group, participants motivated by seeking a world-class education and career—in both trajectories—were satisfied with their lives in Canada and viewed integration in multicultural terms, where one could be accepted as oneself. The majority of participants were highly integrated according to this study’s emergent definition of integration meaning “being open to connecting with others from different cultures”. In terms of the civic engagement aspect, participants in trajectory C who sought to integrate via community action appeared the most integrated, and the “international lifestyle” participants considerably less so. The “community action” participants were more likely than others to discuss integration in terms of outcomes for the South Asian diaspora and other communities in the Lower Mainland as well as their individual experiences. This was underscored by a couple of them commenting that integration should be for all people, including First Nations peoples who have been marginalized in Canada. As these participants placed more emphasis on civic responsibility, this led some of them to report themselves as still being in the process of integrating or adapting. One participant, for example, who seemed very settled in Canada—extremely socially active, with a good salary in his chosen profession and highly familiar with Canadian systems—described himself as only 20% integrated. However, his self-expectations were high; to him, integration meant connecting with “every level” of society and he was aiming to become a leader in the local community to effect positive political change.

In response to the question, “how integrated do you feel?” the trajectory D “international lifestyle” participants were likely to state straightforwardly that they felt integrated and that nobody had treated them any differently in Canada. They were also more likely than other groups to raise the importance of economic integration. A couple of these participants understood integration in terms of having friends from Canada, which was not the case for participants in other groups. This seemed linked to these individuals having more of a desire than others in this study to experience the “individualistic” lifestyle in Canada which they viewed as offering more independence.

I have actually friends *from* Vancouver too. I have a buddy who was born and brought up in Vancouver, and he’s like one of my best buddies. I feel totally integrated. (Tyrion)

Apart from those who had only recently graduated, participants in both trajectories seemed highly economically integrated. Most were earning above or well above the median salary for British Columbia, with trajectory D “international lifestyle” graduates the highest earners. Regarding immigration status, nearly half the group (5/11) had PR and most of the others intended to apply. However, PR status or even an intention to apply for citizenship did not necessarily mean that participants intended to stay in Canada permanently. Three of the seven “international lifestyle” participants expressed that they may move to another nation depending on opportunities, reflecting their overarching ambition for world-class careers above settling in a specific country.

Integration trajectories in relation to existing theory

Participants’ integration strategies closely aligned with the dimensions outlined in this study’s emergent definition of integration described in chapter 4.2. As such, participants appeared to focus primarily on sociopolitical and economic integration strategies. Their sociopolitical approaches were similar to Morawska’s four components of multicultural integration (Table 6). The first component—identification with plural national/ethnic/religious groups resident in the host society—was expressed by some participants simultaneously viewing themselves as Sikh Punjabi, Indian, and Canadian, or feeling a very close connection with Canada alongside their Indian identity. Although most participants described having changed in some way in response to the new social environment in Metro Vancouver—for example, smiling at strangers despite its not being customary in India or adopting new hobbies such as hiking or skiing—they had not made these changes in response to pressure to conform but because they viewed them as positives. This finding aligns with the second component, internationalization and practice of cultural aspects of different national/ethnic-religious groups resident in the host society (Morawska, 2018, p. 765). The fact that many participants sought to build personal 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). Although there was little emphasis on connecting with Canadians specifically, this perhaps reflects the diverse demographics where they lived, given that 21.9% of the Canadian population

were foreign-born immigrants³⁶ (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 Morawska’s fourth component, “civic commitment to/responsibility for the wellbeing of the body politic of several national/ethnic/religious communities resident in the host society” (Morawska, 2018, p. 765).

Table 6 Participants’ integration strategies and their relation to Morawska’s multicultural integration trajectories

Sociopolitical integration strategies	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	
Peer mentorship	
Networking	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, kindergartens and schools, homes and gardens
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	
Advocating for immigrant rights	
iv) Civic commitment to/responsibility for the wellbeing of the body politic of several national/ethnic/religious communities resident in the host society	

³⁶ 16.1% of foreign-born immigrants in Canada were recent immigrants, i.e. arrived in the past five years. The “recent immigrant” category comprised 3.5% of the population. Figure derived from: Statistics Canada (2017) *Focus on Geography Series*, 2016 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-404-X2016001. Ottawa, Ontario. Data products, 2016 Census. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/fogs-spg/Facts-can-eng.cfm?Lang=Eng&GK=CAN&GC=01&TOPIC=7> [Accessed on May 31, 2020]

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). The "tight solidarity" described by selective assimilation had numerous benefits for participants; strong co-national friendships and family connections created feelings of belonging, easing homesickness and supporting mental health. Nonetheless, a reliance on co-national ties could have downsides, as described by some participants. The "community-driven" culture could mean less personal freedom due to others seeking to reinforce Indian cultural norms. Furthermore, the landlord and employer exploitation reported in interviews 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 of South Asian immigrants (Qureshi et al. 2012, p. 55-56).

