

BECOMING AND BEING: INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE STUDENT EXPERIENCE
AND IDENTITY FORMATION IN THE CONTEXT OF MULTICULTURALISM AND
INTERNATIONALIZATION

by

Elizabeth Jane Brin
B.A., Bates College

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Higher Education)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

June 2012

© Elizabeth Jane Brin, 2012

Abstract

International graduate students are perceived as enhancing the prestige of institutions of higher education but are often silenced through structural mechanisms that render their particular needs, perspectives and contributions irrelevant. My research critically examines the dominant institutional discourses by which this group of students negotiate their lived experiences. It specifically looks at how such discourses shape the students' own perspectives of their sense of belonging and their identities. Though literature on international graduate student experience has grown dramatically in recent years, qualitative research on the lived experiences of these students remains limited. Furthermore, the majority of both quantitative and qualitative literature focuses on the student's problems "adapting" and "succeeding" in their new culture. Based on interviews with ten self-identified international students, as well as on my own experience, I argue that there is an institutionalized silencing of notions of difference that often cultivates a concerning lack of belonging. My hope is that this research will provide a new way of looking at international graduate student experiences, emphasizing their strength and agency as opposed to the normative and limited deficit-approach that is currently dominant.

Preface

The proposal of this research was approved by the UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board on July 29, 2011. The Certificate Number of the UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board Certificate is H11-01702.

Table of contents

Abstract.....	ii
Preface.....	iii
Table of contents.....	iv
List of tables	vii
Acknowledgements	viii
Chapter I: Setting the scene.....	1
Background.....	2
Purpose & research questions	5
Significance	6
What to expect.....	7
Chapter II: Mapping it out: My methodology.....	9
Ethics & epistemology.....	10
An outline of my research	17
An overview of my method.....	17
The interviews & the letter home project	18
My participants & my recruitment strategy.....	22
Institutional context.....	25
Institutional numbers.....	25
On-campus student support	25
Informed consent & confidentiality	26
Data analysis.....	27
Funding & compensation.....	29
Final thoughts.....	30
Chapter III: Contextualizing the research.....	32
Conceptual framework	32
Subject & identity.....	33
Power & knowledge.....	34
Review of the literature.....	37
Internationalization in higher education	37
Internationalization in Canada: An economic and political rationale.....	39
Institutional policy documents	45
Internationalization in Canada: A cultural and academic rationale	47
Multiculturalism	49
Institutional policy documents	52
Cultural rationale.....	52

Academic rationale.....	54
Literature on the international student experience.....	56
International students: Undergraduates versus graduates.....	65
Economic discrepancies between international undergraduate and graduate students.....	66
Implications for the institutions and the students.....	68
Chapter IV: A space for the students.....	70
Stanley.....	72
Sally	73
Mi Sun.....	75
Nina.....	76
Nik.....	77
Khari.....	79
Dishi.....	80
Natalia.....	83
Abhi.....	84
Caroline.....	85
CHAPTER V: Experiences of being & becoming: An analysis	87
Setting the scene: Locating oneself within institutional practices of internationalization.....	89
Mixed feelings of (be)longing: A precedent is set	89
Campus isolation	94
Ideas of becoming: Being an international graduate student.....	96
Negotiating the assigned “international” student identity	96
The power of western knowledge	103
Representing & re-presenting diversity	109
Silencing of differences	114
Racialized differences	120
Being American.....	127
Alternate spaces of being: Finding new identities together	131
Chapter VI: Making sense of it all	135
Being & belonging	135
From belonging to becoming.....	140
Pulling it all together.....	142
Limitations & ideas for future research	144
Implications for UBC: Looking towards the future	146
Appendices	158
Appendix A: “Letter Home” project.....	158
Appendix B: Sally’s letter home.....	159
Appendix C: Recruitment poster	160
Appendix D: Initial contact letter	161

Appendix E: Consent form.....	162
Appendix F: Sample coding examples.....	164

List of tables

Table 2.1: Demographic information for the international graduate students	24
Table 3.1: B.A. and B.Sc. tuition	66
Table 3.2: Research based graduate degree tuition	67

Acknowledgements

I spent many hours reflecting on how best to honor the conversations and stories that the students shared with me. The act of balancing my role as an international student, a researcher and an administrator has been a difficult one. I have used some of the international graduate students' conversations, stories and words in ways that may surprise them. I did so with full respect for these conversations and the positions from which they were shared with me, and hope that they understand why I have chosen to present what I have. I feel lucky to have had the chance to have all of the conversations I had with each of the students I interviewed. And so it is here that I want to give them my deepest thanks, for without their generosity and trust this research would not exist.

To my supervisor, Rob Vanwynsberghe, and my committee members, Hartej Gill, and Andre Mazawi—a committee of all committees. Thank you for your patience, your guidance, your trust, and your gentle push in directions that I would not have seen my research heading on my own. I will never be able to express how grateful I am to you and for your dedication to my research.

To my family, thank you for your unyielding support. For the epic phone conversations, for encouraging me to keep going, for keeping me grounded, for flying me home when I desperately needed it, and for loving me unconditionally. Without you I would never have made it.

To my second family—the friends I have met along this journey. You are amazing. Without your minds, hearts, hugs and patience I could not have survived.

And last, but certainly not least—to my team of “editors” who spent hours with me agonizing over the organization of this thesis, my use of punctuation and the English language. Thank you, thank you for helping make this a readable piece of work.

Chapter I: Setting the scene

As I have personally spent time studying, living and working abroad as an international student, the notion of international education as both transformative and challenging is quite familiar to me. As an undergraduate student I spent two semesters studying abroad: one in Ghana and one in Italy. It was because of these experiences that I developed a passion for meeting and working with people from diverse countries and cultures. After graduation I spent time first travelling, and then working in New Zealand where I ran the educational program and helped coordinate the events for international artists at an international arts festival. On returning home to the United States I worked at a non-native English speaking school that helped international students apply to universities in English speaking countries. I mentored students through their studies and have maintained contact with many of the students as they have gone on to university.

The most rewarding aspect of being an educator who works with international students was, and still is, watching students learn to navigate the often complex personal, social and political demands their education presents them with and to begin to understand themselves differently through the comparison of their own experiences with something different and something imagined. It was my desire to learn more about the impact of these possibilities and new learning that brought me back to school.

As an international student, I have once again found myself going through a similar process of negotiation. Although this study examines how students navigate through the

educational systems and come to understand their experiences as international graduate students, this research is also about my processing and understanding these experiences.

Background

Immigration is ingrained in the history of Canada, as it is a country mostly filled with people from somewhere else. The Multiculturalism Policy of 1971, followed by the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* in 1988 made Canada the first nation in the world to officially claim “multiculturalism” as a defining characteristic of its society. These ideas of diversity and multiculturalism are not new in Canadian society, however, and stretch back to colonization of the land and the indigenous population.

Currently, due to the projected decrease in population and the recent global recession, the federal and the provincial governments have begun to promote increased immigration particularly in the education sector (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Association of Universities and Colleges [AAUC], 2009a; AUCC, 2009c; Harris, 2008; Stilwell, 2010; Canadian Bureau for International Education [CBIE], 2010; Citizenship and Immigration Canada [CIC], 2006; CIC, 2008a; CIC, 2008b; CIC 2011b; Council of Ministers of Education, Canada [CMEC], 2008; CMEC, 2009) specifically through the enrollment of international students in higher education. International students are recognized an important source of new talent, research, innovation and international partnership for the country (Cudmore, 2005). In Canada, student immigrants are thought to contribute as much as \$6.5 billion to the Canadian economy through tuition, costs of accommodation, living costs, travel and discretionary products and services, as well as adding directly to government revenues by around \$291 million per year (CIC, 2011a). Post-graduation,

international students who stay to work and/or become permanent residents help the nation compete in the knowledge economy and continue to contribute financially to the Canadian economy. Those who choose to leave spread the knowledge and skills they have gained from Canadian universities and continue to act as international liaisons for Canadian community (CBIE, 2005; CBIE, 2010, OECD, 2009). It is not surprising, therefore, that the recruitment of international students has been one of the primary educational investments made by the Canadian government over the past decade.

At the level of the individual institution this effort by the national government is supported by educational institutions in part due to the increase in enrollment and direct income from the higher tuition paid by international students. The students' daily living expenses, textbook fees, costs of accommodation and other purchases all contribute directly to the local economy (AUCC, 2002; AUCC, 2009a, CBIE, 2010). Although the majority of the policy documents focus on these economic and political benefits, having international student "diversity" is also cited as culturally beneficial to the university and surrounding community. International students bring with them different perspectives creating a multicultural and "diverse" atmosphere, which enriches the learning and cultural experiences both on and off-campus (AUCC, 2009a; CBIE, 2010). Yet there is very little research on what these international student experiences actually are.

In the fall of 2010, Canada had approximately 90,000 full time international students studying in either the college/trade or the university sector; a 10 percent increase from the previous year and a continuation of the expanding international student enrollment, which has been evident for the past 15 years (AAUC, 2010). In 2009, there were 85,140 international students studying in Canada, an increase of 25 percent from 2005 (CIC, 2011b). At the

University of British Columbia (UBC), there were 5,200 international students enrolled in 2005 (UBC, 2005). By the 2010/2011 school year, enrollment had increased to 7,175 (UBC, 2012a). In keeping with the AAUC report that 95 percent of Canadian universities refer to internationalization somewhere in their strategic plan (AAUC, 2008), the UBC Strategic Plan released in 2009 identifies internationalization as one of its main objectives for the future. It specifically addresses the desire to increase international student numbers as one of the prime strategies for “internationalizing” the campus. The 2015 goal is that 25 percent of the graduate student population at UBC be classified as international (UBC, 2009c).

These statistics demonstrate that the student population studying in Canada, and more specifically at UBC is clearly increasing and will continue to do so. Yet the discussions are predominantly focused on the economic impact of international students and rarely focus on the experiences of these students. What are the lived experiences of these students? Are they in fact bringing “an international and intercultural perspective to the classroom and the communities in which they live helping develop the international knowledge, skills and abilities of Canadians” (CBIE, 2005), as they are said to be? The push to increase international enrollment along with the global, national and local changes in immigration and institutional policies on international education serve as an impetus to conduct research that sheds light on the lived experiences of this ever-increasing international student population. Research that does not just examine and present these experiences with fiscal and competitive goals in mind, but seeks to understand the cultural experiences these students are having on the ground.

Purpose & research questions

The purpose of this research is to look at the daily lives of international graduate students in order to understand what it means to be an international graduate student at a large internationalized research university in Canada. I do this by looking at how international graduate students make sense of their experience through their daily interactions with people, places, and systems on-campus and examining how power shapes these experiences and their own perspectives in relation to their identities. Through this research I hope to provide a space for international graduate student voices to be heard on the University of British Columbia campus while highlighting the complexity of the international student experience and the agency behind these experiences: a perspective, I suggest, that is missing both in the literature and in international student policy in higher education today.

My research is guided by the research questions below:

1. What are the experiences of international graduate students at the University of British Columbia?
 - a. How do the discourses and institutional practices of internationalization shape these experiences and the international graduate students' sense of belonging?
 - b. How do these experiences shape what it means to be an international graduate student at UBC?

In this study I explore these questions by interviewing ten self-identified international graduate students about their perceptions of their lived experiences at UBC. My hope is that through this research I can begin to provide a new perspective on the international student experience and

complicate the bounded institutional definition of what it means to be an international graduate student in Canada: thus create spaces for understanding beyond the institutional walls.

Significance

Since 2003 the overall population of international students on the University of British Columbia campus has increased over 20 percent (UBC, 2009a). Since 2005 both the federal and the provincial governments have invested millions of dollars on initiatives to promote Canada as a place to study through marketing and immigration schemes (CIC, 2008a; CIC, 2008b; CMEC, 2009; CMEC, 2007). In September of 2011, B.C. Premier Christy Clark announced as a goal, a 50 percent increase in international student enrollment in British Columbia post-secondary institutions over the next four years (“Christy Clark,” 2011). With the national push for international student recruitment, international student enrollment is bound to continue to rise. This increase has come with an institutional awareness of the difficulties that international students face while living abroad. This awareness both in Canada and other countries has resulted in a growing body of research on international student experiences. One example is the implementation of national surveys such as the International Student Survey (CBIE, 2005, 2009). The majority of this research, however, does little to illuminate the international student experience from the student perspective (Andrade, 2006; Hellsten & Prescott, 2004; Lacina, 2000; Pidgeon & Andres, 2005; Ren et al., 2007). Furthermore, much of this research comes from the United States and Australia which is problematic. Non-Canadian research may not be relevant to the international student in a University within Canada, since Canadian culture,

politics, and history are different and therefore can lead to different results in comparison to other countries. In order to provide effective support for the growing number of international graduate students in Canada, it is imperative that adequate research be conducted on the international graduate student perspective within the Canadian context.

Examining how international students understand themselves and how they negotiate the transformative experiences in graduate school can help educators develop more effective learning and teaching techniques in the classroom and aid administrators and staff in providing better support to international students on their journey through the Canadian higher education system. This research provides a space for us to listen to the student voice and hear from their perspective what it means to be an international graduate student. It also critically examines how power structures within the university affect how international graduate students understand themselves.

What to expect

The thesis is presented in six chapters. In chapter one, I have provided an introduction giving a brief background on the problem, the context of the research and some of the gaps in the research around international graduate student experience. In chapter two I present an overview of my research methodology, my methods, and how I have approached the data analysis. Chapter three outlines my conceptual framework and provides a literature review on internationalization, multiculturalism and international student experience. Although some readers might find my choice to present my methodology prior to my conceptual framework and theory

unconventional, I believe there is good reason in doing so. Theory and data are often treated as binaries but in fact each of my students (data) brought with them their own interpretations (theory). Of course, having done a preliminary literature review, I also come with my own biases and theoretical interpretations, which I discuss in my methodology section. However, my intention was to allow the students' own experiences to drive the analysis. As a result, I feel that this layout more honestly represents the process and creation of my research. Chapter four provides a small window into the individual lives of each of the international graduate students I had conversations with through the students' own stories, background and my descriptions of the student. These experiences are explored further in chapter five, which is outlined in loose thematic sections that highlight the students' voices along with my analysis. Chapter six pulls the research together by summarizing my analysis and exploring the larger implications of the research.

Chapter II: Mapping it out: My methodology

With a background in visual arts I rarely have difficulty letting go with a paintbrush and a canvas. I feel relaxed exploring abstract concepts that can leave me troubled and uncertain because the language of visual art is comfortable to me. I understand how to pay respect to other artists, how to pose questions, how to explain, disrupt and challenge without formulating sentences. Art is a language that allows me to explore the unexplainable without having to use words, and that is what drew me to it initially. As an administrator, however, in “real life” I feel bound by discursive structures that the canvas wipes away (or one might argue “hides”). I manoeuvre my way through these discursive structures with efficiency and control. These two ways of thinking about the world are separate for me, and that is what has always kept me sane. On returning to school after my work as an administrator it is probably not surprising that I had a clear efficient plan that I wanted to follow. I was returning to study the field in which I had worked, and that meant speaking the language of efficiency, measurability and results.

What I discovered, however, was that this “administrative language” could not help me clarify the ideas I wished to investigate, nor did it allow me to understand and explore topics from perspectives that opened doors to new meanings and possibilities. It was not until I was introduced to thinkers that disrupt commonly assumed categories and question power, knowledge and essentialized experiences that I began to feel there was a place in the theory, methodology and literature that I could understand and accept. I slowly became more comfortable with the possibility of fluidity and blurriness as acceptable concept the written academic world. A way of thinking and speaking that provides a space in which I can sit comfortably with discomfort; where meanings are not fixed.

As an undergraduate I spent a month and a half doing my own independent research in Ghana. I wish I had been given some of the literature that I have now read before I took off on that journey. Looking back on those experiences there are many things I am ashamed of having done. As an “innocent researcher” I took advantage of my white privilege in ways that I was not aware of until recently. I really believe that ethical questions arise in every moment of one’s work. Because of this, it is the place that I will start in my discussion of my research. I feel that I need to emphasize that this is not in an effort to check a box and say I have (successfully?) done my research ethically, but instead to set the tone for everything else to come, because as I said before, ethics are involved in every process of research.

In her book *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, respect is a term that Linda Smith (1999) uses to illustrate how balance and harmony can come together in relationships between people and with the environment. It is also described as a place where balance and harmony can be established within ethical protocols for research as well. It is through this positioning of respect that I approached and still approach this study: respect for the students, the research and myself.

Ethics & epistemology

As an international student myself who is bound within the power structures that I am studying in my research, I intended not to affix my “gaze” upon the other, but instead focus on the process of “othering” itself and the web of power dynamics in which we, as university students, administrators, professors, etcetera, are deeply ingrained. At times I am privileged and

at times I am marginalized, regardless, I am bound within these structures; structures that exist in my research and in every interaction I have had with the international graduate students themselves. As such, I approached my methodology from this perspective of respect and have attempted to be conscious of my own privileges, biases and shifting identities while researching, analyzing and drawing my conclusions.

Research is power laden and the mere presence of a researcher affects the research itself. Therefore understanding the “social location” of myself as the researcher is important to troubling the power constructs in my research (Alcoff, 1991). At no point during my research am I neutral. A researcher is forever “shaped by [her or his] socio-historic locations, including the values and interests that these locations confer upon them” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 15). As such, I must constantly reflect upon my understanding of myself and how my social location and identities such as race, nationality, class and gender affect my own interpretations and analysis of events and the actual social interactions during the interviews themselves (Davies, 2008; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Mauthner and Doucet, 2003).

It is easy to merely state “who I am” in fixed normative categories of identity: a heterosexual, white, English speaking, American-born, female, international graduate student. But what these “categories” actually mean within the research and how they position me within the web of power is more challenging. As an international student who has also spent a lot of time working and living outside of my own country I can empathize with the experiences of my interviewees from a broader perspective. I understand the feeling of being in a different time zone than my family and friends, missing major cultural holidays, and being unfamiliar with systems whether it is the institutional structures and barriers I encounter or simply how you get a shopping cart in the grocery store (we don’t need quarters in the United States of America).

Having studied in Ghana I understand the feeling of looking racially different. However, my color was still a privilege there, so I cannot understand what it's like to be a visible minority that is non-white in a white dominated society. Nor what it is like to work toward a degree in a different language than my native tongue.

In other words, I live and exist in multiple social locations and have multiple subjectivities at one time, just as the students I research do. My responsibility to be reflexive is never ending and is deeply ethical. At times I am an “outsider.” For example, as the researcher I am an outsider that has created this research for a specific purpose. As a result I risk projecting my own agenda, beliefs, and understandings onto the perspective of the students I am researching. At other times I am an “insider” as an international graduate student myself and have experiences I share with the students I interview. As Smith (1999) suggests, “insider research has to be as ethical and respectful, as reflexive and critical, as outsider research” (p. 139), requiring me to be “humble” as a member of the community with privilege, access, positioning and relationships that are different to those that I am researching.

This constant reflexivity on the interplay of my social biography is also about looking beyond the dualism that is produced by the insider-outsider relationship. It is about seeing these roles as interchangeable and always shifting, depending on the experiences and social positioning of the people involved (Davies, 2008; Hemmersley and Atkinson, 2007; Mauthner and Doucet, 2003).

I approached the interviews themselves feeling that the knowledge created in an interview is shared knowledge and that “the process of knowing through conversations is intersubjective and social, involving interviewer and interviewee as co-constructors of

knowledge” (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009, p.18). As such I tried my best to create a situation in which the students did not feel as if they were being “interviewed” but rather, were having a discussion with me about their experiences on-campus. By going over the consent form and clearly explaining the objective of this research I hoped to show that my intention was not to seek specific answers from them, but to have more of a conversation about who they are, where they come from, and what their experiences have been on-campus. Through semi-structured interviews I tried to create a space where they were welcome to share their opinions and feelings. I was aware that at times this might create opportunities in which the participants might disclose more information than they had planned. In an effort to reduce this possibility, however, I was clear at the beginning of the interviews that they did not have to share more than they felt comfortable sharing. In addition, if I felt that a conversation had the potential for this disclosure I stopped the conversation to reiterate this point.

Regardless, I “acknowledge the powerful role [I] play in shaping what can be seen” (Naples, 2003, p.66). I am aware that by approaching my research as a conversation, a give and take, and situating myself in the research through the recognition of myself as a researcher power, imbalances do not cease to exist (Mauthner & Daurer, 2003; Naples, 2003). During one of my follow up interviews a student reminded me of my role as the privileged researcher by his discomfort at the possibility of being “represented” differently than how he wanted to be perceived. Sensing a hesitation when reading this student’s “letter home” (they were asked to write a letter to someone they cared for about their experiences as international students at UBC, this project is described later in this section, and in Appendix A). I asked him to talk about his experience writing the letter. He responded that he found it really challenging. I thought he was referring to the extremely broad topic the letter was to be written about, but through the

conversation found out that it had more to do with his concern that he was representing himself in a way that he felt was not true to “himself.”

it’s just a little discomfoting, I like to think about my own situation a lot and I do that a lot but whenever I’m talking about it I’m always worried that I’ll be misrepresenting myself and not really being true... because once you’ve asserted something about yourself then it’s there on record so in general I like to be careful about what I project about myself, which is not always a good thing.... (Stanley)

Later in the interview he explained the barriers he faced when trying to write the letter knowing that it was going to me, a relative stranger. Stanley explained that if he was in fact writing the letter to his friend “I don’t have that worry of, I don’t know, how I’m representing myself to him because in a way I don’t really care because I trust them. A certain level of shared experience.”

Trust. It hurt to hear him say that both on a personal level and as a researcher. I tried my best to be as honest as possible with the students I interviewed about the goals of my research, to situate myself for them, and for myself in my research and to involve them in the analysis process by seeking clarification and being open to a conversation of shared knowledge. Yet there were limits to what I could do to make a student feel comfortable and feel that they would be represented fairly when I eventually sat down to write my thesis. Whenever possible I shared my interpretations with them, was open to theirs, encouraged them to ask me questions about my analysis at that point and clarify anything they felt necessary. Moreover, as conversations have moments of reciprocal engagement, I often found myself sharing my own personal experiences as an international graduate student with the students as well. Regardless, there is no getting around the fact that I am the one writing the thesis and in the end, these are my words.

Another important issue this story highlights is the notion of truth. Just as socially locating myself does NOT guarantee that I am providing a single “truth” in my research, it is important to emphasize that the stories and perspectives in my research are not presented as the only truth available. The interpretation of any story or experience will depend on context, histories and the subjectivities of all players present, just as my use of categories such as race, class, nation, and culture depend on “how they are defined and on the social context in which they are used” (Weedon, 1999, p.130). My goal with this research is not to find out “the” truth. I hope to provide an insight that will affect and make change with “no external guarantee in ‘truth’ or ‘reality’” (p.130).

Any type of qualitative data runs the risk of speaking for the “other.” In fact, this is the dilemma of all qualitative research. There is no perfect answer, but Linda Alcoff (1991) provides two different positions that should be addressed in an effort to not speak “for” or on “behalf” of others. The first I have already discussed: the need to identify one’s “social location” as a researcher in order to address the positioning from which one speaks as it affects both the meaning and the truth of what one says. The second is acknowledging how social location places the researcher in a position of power as, “certain privileged locations are discursively dangerous. In particular, the practice of privileged persons speaking for or on behalf of less privileged persons” (Alcoff, 1991, p. 7).

During the interviews I tried to situate myself within the research and “create wherever possible the conditions for dialogue and the practice of speaking with and to rather than speaking for others” (Alcoff, 1991, p.23). I tried to be as transparent as possible about my feelings about multiple truths, and positivist understandings of experiences and knowledge. For example, while having a conversation with Stanley about his feelings on being represented in this piece, it turned

out his concern was more a personal reflection on speaking about himself generally rather than his fear of my misrepresentation of him.

Furthermore, I used the follow-up interview as an opportunity to talk about themes, questions, and discussions I identified in the first interview, and also as an opportunity to provide a platform for the students to ask questions, and seek clarification on anything either of us said.

I attempted to maintain this reflexivity not just during the interview, but also throughout the entire process of my research to allow the reader, the researcher and the students to have a better understanding of the biases that I bring to my research and the role that I inevitably play as the researcher. (Davies, 2008; Finlay, 2002; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Naples, 2003). This can never completely erase the power imbalances that exist, nor eliminate the role of my interpretation or my presence on the work itself. However, I believe my conscious effort to understand and analyze these limitations as they affect my research and to be as transparent as possible with the students will provide the reader a more honest, or accurate interpretation of the results of my research. As with the students, this leaves the door open to more dialogue. Reflexivity is not a solution to power imbalances within research, but it can enrich the accounts and the practice (Naples, 2003, p. 37) by acknowledging and troubling the knowledge that is gained through the research process itself.

An outline of my research

An overview of my method

In order to look at the lived experiences of international graduate students I conducted qualitative research using in-depth, semi-structured interviews with ten international graduate students that are enrolled in the Faculty of the Arts at the University of British Columbia. I established interview questions based on my proposed research question, a thorough literature review, and three pilot interviews, which helped me clarify my interview questions further.

After the first interviews I asked each student to take some time on their own to write a “letter home” to someone important in their life about their experiences as international students at UBC. Once these letters were written and I had transcribed our first interviews we had a second interview. In this follow-up interview we discussed any questions and clarifications we had regarding the first interview and discussed the “letter home” project.

The interviews and the “letter home” projects were analyzed by allowing the data to speak. I found patterns and themes as they emerged from the data itself, rather than using previously established categories from prior research (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008). I then used theory to complicate and guide my understanding of how power played a role in the experiences the students talked about. The inclusion of the creative project provided a more in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of these students.

The interviews & the letter home project

The objective of my personal research was to try to get a better understanding of the lived experience that graduate international students have at UBC. Because interviews attempt “to understand the world from the subjects’ point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences, to uncover their lived world” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p.1), they can be used as a valuable method for learning information about students’ personal experiences. The benefit to individual student interviews is that it is “designed to bring out how the *interviewees themselves* interpret and make sense of issues and events” (Bryman, Teevan & Bell, 2009, p. 160) while also allowing the interviewee to probe, ask more questions, and direct the interview if need be.

My interviews were semi-structured, using specific guiding questions to frame the interview while allowing space for a conversation. Knowledge created in an interview is shared knowledge that is “intersubjective and social, involving interviewer and interviewee as co-constructors of knowledge” (Kvale and Brinkman, 2009, p. 18). In my interviews, I was able to have directed conversations that drew from the themes of my interview questions. I also endeavored to allow the students to feel as if the interview was not an interrogation, but rather a dialogue between the two of us. In an effort not to overpower the voices of the students with my personal agenda and to create a space for shared knowledge, I tried my best to be in a continual dialogue with the students throughout the entire interview. In addition, to continue creating this shared space, my approach towards the interviews was to have conversations *with* the students and not just *on* them (Pillow, 2003). I did so by involving them in the process of analyzing the data itself by offering to give the students their transcript and a copy of their recording (which I transcribed within seven days of our first interview) and by having follow up interviews where

we discussed questions that we had regarding what was said during the first interview and written in the transcription itself.

At the beginning of each interview I emphasized that their participation would not jeopardize their enrollment and I was clear to state that there were no “correct answers” to the questions I posed. I was interested in hearing their story, their interpretations and their experiences. They were welcome to ask me to clarify any concepts or questions at any time. My first interviews with the students started with broad questions so as to make the interviewee more comfortable, to better understand the context from which the student was speaking, and to avoid placing pre-existing categories into the discussion. As the interview proceeded, I asked more directed questions to get the students to elaborate on ideas that reflected my research questions and tried to be as interactive as possible in an effort to have more of a conversation with the student rather than a one-sided dialogue. Whenever clarification was needed on particular statements, I would follow up by asking for further explanation, or for confirmation as to whether my interpretation of what I heard was correct. This not only helped me better understand what the student was trying to explain, but is also an example of how I attempted to be an active participant in the interview itself.

I tried my best to make the student as comfortable as I could during the interview. I did this by being as flexible as possible when choosing the interview location. If they chose to meet me on-campus, we often ended up in a small conference room because I do not have a private office space. This was not only cold (literally in regards to the temperature), but at times it also felt very formal. The use of a coffee shop was found to be ineffective due to the ambient noise for my recording device and because the conversation felt less private.

I was also sure to let the student know, prior to the start of the interview, that if at any point during the interview she or he felt uncomfortable and didn't want to answer a particular question she or he did not have to. In addition, I informed them that if they wanted me to stop the recording or end the interview early they had the power to do so. The recorded interviews were uploaded and transcribed directly on my personal computer within seven days after the interview took place.

At the end of the first interview I explained the "letter home" project, which I asked them to participate in and provided a document that further explained what I was looking for (see Appendix A). In this project the student was asked to take some time and write a letter to a close family member or a friend about their experiences, or a more detailed discussion of a topic that had interested them from our first interview. The student was encouraged to be creative and the platform of dialogue was left open (suggested medium was drawing, painting, collage, maps, etc.). I asked to be provided a copy of this "letter home" once finished, unless it was too large to copy (i.e., something three dimensional). During the follow-up interview, we discussed the letter itself, the process of creating the letter, and the meaning we saw in the letter or the project they created.

The letter home project was used as a different platform for receiving data in order to enrich my dataset. It provided a way for international graduate students to express her or his experiences in a thoughtful and creative manner without my being present and then became an important platform for further discussion in the follow up interview (as explained below). Moreover, this project was not used to confirm any "truths" that I had "discovered" in my research (Davies, 2008). I was aware that this additional source of data might filled with both contradictions and confirmations of what had been discussed in the first interview, but felt that

these potential discrepancies would help inform and deepen my understanding of these students' experiences. Furthermore, it is through these contradicting discursive fields that a researcher often can discover new meanings from within (Davies, 2008; Weedon, 1999).

The follow-up interview presented a chance to clarify any questions or concerns the student as the interviewee or myself, as the interviewer, had about the first interview and the "letter home" project. Simultaneously, this was also a chance for us to discuss what was written, drawn or organized in the "letter home" project. The conversations about the "letter home" project varied depending on how comfortable the student felt discussing what they had created and whether there were other topics that the student or I felt were more important to discuss. Generally, this interview provided me a chance to talk with them, in person, about how I interpreted their letter and for them to expand on it themselves. It was also a chance for me to test my interpretations and allowed the students to clarify and partake in the analysis I have provided in the following chapters.

The letters came in various forms. The majority of the students who did participate in the second interview chose to write in traditional letterform (six out of the eight students that participated in the second interviews). One student chose to draw a comic strip that outlined the various emotional and physical challenges she has faced as an international student (Appendix B). Another student showed me a selection of photos of family and friends that gave a larger picture of her daily experiences. Because there were only two letters that were not in written form, I did not undergo any visual analysis. I used the transcripts and the written letters for the analysis in the following chapters and the pictures and the comic strip only as a guide for the second interviews with these students. Not only was each letter unique, but this project also gave me a different and sometimes new perspective into the lives of these students. Furthermore,

provided me with a chance to better understand and clarify the contents of the discussions we had during the first interview. The follow-up interview was the last interview I had with each student.

The advantage of taking the time to have personal one-on-one interviews and a follow up interview to discuss the “letter home” project was that these methods present a platform that provides rich and thickly descriptive stories and perspectives on the lives of each of the individual international students. Furthermore this allowed me to include the students in the process of the analysis by allowing me to ask for clarification on subjects we discussed and my own interpretations. There are disadvantages that need to be considered with this method as well. Interviews can take a lot of time and like all qualitative research that involves personal interaction, power dynamics, biases, an acknowledgment of the subjectivity of a researchers’ interpretation can be a challenge. These are all challenges that I tried my best to address.

My participants & my recruitment strategy

The majority of international student research focuses on both graduate students and undergraduate students together, however since international graduate students often have had different life experiences than international undergraduate students, which can create different challenges and academic results for them when studying at university (Berman & Cheng, 2001; Briguglio, 2000) I chose to focus only on graduate students. In light of this, the participants for my study were all international Masters and Ph.D. students. I drew my sample from current students in the Faculty of the Arts at UBC. In addition, I only interviewed students in their second year and above. On completion of at least a year of study at UBC, these students seemed

in a better position to reflect on their experiences at the school. I recruited these students through poster in the student union, international house, residences and other public boards around campus. I used e-mail list-serves in the various departments within the Faculty of the Arts to send out announcements/a call for participants that gave a brief summary of the objectives of my project with an ethics approved poster attached (see Appendix C). I also used department contacts that I have built over my time studying here and did not directly contact any participant without their initially contacting me. I was lucky to find that I received enough interest through these recruitment efforts that I did not need to use snowballing as well, though I did try to encourage each of the participants to see if any of their friends were interested in participating in the study. Based on my recruitment methods, I had hoped that these students would come from mixed backgrounds and disciplines, and I was pleased to find that this was the case. Table 2.1 on the next page outlines the demographics of the international graduate students that I interviewed. Please note that all of the students have been given pseudonyms and their department of study has been left out to protect student confidentiality.

Table 2.1: Demographic information for the international graduate students

Name & Gender	Age	Degree	Citizenship	First Language	How are you financed?	Housing	Years in Canada	Recent country of residence
Stanley Male	31	MA	Pakistan	Urdu	Scholarship / TA	Off Campus w/ roommate & cat	1 ½ yrs	Thailand
Sally Female	27	Ph.D.	USA	English	Scholarship	Off Campus w/ cats	1 yr	Hungary and the Netherlands
Mi Sun Female	37	Ph.D.	South Korea	Korean	Scholarship	Off campus w/ husband & child	3 yrs	South Korea
Nina Female	26	MA	USA	English	Scholarship / Fellowship/ TA	Off Campus	1 1/2 yrs	USA
Nik Male	26	Ph.D.	Bulgaria	Bulgarian	Scholarship / TA	On campus w/ roommate	2 1/2 yrs	USA
Khari Male	33	Ph.D.	Tanzania	Swahili	Scholarship / RA	Off Campus homestay	1 1/2 yrs	Tanzania
Dishi Male	31	MA	China	Chinese	Parents & Self	Off campus w/ roommate	6 yrs	China
Natalia Female	29	Ph.D.	Chile	Spanish	Scholarship from Chile	Off campus w/ husband	1 1/2 yrs	Chile
Abhi Male	34	Ph.D.	India	English	TA	Off Campus	4 yrs	USA
Caroline Female	24	Ph.D.	USA	English	Scholarship	Off campus w/ roommate	2 1/2 yrs	USA

Institutional context

Institutional numbers

British Columbia as a province has been reported to account for about 28 percent of the international students in the country. In November of 2011 there were 48,393 students enrolled at UBC on the Vancouver campus. Of these students, 10,195 were graduate students and 2,919 are identified as international students making international students almost 29 percent of the graduate student population. The Faculty of the Arts has the largest graduate student enrollment with a total of 1,996 graduate students enrolled, 597 of who are international graduate students (UBC, 2011).

On-campus student support

UBC has multiple organizations and support programs in place to help international students that are enrolled. Many of these services are housed at the International House on-campus, which is a building on-campus dedicated to supporting international students and domestic students interested in spending time abroad. The International Student Development (ISD) office is located here and supports various student run organizations such as the International Peer Advisor Program and the International Peer Program where second, third and fourth year students support and advise new and continuing international students during their journeys at school. ESL classes are also provided for students should they need it along with social events at this location. The Global Lounge is a recent addition to student services and has started to become a place where domestic and international students are encouraged to mingle.

Furthermore, the International Students Association (ISA) works to help advocate and create a space for cross-cultural awareness on-campus, while also being key to communication between international students and the Alma Matter Society (AMS), the general student body's student union. The AMS helps provide the student health care, the transportation passes and student clubs and societies. In addition to the aforementioned international student specific organizations, international students are also welcome to use all other student services on-campus (UBC, 2010a).

Informed consent & confidentiality

Once I had been contacted by the students interested in the study I sent out the initial contact form (see Appendix D) and the consent form (see Appendix E) for their review. If they still wished to participate in the study after reading these forms I asked that they contact me a second time to discuss availability. If I did not hear back from them within two weeks from sending them the original forms I contacted them via e-mail to see if they were still willing to participate.

At the beginning of the interview, I presented a printed copy of the consent form, which I offered to read out loud. If the student declined that offer, I asked them to read it over one last time in front of me. I then asked them if they had any questions regarding the document and offered to discuss any issues they might have with it. After they re-read the form (none of the students requested that I read it aloud) I had them sign the form in front of me if they agreed to the stipulations.

As for the confidentiality of the material, all personal information along with any notes I took during the interview and the audio recording itself, were locked securely in a place that only I have access to. I used numbers for each participant in the official transcription and pseudonyms for the thesis itself. The coding that links these pseudonyms with the correct participant and their personal information is saved and password protected on my personal computer. This is also backed up on a flash drive that is locked in the aforementioned space along with any information that can be personally linked to the participants.

Data analysis

Just as reflexivity is crucial at every part of the research, data analysis was also part of every stage of my research. As Davies (2008) suggests, “[t]he process of analysis is intrinsic to all stages... and not something that begins once data collection is complete” (p. 231). My analysis began by narrowing the focus of my topic once I started my research; this narrowing continued through the last edit of this thesis. I analyzed my research by using what Kvale and Brinkmann (2008) describe as an “ad hoc” method of analysis, which mixes multiple forms of analysis together to coherently understand the data. Rather than approaching my research with already established codes, concepts or themes developed from an outline provided by my literature review, I used the data to derive codes, allowing the data to speak and for me to “examine what is said rather than how it is said” (Bryman, Teevan & Bell, 2009, p. 271). The major steps of my analysis are described below.

First, I created codes while I transcribed the interviews and while reading the “letters home.” I re-coded these documents several times after I had completed all of the interviews and

transcriptions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008) in an effort to maintain continued reflexivity. From these codes, I then noted patterns and themes that emerged looking for plausibility and initial impressions as to meanings in the stories and conversations I had with the students (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Two limitations of coding qualitative data are that the students' voice and the contextualization of the stories and experiences can be lost due to the unintentional removal of "chunks of text out of the context in which they appear" (Bryman, Teevan & Bell, 2009, p.269). To minimize this possibility, I conducted a narrative analysis, as described by Bryman, Teevan and Bell (2009). The narrative analysis examines both the recounting of experiences and the stories that are told, by focusing on

the connections in people's accounts of past, present, and future events and states of affairs; people's sense of their place within those events and situations; the stories they generate about them; and the significance of context for the unfolding of events and people's sense of their role within them. (Bryman, Teevan & Bell, 2009, p. 271).