Whilst the "horizontal" aspects of integration which related to Morawska's multicultural integration trajectories were highly influential upon participants' experiences, "vertical" processes were critical too, such as Canada's immigration regime.³⁷ 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 motivating factor for some integration strategies such as seeking Canadian work experience. The relatively open immigration pathways for international students reflect mainstream conceptualizations of multiculturalism in Canada, and its focus on "citizenisation" or providing immigrants access to equal citizenship (Kymlicka, 2018, p. 138).

³⁷ 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).

Chapter 5.

Conclusion

In the context of soaring international student numbers worldwide, this study sought to explore how a sample of Indian international students who studied at Canadian postsecondary institutions understand "integration" and how this relates to their experiences settling into life in Canada as a 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 by others without losing their own cultural identity. It differs from dominant conceptualizations of multicultural integration as it underscores the immigrant's role in being open to other cultures themselves. This understanding emphasizes the sociopolitical dimension, and, secondarily, the economic, rather than weighting several dimensions equally, as some integration measures such as the IPL Immigration Integration Index do.

The immigrants' understandings and experiences of integration were deeply shaped by "horizontal" factors such as the immediate surroundings of their daily lives as much as by "vertical" forces of immigration policies or the educational systems that they navigated. Another important aspect was adapting according to one's own values of what integration should mean, rather than following a specific path. Their understandings of integration—summarized in the emergent definition developed in this study—informed how they sought to adjust to life in Canada. For example, this meant retaining the aspects of their culture that they valued without attempting to "blend in", and esteeming friendships with co-nationals and other immigrants as highly as connections with Canadian citizens. Valuing civic engagement and political representation led several participants to actively advocate for international students, including for policy changes to help those facing exploitation within the community. Alongside the sociopolitical aspects of integration, finding suitable employment (and economic integration) was a key consideration for participants during and after their studies. My findings are similar to the multicultural trajectories of immigrants integration outlined by Morawska (2018), which underline the importance of immigrants' immediate experiences and locally embedded "prosaic interactions" (everyday intergroup relations) with members of

different ethnic, racial and religious groups (pp. 769, 772). This articulation of multicultural integration places equal weight on micro-level factors alongside macro- (national-) level influences.

The multicultural understanding of integration described by immigrants in this study also reflects Canada's federal and provincial level policies of multiculturalism. Whilst participants' explicit understandings of integration did not include securing durable immigration status, "vertical" factors like Canada's relatively open immigration policies were highly important alongside the "horizontal" factors. Most participants had or intended to gain permanent residency (PR), which had contributed to their focus on gaining "Canadian experience" through employment to qualify for some PR routes. In this respect, participants' integration trajectories aligned with the mainstream Canadian theories of multiculturalism and their strong attention to the communitarian and civic aspects of immigrant incorporation—as expounded by Charles Taylor (1994) and Will Kymlicka (1995). These emphasize offering immigrants access to the common rights of citizenship (Kymlicka, 1995). However, going beyond this view, participants in this study attributed greater weight to their own agency as individuals.

My data shows that there are some inadequacies in some of our existing understandings and measurements of integration. However, this does not mean that the multicultural understanding of integration articulated by this specific sample is how every immigrant thinks about integration. As the participants in this study were highly educated Indian international students (current and former) living in Metro Vancouver, which is an particularly diverse location with a large South Asian diaspora, it would be interesting to conduct a similar study with different types of participants in various contextual locations within 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 international students but that have different immigrant integration policies, such as the US, UK or Australia, to see how views and experiences of integration are affected by different factors at the individual, community and national levels.