With these goals in mind, I created ten-page documents for each student with rich quotes and stories gathered from the original transcripts and the "letters home." Using these ten-page documents, and the patterns and themes from the first step of my analysis, I then contrasted and compared the codes, stories and experiences of the students with each other in order to "sharpen [my] understanding" of the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.245). A simplified version of this coding and thematic organizing is provided in Appendix F. At this stage of the research I was wary of creating categories that limited the data and remained reflexive in each of my decisions, open to changes at any time. From here, I then turned to my conceptual theory to further my understanding of the stories and experiences and to help create the analysis section of this thesis.

My choice to remain close to the data through my analysis and my continued emphasis on the students words, stories and experiences in this research does not suggest that I was neutral in my readings and understandings. I cannot ignore that I am a researcher with my own personal goal; to complete research that I feel is both meaningful in the field of academia and higher education administration. Nor can I claim that I am free of my own biases, beliefs, and lenses. At the beginning of my research I had a broad theoretical base that helped me choose a research topic, the participants, the site and the methodological approach. This methodological approach drew from a preliminary literature review I conducted on international student perspectives and experiences in higher education. It was further influenced by my personal experiences in higher education working as an administrator and as an international student. My theoretical perspective was framed by scholars such as Chris Weedon, Michel Foucault, Linda Smith, and Stuart Hall. As such, it is impossible to deny that these perspectives did not influence how I saw patterns, themes and relationships in my research. However, I tried my best to allow the research to guide the study by being reflexive about the theories and open to changes as the research moved forward (Davies, 2008).

Funding & compensation

This research was not funded. At the beginning of the research, the students were informed that a contribution of \$25 for each international student interviewed would be donated to an international graduate student cause upon completion of the thesis. The rationale behind this choice was that I wanted the money and the research to benefit the collective good of the international graduate student body. After reflecting on the research itself, I have decided to

donate the money to the International House on-campus, requesting that the money be used to pay a current international graduate student to update the international graduate student orientation curriculum and deliver the revised version at the upcoming orientation in September, 2012. Although this has yet not been confirmed, the International House has offered to match my donation. The new orientation program will include more community building exercises where students interact and get to know each other.

Final thoughts

I am aware that I am intricately bound within a web of power relations that shaped and continue to shape both the students and my experiences in this research. This research is subjective. Although my interpretations, analysis and conclusions are what will be read it is the students' narratives that provide the substance of this thesis. It is the telling of their stories from their point of view that informed my results. In interpreting and analyzing the narratives, I continually reflected on my positioning, experiences and biases through my investigation of the literature, consultation with mentors, informal discussions with other students interested in international education and personal reflection in the form of e-mails and creative essays written for my own personal use. Moreover, by sharing transparently with the students the purpose and methodology of my research I left room for the students to question me. The follow-up interviews further allowed for feedback and correction of my interpretations by the students. Regardless, there is no denying that biases will exist in this research and there is no way to eliminate them entirely. I can promise, however, that I have tried to show respect for all

knowledge exchanged and constructed, accepting that this is just one of multiple truths, albeit a valid and important truth to be heard and shared, as knowledge is necessarily incomplete.

Chapter III: Contextualizing the research

Conceptual framework

In *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Linda Smith (1999) suggests that, “it is important to have a critical understanding of some of the tools of research – not just the obvious technical tools, but the conceptual tools, the ones that make us feel uncomfortable, which we avoid, for which we have no easy response” (p.40). In the following chapter I will begin to elaborate on some of the often uncomfortable and challenging “conceptual tools” that guide this study. In writing this thesis I draw heavily from cultural, political and social theorists such as Stuart Hall, Benedict Anderson, Chris Weedon, Linda Smith, Michel Foucault and others, which I shall acknowledge as the study unfolds. This is important because as Weedon (1987) suggests:

rather than turning our backs on theory and taking refuge in experience alone, we should think in terms of transforming both the social relations of knowledge production and the type of knowledge produced. To do so requires that we tackle the fundamental questions of how and where knowledge is produced and by whom, and of what counts as knowledge. It also requires a transformation of the structures, which determine how knowledge is disseminated or otherwise (p.7).

Following Weedon, I use theory not to help me find a single truth, but to enrich my understanding of the international graduate student experiences at UBC and as a guide for how I have chosen to conceptualize notions of knowledge, power, history, and identities.

Subject & identity

Stuart Hall (1990) suggests that instead of thinking about identity as a known “already accomplished fact,” we should think about identity as “a production, which is never complete, always in the process and always constituted within, not outside, representation” (p.222).

Viewing identity should not be understood as a fixed, unified concept of “being”, but instead as a social enactment “in continuous play with history, culture and power” (p.225).

The notion of “*being*” draws from the idea that there is a common understanding of “being” that brings groups together in a single essentialized shared identity. This notion of identity is shaped by historical experiences and cultural codes, which then unifies and provide us with a stable idea of oneness. It implies that there is a unity and an oneness that underlies all superficial differences and that there is a fixed single truth that shapes an “imagined” identity similar to that of Anderson’s (1991) notion of the imagined community. Hall (1990) addresses the value this unity has created in important social movements such as anti-racist, feminist and anti-colonial movements. By providing a space for commonalities in identities, this concept of “being” gives opportunities for unification in order to form resistance. However, Hall (1990) does not feel that this notion of identity addresses another important aspect of identity: differences. In order to provide space for difference, he describes a second notion of identity, “*becoming*.”

Becoming acknowledges that similarities play a large role in who we are, but that there is a past, present and future engrained in the idea of who we are as well. In other words, identities are not simply grounded in the past, in a single idea of “being” but are undergoing constant transformation shaped by past history as well as the future (Hall, 1990). They are deeply

influenced by colonial histories and with both personal and local cultural and political issues in the present, while simultaneously existing in the imaginary of becoming in the future (Rizvi, 2005). Identities are therefore never fixed in meaning and can be contradictory, and inconsistent (Koehne, 2006; Hall, 1990; Rizvi, 2005; Weedon, 1987, 1999). This allows for the possibilities of both appropriation and resistance and provides space for “discontinuities in ways of being that lead to new ways of becoming” (Koehne, 2006, p.241). From this view, identities are much more complex than static entities. They are multiple and unfixed. This perspective provides a space for change, opening up the possibilities for becoming and not simply being, as a fixed known.

Power & knowledge

Added to this notion of becoming is also the idea that identities are constituted in power and discourses (Koehne, 2006; Seidman, 2004; Weedon, 1987, 1999). Drawing from Foucault, power is discursively produced through laws, language and social interactions of subjectivity and understanding (Foucault, 1982). Discourse can be in the form of language (verbal, written, etc.), and the actions of a subject, which then govern norms, behaviours, and areas of knowledge. These governing discourses can be seen in the structural laws and policies of institutions of power such as the state, legal systems, or in this case, institutions of higher education. For example, economically driven policies and practices of internationalization in higher education are one of the discourses that govern international graduate students. It is this and other available discourses that the students are subject to and in turn shape how the students understand themselves and their own identities. As “discursive practices shape our bodies, as well as our minds and emotions” (Jordan & Weedon, 1995, p. 104).

Furthermore, a subject talks about her or his identities as framed by the available discourses. Therefore, it is the power in these discourses that shape the cultural codes in which the students exist and can then categorize individuals and attach people to their identities. For example, the identity of being “Asian” was not one that Mi Sun related to before moving to Canada. However, because this idea has become available since moving to Canada, she has now begun to adopt it into how she speaks about and understands her own identity. These categorizations can then determine the criteria for inclusions and exclusion, which can result in feelings of lack of belonging, as illustrated in Chapter V. There I draw attention to Natalia’s discussion on what it means to be the holder of an international student visa. From an institutional perspective, this visa categorizes and defines her as an “international student” for bureaucratic purposes. However, this definition also creates ambiguities about her residency status, which affect her when entering Canada, while simultaneously reminding her that she is different, affecting her feelings of belonging in Canada.

In order for discourses to be effective, however, “they require activation through the agency of the individuals whom they constitute and govern, in particular ways, as embodied subjects” (Weedon, 1987, p.112). In other words, it is up to the subject to respond to the governing discourse, which then opens up the opportunity for the creation of a counter-discourse thereby allows for alternate forms of knowing. Power is not always oppressive, but instead a dynamic push and pull between subjects. In turn, discourses are the mobilization, or the enactment, of a particular subject’s negotiation and understanding of the power constructs within one’s surroundings. One has the agency to both “exercise power within the social constructs in which we exist or we can be subjected to the definitions of others” (Jordan & Weedon, 1995, p.111). This opens up possibilities for alternate meanings within the discourses in which subjects

are bound and it is these alternate meanings that I wish to highlight in the international graduate student experiences that I am studying.

Pinar (2003) suggests that, “the study of identity enables us to portray how the politics we had thought were located ‘out there’ in society, are lived through ‘in here’ in our bodies, our minds, our everyday speech and conduct” (p. 8). After listening to international graduate students talk about being, belonging and becoming as they negotiate the powerful discourses and practices within the context of internationalization in their everyday lives, it becomes apparent that the dominant economic discourses provide a limited way of understanding international graduate students and their experiences. Thus, in order to analyze the interplay between power and identity within the international graduate student experience the research needs to be situated in the discourses of internationalization in higher education in Canada. I do so by critically looking at the larger discourses around internationalization, addressing the history of how some of these discourses have been handled and questioning the role of knowledge production and power within these discourses. I continue by examining how this plays out in the local policy on internationalization and the management of diversity and culture in the Canadian/Institutional context. This is followed by a brief discussion of select literature on the international experience, its limitations, and how other research seeks to disrupt some of these discourses within academia itself. Through this analysis it becomes clear that an effect of the current dominant discourse is that international students are positioned as commodities that can be used for economic gains stripping the students of their identities and creating an atmosphere that often causes the students to feel isolated and undervalued. Thus I attempt to challenge this dominant discourse by giving these students a voice.

Review of the literature

Internationalization in higher education

Whether through international student recruitment, hiring of international faculty or the integration of international learning in the curriculum, most higher education institutes in Canada engage in some international education. With 95 percent of universities in Canada referencing “the internationalization of teaching, research and service in their strategic planning” (AAUC, 2008, p.1) one would think that what internationalization is, as a concept and an action plan, would be a term that had an agreed definition. However, this is not the case. De Wit (2011) suggests that when talking about internationalization “it is important to make the distinction between why we are internationalising higher education and what we mean by internationalisation” (p.241). As such, I will begin by exploring *what* internationalization is.

In the context of higher education, internationalization has become a term that is used to define anything “international.” Furthermore, it is often used interchangeably with globalization. Though there is a natural play between globalization and internationalization (de Wit, 2011), for the purpose of this research, I will establish a distinction between the two. Marginson (2000) defines the two terms as such: internationalization is “the growth of relations between nations and between national cultures” while globalization is “the growing role of the world systems.” These world systems are situated outside and beyond the nation state, even while bearing the marks of dominant national cultures” (p. 24). Therefore, internationalization is a relationship. It is the interaction, or a process of integration between cultures and nations within the context of a

larger world system (globalization), while globalization is the “economic, political and societal force” behind internationalization in higher education today (Altbach & Knight, 2007, p.290).

To further clarify internationalization, I now turn to Knight’s (2004) definition, which describes internationalization, in relation to education, as “the *process* of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education” (p.11, emphasis added). In this definition, international is used to describe the relationship between nation states, intercultural is viewed as diversity at the home university, and global addresses the larger context in which the process is occurring. Internationalization, therefore, is the actual act (process) of integrating international relations and diversity into higher education (p.11). This process is put into motion through programs and policies that are outlined in policy documents, strategic plans and mission statements. These are then implemented at both a national and institutional level (Altbach, 2004; de Wit, 2011). The language used in these programs and policies consists of terms related to mobility across borders, ie: staff and student mobility, study abroad, recruitment of international students, international and intercultural policies, international research abroad, cross border student connection, academic mobility, borderless education. There is also an additional set of curriculum related terms, such as, education delivery with technology, “global” education, studies and skill development, international learning and courses, and intercultural understanding and education (Altbach & Knight, 2007; de Wit, 2011; Hughes-Warrington, 2010; Knight, 2004).

Having broadly defined internationalization in the context of this research, a more comprehensive discussion of its underlying rationales is warranted. Knight (2004) describes four rationales for internationalization—economic, political, academic and cultural—though it is frequently difficult to distinguish between these categories as they are often interrelated. For

clarity of reading, and because of the often-overlapping motives, instead of having four distinct sections, I have broken it up into two. First, a critical examination of the economic and political rationale of internationalization indicates that this rationale has had a great influence on higher educational policy and practices in Canada and at UBC, yet fails to take into account the perspective of the human capital being sought—the students themselves. Second, I look at the social and cultural rationales, which are given heightened value within discourses on internationalization. However, in the context of higher education, even the discussions relating to multiculturalism and diversity ignore the actual experiences of those individual students meant to expand and enrich the culture of these academic institutions.

Internationalization in Canada: An economic and political rationale

Investment in education, research and innovation is internationally known as being key to a country's development and success if it is to come out “on top” (AAUC, 2009a; AUCC, 2009d; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2009). Due to the current economic climate, the higher education system in Canada and throughout most of the Western world has shifted to a market driven model that stresses information, knowledge, talent and productivity as a form of economic capital (Harris, 2008; Knight & de Wit, 1995). Part of this model is the marketing of the “internationalization” of the university as a means to compete on the global educational stage and for financial gains (Yang, 2003).

Frequently, the recruitment of both undergraduate and graduate international students are cited as a financial investment, which creates jobs in the larger community and generates income through the international students' every-day use of goods, services and accommodation. Higher

tuition also provides institutions with additional income (CBIE, 2010; Roslyn Kunin & Associates, Inc., 2009).

The OECD (2006) uses the highest level of education attainment as a means of measuring human capital. As a result, the recruitment and retention of international graduate students post-graduation has become key for countries to help them build their economies. Investing in the recruitment of highly qualified and skilled students, international researchers, and both increases human capital and simultaneously improves a country's future economic success. Therefore, the recruitment of international graduate students is arguably a key driver behind many of the recent education and immigration policy changes. The emphasis on international graduate student recruitment is visible in institutional policy documents as discussed below (UBC, 2009c), but it is rarely expressed in the government discourses themselves.

Over the past seven years the Canadian government has invested millions of dollars in creating marketing schemes and changing immigration policy to attract, recruit and retain international students (Altbach & Knight, 2007; AUCC, 2009a; AUCC, 2009c; Harris, 2008; Stilwell, 2010; CBIE, 2010; CIC, 2006, 2008a, 2008b, 2011; Council of Ministers of Education, Canada [CMEC], 2008, 2009; "Christy Clark", 2011). Government reports on these changes site the economic and political benefits, but often neglect to explore the international student story. This creates a powerful discourse that appears to position international students as subjects without agency, who can be used for political and economic gains. Examples of this can be seen in many government documents, media releases, and initiatives and policy changes over the past decade (CBIE, 2010; CIC, 2006, 2008a, 2008b, 2011; CMEC, 2007, 2009; "Christy Clark", 2011).

For example, in April of 2007, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) released *Learn Canada 2020* as a framework for the provincial and territorial educational governing bodies to enhance Canadian educational system. In this report, the connection between a well-educated population and the competitiveness and growth of the Canadian economy and society is highlighted. This is then linked directly to the need to recruit more international students in an effort to offset the decreasing numbers of Canadian students entering post-secondary institutions due to recent demographic shifts (CMEC, 2007). The emphasis is on the mobility and recruitment of international students for the *Canadian* society and the *Canadian* economy. It is important to note that in the section of the document that addresses international students there is mention of the cultural benefits that international students bring to communities in Canada and the need to “actively engage foreign students as more than passive consumers of *our* educational products for *their* individual ends” (p. 56). However, in the three highlighted recommendations that come from the discussion related to international students, the focus is not on the students themselves or the interactions and experiences these students have once they arrive, but instead on “maximizing the opportunity to attract and retain international students,” (p. 61) by initiating changes in work permit and student immigration policies, and the need to make international credentials more easily transferable to aid the recruitment of these students (p. 61). While the role that international student play in internationalization is mentioned, it is ultimately silenced by these recommendations and unfortunately there appears to be no reflexivity on who these students are, what educational level of attainment they are achieving, where they come from, and the effect this might have on the students and their home countries.

In 2007, the Canadian government implemented a major marketing initiative geared towards the recruitment of the “best and the brightest” called the *Imagine Education au/in*

Canada brand. The federal government invested millions of dollars to create this brand. In *A Brand for Education in Canada Fact Sheet* (CMEC, 2009), the Canadian government outlines the justification for the need to increase targeted recruitment of international students as a response to the current market demands. “Spectacular growth in markets and fierce competition among more and more countries to attract foreign students made it necessary to create a strong, distinctive image.” With the help of this branding, the hope is to be able to increase the international student flow into Canada as international students, “provide a significant, positive economic impact, a positive effect on gross domestic product, innovation, international trade, and foreign direct investment; and diversification of the economy” (p.1). Added to this rationale is the hope that the increased international student flow will also help Canada develop “a worldwide network of academics and graduates.” (p.1). By suggesting that there is a *need* to play a role in the international student market, the language, though perhaps unintentional, seems to minimize the role that international students themselves play in this plan. Scant attention is paid to the role the international students can play in adding to the multicultural identity of Canadian society and the diverse views that they bring in as individuals, which can enrich this society and open it to new ways of viewing and thinking about the larger world. This market driven language not only positions the students as if they are a commodities that can be competed for but also silences their voices in the discourses of internationalization.

When examining recent immigration changes affecting international students in Canada, this economically driven agenda is visible as well. In 2006, full-time students were given the opportunity to apply for off-campus work permits that allowed them to work for up to 20 hours per week (prior to 2006, students could only work up to 20 hours per week on-campus). A CIC (2006) news release announcing this change reported that international students are “an

important pool of potential future skilled workers that Canadian businesses *need* to remain competitive” (emphasis added) suggesting that the policy change will help “address skilled labour shortages.” The hope is that these off-campus work permits will benefit the country in the future by allowing international students to work, and support themselves while studying (CBIE, 2010) while simultaneously helping them to “integrate into the labour force more quickly” (CIC, 2006). Ideally, this would facilitate the transition into the Canadian work force post-graduation as students will have already established contacts and identified opportunities for employment. Following this lead, in 2008 the federal government opened up the post-graduation work permit application to students *without* a job offer, allowing international students to apply for work post-graduation (CIC, 2008a; CBIE, 2010). This change is intended to further help alleviate the skilled labour shortage issue in Canada due to the changing demographic shifts (AAUC, 2009a; CMEC, 2007).

International students have benefited greatly from these policy changes. International students now having the chance to work off campus and stay post-graduation should they be interested in doing so. The rationale behind the changes is two-fold. First, in the International Student Survey (2005) many students indicated their desire to work off campus in order to support themselves while studying in Canada. Additionally, many reflected on their desire for an easier transition from school into the workforce. However, this can also be attributed to the market driven approach as the aforementioned news release by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2006) exemplifies. Arguably, by making these changes, the government is pleasing the “customer” for the economic benefits the students bring to the nation. These economic implications for international student recruitment are consistently stressed in many of the publications released by the Canadian government with their continued emphasis on economic

language and figures. For instance, the Ministry of Advanced Education (2005) in their *Report on International Education*, highlights the economic value of international students as a justification for international student recruitment. “There was likely no subsidization of international students by BC taxpayers at the institutions we examined. In most cases, a surplus still remained after all relevant direct, indirect and capital costs were allocated” (p. 5). Another more recent report by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2011a) continues the above trend by declaring international student recruitment a priority for the Canadian government. This report also highlights the economic benefits of international student recruitment by pointing to the large expenditures made by international students during their time of study:

[T]otal expenditures by international students while they study here (tuition, accommodation, living costs, travel and discretionary products and services) resulted in a \$6.5 billion infusion to the Canadian economy in 2008. Expenditures of international education students have now surpassed exports of coniferous lumber (\$5.1 billion) and coal (\$6.1 billion) (CIC, 2011a).