The exploratory nature of this study helped to reveal processes of integration that would have been overlooked by most current integration measures. As well as being influenced by immigration policies and the local context in Canada, participants' integration trajectories were affected by their original motivations for migrating, plus their

existing economic, cultural and social capital. Moreover, how integrated participants felt was linked to whether or not they were achieving the ambitions that led them to move to Canada in the first place, emphasizing the significance of agency as well as structural factors for integration experiences. The finding that immigrants' original migration motivations affect integration outcomes may seem obvious, but it is a point that is not included in most integration theories or frameworks currently employed in Canada or worldwide.

This study highlights how immigrant integration is highly context-dependent, even within a small sample like mine where respondents were similar in terms of nationality, age range and location. The subjectivity of integration makes it notoriously difficult to measure. As trajectories of immigrant integration are highly personal and variable, we should be sceptical that measurement frameworks can transcend the specificities of time and space. Although the apparently clear and simple format of "off the shelf" integration frameworks is appealing, the survey data that it generates can risk being vague and at worst, misleading. It may be possible to build flexible frameworks that take into consideration 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. However, whether this would work in practice would require detailed investigation.

Three main implications arise from this study. Firstly, when conceptualizing or operationalizing immigrant integration, it is necessary to consider how immigrants themselves understand integration. Secondly, immigrants' original motivations for migrating should be considered more closely when seeking to understand trajectories or modes of integration. Thirdly and finally, this study suggests that international students in Canada should be viewed as a subset of immigrants rather than as sojourners, and that their integration matters. The prevailing categorization of international students as temporary residents in the literature means that they are often overlooked in studies and policies of integration. In line with Canada's immigration strategy, a sizable minority of international students will remain permanently, and their settlement trajectories affect the communities in which they reside. As highlighted by participants in this study in relation to the South Asian diaspora in the Lower Mainland of BC, the large influx of international students has implications for community cohesion. Their integration is valuable 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 students vulnerable to abuse and potentially lead to mental illness. There remain large gaps in the literature regarding student exploitation, especially in Canada, and further research in this area would be valuable. As countries seek to grow their economies by recruiting foreign students, states must also ensure they are delivering fair outcomes to international student immigrants and protecting their welfare.

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Appendix A

Interview questions

Section 1: About the past

1.1 Please tell me about yourself and your background

Probing questions:

- Where did you grow up? Where did you live before you moved to Canada?
 - What is your family like – is it large or small? Do you have siblings, and if so how many? Do your grandparents live close by to your parents? What do your parents do for work?
 - What did you do before you came to Canada?

1.2 When and why did you come to Canada?

Probing questions:

- What/who influenced your decision to move here? How?

1.3 Did you know anyone or have connections here before you moved here?

Probing questions:

- How many and who were they? How close were you before you arrived, and how close are you now?

Section 2: About the present

2.1 Tell me about your life now...

Probing questions:

- What do you do (e.g. further study, work)?
- What is your average day like?
- What are your hobbies, and what do you do for fun?

Section 3: Social ties

3.1 Who do you spend time with here?

Probing questions:

- How did you meet them?
- How close are you and how much time do you spend together?

3.2 How many close friends or family members do you have in Canada?

Probing questions:

- What are your friends here like (e.g. age, nationality, working/student)? How are they similar to you or not? How so? How did you meet them?

3.3 Do your close connections in Canada know each other?

Probing questions:

- [If yes] How many of your friends know each other? Are they friends too?
- Do your friends know any of your family members?
- When did these connections move to Canada? Did they move here first or did you?

3.4 How frequently are you in touch with friends and family in your home country?

Probing questions:

- What impact does this have on you?
- What support do they offer you (if any)?

3.4 Are you a member of any organizations or groups in Canada? (This can be any form of group, from a sports club to a religious or political organization or a hobby group.)

Probing questions...

- If so, what are these groups?
- What are the other members like (e.g. age, nationality, ethnicity, etc.)? Are they welcoming?
- How much time do you spend with group members? (How often does the group meet, and do you see them outside of the group's events/meetings?)
- How many of the group members do you consider to be your friends?
- Would you turn to any of the group members if you needed help?

Section 4: Finance and basic needs

4.1 How do you finance your life here?

Probing questions:

- If you're working, what is your job and how many hours do you work a week?
- Does anyone else support you financially? How about while you were studying, e.g. support from family, bursary, scholarship?
- Is your income adequate to meet your needs? Are you able to save?
- How easily could you meet a large unexpected expense?