Further examples of documents on international student policies and recruitment using this economic and market driven language can be seen in media and publication releases by the AUCC (2002, 2008, 2009a, 2009c), CIC (2010a, 2010b, 2011) and CBIE (2005, 2010).

The discourses that surround ideas of internationalization in policy and media documents released by the Canadian government and other national education institutions act to reinforce a strong market and economically driven rationale for student recruitment. Though one can assume that graduate students hold more value in relation to the success of their human capital due to their higher level of education attainment, the economic discourses rarely differentiate between undergraduate versus graduate student capital in the documents themselves. As a result, the “international student” is placed into an easily categorized and managed term. All “international students” are situated as fixed subjects that can be used for the production of knowledge and

money, with little regard for them as beings with experiences, choice and agency or any capital of their own. These discourses then filter down to the institution, as can be seen in the next section.

Institutional policy documents

For universities, international students are arguably a valuable way to generate income through their higher tuition fees and job creation, prestige and “excellence” within the field, and partnership between international organizations (Altbach & Knight, 2007; AUCC, 2009a; AUCC, 2009c; Harris, 2008; Stilwell, 2010). “Internationalization” itself is mentioned frequently in higher education institution mission statements, promotional material, and strategic plans. International student involvement is a central player in internationalization and is continually emphasized in university internationalization policy documents. Unfortunately, however, “international education is often simply taken to mean the increased flow and presence of foreign students in industrialized countries” (Ryan & Louie, 2007, p. 411). As such, it is not surprising that increased recruitment and enrolment of international students is cited as being one of the top strategies for implementing internationalization of universities (Knight, 2000).

In December of 2009, UBC launched its new brand with the tagline of “*A place of mind.*” The goal of the new branding of the school was to “increase the profile and reputation of UBC as a Tier One international research-intensive university and to create a renewed sense of affinity, pride and connection to the university among the multiple audiences we engage” (UBC, 2009d). Along with the unveiling of the new UBC branding came a new Strategic Plan for the University; *Place and Promise: The UBC Plan*. From this initiative, six major university

commitments were highlighted with individual “mid-level” plans addressing *how* the University of British Columbia will implement each of these commitments. Two of these are the International Strategic Plan, currently in draft form, and the Equity and Diversity Strategic Plan, which is addressed later in this paper as it relates to UBC’s management of diversity.

A key initiative in the International Strategic plan is “international engagement,” which has to do with student recruitment. By 2015, the hope is to have 15 percent of the undergraduate population and 25 percent of the graduate student population be international (UBC, 2009c). In the International Strategy three areas of geographic focus for outreach are cited: China, India and Europe, with specific plans on strategic marketing, communication, establishment and maintenance of partnership and engagement with these regional areas. Though the United States and Africa are both mentioned briefly at the end, these regions are not the focus for the plan. There is also mention of a need to promote and facilitate international travel for domestic students, and make mobile learning more attractive to students at UBC.

The phrase “international engagement” could just as easily be “mobility and recruitment”—a discussion that takes up half of the document. Unfortunately, there are only three sentences in the twenty-two page strategic plan that addresses the support and engagement of international students *once they arrive*. Citing the already “good record in providing practical support for students new to Canada” (p. 9), the section addresses needs around classroom capacity, and for increased housing—two very important structural issues that affect the international student experience—however, it does not provide any suggestions for student engagement. The action plan for support of these students is not discussed further in this draft proposal, or in any other strategic plan document I could locate. The role of the international student, arguably the main focus of the plan (albeit hidden in economic and political language of

recruitment and mobility) and the value of their experiences appear to have no voice and little relevance in this document.

The power in the government and institutional discourses lies in their ability to define the international students in economic terms, placing them into a single, fixed group identity. This identity, often represented by figures and graphs as is seen in the UBC International Strategic Plan (UBC, 2009d) and the *Imagine Education au/in Canada* branding (CMEC, 2009) is then used for the benefit of the nation and the institution through the “international students” ability to help with labour shortages and grow the economy by their presence as students and in the future as highly trained and skilled members of the work force. The economy. As a result, this creates a discourse that does not treat these students as individual beings with choice, agency, and the possibilities for experiences beyond these discourses, but instead as a single category that can be controlled and used for economic and political gains. This is further perpetuated by the minimal discussion around the academic and cultural “benefits” these international students provide and even more so, whether and how this is happening.

Internationalization in Canada: A cultural and academic rationale

The off-campus work permit document release by CIC (2006) states that “[international students] enrich campus and community life with new ideas and new cultures.” While evidence is provided in this document for how international students benefit the country economically (as discussed earlier), there is no further explanation or proof of how and if this enrichment of campus life with new cultures and ideas is actually occurring. In the *Imagine Education au/in Canada* brand (CMEC, 2009), the need for the presence of international students is explained

because international students help improve “international education” that “develops internationally and interculturally knowledgeable graduates and creates additional opportunities for research and learning” (p.1). But again, what this actually means is not explored, whereas more specific economic benefits are well described. In yet another document, where the presence of international students is argued to benefit communities because they “bring diverse perspectives, expertise and skills to Canadian classrooms and labs” and their presence “brings together many cultures from around the world which in turn, infuses the broader community with diversity,” (Davidson, 2010, p.3) the same lack of explanation as to how this occurs, or should occur prevails.

The effort to include the cultural implications of international students’ presence in these documents should be commended, especially because they are not easily quantifiable ideas. Unfortunately, the language around the cultural rationale for internationalization is notably vague, as is evidence in these documents. Elaboration on what is meant by words such as “culture,” “diversity” and “intercultural” in this context is absent. Yet, if culture and diversity are a part of the justification for international student recruitment, then it is important to take a closer look at how the term culture is used in Canadian policy. Canada’s Multicultural Policy is a starting point, as it is a fundamental national policy created to promote and maintain cultural diversity and “inclusive” practices in Canada (CIC, 2008).

Multiculturalism

Written into legislation in 1988, Canada began using multiculturalism as a term that defines an “inclusive” citizenship and identity for the nation. It became the “official” branding through the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* in 1971. Canada was the first country in the world to establish a national policy on multiculturalism at that time. In this act, the Canadian identity is projected as a unified notion of citizenship, and is tied to an idea that people want and need to belong and be attached to a notion of home. In this case, home is represented by the nation or an “imagined political community” (Anderson, 1991, p.6); multiculturalism advocates for an “inclusive citizenship” and “ensures that all citizens can keep their identities, can take pride in their ancestry and have a sense of belonging” (CIC, 2008b, para. 2). The policy encourages acceptance in order to shape a diverse and inclusive community. “Acceptance gives Canadians a feeling of security and self-confidence, making them more open to, and accepting of, diverse cultures” (para. 2). Thus it appears that to be Canadian requires that one accept and value the multicultural identity of the nation through the discourse of inclusion and the projection of a unified culture with a particular set of values. The policy asks citizens to take an active role in this society and encourages citizens “to integrate into their society and take an active part in its social, cultural, economic and political affairs” (para. 4) in an effort to promote these values. Important to note is in a country dominated by British and French culture, other cultures were silenced thus this naming race, ethnicity and language in the policy was a step forward (Chan, 2007). The mere fact that these identities were brought up as categories for inclusion rather than exclusion in the grand narrative of the Canadian identity was a profound statement.

It has been argued, however, that through this policy a “Canadian identity” is promoted in such a way that it embraces a revisionist history and prevents real understanding of this multicultural identity. The histories and experiences of oppressed people in this nation are notably absent from this celebration of multiculturalism. Yet in Canada, hostility, barriers, and restrictions to the entry of racialized others has been well documented. Beginning with the French and British colonization of what is now Canada, it is also visible in other national histories such as the Chinese Immigration Act of 1885 and the internment of Japanese-Canadians during World War II, race-based policies that outlined selected treatment and forms of discrimination also include acts such as the Indian Act of 1876 and the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1923 (Chan, 2007). Issues around immigration, multiculturalism, race, colonial histories and Aboriginal and First Nations rights remains controversial even today. The discourse of multiculturalism, presented in this “inclusive” form is arguably a way to silence these contested histories and ignore these struggles. By highlighting the “inclusion” of all races, ethnicities, and language as part of the policy, people who are not of the assumed dominant white French or British descent are accordingly labelled outside of the norm, implying inferiority simply by framing multiculturalism as requiring individuals to embrace this concept of unity and inclusiveness. In effect the larger discourse of multiculturalism emphasizes a normalized unified identity that becomes the expected understanding of what being a “Canadian” is, differences and ideas of multiple identities appear to be erased, silencing those who seek belonging yet identify with these very differences. Power, decolonization, racism and white privilege become issues that are ignored in the discourse of multiculturalism through the emphasis of “softening the edges that mark ‘the Other’ and ‘Otherness,’ namely those socially constructed lines of

difference that determine who and what is normal and dominant, and conversely who and what is abnormal and consequently deemed to be inferior” (Dhamoon, pp. x-xi, 2009).

From within this “multiculturalism” discourse, international graduate students are arguably “included” and welcomed through structures such as student visas allowing them into the country to study. The visa example shows that even where international graduate students are seemingly embraced and asked, in turn, to embrace Canada’s policy of diversity and multiculturalism, visa regulations create hurdles that further estrange these students. The very document that serves as their passage into these discourses, also marks them as the “other.” Often students face difficult and time consuming bureaucratic challenges both pre-arrival and once the students have entered Canada. Whether this is through the application process itself, or having different procedures to receive payments on campus due to visa restrictions, these experiences serve to further their feeling of alienation.

In an effort to promote tolerance, accommodation, and diversity in the national imaginary, multiculturalism has become a blanket term that is used instead to disregard the complex issues of diversity and difference. Acknowledgement and communication of difference has been replaced by ideas of acceptance and equality (Day, 2000; Dhamoon, 2009). Canada’s current definition and stated policy in relation to multiculturalism, in effect, takes control over the concepts of race, nation, culture and belonging. The stated policy appears to at times eliminate the space to speak about differences in its continued emphasis on the need for inclusion and a single, unified identity. In essence, Canada’s current discourse surrounding multiculturalism allows the normalcy of the dominant white culture to remain prevalent and unquestioned by fostering and encouraging silence as to difference (Day, 2000; Dhamoon, 2009).

Institutional policy documents

Cultural rationale

This notion of multiculturalism has been built into the fabric of the nation and is therefore intimately interconnected with its institutions. This fixed representation of diversity is seen through the counting of “international” and “minority” heads on university websites such as (UBC, 2009e), represents one aspect of a university’s acknowledgement of this goal. “Diversity” is promoted through practices on-campus throughout Canada through “international” evenings, and events where international students are given a chance to sing, dance, and make food, etcetera from their own countries. However discussions of acculturation, culture shock, and adaptation—which ultimately have “integration” into the host society as the end goal—still dominate the university discourse in orientations and on university websites today. Examples of this can be seen in the University of British Columbia (2010) International Student Handbook and on the UBC (2010b) Cultural Transitions webpage for current and prospective students. These terms also dominate much of the psychology literature around student learning (Gu et al., 2010; Misra, et al., 2003; Schmitt, 2003; Trice, 2004; Zhao et al., 2005). The discourses emphasizing ‘adjustment’, ‘acceptance’, and ‘adaptation’ as “normalizing” processes suggests that there is a white Canadian ideal, or “norm,” that everyone should experience on campus. The effect of this is that it brings to into question who “naturally” belongs and who does not, an issue I address in further detail below.

In an effort to address equity and diversity on campus, UBC has created an Equity and Diversity Strategic Plan. In the plan, the President of the University, Steven J. Toope, sets the

precedent for the goals of the strategy stating that “[b]eing a diverse community is not enough, however; UBC must ensure that those voices perceived to be ‘different’ are recognized and appreciated” (UBC, 2009e, p. 2). Within this document are many important and helpful action plans and commitments that the university has made to help implement equity and diversity on and off campus. However, despite its positive aim, the document is still riddled with the language of (economic) competition. For example, there are the three main goals outlined at the beginning: that of “excellence,” “demographics,” and “societal good” (p.7). ‘Excellence’ is a goal that will enable UBC to “draw on the broadest possible pool of qualified students, faculty and staff,” ‘demographics’ refers to the need for diversity on-campus in an effort to attract the “best talent available” (p. 7) and ‘societal good’ is in reference to addressing the barriers of entry into higher education in order to promote equity and diversity at UBC and in the broader community.

Without minimizing the effort and good will behind creating such a document it is interesting to note that international students are mentioned once in this twenty-seven-page document: on a graph showing how “diverse” the campus has become. This is a further example of how international students are often used as a fixed entity of proof for diversity; a “diversity” that seems to be very much projected for the good of the university, rather than taking into consideration any individual or societal implications of the goal, as is set forth within the document. As UBC states in the section defining diversity: “We embrace diversity because it enriches our institution” (UBC, 2009e, p.6), just as the Canadian government declares in *Canadian Multiculturalism: An Inclusive Citizenship* “diversity is a national asset” (CIC, 2008b). The student appears to be simply the commodity used to achieve this enrichment, but in fact given short shrift in lengthy documents purporting to outline their worth.

Academic rationale

Whose and what knowledge is being included in these analyses is also a question that needs to be asked of the multicultural practices and policies in education. Universities were founded as places for the creation and fostering of intellectual understanding (Knight & de Wit, 1995) based on an Eurocentric model that promotes the dissemination of Western knowledge and values. This spread of Western knowledge and colonial education is not a new agenda of education in colonial and colonized states' histories. Beginning with branch and sponsored schools established by colonizing countries in the colonized states (Altbach, 2004; Knight, 2004; Smith, 1999) this agenda continues today through English language domination and global power (Koehne, 2010; MacKinnon & Manathunga, 2003; Marginson, 2010). The push for Westernization as the model for knowing, learning, and organizing systems of academia has expanded to other parts of the world as well (Singh, 2009). For example, English is a required second language in many countries around the world. It has also become one of the primary languages of instruction in countries where English is not the primary language spoken, with these countries often offering many academic classes and degree programs in English. Furthermore, a large portion of peer review journals come from the US and other powerful English speaking countries. The result of this is a cycle of Western dominance through academic production and publications and an academic advantage to Western and English trained scholars and scholarship (Altbach, 2004; Tikly, 2004).

The recruitment and education of international students is used to reinforce the powerful Western discourse by spreading Western knowledge internationally. This flow of academic talent is largely from the South to the North (often referred to as "brain drain"). It has been cited that

upwards of 80 percent (Altbach, 2004) of international masters and doctoral students arrive from developing countries and the majority do not return post-graduation (Altbach, 2004; Kapur & McHale, 2005). Those who do return home often bring with them Western norms and ideals that often do not conform with the norms and ideals of the universities and systems to which they return. Western industrialized countries provide incentives for international students (mostly graduate students) to immigrate post-graduation through the use of targeted marketing, competitive immigration policies, and competitive salaries, and academic opportunities (Altbach, 2004; Kapur & McHale, 2005). In contrast, the students who participate in cross-border learning from industrialized countries often spend one or two years in study abroad programs to acquire language skills before returning home (Altbach, 2004).

Thus, internationalization can also be seen as the Western preservation of dominance through the continual promotion and emphasis of Western knowledge and understanding in academia (Marginson, 2010; Singh, 2009; Smith, 1999), and the controlling of immigration through colonial discourses (Dhamoon, 2010). An example of this controlled immigration can be seen in the International Strategic Plan (UBC, 2009c), where UBC is strategically targeting certain populations for enrollment (China, India and Europe). As Yang (2003) states, internationalization is “the new coloniser, insensitively spreading its providers views of the world on to developing nations in the mistaken belief that they are actually helping people” (p.282). Another example of this dissemination of Western knowledge in Canadian policy can be seen through the language used in *Imagine Education au/in Canada*. The objective of this new branding is an opportunity to “convey to foreign students that the quality of a Canadian education will provide them with the tools they need to develop the full potential of their human capacities” (CMEC, 2009, p.3). There is no mention of knowledge exchange, or how the

international, or “foreign” students’ knowledge will provide a benefit, other than economic or numerical diversification, to the university itself. Western knowledge, in this case Canadian, is arguably the promoted tool for an international student to reach their full potential. This necessarily implies that *without* this Western knowledge, their potential could not be met and any individual knowledge an international student might arrive with is without value.

It is from within this context that the international graduate students I interviewed negotiate where they belong, who they are becoming and how they understand themselves. The dominant discourses of economic and political outcomes and gains, the fixed categories of inter/national, region, race, and diversity all play a role in their daily experiences. International graduate student challenges within the institution are spoken about and treated from an objectifying perspective. This is because international graduate student problems are dealt with solely through the narrow lens of these discourses, causing the university to ignore larger systemic issues such as the students’ lack of belonging and feeling undervalued. This pattern can also be seen in the academic research on the international student experience.

Literature on the international student experience

There is limited literature available that looks at the international student experience from the student perspective (Andrade, 2006; Beck, 2008; Grayson, 2008; Hellsten & Prescott, 2004; Koehne, 2005; Lacina, 2000; Montgomery & McDowell, 2009; Pidgeon & Andres, 2005; Ren et al., 2007). Most of the literature comes from the United States and Australia with very few published studies coming from Canada. This is problematic. Canadian culture, politics, and history are unique and may provide different results and experiences in comparison to other

countries (Grayson, 2008). Research that does look at student experiences tends to focus on undergraduate and graduate student experiences together (Beck, 2008; Hellsten & Prescott, 2004; Hsieh, 2006; Koehne, 2005; Lacina, 2000; Lee & Rice, 2007; Mori, 2000; Ren et al., 2007; Tian & Lowe, 2009), and sometimes does not even distinguish between the two (Montgomery & McDowell, 2009). The undergraduate and graduate student experience, however, can be drastically different due to their different positions within the university and many differing “identifying” factors including age, class, familial obligations, and funding opportunities, to name a few. Grouping undergraduate and graduate students together is also present in the government policy documents that I examined in the previous section where often there is no distinction between the rationales for undergraduate and graduate recruitment.

There is some literature that separates undergraduate and graduate or post-doctoral student experience (Beoku-Betts’s, 2004; Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004; Lyakhovetska, 2004; Rizvi, 2010; Rhee, 2006; Ryan & Viete, 2009; Trice, 2004). For this review, due to the limited availability of graduate students and Canadian specific research similar to my topic, I have included undergraduate and graduate studies as well as research from outside of Canada. When exploring specific research in detail, I have included the level of study and country of origin in which research was done.