4.2 [If working] What is your job like, and how did you find it?

Probing questions:

- Did anyone help you to find your job? (If so, who and how?)
- How satisfied are you with your employment?

4.3 Where do you live?

Probing questions:

- Who do you live with? What is your relationship with them like?
- How did you find where you live? Did anyone help you? (If so, who and how?)
- How satisfied are you with your current living situation?

Section 5: Cultural adjustment

5.1 How is the culture in Canada different to that of your home country?

Probing questions:

- How easy or difficult was it to adapt?
- How would you describe the cultural “mainstream” in Canada?

5.2 How do you like living in Canada now?

Probing questions:

- What do you like most about it?
- What do you not like so much?
- Have you ever regretted moving here? If so, when and why?
- What have you found especially helpful in adjusting to life here?

Section 6: Thoughts on integration and future plans

6.1 What has your life been like since you moved here?

Probing questions:

- Did you face any challenges? If so, how did you overcome them?
- Who do you turn to when you need help or support?
- What kind of help/support do they give you? Is it enough?
- [If they faced challenges] Has this become easier or harder over time? How?
- [If they mention isolation/loneliness] What do you do when you feel like that? Who do you speak to, if anyone?
- What kind of support did you most need when you first came to Canada? Who provided help, and what support did you find beneficial?

6.2 Do you feel accepted by others?

Probing questions:

- Do you feel that you fit in?
- Do you/did you try to blend in? (If so, how?)
- Do you/did you feel pressure to change to fit in? (If so, how?)

6.3 How satisfied are you with your life here?

Probing questions:

- Do you feel settled?
- Do you feel a sense of belonging with Canada?

6.4 How long to you intend to stay in Canada? Why?

Probing questions:

- Will any of your family/friends move here to join you?
- What are your plans for the future?

6.5 Do you feel integrated into life here?

Probing questions:

- How do you feel about it? Has this changed over time?
- Do think integration is important? Why or why not?
- What, if anything, do you do to try to integrate?

6.5 What does the term “integration” mean to you? How integrated do you feel you are in relation to this definition?

Appendix B

Integration survey design

The core part of the survey is based upon the Immigration Policy Lab's IPL-12 Integration Index.³⁸ The questions pertain to six different dimensions of integration – psychological, navigational (the ability to manage basic needs in the host country), economic, social, linguistic and political (Harder et al. 2018).

Questions 1-12 are directly adapted from the IPL-12 survey instrument. Although the original version was created for the U.S. context, the IPL Index aims to create a common empirical measure of immigrant integration and is designed to be used across different groups of immigrants and countries (Harder et al. 2018: 11483), so only minor changes implemented to adapt the IPL survey for the Canadian context. This included simply updating the responses to the question on household income (question 5) to reflect deciles for British Columbia, as this is where the research was conducted, and changing “America” to “Canada” and “Americans”³⁹ to “Canadians”. In the survey, the term “Canadian” was described 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 may not have official citizenship, such as individuals whose parents were immigrants to Canada. This reflects that according to the 2016 Canadian Census, 21.9% of the Canadian population were foreign-born (immigrants), but only 3.5% of the population

³⁸ The IPL Integration Index is a survey tool developed for governments, nonprofits and researchers to measure the integration of immigrants around the world, developed by the Immigration Policy Lab (IPL) at Stanford University and ETH-Zurich. IPL survey materials are available to download from <https://www.integrationindex.org/theintegrationindex>

³⁹ The creators of the IPL survey – preferred the more generic term of “Americans” for simplicity, as more specific phrasing was found to complicate questions, especially given that respondents will not necessarily know the citizenship and legal status of other members of their social networks. The researchers conducted think-aloud interviews with immigrants and natives in San Francisco to better understand how respondents understand just the term “Americans”, and found that “the large majority identified Americans by citizenship and many explicitly mentioned naturalized citizens. Based on this result, we believe that this short form will be feasible in most countries.” (Harder et al., 2018b, p. 17)

(16.1% of the immigrant population) were recent immigrants, i.e. arriving between 2011 and 2016.⁴⁰

Aside from the IPL-12 questions, the survey included some extra questions: five further questions aiming to provide a general profile of the respondent (year of birth, gender, number of years in Canada, residency status and household size), and five extra questions relating to social networks (questions 13 to 17). These further questions investigating participants' social networks were included because the integration literature frequently draws upon the social capital literature. Two of these social network questions were drawn from the longer version of the Immigrant Integration Index questionnaire (the IPL-24; questions 13 and 14), and asked participants to respond to how often they participate in different types of groups and organizations. I also added three further questions relating to social networks (questions 15, 16 and 17) that aim to draw out more about respondents' connections, including approximately how many of their connections share their ethnicity (Q15), how many close connections they have in Canada (Q16), and how many of their close connections know each other (Q17).