The majority of the literature on international student experience focuses on the academic success and failure rate of international students, pedagogical and linguistic implications of learning in an English speaking university, the challenges and hurdles they face on-campus such as culture shock, difficulties with the English language, and difficulties meeting local students (Berman & Cheng, 2001; CBIE, 1998, 1999, 2004, 2009; Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004; Grayson, 2008; Hellsten & Prescott, 2004; Lacina, 2002; Lin & Yi, 1997; Mori, 2000; Trice,

2004). This research tends to be quite “objectivistic in nature” (Gu, et al., 2010) categorizing international student “issues” from a deficit approach—that it is the students’ problem that needs to be fixed- ignoring the historical, political and cultural context in which the research is taking place and how this might affect these experiences. Similarly, the literature that comes from psychology uses theories and terms such as culture shock, adaptation, acceptance and coping (Gu et al., 2010; Misra, et al., 2003; Zhao, et al. 2005) that do not necessarily give a complete picture of the students’ experiences. This research perpetuates the idea that the students need to adapt and acculturate to the host culture and that it is the students’ fault if they do not. Loneliness, isolation and depression are often linked to maladjustment rather than their positioning within the broader cultural picture.

Larger quantitative government studies such as the International Student Survey conducted by the Canadian Bureau of International Education (2005, 2009) can also give us an idea of what is going on within the student experience. However, they not only use international students (undergraduate and graduate) as one group of study, but also provide a limited and biased view by only asking questions that are measurable. As Dowd, Sawatzky, and Korn (2011) have argued, the trouble with the commonly used number and statistic-based research is that since “colleges cannot see or address significant problems that are not measured” the ones that we are measuring only provide us a very narrow perspective causing us to “overlook important problems” (p. 38). As a result many of these larger studies do not give us an accurate picture of what the international student experience is really like, and are used as unproblematic student satisfaction rates for government reports along with other statistics on economic impact for the promotion of “competitiveness in the global market” (AAUC, 2010) and to report “the economic value of the presence of international students in Canada” (CIC, 2011a).

The role that language plays in non-native English speaking students' experience is a frequently examined topic (Berman & Cheng, 2001; Tian & Lowe, 2009). Much of the research is quantitative looking at grade point averages in correlation with TOEFL scores (Berman & Cheng, 2001; Lacina, 2002; Mori, 2000; Ren, et al., 2007) but there has also been a substantial increase in qualitative research on international non-native English speaking students' experiences. Language can be a barrier to entry causing additional stress and affecting the confidence of their interactions with local and international students. Misunderstanding certain slang, and cultural references (Hellsten & Prescott, 2004; Lacina, 2002; Major, 2005; Mori, 2000; Ren et al., 2007) and lack of proficiency are often cited as a main difficulty facing non-native English speaking international students (Lacina, 2002; Mori, 2000; Ren, et al., 2007). A limitation of this research is that it identifies the domestic student and native-speaker as the "norm" for the international student to emulate. The very idea that English is the dominant and expected form of communication in Western education (May, 1994) is frequently left completely unquestioned in these discussions. Moreover this view is fostered when courses abroad are also taught only in English.

Providing a different perspective to language learning, Pierce (1995) contextualizes the experiences of second language acquisition within the relationships of power and identity. In doing so, learning a second language can be viewed as an investment in learning giving the student learner agency to learn and use the language as he or she chooses. Moreover, language is not seen as a neutral category but instead carries history and conflict. It is these relations of power that then help a language learner negotiate a sense of self in time, gain access or be denied access to social networks and have an opportunity to be heard. This, in turn, opens up a space for language to be used as a form of empowerment. For example, Kim (2003) found in her study that

ESL students make strategic choices to use English in certain situations to fit in and be a part of a certain social experience, while in another situation students choose instead to use their native tongue in an act of solidarity and cultural identity. Research like this shows that when educational experiences are examined from a power/identity perspective, notions of agency, self-empowerment and larger power relationships open up new possibilities of understanding the student experience beyond the deficit approach.

Another commonly cited experience of international students is the challenges that they face connecting with local students and learning about their host culture. Both Briguglio (2000) and Lacina (2002) found that many international students did not feel welcomed by Americans at the universities where they studied. Pidgeon and Andres (2005), in their study on domestic and undergraduate international students in Canada, and Lyakhovetska (2004), in her research on graduate students in Canada, discovered that international students frequently reported feeling that while the diversity on-campus made them feel more comfortable, it was hard to make local friends on Canadian campuses. In addition, international student interactions with domestic students were often deemed to be “superficial” (Pidgeon & Andres, 2005). The international students in their studies described feeling as if their lack of Canadian cultural knowledge, lingo, and interests were the primary cause of this. The result of this experience was isolation and loneliness leading to the need to seek out other students from their own cultural background to find support.

Koehne’s (2005) study also speaks to the difficulty that international students face meeting local students. By providing an analysis based on power and agency, however, she found students had alternate reactions as well. For instance, instead of pulling away and isolating themselves, as the research by Pidgeon and Andres (2005) and Lyakhovetska (2004) indicates,

Koehne (2005) found that international students often empower themselves by finding other international students and bonding together in a “fight” rather than submissively accepting their isolation as necessary. International students turned to each other and created their own support groups based on the similarity of being international, rather than accepting being “othered” by the larger “international student” category or by exclusion from the host culture. Montgomery and McDowell (2009) also found this to be the case. In their research they discovered that although there was limited contact with the local students and culture, international students often developed international perspectives from within international student communities of practice.

Other researchers have also studied the international student experience from a less normative approach. This allows for the conflicting storylines of the students to emerge. In doing so, the research provides a rich story of the contradictory lives that international students have categorized as a group with a similar shared identity and “shared experience and sameness” (Koehne, 2005, p. 108), by also highlighting the individuality of each student (Gu, et al, 2010; Hughes-Warrington, 2010; Koehne, 2005; Lee & Rice, 2007; Rhee, 2006).

Koehne’s (2005) research looks at the complexities of the international experience, rejecting “international student experience” as a group experience. She argues that looking at the international student experience, as a group, is a limited way of understanding the daily lives of these students. Her research highlights the individuality of each international student experience by exploring the differences between international students, within the category of “international students” and by looking at the individual experiences international students have in relation to students outside of the international student group. She examines the tensions that exist between the dominant categories of race, international student identity, nationality and language and how

and what they choose to accept/resist/modify these realities. In her research, she describes an othering and an exclusion that can happen *within* international student groups themselves. She found that certain international students felt that they were excluded from the category of being an international student either by their skin color or language comprehension –further challenging the notion of a universal international student experience.

Tian and Lowe (2009) also addressed the issue of exclusion from within the international student category and found that international students respond to this internal othering in various ways. Instead of feeling a rejection from the host culture and the international student community, they found that the Chinese students they studied developed a national pride as a sense of empowerment, giving them the self-confidence they needed to negotiate the other challenges of their experiences abroad. They discovered resistance in the form of acceptance, embracing the categorical othering. By taking an alternate approach and examining relations of power, Koehne (2005) and Tian and Lowe's (2009) research exposes both the complexity of the international student experience by disrupting the fixed idea of an international student as a unified identity. Their research highlights the students' ability to choose to accept, to resist, and to respond to the host cultures norms and expectations, and to take ownership of their own experiences.

Lee and Rice (2007) examined the perceptions international students have of the host cultures' tolerance of international students in an American university. Working from a neo-racism framework, the analysis focuses on the barriers and difficulties international students face when studying in a new country and a new culture. This study challenges previous research showing that not all of the issues can simply be described as adjustment issues. Instead, they argue that international student isolation, and issues of adjustment have to do with inadequacies

within the host society itself to accept new cultures, ethnicities and races, causing the international students in their study to feel discriminated against.

Looking further into issues around racial and other host culture discrimination Beoku-Betts's (2004) research looks specifically at the experiences and multiple identities of female African graduate students in the sciences. In her research, she examines the multiple locations from which the women talked about their experiences on campus, looking particularly at issues of race, gender bias and marginality. The women spoke about being conscious of negative stereotypes, dealing with racism and having to deal with the burden of representation in their daily experiences on campus. Beoku-Betts's research challenges the hierarchical systems of power relations, specifically in the sciences, and argues that it is imperative that this be examined when looking at the "success" of these students. She found that the women were "differently positioned according to the varied conditions of their lives, the power relations which they structure, their various locations, and the strategies they employ to address these concerns" (p. 131). As such, the international students took up alternate forms of identities, positioning themselves in a space of strength in order to "survive" in their new context.

Rizvi (2010) also looks at how international doctoral students locate themselves and take up new identities in the context of power relations within the university. His research, however, examines how international doctoral students negotiate their identities from within global discourses and relationships of the university. He argues that universities are no longer just physical entities but they also "giv[e] meaning through rules, myths, language and rituals" defined by "a set of social relations and cultural practices" (Rizvi, 2010, p. 161), and that globalization has changed both the political and the social fields in which universities operate. As a result, transnational spaces have emerged where people must interact cross-nationally not

just nationally or internationally. From within this context, doctoral students feel both constrained *and* freed by national and global discourses that are circulating. In order to negotiate these discourses, they exist in this alternate (transnational) space, which is tied to both the discourses in which the students exist and how the students understand themselves in this space and in relation to the world. As Rizvi (2010) suggests, transnationalism is “systems of ties, interactions, exchanges and mobility that spread across and span the world” that “also refers to a mode of consciousness – a way of thinking about ourselves as belonging to the world as a whole” (p.160). Rizvi offers a new way of looking at how international students negotiate their multiple identities by showing how the students’ identities are invariably tied to both the global discourses, and the system of histories and interactions in which the students exist, thereby shaping the way the students feel in relation to being, belonging and who they are becoming.

Research that approaches the international student experience from a perspective that requires international students to “accommodate,” “change,” or “adapt” to the domestic norm on campus disempowers and minimizes the complexity of international student identity and their agency to respond within the discourses. Often, this is done for the ease of institutional categorization and control as can be seen in the review of the policy on internationalization earlier in this chapter. Furthermore, in doing so, it also ignores the complexity, historicized and contextualized experiences of international students’ experiences and perpetuates an already simplistic, stereotypical, economically driven, and one-sided dominant political discourse towards international students within higher education today (Haugh, 2008; Montgomery & McDowell, 2008; Ryan & Viete, 2009). By framing the student experience in discourses of power, Beoku-Betts (2004), Koehne (2005), Hughes-Warrington (2010), Rizvi, (2010), and Tian and Lowe (2009) open up new ways of understanding what it means to be an international

student. This provides space for the students to re-examine their identities and agency with a broader perspective.

By examining the daily lives of ten international graduate students at UBC, my research seeks to do the same. In the following chapters I will examine how their experiences are shaped by culture, power, knowledge and the discourses around internationalization, and how it is that these experiences shape their understanding of themselves and their ideas of belonging. This research will not only provide a space for the voice and stories of the international graduate students to be heard, but also highlight the complexity of the international graduate student experience and the agency behind these experiences: a perspective that is missing both in the literature and in international student policy in higher education today.

International students: Undergraduates versus graduates

There is a limited discussion of international graduate versus undergraduate student experiences in the context of internationalization and in the academic literature on the international student experience. However, these students have different experiences due to their positioning, both globally and locally, at the universities they attend. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, this is due to different characteristics, such as international graduate students being older than the “traditional” international undergraduate students or often having different familial obligations. In addition, international graduate students are often presented with different funding/financial opportunities than undergraduate students. The implications of this are that international graduate students often embody and bring with them different forms of capital.

Economic discrepancies between international undergraduate and graduate students

As demonstrated in tables 3.1 and 3.2 below, both international undergraduate and graduate students pay more for tuition than domestic students. As a result, “international students” are often described as being “cash-cows” for the university, a term that in many ways perpetuates their categorization within the economic discourse. Looking with more detail at the statistics, there is a much larger difference between undergraduate international and domestic student tuition rates than between graduate international and domestic student tuition rates. The chart below does not reflect the difference in tuition fees for domestic versus international students among professional programs, which is much larger.

Fees are for the 2011/2012 academic year

Table 3.1: B.A. and B.Sc. tuition

Program (undergraduate)	Domestic per credit	International per credit	Difference between domestic/international	Difference between domestic & international tuition PER YEAR based on 4yr completion
Arts, Science, and Applied Science 2-5yr	\$153.61	\$732.09	\$578.48	\$17,354.4

Note: B.A. and B.Sc. require a minimum of 120 credits with certain programs requiring more Statistics have been taken from the UBC website. UBC (n.d.c). Tuition Fees. Retrieved on April 26, 2012 from <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=14,266,0,0>

Table 3.2: Research based graduate degree tuition

Program	Domestic per instalment	International per instalment	Difference between domestic & international	Difference between domestic & international PER YEAR
M.A./Ph.D.	\$1,421.29	\$2,496.96	\$1,075.67	\$3,227.01

Note: 3 tuition instalments per year

Statistics have been taken from the UBC website. UBC (n.d.c). Tuition Fees. Retrieved on April 26, 2012 from <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=14,266,0,0>

The additional tuition that an international undergraduate student must pay to complete his or her degree at UBC in comparison to international graduate students is drastically different. For a 120 credit B.A. or B.Sc., the difference between international and domestic undergraduate tuition is about \$69,420. If it takes five years for an international graduate student to complete either a M.A. or a Ph.D. program, the tuition fees for an international graduate student are about \$16,140 more than for domestic graduate students.

A further difference between undergraduate and graduate international student expenses is that undergraduate international students are often not provided funding for their studies, whereas international graduate students are. For example, at UBC, all international students receive a partial tuition scholarship (up to \$3,200/year for Ph.D. students and \$1,500/year for M.A. students), unless they have third party funding (UBC, 2012b). In addition, Ph.D. students are also eligible for a \$16,000/year four-year scholarship (UBC, n.d.b). International graduate students are often eligible for external funding from their own countries. For example, students from the United States of America can apply for scholarships such as the Fulbright Council for International Exchange of Scholars (n.d.). These figures illuminate the large difference in the income that international undergraduate students bring into the university, compared to international graduate students.

Implications for the institutions and the students

Earlier in the chapter, I noted that the competition for international students has grown globally (CMEC, 2009). The recruitment of international *graduate* students has increased, as is evident in UBC's International Strategic Plan that has set the goal of 25 percent for the international graduate student population. This is in contrast to only 15 percent for the undergraduate student population (UBC, 2009c). With the commitment for higher international graduate student numbers often comes a need for universities to market themselves as providing top tier education, as can be seen by the release of the branding of Canadian Education, *Imagine Education au/in Canada*. Universities are also recruiting by increasing funding opportunities and other incentives for international graduate students to come to Canada to study (Altbach, 2004; Kapur & McHale, 2005).

The consequence of the different fees between domestic and international undergraduate students and the limited funding opportunities for the international undergraduate students is that international undergraduate students, for the most part, are being recruited for the money that they bring into the university directly. For international graduate students, however, the rationale appears to be less economic. Theoretically, graduate students are being valued for their academic and cultural benefit to UBC and Canada. In addition, presumably, for highly desired international graduate students, there is an opportunity to negotiate with schools regarding funding possibilities.

On the other hand, the implication for the university is that although the immediate financial benefits to the school are smaller than from international graduate students, their market value is very important. Arguably, their value lies in being "intellectual workers" (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004), and representatives of international "diversity." That is, rather than being treated

solely as students or individual beings, graduate students serve as valuable capital to improve the reputation of the country and the universities' prestige. In other words, their presence is not necessarily measured by tuition fees but by the quality of their academic research and innovation (OECD, 2006) that is essential to their identity.

Of primary concern in this paper is how this imposition of a certain kind of value upon international graduate students impacts the student experience. For instance, who is given access to the funding resources and how does this affect the students' perspectives of themselves and others? How does this shape the diversity and culture on campus? How does this affect the students' notions of belonging, being and becoming? These are all questions that I address throughout the remainder of this thesis.

Chapter IV: A space for the students

Much of the current research on international student experience is derived from an approach that isolates and categorizes international students and their issues into narrow, easily quantified challenges and barriers that the students face. This is problematic for several reasons. First, this categorization perpetuates a non-contextualized and fixed understanding of the dynamic lived experience of these students. By viewing the issues presented in the forthcoming stories as isolated incidents, we forget about the larger picture—the history of the student, of the place they are studying and how power is interconnected and contextualized throughout the experiences of these students. Second, through this categorization we are losing the strength of the individual student voice and story, which is important if we seek a better understanding of the complexity of what it means to be an international graduate student. Finally, drawing from my personal administrative experience in international education, I find that issues around international student experience are addressed from a hierarchical, top-down approach. Problems are brought to management as isolated incidents, without the larger context of an individual student's identity or background. As a result a 'Band Aid' fix is put in place that may help solve the immediate problem, but ignores the larger systematic issues that may be the source of these problems.

I have created a separate chapter, as the heart of this thesis, to introduce the reader to the international graduate students that made up the data set for this paper. *They* are the core of my research. This additional chapter gives each student their own section, provides a space for the individual, to come alive as a being, not represented on the page in a fixed quote, but as a real person. A person who has agency and choice, a person with current lives, past experiences and a

future imaginary as well. This chapter highlights the diversity of the “international graduate student experience” while providing a space for that experience to be heard; a space that the majority of the students described as missing in the university context.

I must emphasize that my original intent was to have the body of this thesis dedicated to the students’ words. After the conversations I had with the students and returning to the current literature and research on international students, however, it became apparent that it was necessary to take a step back from this. The dearth of any literature, research or discussion on the importance of the students’ perspective or about international student identity, instead, became my focus. The first step became analyzing the current policy, norms, research, and literature on international graduate students and addressing the need for these types of stories to be included in the dominant discourse. My hope is that by arguing that such a methodology is necessary to both the stated goals of Canada in internationalization, and to a comprehensive definition and understanding of the rationales behind internationalization, this paper will pave the way for later literature that is dedicated solely to providing space for the students’ voice.

Using this analysis as a guide, I now return to the conversations I had with the students to understand how these discourses impact ideas of internationalization and international graduate student identities and notions of belonging. However, having to compromise due to the richness of the material, here, I have summarized the stories of the students I interviewed. These stories are intentionally unfinished. They vary on topic and are choppy at times because this is how conversations are; depending on the person, a conversation about the same subject can digress at any moment and differ as drastically as the experiences themselves. These partial realities, often lead to more questions than answers, but also act as a reminder that this is only a small part of a

long journey these students are on, while also signifying that there is so much more to the students' experience than these pages can hold.

Stanley

Stanley is a second year Masters student from Pakistan. His passion for his discipline came from his grandfather, who was also a scholar in a similar field himself. Though Stanley described himself as not taking the “standard” Pakistani life path by studying a transferable trade skill, his immediate family supports him, while his extended family still questions his choice to travel and pursue academia. He has spent a lot of time living outside of Pakistan. Stanley got his undergraduate degree from the US and spent time traveling and teaching English in Thailand for several years before coming to UBC. He chose to attend UBC because he was applying for schools directly from Thailand, and Canada had a visa application process that did not require him to have to return home to apply. In addition Canada seemed like a safe country, Vancouver is close to his brother who lives in Seattle, and UBC also offered him funding. After his Masters, Stanley hopes to continue with a Ph.D. at UBC with the goal of eventually becoming a professor. Stanley lives off-campus because on campus housing does not allow pets. He has moved several times since he started two years ago.

Most of Stanley's friends are from his department. He feels the department “could be tighter, but there is a community.” When I asked him to describe what a community meant to him he stated:

for me it's a circle of really close friends. A group of people that every couple of weeks you go to a movie, or to dinner and hang out and you can call, without

hesitation, at any time. And I don't have that here yet. I guess the reason I say it could be tighter is because right now I feel there's me, and there's a number of individuals who are not connected amongst one another

Stanley has spent a lot of time thinking about being in Canada, being back in grad school, and understanding what this choice has meant to him.

I think I've just been in a frame of mind where I'm happy, well I won't say I'm happy... I've got some priorities here. I chose to go back to university to study and not anything else. Part of that is just, typically, how do you value that and how do you devote yourself fully to it. ... It's really, an exercise in clarifying a lot of worries that I've had. Just conceptual worries on how I view myself, how I value myself and I guess those have sort of been dominant in a private way.

As a result he feels that Canada, and the Canadian culture is somewhat irrelevant to his experiences, but instead they have more to do with his personal choices and where he is at this point in his life. And yet, when Stanley compared his experience here to his undergraduate experiences in the US, he described feeling supported and as if who he *is* mattered in the US. In contrast, how he fits in Canada becomes much less clear as he feels Canadians are so fixed on emphasizing their own Canadian identities. He feels that there is a "very conscious emphasis on you're in Canada" at times making him feel like he does not "belong." In response, he plays a dual role of simply being a "graduate student" and representing Pakistan. Whereas he never identifies as an "international graduate student."

Sally

Sally is a second year Ph.D. student from the US. She received her Masters in the Netherlands and stayed to live and work there after graduation. Her partner still lives in the Netherlands. She applied to Canadian schools because they did not require the GRE. A major

reason for accepting the offer to attend UBC was because she was given funding and a teaching assistant position. Unable to live on-campus because she has cats, she flew to Vancouver for two weeks prior to the start of school to look for an apartment. When it was time to move, her sister flew in to help, which she is deeply thankful for. Her family is incredibly proud of her decision to get a Ph.D. as she is the first in her family to do so. When I asked her what it meant to be getting a Ph.D. at UBC, her response was that it was like being an astronaut:

it's kind of like being able to be an astronaut. It's something that was never, nobody in [my hometown in] Michigan except the people who had a lot of money and those people cause they were like the only ones, it was never in our like rule book.

Getting a further degree is a privilege to her because of what the knowledge now allows her to access, and also because academia has helped her learn about herself and given her a voice. "So much of my, so many happy experiences happened to me in academia so much of me realized about myself, what I contribute, about finding my voice."

Sally found the transition to UBC really hard, lonely and isolating, especially at first because of the distance from her social support (her friends, partner, family). This struggle can be seen in her letter home where she drew a comic of this transition (see Appendix B). It was really challenging for Sally to find her footing at UBC academically and as an international student, particularly as an American in Canada. In fact, she described her experiences as an international student here, in Canada, as being harder than being an international student in the Netherlands.

One of Sally's favourite experiences on campus has been being a mentor. This year her department started a mentor program where incoming international students are paired up with current international students. Being a mentor has given Sally a chance to give back some of the

knowledge she has gained and help a new, incoming international student feel welcomed, something Sally did not feel in her first days at UBC. The bond they built was so strong that even before arriving, the new student exclaimed to Sally that she feels like she is going to a country where she already has a “best friend.”

Mi Sun

Mi Sun is a second year Ph.D. student from Korea (her third year enrolled, however, as she is on maternity leave). She lives in an apartment off-campus with her newborn baby girl and her husband, also a Ph.D. student, whom she met in Korea but is originally from Canada. Recently, she has had tremendous difficulties getting financial and social support at UBC because of her maternity leave. The school has placed her financial award on hold, her library privileges have been cut off and she feels like she is falling behind because she has not been able to do her compositional exams, which the majority of her cohort has already finished. She is now a permanent resident of Canada and is interested in applying for citizenship, but is not willing to give up her Korean citizenship to do so.

In her first semester at UBC, she attended several undergraduate classes to prepare for her graduate courses. Once she started taking graduate classes she was also a teaching assistant for one semester and really liked it as a job, but was concerned about her English. When she first got to UBC she was surprised she did not receive more social support since in Korea her experience was that international students were very welcomed. Instead, she found that people “act[ed] a little bit awkward with me, then they quickly disappeared somewhere. So it was not really fun.”

Mi Sun's experiences in Vancouver have been challenging. Meeting and engaging in conversations with people has been difficult. When I asked her why she thought this was the case she said it was partially the language barrier, but also feels like there is something else. "The language barrier is really the key point but even if my English was good there still is some hidden wall. It's not easy to get into the mainstream circle." She feels there are benefits and drawbacks to creating a life in Korea versus Vancouver. When talking about Vancouver she described at one moment loving the outward beauty of Vancouver—the clean air, the mountains, the skis slopes, and being satisfied with the living conditions—however, at other moments being unhappy. There seems to be something missing, a feeling like she does not quite belong. As she explained,

[I'm] unhappy with my social life. Even though I have a lot of friends in Vancouver, still sometimes I feel [it is] hard to get deeply involved here. It makes me a little bit unhappy because as time goes on my expectation in this society is getting higher I guess, but the reality doesn't always meet my expectation so that's why I feel a little bit unhappy or, a little bit left out.

Nina

Nina is a 2nd year Masters student from the US. She completed her undergraduate degree in America and then spent two years working before coming to UBC. Her fiancé and her dog live in Seattle, so she applied to programs in the area in order to be close to them. She originally wanted to attend University of Washington but after a difficult decision, chose to be "financially comfortable" over "emotionally comfortable" and came to UBC, which offered her funding. Reflecting on this decision she is proud she chose to come to UBC despite the difficult transition

academically after being out of school for so long. In addition, she finds that the time apart from her partner has brought them closer together.

When I asked her if she feels socially supported on campus, she said yes, but mostly because she talks to her fiancé in Seattle a lot, not because of her friendships on campus. Nina talked about having trouble “finding the cultural pulse of UBC.” She does not feel like she has made a lot of friends: “I feel like I’m part, I’ve made friends within the department but I don’t at all feel like I’m part of a culture of UBC... I don’t feel like I’m plugged into a massive network here.” She has spent a lot of time thinking about “all of the ways that UBC fails to create any space for student culture and how isolated [she] feels from student culture on campus.” She feels part of it has to do with the culture, and how Canada manages ideas around race and history. Nina also wonders if this isolation might also have to do with the local commuter lifestyle many students lead. She often feels like a commuter herself, not feeling like she belongs at UBC campus, nor in Vancouver.

Nik

Nik is a first year Ph.D. student from Bulgaria who just finished his two-year Masters degree at UBC. He chose to get an undergraduate degree in the US partially because Bulgaria is more “conservative in terms of gay issues” and he wanted to experience a more accepting environment for himself and because he has also always loved traveling. Before coming to UBC to get his Masters two and a half years ago he worked for a year in the US. He chose to attend UBC because the funding was good, he felt that he was already familiar with the Pacific Northwest, and he liked his department.

Nik's transition to UBC was easy. He arrived two months before school began, moved into a graduate college on campus, and spent the summer at the beach and getting to know campus. The majority of his friends are Canadian or American (he does not "distinguish between the two too much") and from the residence college he lives in, which he loves. He "feels very well integrated here." He has an active social life getting out, dating, taking trips hiking and going out with friends. When cultural things come up, like references to artists he does not know, he is reminded that he is an international student, but "it's not that I feel like I don't belong, just that I learned a new thing." The residence has also given him an opportunity to really get involved with activities. Nik sat on the social committee chair, was the president of the dining society and is involved in yoga and meditation. He finds being active in the community rewarding, fun and satisfying.

Nik thinks of himself as an international student but "not on a daily basis" because he feels that he is so well "adjusted" and strongly identifies with the "Canadian and American" culture. "I like socialize with like you know my Canadian and American friends or whatever so there's no noticeable difference, you know, even my accent is not that strong." He also thinks it helps that Bulgaria is influenced by "American Western culture" and TV shows and such, making "all of these kind of things not foreign."

Nik talked about sometimes feeling "culture shock" when he returns to Bulgaria. "The first few days, there's kind of you know, there's this adjustment period almost, from, but you can almost say I guess that it's adjusting from your one home to your other home or something like that." He feels as if he almost has "different identities" since at UBC he is a "student" and a "resident" at the college, and friendships, which he feels are different in Bulgaria. For instance he needs to re-adjust to the jokes and the lack of political correctness in Bulgaria such as the

blatant homophobia, which he experiences only in isolated instances in Canada since “it’s just not like accepted for people to express their homophobic feelings [in Canada].”

Khari

Khari is a second year Ph.D. student from Tanzania. He did his Masters in Tanzania and decided to get his degree abroad so that he could learn more contemporary theories. Though he applied to schools across North America he chose UBC for the funding. He described the opportunity to come here not as a “matter of choice” but rather a “privilege or opportunity.”

When Khari first got here he lived in a residence college on campus, which he said shaped his experiences at UBC. It “was really cool and it shaped an understanding and my experience for the first time.” With ten meals provided, he liked the social aspect of the meals and feels that the community there was really supportive and open. Because it was too expensive, Khari moved out, and since then has moved three times. First he moved in with other Tanzanians, but because he wanted to practice his English and to “interact with other people and learn a bit more of the culture” he moved into an apartment with two roommates downtown. Because he rarely saw his roommates downtown, he moved again this time into a house with a family, where he is living now.

Because Khari “didn’t have sufficient background” in his department’s subject he took undergraduate courses when he first arrived which he found challenging. He described his first three months academically as being “hell.” Between working extra hard and not knowing anyone he felt quite lonely, though he has found a lot of support in his residence and his department.

It is through English that Khari feels he has been able to experience and learn about new cultures. “Living in an English speaking community you [also] learn other peoples cultures.” Seeing his education at UBC as “a golden opportunity” that he really values, he also feels bad because “life is very hard in their villages” and he feels like he “need[s] to do something for [his] community out there, and for the Canadian community too.” And he does. Khari is involved in outreach events locally, seeing them as a chance to connect him to the Vancouver community and a way to meet friends. “I love going to outreach events, you know and trying to meet local people in the community... sometime you have to go out and deliver food and stuff to local communities” and involved in running an education program back in his home village.

Learning about social “norms” in Canada has been challenging. At times he has just had to accept differences as is, and does not try to “force” his own ideas on people. Many of his cultural experiences have been rewarding too and he is proud of how he has changed. There are “so many things, but I think I’m coping very fast. Now I’m at least comfortable.”

Dishi

Dishi is a second year Chinese Masters student. He received his first undergraduate degree in computer engineering in China and was then advised by his father not to take a job with the Chinese government and instead leave the country to have a different experience. Although his family is very supportive of his decision to continue his education, they are worried that he is thirty-one and not married yet.

Dishi first came here six years ago and studied at a local community college in an effort to improve his English and take pre-requisite for his undergraduate degree at UBC. His desire to

continue on to get his Masters (and to do it in English) related to the value he placed on education itself: “my interest, again, I can trace it back to the family education thing and the kind of Chinese Confucianism, Confucian ideology like education is always good” and on gaining a competitive advantage should he choose to return to China post-graduation “if I go back there and compete with the labour market I will have some advantage.”

For the first four years living in Canada, Dishu lived in a suburb of Vancouver with a large Chinese immigrant population. He first lived with Chinese friends he knew from back home and then found his own place with a roommate. Reflecting on his first experiences, he felt that he did not have “culture shock” because he thinks of himself as

a very international person... partially due to the new technology internet and better media like global medial. So I already know something about Canada or something before I come here. Therefore the culture shock is not that big, so when I just came here I was kind of happy. And another thing is this is Vancouver right? It's very [laughing] people are saying it's Hongcouver right?!

Dishu attended the UBC orientations when studying at a local community college before his enrollment at UBC so that he could be prepared on arrival. Once at UBC, he quickly joined the peer mentorship program for undergraduate international students and started providing advice to other students. By the time he attended graduate school he felt he didn't need to go to the orientations and attended only his departmental orientation. Despite having spent time studying in Canada and at UBC, his academic transition into being a graduate student was still challenging because of the large amount of reading and writing that is expected of a graduate student. The “first month was horrible. Everyone [says the] first month is horrible, but if you can survive the first month, you can survive the whole program.”

His friends are from all over the world. He met them mostly in graduate school through his department seminars and through sports on campus. He often has work dates at coffee shops with friends from the department. UBC has given Dishu an “international perspective” learning about new places through personal interactions with different people from different places, something he feels that he would not have gotten back in China. Dishu really appreciates being able to speak with people from different countries in order to break “distorted” knowledge he learned about different cultures/nations through media and stereotypes back in China instead of learning things “firsthand.” When he returns home he has to “try to be quiet.” He only shares his experiences and new perspectives if people are interested believing that most people already have their own perspectives on things and don’t want to hear what he has to say.

His experience amongst his friends regarding race is that they tend not to “identify each other as Canadian, American, Chinese, or Japanese.” When talking about his own identities on campus, weary of using labels, he described himself as a cosmopolitan. “Sometimes I identify as Chinese because I have to have a national identity, then I can become cosmopolitanist.” Dishu also feels that he has a “strong identity with UBC.” He described it as “something about the character of this campus and the characteristics of myself match up like for instance it’s very internationalized, open minded,” which make him feel like there is space for him to express his opinions and ideas. Dishu acknowledges a lack communication between different groups on campus thinking it is a mixture of “misunderstanding and miscommunication” that causes both Canadians and international students to want to “protect what they have.” As a result people tend to “concentrate only on their inner circle” causing the “self [to] reinforces itself. If you just sort of get into your own isolated own circle that identity gets stronger and stronger and finally takes over the other fields and causes problems.”

Natalia

Natalia is a second year Ph.D. student from Chile. She did her Masters in Chile and after working for a couple years she and her husband decided that they wanted a challenge and decided to study abroad in English. It is their first experience living outside of Chile *and* with English. They both received a scholarship from the Chilean government that pays for four years of studying with the Canadian government covering the cost of one year of English courses. When they first arrived to take the English courses, they lived with Natalia's Aunt about an hour and a half bus ride away. Though this distance was far, Natalia found it helpful living with a family member because it took longer for them to receive their funding and it allowed them time to look for an apartment that they liked in a safe and nice neighbourhood.

Natalia described getting a Ph.D. in Canada as a chance to learn a North American perspective which is "a whole new perspective, even though it's an outside perspective." She feels very strongly that every moment of "daily life" in Canada is valuable and not just her academic experiences. If she left at the end of her four years without a degree, she still thinks it all will all have been worth it. Natalia's visa and funding situation requires that she return to Chile after graduation. Unsure what she will do with her degree she wants "to apply [her] experience and [her] knowledge in something really useful, like work for an NGO or something like that." But she knows it will be difficult because there is not much work for people in her field of study unless they are working in the university system.

When I asked her about Vancouver she described loving the city because it is just big enough, loud enough and fast enough, but not a huge city like New York or Santiago. The slower pace appeals to her. The weather has been difficult though.

Natalia misses the days of the English language school where she made friends easily, and the “consciousness that life is much more than being a student” that the institute instilled. Reflecting on what she enjoyed about her experiences there she said that she found there was space to communicate and “share your cultural experiences” and to also explore the differences. At UBC, she does not feel there are supportive “spaces” (physical and social) on campus to make friends.

Reflecting on whether Vancouver feels like “home” she said:

I think it is a potential home... if I have some kind of emotional support like [to] be part of the community, but I am not looking for my family. Just [to] be able to also give back. I think that is something I feel that I don't have yet, I haven't found like a something I can give to the people in the community here in Vancouver. I still don't know if they need me for example but I think if I can find that, this will be my home.

Abhi

Abhi is a third year Ph.D. student from India. He completed two Masters degrees in the US and followed his current supervisor from a university in the US to start his Ph.D. in Canada. His wife has been living with him on and off over the past couple years. Originally Abhi applied to live on campus, but found it is too expensive. As a result he lived over an hour commute away only to move several times until finally finding a place that he really enjoys.

His family supports his desire to pursue academia however cannot understand why he changed disciplines to get a degree in the social sciences when he began in the hard sciences. His first summer at UBC he spent working off-campus at a gas station and at McDonalds in order to pay his bills until he was given an opportunity to work as a research assistant.

Abhi really enjoyed his graduate experiences in the US and spent a lot of time comparing those experiences with his Canadian experience. He found people in the US more polite and interested in different things including participating in cultural exchanges both socially and academically. In Canada, Abhi does not feel like he has a good group of friends that are really “there for him.” Abhi described being an international student as having “a cosmopolitan outlook, like being an internationalist.” For him, it’s “fun to be an international student” because if he had stayed and studied in India he would not have been able to grow and exchange knowledge with other cultures.

Caroline

Caroline is a first year Ph.D. student from the United States who just finished her MA at UBC. She began her MA program at UBC directly after graduating from her undergraduate program in the US. She lived on-campus for the first two years because she “figured coming to a new country, a huge city it was just [going to] be too much.” Caroline feels that it was a good decision because she was able to get to know people outside of her department, while at the residence she made “friends from all over” which was “pretty cool.” Living at a residence for her first two years meant that she spent the majority of her time on campus and feels like she missed

out on some dining options and “some of like the Vancouver feel” but regardless, she found it a good opportunity to meet different people.

Caroline feels like she has a lot of good friends on campus and always has someone to talk to or grab lunch with. The majority of her friends are from her department and some from her residence. They are mostly Canadian and American and she thinks this has to do with her cohort being primarily Canadian and American. Caroline may apply for permanent residency, but mainly because it would open up opportunities for funding in the upcoming years and not because she is planning to stay post-graduation. Though she originally came to UBC because of her supervisor and the research her supervisor is interested in, she is beginning to appreciate the “international name” UBC carries as well.

CHAPTER V: Experiences of being & becoming: An analysis

The experiences of being an international graduate student are complex. Most of the students thanked me for taking the time to have our conversation together and expressing a desire to hear their stories. They felt nobody on campus was listening; a reflection of the silencing they feel on campus. Over half of the students said that they had spent time before this research thinking about their experiences, their lack of belonging and the challenges connecting with other students. Several said that by having the chance to talk with me and reflect and write about their experiences they noticed a change in the way they thought about themselves, their experiences on campus and the choices they were making. In the conversations I had with the students I could hear their own understandings of themselves shifting as they spoke, through their words. This is also a reminder that the stories and experiences they talked about have history and context. Our understandings of our experiences and ourselves are ever-changing, reflecting the past, present and future of every moment we live.

Keeping with my methodological framework I have used my conceptual lens and literature on internationalization and multiculturalism to help me better understand the conversations I had with the students. For ease of reading, I have chosen to organize this chapter broadly into my two research questions, and within these sections overarching themes that came from the conversations I had with the students. As identities are socially enacted and shaped through discourses, the second research question is not completely divorced of the first question, but instead builds on it.

The first section explores how the institutional practices and discourses of internationalization shape international graduate student experiences and their sense of belonging

by looking at their own reflections about their initial interactions and experiences with institutional policies and practices. Bridging from this, I turn to how, from the students' perspective, these experiences shape what it means to be an international graduate student. This includes taking a closer look at how international students are situated within the discourses and practices around being an "international student," and how stories of friendship, exclusion, and difference shape the individual students' notions of identity and belonging. This chapter finishes with a section on alternate ways of being, exploring how international students have found alternate ways of learning and understanding themselves outside of the dominant discourses

The complexity of the conversations I had with each international graduate student should not be forgotten when reading this chapter. The students' hold a history of their own; they each come from somewhere and have dreams and aspirations of the future that shape their experiences of the present. It is from this larger context of their lives and through the stories they shared, and chose to not share with me, that I have pulled quotes to create this chapter. I have intentionally tried to fill this chapter with the international graduate students' own words. There are times where I have left the students quotes to stand on their own, feeling that there is no further analysis needed as the stories themselves reflect the students' own critical analysis of their experiences.