5.1. Scoring

Responses to the IPL-12 questions (1-12) were used to calculate a total integration score across the six dimensions of integration. Following the IPL Index's scoring rules (Harder et al. 2018b), participant responses to each question were assigned values from 1 to 5 (these scores are noted in brackets next to each question response option below). The question on household income (question 5) required some further calculations and rescaling, as follows:

Household income scoring rules

As specified in the IPL Index's scoring rules (Harder et al. 2018b: 11), household income answer options are 10 intervals defined by the deciles of gross household income distribution. As household incomes vary considerably across Canada, the income

⁴⁰This figure is derived from data available at Statistics Canada. 2017. Focus on Geography Series, 2016 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-404-X2016001. Ottawa, Ontario. Data products, 2016 Census. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/fogs-spg/Facts-can-eng.cfm?Lang=Eng&GK=CAN&GC=01&TOPIC=7> [Accessed on May 31, 2020]

deciles used in my adapted version of the survey are for British Columbia specifically.⁴¹ The question asked for annual total income before taxes and other deductions as it is assumed that respondents are more likely to know this figure as it relates to employment contracts (Harder et al. 2018b: 11).

Answers were then re-coded as follows:

- Income brackets were re-coded to the midpoint of the interval.
- The highest income bracket was re-coded to the sum of the starting value of the highest bracket and the difference between the highest and the lowest value of the second highest bracket (i.e. re-coded to CA\$214,500, worked out as $\$171,901 + [171,900 - 129,301]$).
- The new values were divided by the square root of the respondent's household size to find the equivalized income. *Note: Household size is indicated in question 18.*

The gross median equivalized household (gmeh) income⁴² (i.e. CA\$59,450 for British Columbia)⁴³ was then used to create 5 categories:

- $[0, \text{gmeh}/3]$ i.e. CA\$19,816.67 (gmeh of CA\$59,450 /3)
- $(\text{gmeh}/3, \text{gmeh}/1.5]$
- $(\text{gmeh}/1.5, \text{gmeh}]$
- $(\text{gmeh}, \text{gmeh} + (\text{gmeh}/3)]$
- $\text{gmeh} + (\text{gmeh}/3)$

⁴¹ Statistics Canada. Table 11-10-0192-01 Upper income limit, income share and average income by economic family type and income decile
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1110019201>

⁴² Equivalized (or “adjusted”) household incomes take into account differences in household size and composition and the resulting economies of scale for income, consumption and savings (Statistics Canada 2019).

⁴³ Figure based upon the median of average adjusted (equivalized) household total income deciles [before tax] for British Columbia in 2017. Please note that since accessing the data on December 3rd 2019, the average income has been adjusted into 2018 constant dollars and is now listed as CA\$65,400. (Statistics Canada. Table 11-10-0193-01 Upper income limit, income share and average of adjusted market, total and after-tax income by income decile)
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/cv/recreate.action?pid=1110019301&selectedNodeIds=1D13,2D2,2D3&checkedLevels=2D1,3D1,3D2&refPeriods=20170101,20170101&dimensionLayout=s=layout2,layout2,layout3,layout3,layout2&vectorDisplay=false>

The re-coded gross household income was then assigned to one of the outlined categories, and scored from 1-5:

\$0 to CA\$19,816.67 [i.e. gmeh \$59,450 /3] (1)

CA\$19,816.67 to 39,633.33 [i.e. gmeh \$59,450 /3, to gmeh \$59,450 /1.5] (2)

CA\$39,633.33 to 59,450 (3)

CA\$59,450 to 79,266.67 (4)

Above CA\$79,266.67 (5)

Example: If a respondent is part of a household of two, with a combined income of \$71,500, the response to the income question would be the option "CA\$69,201 to 84,700". The answer would then be recoded to the middle of the interval, and then divided by the square root of 2 (= CA\$54,412.22). The score would therefore be 3.