It is also important to note that when I am talking about identities and concepts such as race or nation, I do not use these as fixed terms. I do so from the perspective that identities are continually in flux, non-hierarchical, perspective based and changing in relation to history and social/political climate (Weedon, 1987, 1999; Hall, 1990).

Setting the scene: Locating oneself within institutional practices of internationalization

Mixed feelings of (be)longing: A precedent is set

You just have all of this doubt and panic that you don't really have any base to go to. So you don't really have a home you don't really have a good place where you can, you don't even have a community... so you're kind of left to the elements
(SALLY)

All of the students had to make choices, sacrifices and commitments in choosing to embark on their new lives in Canada and at UBC. This can be seen in the stories they told about the challenges that came with moving to a new country. Along with the act of “packing up all of your belongings” (Sally) came other larger life changes for many of them. Some, like Dishu, Natalia, Mi Sun, and Khari had to learn or improve their skills in a second language, while others had to leave fiancés, wives, and other loved ones behind. Coming to Vancouver was challenging and for the students who came alone, with no friends or family to support them, they described moments of feeling isolated, especially at first.

At UBC, 93 percent of the graduate student population lives off campus (UBC, 2012a). All of the international graduate students who lived off campus at the time of my interview except for Caroline and Khari who both moved off campus this year, said that they would have preferred to live on campus for the extra support that they imagined they would receive on campus. Despite this desire they ran into barriers that prevented them from being able to do so. The main issue was accessibility; living on campus is more expensive than renting an apartment off campus. (The funding that UBC provides Ph.D. students, which six of the students had, would barely cover the cost of this housing). The higher price was a major reason for the

students to “choose” to live off-campus or for moving off-campus once they had begun their studies, though Abhi and Nina both mentioned not wanting to be on a meal plan, either. The second barrier for entry was that animals are not allowed in on-campus housing. This is an issue that came up for three of the students who were coming to Canada, on their own, and were hoping to bring their animals with them. Though this may seem trivial at first, however for these students, their animals are not only family members, but also very important systems of support. In addition, it further exemplifies the different complications and financial and personal responsibilities that international *graduate* students bring with them when attending university. All three of these students ended up living off campus because of this.

The students who were accepted and could afford to live on campus at the start of their studies told stories of inclusion, feeling welcomed and attending orientations specific to getting to know the community of students that they were going to live with. Khari described how at meal time (ten meals/week are included in the rent) people were encouraged to move around to different tables and meet new people. This environment created a community that fostered making friendships:

you don't need to sit in one fixed position. So they encourage you to keep moving so that you will talk with many more people from different places and they accepted different, there are students from different nationalities and they have flags, you know, from every country... It was really amazing and that's the first place where I made friends. (Khari)

At the residences there were orientations geared towards meeting people and getting to know UBC outside of the international and graduate student orientations on campus. In addition, the students residing in on-campus housing were actively encouraged to get involved with social events, discussions and other activities within the residence. Caroline, Nik and Abhi described

feeling as if they had a community and that their general experiences in the residences gave them confidence to speak up and try new things.

It gives you this sense of community that you're contributing and people are usually pretty grateful for your efforts right away so you kind of see this immediate satisfaction. And also, I guess, you know, I don't know, I guess this status in your community right? You're respected and all that stuff, yeah (Nik).

In contrast, the students who began their studies living off campus described their first days as being incredibly busy trying to set up their apartments, dealing with banks in order to pay deposits and first month rent and dealing with non-academic bureaucratic and institutional details that moving to a new country requires. Nina tried to go to all of the orientations, but after the first one, which she found unhelpful, she was too busy to attend the others. In addition, her partner was visiting to help her with her transition.

I had gone to the one for the new graduate students and I just thought it was stupid so then I didn't want to go to the next one, and my fiancé was up, and I think we were waiting for my Ikea bed to come or something and there was, it just felt like there was too much to do in terms of getting settled. I was probably opening a bank account or you know (Nina)

Due to time restrictions (the students could often only arrive a few days before orientation/classes began) and receiving little to no support from the university when searching for off-campus housing, the students ended up living, on average, in areas an hour or more from campus. Each of these students also moved three times or more within their first year and a half of living in Vancouver, which did not help them feel settled. An additional issue for off-campus students was that many had to miss some or part of the school orientations due to having to manage the aforementioned details before classes started. This was especially problematic as

these were the very students who expressed more of a need to find connection and information on-campus when first arriving.

The students who did make it to the graduate student orientation and the international graduate student orientation found them of “mixed quality” (Stanley). Nik explained it as being neither a positive nor a negative experience. The information on visas, health insurance and other bureaucratic necessities was described as being helpful for most of the students, however, several of the students expressed that most of the information the orientations provided they had already read or were comfortable searching for on their own. All of the students were interested in meeting other students at these orientations. Most of them found the orientations were not helpful in connecting international graduate students with other students. Stanley described having met other students, both international and domestic, some whom he has kept in contact with. But the other students did not seem to make the same connections. As Natalia said, “I didn’t make any friends for life, just met people for that time and then never saw them again.” The university seemed to place no time or value on conversations and mingling.

For most of the students, these orientations were their first interaction with the university and with Vancouver as a new home. It was their “point of entry” (Stanley) and they came in with the hope that the university would “create a sense of community” (Stanley). The University welcomed these graduate students with special orientations and practices, but what appeared to be reflected back to the students even through this programming was a lack of knowledge or value by the University in what it was that would be most conducive to the students’ experience and feeling of belonging once they had arrived. The precedent of a silenced cross-cultural dialogue was set early on.

As graduate students, most of their interactions with the campus happen within their department of study, which has its own orientation for this very reason. The students described the departmental orientations as being more helpful regarding logistics of daily life. Nonetheless there still seemed to be a lack of engagement with the student body. For several of the students the department orientations were focused on their responsibilities as Teaching Assistants, rather than as researchers, arguably the reason why the graduate students chose UBC to study. While helpful to learn the expectations around being a teaching assistant, this also exemplifies the continued economic discourse within the structural practices of the university, whereby the international graduate student is less the focus, and their value as “intellectual workers” is instead emphasized.

Looking for connection and a welcoming, the students described leaving the orientations feeling as if they had learned little and made few, if any, connections at all. The disconnect between the students’ expectation and the practices of the university is symbolized in Stanley’s story about his favourite part of orientation: “I’m not criticizing the orientation because it was [short pause] the thing I liked about it best was actually that there were people giving free hugs outside” (Stanley). Stanley’s most memorable connection came from an event that was not actually a part of orientation at all. Yet, if a goal of the university is to recruit more international students, helping the students forge these relationships should be an important part of this recruitment strategy.

Campus isolation

It is like an island here, like we're surrounded by water and surrounded by forest and you come in and you are with students so it's a completely different thought process than if campus were more integrated (Sally)

The search for connections and a platform to connect through, whether in a physical space on or off campus or with other students, are themes that emerged in all of the students' stories. Housing and orientations were two ways in which the students expected more guidance in finding these connections. Another place the university left the student feeling voiceless and without a sense of belonging, was in the physical space of the campus itself.

Isolation was particularly heightened for students who moved to Canada without a support system already in place here (either friends or family) and had to live off-campus—a decision having to do mostly with financial restrictions. Sally described her first semesters at UBC as if she was living on an island and “shipping in and shipping out” (Sally). Nina felt like this isolation had partly to do with how the city of Vancouver does not seem to notice that UBC is there. Despite living in the city, she feels like she lives in “the suburbs and commute[s] to campus.” Nina has a growing appreciation for the University district in Seattle. “If you live in Seattle you're a part of the University of Washington's kind of network experience, like it's all one community, but here, it seems as though Vancouver is oblivious to the fact that there is a major public university here” (Nina).

For students living on campus, there was a stronger sense of belonging. The residences on-campus were a great example of how the university created physical and emotional places that provided a space for inter cultural exchanges and open dialogue. There are two other places on-campus—the International House (IHouse) located on the far end of campus, and a more

central space that has recently opened, the Global Lounge—that are also geared towards international exchange (for a brief description, please refer to the *Institutional context* section in Chapter II). While these spaces show that the university acknowledges the extra support that international students need and were created as a space for international inclusion, the students described feeling unwelcome in these places because of their age, exclaiming that they appeared to be more “undergraduate focused.” In addition, the IHouse, which is home to many international services, is at the far end of campus and reproduced a feeling of separation and exclusion that the students already felt being international and graduate students on campus.

The feeling of non-spatial belonging spreads into other spaces on campus as well. The graduate student experience is isolating for both international and domestic students due to the individualized demand of research and writing. In order to maintain a balance, all of the students living off-campus explained to me that they tried to come on campus regularly. When on campus, graduate students often spend the majority of their time in their departments. As a result, they described feeling like they had more of a space and a community in their departments than any other space on campus. But Caroline was the only student who described feeling a strong connection with her department and the students in it. For the other international graduate students, it only seemed to be a *stronger* connection, not necessarily a very good one. They often described having no physical space that they felt they belonged to. In the sociology department, if you do not work for the school you are not provided a desk. In the history department the desks are shared by several students, not allowing students to feel like they have a permanent space to keep their stuff. Natalia tried to keep a schedule and come to school to work but without a desk found herself looking for space in the library. She often could not find a desk at all. This

resulted in her having to work from home the majority of the time leading her to feel further isolated and out of contact with a community on-campus.

For students living off campus, if they did not have an office on campus where they could work, they missed out on experiencing natural daily interactions that can make a student feel like they belong. These experiences are challenging for international students, specifically, because as Natalia explained, by not having a space to work in “with that dynamic you lose the daily conversation and I already have trouble finding common topics to chat for more than three minutes about.”

Ideas of becoming: Being an international graduate student

Negotiating the assigned “international” student identity

You’re always like you want to be here, but you have all of [that] institutional pulling and pushing that is kind of reminding you that you’re still from this other place (Natalia)

What is at issue is the power to define what things mean. How meanings are defined largely determines who has access to wealth and the social resources that are necessary for a decent life (Jordan & Weedon, 1995, p. 13)

The power of discourse is in the discourse’s ability to speak a subject into being. This power to define can dictate who can and cannot have access to resources and experiences. These discourses also have the ability to group students into limited positions, such as being an “international student.” All international graduate students, upon arrival in Canada, receive an assigned identity of being an “international graduate student.” Both the country, through the

required student visa they needed to obtain in order to enter, and the university that requires this visa to study, imposes this identity on them immediately. This identity is presented as if it is natural and desirable, and given to them regardless of any similarities or differences these students have. They are categorized into this group in order for institutions to easily collect statistics, create policies, and designate spaces and social groups specifically geared around the international student population. But what are the implications of this? As Hall (1990) states:

Practices of representation always implicate the positions from which we speak or write...though we speak, so to say in our own name, of ourselves and from our own experience, nevertheless who speaks, and the subject who is spoken of, are never identical, never exactly in the same place (p.222).

The definer and the defined can never speak the same definition because their social location is never the same. The identity of being an international graduate student is far more complicated than the simplified institutional definition that is given to the international graduate students upon arrival: “a student who is neither a Canadian citizen nor a permanent resident of Canada” (UBC, n.d,a).

However, often the definition for an “international student” given by the students I interviewed was similar to UBC’s institutional definition: a student who is “not Canadian” (Stanley) Even when self-defining in this way, the exclusionary nature of this definition is forefront, highlighting the governmental and institutional control over who is allowed in and who is not. At other times, the students’ definition of an “international student” was focused on being born or traveling from another country: “somebody who lives abroad or is born and lived abroad and is coming here for school” (Nik). These definitions were generally followed by experiences where they were reminded of their international status in what they said were “mundane”

(Stanley) ways. They described the examples as simply “legal mumbo-jumbo” (Stanley) claiming that being an international graduate student was “just another student...in some cases maybe with more problems” (Natalia).

As the stories continued, it appeared that these extra hurdles were more than just mundane problems. In fact, they had a profound effect on how these students understood themselves and feelings of belonging. For example, e-mails circulating regularly with requests for applications for additional external and internal funding with subscripts at the bottom indicating that the money was only available for domestic students signified more than just a denial of funding for some students. Sally spoke about these as institutional reminders of exclusion, and a portrayal that her knowledge was less respected and desired than if she was a Canadian. In our conversation about this, she was referring to a recent e-mail calling for applications for funding to do international research outside of the university (it should be noted that doing research outside of North America is itself outlined as an important aspect of internationalizing a university in UBC’s International Strategic Plan (UBC, 2009c)). Though Sally is funded for her studies through a four-year scholarship like many graduate students, as someone who researches internationally she finds it frustrating that she is unable to apply for additional travel grants as other domestic students can. “I’m still doing work, I don’t understand why I can’t get my research supported as well because I’m paying [tuition], I mean I’m still financially in the hole when I do this research project right?” (Sally).

Sally understands that certain funding is not available for international students because it is coming from the Canadian government. This anecdote seemed to be less about the funding itself than about the feeling of exclusion from the larger, UBC research community. This exclusion sent a message to Sally that her research, as an international graduate student, was less

meaningful than domestic students' research. It also made her question her sense of belonging as part of the larger UBC community.

Though international graduate students, from the institutional perspective, do not provide as much direct income into the university as international undergraduate students do, the overarching narrative of "international students" being used for the purpose of economic gain was often felt. By excluding Sally in the application process, it reinforced the larger discourse that "international students" are wealthy, and are the "cash cows" for the university.

you know it's not that I feel outward, I never feel outwardly discriminated but it's in these moments when I'm looking at grant applications or when I'm looking at, just sort of interactions with students when they find out that you're an American it's like this like, oh, Americans... you're really rich (Sally)

Sally has always identified as being a part of the working class. "My cultural identity always still feels very much, even despite all of the privilege that I've had, and even despite all of the international experiences I've had, I always still recognize my class as being working class" (Sally). However, other students who did not so identify also spoke about this broader conception that "international students" have more money than domestic students—again a reflection of the economic discourses that dominate internationalization and the rationale for the recruitment of international students, more generally. This, however, was not the lived reality for these students. Seven out of ten of these students received financial support through scholarships or fellowships, each described this support as being one of the main reason for attending UBC.

This feeling of exclusion was further elaborated on in a discussion I had with Dishu, though he is the one student that does not get any financial support from the school. Dishu stated

that it is about “ideational segregation, like we pay, we are the ATM machines and those people are different.” In other words, the dominant discourse of “international students” being used for the purpose of their money is felt as a lived experience on campus. The result of this is that international students often feel excluded due to this segregation of the purpose of their presence on campus. To Dishy, just as it was for Sally, it was not about whether they are viewed by the institution as “cash cows” or not, it is about the feeling of exclusion that these discourses cause amongst international students on campus. As Dishy suggests, “the financial side has been emphasized too much” and needs to be “de-emphasized” since international students “are also future source of production and knowledge” (Dishy).

Along with the institutional definition of being an international graduate student comes a student visa. This is a piece of paper that needs to be kept valid, and is an institutional reminder that international graduate students are being given permission to temporarily live here for a restricted amount of time. Students are neither visitors nor permanent residents; they are “temporary” residents. Matus’ (2006) research speaks to how the fuzzy “non-immigrant” but “non-citizen” status makes students feel both privileged and disadvantaged at the same time. While international graduate students are in a position of privilege because of the degree they are receiving, at the same time, they are disadvantaged because they are confined by non-citizen rights and subject to government policy that then trickles down into the institution as well. The international graduate students described to me several institutional restrictions caused by having international student visas, such as work permit limitations, barriers to getting paid (specifically at the university), social insurance number issues, and other such challenges.

When Stanley spoke about these hardships, at first he said they did not play a role in his identity, but as he continued discussing them, he began to wonder:

going to Service Canada to get a replacement SIN card, and there are different requirements, they begin by asking for the birth certificate which is what they require for Canadian nationals and I haven't got a birth certificate, but they ask me are you from, are you Canadian? I'm like no. But it's a perfect example. I mean it's not one that really affects my self-conception as much. Maybe it does, just a little bit.

Many of the examples, both inside and outside the university, were related to the students' finances, which is not surprising given the economic discourses in which the students exist. However, as is illustrated by Stanley's comment, it is not always about the financial difficulties. The moment of confrontation where he was reminded of being 'international' was just as significant for him.

Being institutionally defined by a visa also affected the students' ideas of self in other ways. Natalia and I joked about not knowing which line to walk through when crossing immigration at the airport. There are only two options: visitors and permanent residents/citizens. In this discussion, Natalia continued to say that she saw the visa as

reminding you that you're still from this other place, that is, it's kind of funny. Especially that when I feel at the university here, that I feel more the mark of the governmental institutional thing, of the student visa, I feel more, that's the only mark instead of the mark of ethnicity or other things that you carry every day (Natalia).

She described it as like having "a leg in your country and leg in Canada" (Natalia).

It is at moments like these, international students are forced to decide who they are, and yet, there is no place within the institutional definitions or categories for them. For many of them, this raised the more visceral questions of who they were in relation to Canada, their own

countries and where they belonged. These questions were harder to answer when the students were getting mixed messages from a country that seems to invite international students in, through their laws, practices and discourses , only to turn around and place barriers for this very “inclusion” they claim to practice.

Nina described this lived feeling of limbo as “implied temporality.” She felt that there was an implied “assumption that you have a permanent seat somewhere else” which resulted in her feeling isolated, unwelcome and even excluded at times. For Nina, an example of this was when she began to apply for Ph.D. programs and found that her professors spoke to her as if “it was just assumed that I was going to leave” (Nina) and do her Ph.D. in the U.S. It was also reinforced through social interactions where people assumed her real home was Seattle, which is another temporary space because her partner lives there, but is not where she identifies as a permanent living space. Describing it as “hard to get invested when you’re in that limbo stage,” Nina found herself beginning to take on a “transnational” (Nina) identity. Nina compared her experiences from this year to last year and said “I set off and last year was very optimistic and I was very positive that this was going to be good” however found that it was hard for her to return to school after the summer. She described this as partially being related to her status as a Masters student who is halfway done with her program and not exactly sure where the next step will lead her, resulting in an enhanced feeling of being in “limbo.” But she also explained that it had to do with having to originally make the decision between being “somewhat financial stability being [in Vancouver], or taking out this massive debt but being able to stay with my dog and fiancé [in Seattle].” Not finding the support in Vancouver that she had originally optimistically searched for she instead returned this year determined empower herself through embracing mobility and travel as part of her current identity. She began to accept a transnational lifestyle allowing her to

feel a sense of belonging through the community and support she received in Seattle and educational attainment in Vancouver.

Although some initially claimed that the legal structures were insignificant, as related to their identities, as the students spoke they became more conscious of how these structures affected them daily in their interactions and their own understandings of themselves. The small “legal mumbo-jumbo” (Stanley) seemed to actually shape the students understanding of who they are in the Canadian context. The institutional barriers, whether work restrictions due to their international student status, exclusions from specific funding, or “assumed” temporality that extended beyond visa definitions and into the social experiences, were constant reminders of how they do not belong.

The power of western knowledge

When the students talked directly about internationalization as a concept, their definitions varied depending on their country of citizenship and how they perceived the differences of their education in other countries in comparison to the one they receive in Canada. Unlike the dominant economic discourses around internationalization that I explored in Chapter III, the international graduate students I interviewed defined internationalization as the presence of cultural diversity, inter cultural discussion, the exchange of *different* kinds of knowledge, and the value of Western knowledge in their own personal lives.