Interpreting IPL scores

The assigned scores for the IPL-12 questions were subsequently calculated for each respondent. Overall integration scored between 12 to 60 (which can be rescaled from 0 to 1) where a score of 12 is indicative of low integration and 60 is high (Harder, et al., 2018, p. 11485). All the final questions (from 13 to 22; all non IPL-12 questions) were not assigned a score. This was partly in order not to affect the IPL-12 scores.

Additionally, given that one of the aims of my study is to investigate what forms of social networks may lead an individual to feel “integrated” into Canada or not, further survey questions were unscored to help avoid making a preemptive judgement on what characteristics of social networks reflect “higher” or “lower” integration. The final questions (18-22) on the respondents’ gender, age, household size (in order to calculate the equivalized household income), number of years living in Canada and immigration status were also unscored questions.

5.2. Survey questions

Dimension: Psychological integration

Q1 How connected do you feel with Canada?

- I feel an extremely close connection (5)
- I feel a very close connection (4)
- I feel a moderately close connection (3)
- I feel a weak connection (2)
- I do not feel a connection at all (1)

Q2 How often do you feel like an outsider in Canada?

- Never (5)
- Rarely (4)
- Sometimes (3)
- Often (2)
- Always (1)

Dimension: Navigational integration

Q3 In this country, how difficult or easy would it be for you to see a doctor?

- Very difficult (1)
- Somewhat difficult (2)
- Neither difficult, nor easy (3)
- Somewhat easy (4)
- Very easy (5)

Q4 In this country, how difficult or easy would it be for you to search for a job (find the proper listings)?

- Very difficult (1)
- Somewhat difficult (2)
- Neither difficult, nor easy (3)
- Somewhat easy (4)
- Very easy (5)

Dimension: Economic integration

Q5 What is your household's total annual income (before taxes and deductions) from all sources?⁴⁴ If you don't know the exact figure, please give an estimate.

Your household includes everyone who lives with you and with whom you also routinely share living expenses and other financial responsibilities.⁴⁵ If you live alone, please count yourself as a household of one.

- Under CA\$19,100
- CA\$19,101 to 29,300
- CA\$29,301 to 40,900
- CA\$40,901 to 53,900
- CA\$53,901 to 69,200
- CA\$69,201 to 84,700
- CA\$84,701 to 102,700
- CA\$102,701 to 129,300
- CA\$129,301 to 171,900
- CA\$171,901 or above

Q6 Which of these descriptions best applies to what you have been doing for the last four weeks? Please select only one.

⁴⁴ Income ranges based upon household income deciles and upper income limits (total income) for British Columbia in 2017. Please note that the income deciles have since been adjusted into 2018 constant dollars; for example, CA\$19,100 (previously the lowest decile upper limit of annual income before tax for families and unattached individuals in BC) has been adjusted to CA\$19,600 and so forth. Source: Statistics Canada. Table 11-10-0192-01 Upper income limit, income share and average income by economic family type and income decile <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/cv/recreate.action?pid=1110019201&selectedNodeIds=1D13,3D2,3D3&checkedLevels=1D1,3D1,4D1,4D2&refPeriods=20170101,20170101&dimensionLayouts=layout2,layout3,layout2,layout2,layout3,layout2&vectorDisplay=false>

⁴⁵ This definition follows that outlined in the IPL scoring rules (Harder et al. 2018b: 7) instead of the phrasing in the original IPL survey tool itself, which described a household as "everyone with whom you share an apartment or house and with whom you are also related by birth, marriage, partnership, or adoption". The researchers chose that description as it was believed to be applicable to many different contexts, but I believe the former is more relevant to the Canadian setting where respondents may share bills with friends as well as partners or family members.

- In paid work, even if away temporarily (employee, self-employed, working for your family business) (5)
- In school/university, even if also employed (in paid work), on vacation or looking after family⁴⁶ (3)
- Unemployed and actively looking for a job (1)
- Unemployed and not actively looking for a job (1)
- Permanently sick or disabled (3)
- Retired (3)
- In military service (5)
- Volunteering in the community⁴⁷ (3)
- Doing unpaid housework, looking after children or other persons (3)
- Other (please specify) _____

Dimension: Linguistic integration

Q7 Please evaluate your own skills in English. How well can you do the following when reading English?⁴⁸

I can read and understand the main points in simple newspaper articles on familiar subjects.

- Very well (5)
- Well (4)
- Moderately well (3)

⁴⁶ Added “even if also employed (in paid work)” or “looking after family”, as many students are also in paid employment and may also have responsibilities carrying for family members. This combination of activities was not listed as an option in the original IPL survey phrasing, which could lead respondents to select “other”, distorting the score.

⁴⁷ Adapted from the original IPL survey phrasing “In community service”. Rephrased for clarity, as to some English speakers “community service” means mandatory service as punishment for committing a crime.

⁴⁸ Although English and French are the official languages of Canada, English only is used as it is the lingua franca of British Columbia where my study will take place.

- Not well (2)
- Not well at all (1)

Q8 Please evaluate your own skills in English. How well can you do the following when speaking English?

In a conversation, I can speak about familiar topics and express personal opinions.

- Very well (5)
- Well (4)
- Moderately well (3)
- Not well (2)
- Not well at all (1)

Dimension: Political integration

Q9 How well do you understand the important political issues facing Canada?

- Very well (5)
- Well (4)
- Moderately well (3)
- Not well (2)
- Not well at all (1)

Q10 In the last 12 months, how often did you typically discuss major political issues facing Canada with others?

- Never (1)
- Once a year (2)
- Once a month (3)
- Once a week (4)
- Almost every day (5)

Dimension: Social integration

Q11 In the last 12 months, how often did you eat dinner with Canadians (born or brought up in Canada) who are not part of your family?

- Never (1)
- Once a year (2)
- Once a month (3)
- Once a week (4)
- Almost every day (5)

Q12 Please think about the Canadians in your address book or your phone contacts. With how many of them did you have a conversation - either by phone, messenger chat, or text exchange - in the last 4 weeks?

- 0 (1)
- 1 to 2 (2)
- 3 to 6 (3)
- 7 to 14 (4)
- 15 or more (5)

Further questions (unscored; non IPL-12 questions)

Q13 People sometimes participate in different kinds of groups or associations. For each group listed below, how often do you participate in a group activity?

	Participate at least once per week	Participate at least once per month	Participate at least once per year	Belong but do not actively participate	Do not belong nor participate
A group related to your job, like a union, business, or professional organization (job)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A group related to your religious beliefs, like a church, mosque, synagogue, or other religious organization (religion)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A group related to your hobbies, like a sports, leisure, or cultural group (hobbies)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A group related to a social or political cause, such as a voluntary organization or political party (politics)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Another voluntary organization (other)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q14 If you think about members of the groups you are participating in, how many of them are Canadians (by birth or brought up in Canada)?

	All of them	Most of them	About half of them	Few of them	None of them	Do not belong nor participate

A group related to your **job**, like a union, business, or professional organization (job)

A group related to your **religious beliefs**, like a church, mosque, synagogue, or other religious organization (religion)

A group related to your **hobbies**, like a sports, leisure, or cultural group (hobbies)

A group related to a **social or political cause**, such as a voluntary organization or political party (politics)

Another voluntary organization (other)

Q15 How many of your connections in Canada are the same ethnicity as you? (Not including any family members.)

- All of them
- Most of them
- About half of them
- Few of them
- None of them

Q16 How many close connections do you have in Canada? They could be close friends, family members or other personal connections of any nationality or ethnicity.

- 0
- 1 to 2
- 3 to 6
- 7 to 14
- 15 or more

Q17 How many of your close connections in Canada know each other?

- All of them
- Most of them
- Half of them
- Some of them
- None of them
- Not applicable – no close connections

Q18 How many people, including yourself, live in your household?

Your household includes everyone who lives with you and with whom you also routinely share living expenses and other financial responsibilities.

Q19 What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other _____

Q20 What year were you born? _____

Q21 How many years have you lived in Canada?

- _____ years
- Less than one year

Q22 What is your current immigration status?

- Study visa (temporary resident)
- Work visa (including post-graduation work permit; temporary resident)
- Temporary Residents' Permit (TRP)
- Permanent Resident (PR)
- Refugee (or Protected Person)
- Citizen (naturalized)
- Other (please specify) _____

References – Appendix B

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