In some cases, it seemed as if international graduate students incorporated the dominant discourse that favors Western knowledge, into their own dreams and ways of becoming. Khari and Dishu described getting their degree as a “privilege” or a “golden opportunity” (Khari) that

could be used as a, “ticket to going around the world, to travel around the world to look for a job” (Dishi). Empowering themselves through both the social and cultural capital of Western knowledge, they also hoped to use this new knowledge and privilege to better themselves and their home communities in the future. Dishi spoke directly about the benefit of Western knowledge and English as a competitive advantage should he choose to go back to China. “If I go back there and compete with the labour market, I will have some advantage” (Dishi). Khari, with the help of the university, is developing a program back in Tanzania that teaches English to students who would not otherwise be able to afford schooling in English. He spoke about the possibility of returning with his newly acquired knowledge to continue to help his home community once he has graduated. Enacting the discourse around Western knowledge, they are both gaining capital themselves, while further perpetuating the dominance of English and Western knowledge.

The privilege that Dishi and Khari felt having the opportunity to receive a Western “international” education seems to be connected with the positionality of where they come from and the education they received before UBC. As Khari described,

there’s a very sharp difference between education in Tanzania and here, so, being an international student here I feel like I’m proving so many things! It is a place, UBC is a place, which gives me the opportunity to study more about what I wanted to like for instance courses, they have a variety of courses... it’s really hard to get all of the resources you want back there, in Africa.

This is further emphasized in how they both discussed and defined an “internationalized” school (UBC) in comparison to their past experiences at their home country universities. For Dishi, internationalization is about critical thinking or being “open minded,” something he did not feel like he received in his more “technical” education training back in China. For Khari, being in an

international school is about the academic prestige, Western academic rigour and the global recognition of the scholars and the school itself; also something he did not feel that he received back in Tanzania.

Reminiscent of what Tickly (2004) would describe as an example of the discursive aspect of ‘new imperialism,’ in education, neither Dishu nor Khari’s definitions had to do with the actual reciprocity of knowledge, but rather reflected a subtle domination of Western knowledge over non-Western knowledge. Both Dishu and Khari appear to accept Western knowledge as a more valuable currency of power and capital that can be individually obtained, rather than the acceptance of a multitude of knowledge.

Ironically, they were the only non-Western students who described feeling as if there was space on campus to share their own knowledge. Yet, upon closer examination of their stories it appears that the “sharing” of knowledge is less about the exchange of knowledge, and more targeted to the continuation of Western knowledge dominance. Comparing his experiences at UBC to his school at home in China, Dishu described feeling as if he could really voice his opinion in Canada and that his knowledge, as a Chinese student, was respected.

Sometimes I do feel like being an international student I can bring some aspect [that] people here actually are looking for. I feel needed, especially in [my] seminar[s]. Sometimes people will just point at me and ask me what do you think about [this] from a Chinese point of view? What do you think about this question?... I feel like oh, okay I can produce some knowledge to this whole large building process it’s like building a tower and everyone comes into a little bit like that.

Khari also told me a story about being asked to give a presentation on his own language.

[S]omething that [I] was really surprised by, when I, in my first, second day of class I was attending, was in semantics lecture and then that professor said and so

many different languages have different aspects... and I would, at this moment I would like to invite Khari to come in front and tell us something about Swahili. I know he speaks Swahili and it would be really neat to hear about if Swahili has tense, and aspects and if it doesn't. I was thinking, what? In this context I was really surprised, oh they want to hear about Swahili so, I, and then I talked about it a little bit and then she say, we will give you 45minutes to kind of you know make my students elicit, I mean some stance and aspects in Swahili and the students were really interested (Khari).

Both Khari and Dishu described these stories as moments where their culture and their histories were valued and heard. Both were given a chance to speak, however, the singling out, whether through the action of “point[ing]” to Dishu or the “invitation” for Khari to speak, positioned these students as representatives of their culture, history and country. This is similar to how “cultural” events on-campus are used to highlight the diversity that is present. In these two stories, the sharing of knowledge—through the students’ language and cultural perspectives—are not open discussions relating to different types of knowledge, rather they serve as maintenance of Western dominance that is perpetuated knowingly, or unknowingly, by both the students and the instructor.

Unlike Dishu and Khari, Natalia described getting an internationalized education as an opportunity to experience the exchange of knowledge both in and outside of the classroom. She came expecting to get “a whole new perspective, even though it’s an outside perspective” that would open up new ways of knowing and learning. Seeming to value her experience abroad as a whole—both educationally and academically—she did not place a hierarchy of Western knowledge over her own knowledge that she brings with her from Chile, but instead viewed reciprocity of knowledge and cultural experiences as being an important part of what she had hoped to receive as an international graduate student at UBC. In contrast to Dishu and Khari,

however, Natalia did not find space for this reciprocity inside the classroom. In her letter home she wrote:

I think that in the 1000 readings I have made, only four mentioned something about other the countries, but neither of the papers were about our region. And the professors and my classmates don't have too much information. It's kind of frustrating because I cannot give examples. When I tried to connect some theoretical things from one of my courses with situation from Chile you could almost hear crickets (Natalia)

Within the Western-dominated curriculum that Natalia was being taught, Natalia also felt there was no natural space for the sharing of "other" knowledge not only perpetuated a feeling that her knowledge, and she as a person and an academic did not belong at the school, but she also described it as an example of how the school was not, in fact, internationalized.

Sally also talked about the discourse of exclusion of non-Western knowledge in the curriculum and her learning experiences on campus. She described internationalization as a term that the university uses to make the school feel like it is doing the right thing, even though there is an alternate agenda; that of making money and forced cultural assimilation to the white Western culture and ways of knowing.

You slap on internationalism just like how multiculturalism can be a money making scheme. Like "look at us, we accept all cultures but act white. We accept you but you are going to be taught by white male professors, you're going to have to do these active disciplines that don't critically address issues of race and inequality and, you are going to just sit there and just and do the standard education without any sort of critical inside, or the opportunities to provide alternative knowledge." If you want to say international then you should also think about alternative ways of knowledge, of critical thinking of self expression, of languages like international, but everyone speaks English and if you don't have the resources to be able to articulate yourself in English you just get flunked out of classes.

Sally was the only Western student who spoke directly about the social capital she felt that she was gaining from getting a Ph.D. at UBC. Coming from a lower socioeconomic class, getting a Ph.D. was a “privilege” for the imagined opportunities the degree could provide in the future. Though the other Western students saw value in the degrees they were getting, receiving the degree itself was not mentioned as playing a large role in how they identified themselves as students on campus. In addition, the Western students also had an easier time getting their perspectives heard. In fact Sally spoke about finding her academic voice and a “foothold” amongst international minded students and academics.

the [institute] has given me so much support and so encouraging, and I feel so less, self conscious about being a doctoral student because I always feel a little insecure I mean because of my background, you know I’ve had to overcome so many leaps and bounds because of my upbringing and education and all that that I’ve always felt I always feel a little bit uncomfortable talking to my fellow doctorate students and my fellow professors and even though I shouldn’t like it’s not like people call me out on it, I always feel a little bit nervous but here I don’t but I think it’s because everyone is really passionate about doing, like global human rights work that I get that activist side of me that’s a lot more comfortable than my academic side

EJ: Yeah, and so do you have a lot of friends here then?

Sally: Yeah, I do, and that’s great, so that makes it so it’s a lot less lonely. Cause it is lonely. It is really isolating. And it was really hard the first semester because I was really still primarily based in my department and everyone is masters students and not that they aren’t really nice people but everyone is in a different trajectory, they have a lot more pressures financially, you know what I mean, I mean of course, for me I felt very... And being new, and being American I guess, I felt very lonely and depressed and then it wasn’t until I got to the [institute] and met other doctoral students and stuff that I felt a lot better.

These contradictory moments are examples of how each student is positioned differently within the discourses of knowledge depending on where they come from, who they are and the expectations, and “imagined” experiences these students held. This not only shaped these

students' experiences differently, but also affected their understandings of themselves within the context of Western higher education and their sense of belonging in different ways as well.

Whereas Dishi and Khari chose to accept the dominant Western discourse of power, using the privilege of gaining Western knowledge to help them achieve their goals for their future opportunities, when prompted, Natalia challenged this experience of western imperialism and asked questions about what kind of knowledge she was receiving, who it was silencing and what type of hierarchy it was presenting. It appears that the policy and discourses of internationalization have not infiltrated all of the classroom experiences, or the disciplines of study fully or equally.

Representing & re-presenting diversity

When talking about internationalization, the international graduate students all described international diversity as a component of it. All of the students agreed that there was some “presence of diversity” (Nina) at UBC, whether it was through the many nationalities seen around campus, or through the “different languages everywhere and different cultural festivals and stuff” (Dishi). Despite this, there was always something “missing” (Stanley). The interaction *between* cultures and a space for these interactions to occur is part of this missing piece.

So yes, if you open your ears you will hear different languages like Spanish or Arabic language or Italian and German but you don't really see the people maybe acting or doing thing together. You hear them but you don't have them sharing their experiences together in an initiative, so I imagine an international university like a place that facilitates that kind of encounter (Natalia).

The students were brought to UBC to be a part of internationalization and therefore came with an expectation that the campus would be a place where they could both learn and share knowledge and culture between a diversity of students. Instead, as Natalia stated, there seemed to be no platform for sharing or the-inter cultural engagement of the cultures, but only the representation of these cultures on campus. When there were structured opportunities for this exchange, the representation of the students' culture or knowledge became the subject of celebration, rather than the engagement itself. Much like the knowledge of Dishu and Khari being used to reinforce the Western hegemonic system, acts of diversity such as cultural festivals, became performances to prove that the university embraces and accepts the diversity on campus, but only superficially and for show. This can be seen in a story Khari shared with me about being pulled to the front of a "cultural" night at his residence where people were asked to wear their "traditional dress" to dinner. Arriving late he was in the back and was asked to come forward:

I didn't get a seat, I was a little bit just like an African, as usual, [laughing], so I missed a seat and was standing at the back and then you know he was giving a speech and he said, oh I see someone at the back I really like your dress, I really like your outfit of dress, that is a typical African dress and will you come near the front please, and then everyone gave a big applause and [it] was really cool. So I love to be identified as an African and I feel that is my label, that is my identity, but that doesn't mean that I feel, or I look down at people from other nationalities or other races, so I feel like we are all the same (Khari)

Khari described this story as a moment where he was able to proudly show his cultural dress. Arguably, however, just as "diversity" is represented in facts and figures within the policy documents surrounding internationalization, this story also exemplifies a time where Khari was singled out because of his difference and asked to be a representative of the presence of national diversity on campus and in the residence. Instead of celebrating Khari as a student with culture,

knowledge, history and multiple identities, his “African dress” was the focus of applause. A moment with the potential to foster the exchanging and sharing of differences instead mimics the ideas of multicultural “inclusion” while simultaneously silencing the more complex issues of difference.

As Khari explained institutional practice have also positioned him to take on a certain label. He later described taking on this responsibility in his department as well.

I’m the only black in [my department] everyone likes me. I assume that I’m an ambassador – representing my country and my continent so everything I do I must think first of who am I, where am I from and what is the purpose being here. If I do something bad, or if I flunk then I will be closing the door for my young brothers and sister because if such thing happens they won’t trust us anymore. I’m studying hard to reach my goal – knowing that I’m supposed to help my family and our people in Tanzania (Khari).

As the only black student in his department Khari takes on the weight of not only representing his country but also Africa as a continent. As a result, he is constantly negotiating who he is in relation to his past, his homeland and home continent. As a graduate student, he wants to do well for himself. As an international student from Africa, he also carries an additional burden of responsibility to do well for the fate of his continent. Beoku-Betts (2004) called this the “burden of representation” in response to the students’ awareness of the negative stereotyping of students from their region due to “the legacy of subordination arising from the colonial experience and the marginal position of their societies in the global economic system” (p. 132).

Khari’s positionality, as an African student, causes him to feel as though he must represent and fight against any negative stereotyping of African students that might exist in order

to pave the way for future generations of Africans. Rather than simply taking on this “burden” however, Khari empowers himself by being positive and making these teaching moments.

I mean most people used to ask me where are you from? And I was like [I’m] from Tanzania. Tanzania? Some of them - where is Tanzania? Is it in Latin America? It’s like come on, [laughing] how is it possible you don’t know where Tanzania is? It was really, it was like, why don’t people know where my country is? Oh man, and it was like, so you guys need to have an orientation about [it]. I mean at least you should know where I’m from and know a little bit of my culture and other stuff too. And so, and not one, or two people, or three, but many people didn’t know where Tanzania is so my job was to explain and try to sketch a map in a very abstract way. Tanzania is in the Eastern part of Africa it is a great country and we have so many things... (Khari)

Knowing where some of the international student body comes from appears not to shared knowledge, as can be seen in Khari’s story and was echoed in others told by Natalia and Abhi. It was the responsibility of the student to educate through his or her own “orientation[s]” (Khari). For an “international” school that takes pride in the diversity of countries present on campus and whose vision is to “create an exceptional learning environment that fosters global citizenship” (UBC, 2010b, p. 6), it is ironic that some of the student population is more than happy to applaud the “African” attire when it is brought on stage, but cannot point to what continent the dress comes from on a map. While it is not necessarily the responsibility of UBC to teach geography to its graduate student body, this is indicative of how international graduate students often feel that the sharing of knowledge and the space to talk about their differences in a non-hegemonic way is not a priority to the institution. Instead, the international students themselves must create these conversations.

Other international graduate students told different stories about feeling a need to represent or even sometimes defend their nationality and cultures. Stanley described the “role” of being a Pakistani as not always on his mind, but being aware of it. “I mean when I interact with people then I’m representing, in their minds, I’m representing Pakistan in some way. I’m not always conscious of it at every moment of the day, but [laughing].” A moment he highlighted was at a bar where he and a friend were asked if they were from Iraq:

Stanley: then he made a remark, just a joking remark about bombs and vests and stuff like that. And in a moment like that, I’m, I guess more aware that I then have to remain calm and actually engage in a conversation and the further it goes the better. That I really need to sort of, connect with the person at a human level because I accept that he is, I mean whatever jokes he might be cracking there’s still people that can be, that have the capacity to identify with me. This is, on a basic human level. And I sort of bring that out. Yeah, I guess I allude to, this is an important role to me because a lot of people just have never met a person from Pakistan in any meaningful capacity.

EJ: Do you feel like you carry that role on campus as well?

Stanley: Yup, when the occasion arrives.

Carrying their national identities with them, Stanley and Khari responded to the marginalization of their identities by finding strength in their own nation’s “shared culture” (Hall, 1990). Khari was tasked with teaching about the very existence of his home country, a place he belongs to, and bringing it into the discourses on campus, while for Stanley, it was about addressing the misconceptions about his home culture and region. Instead of remaining silenced, they both empowered themselves by reaching out, sharing their knowledge and histories, and embracing their national cultures, which in turn also helped them carve out a space and find a feeling of belonging in the multicultural discourses where the story of differences is often erased.

Silencing of differences

When Stanley was talking about his experiences on campus around internationalization, he described feeling like there was a homogenizing force watering down individual identities, and a grouping off of a distinct “Canadian” identity that does not, in fact, welcome outsider cultures into its paradigm.

What’s also important and that I’m not always sure of Vancouver’s success in doing is like, so there are lots of different cultures represented and Vancouver, it seems like there is some sort of force that tends to water [it] down and there’s a homogenizing force of some sort. I don’t know if it’s true. So, you can have a society that’s international or multiculturalists in which there are people from many different cultures and they’re just going about their own ways, their own lifestyle, with their values and beliefs. You can have another society, which also claims the same thing with the same group of people that are in which there are more, there are stronger constraints that water down the individual identities

And he continued on to say:

There are people from a lot of different parts of the world and, UBC’s very, the Canadian society in general is very tolerant and accepting, but, I don’t know, I am constantly reminded of, quite frequently reminded of a strong sense of Canadianness. I’m not really sure what that amounts to in material terms, but there seems to be a very conscious emphasis on: you’re in Canada and the Canadian values and Canadian artefacts. Which, I mean, I think for example, contrasting it with the US I think in actual material terms I feel like the notion of an American identity, or what it takes to be an American is somehow more clearer, like it’s more well defined, but, there’s, I’ve never felt, I mean I guess it varies in different one part of the US and others, but I never really felt that to be very, to be that important and popular in the public sphere. Where as here, people are, I don’t know, I just get the sense that there is an emphasis on making people aware that there is something very distinct and very unique which is to be Canadian and I think the effect it has on me at least is, one in which I will always feel that I’m an international student from another part of the world who has been

accepted as part of this bigger framework which is some mysterious notion of Canadianness. I don't know. So the reason I say no is because I think there is a sense in which you can have, no matter how many international students there are on campus, they'll still be made aware that they are a part of the more often underlying social cultural paradigm or something.

Stanley described two points which Dhamoon (2009) and May (2000) criticize as being faults of the Canadian multicultural platform. First, Canadian multiculturalism does not, in fact, welcome outsider cultures but instead privileges liberal values suggesting, “‘different’ cultural groups should adopt to the values of an already existing dominant culture” (Dhamoon, 2009, p.7), the “dominant culture” being a Canadian Western culture. Second, that through the paradigm of multiculturalism, a platform that accepts all differences, the language to speak about difference and conceptualize difference has been lost, due to the emphasis on an “inclusive,” “accepting,” and “integrated” (CIC, 2008c) society, creating a homogeneous and unproblematic understanding of Canadianness (Dhamoon, 2009). As a result, even the increase in the numbers of international students, or “diversity” cannot change the homogeneity of the current culture.

For the international graduate students I interviewed, both this “watering down” and a distinct underlying Canadian nationalism—oftentimes through the discourses of multiculturalism—and a fear of talking about difference were reflected in our discussions. Inside the classroom, as discussed earlier, this was seen through the Western-dominated content and the silences in conversations around different cultures. Outside of the classroom, this was also prevalent. International graduate students often found it challenging to articulate who they are, and how they belong in this imagined, projected and lived out Canadian community. This showed in the different stories that the international graduate students told, especially when talking about their friendships on campus.

As supported by the literature on international student experience, almost every student spoke about having shallow friendships with Canadian students at UBC. In his letter home, Stanley wrote about being disappointed with his social life:

I'd say this has been a bit of a disappointment. Don't get me wrong, I get along with folks around campus just fine. I find people to go to the movies and shows with, and I've probably I've even made some real friends (and you know I don't take that term lightly). But something seems to be lacking – warmth, closeness, openness some such thing (Stanley).

Oftentimes the students said they felt it had to do with the discomfort Canadian students had discussing, learning and engaging with them around new cultures. Natalia found “conversations about Chile, or Latin America in general are very short and quickly change to culture in Canada.” The few people who did engage were ones who already “know something about my country or my region, they ask more questions than people who don't know, if they don't have, they didn't know what to, what to say, or even know what to explore” (Natalia). Students seemed not to know how to ask questions about different cultures. Mi Sun found that Canadians just seemed awkward around her.

Mi Sun: I found that she's [a female colleague] really polite and really nice person but whenever I meet her she looked a little bit awkward because so I think that she maybe she's worrying about my cultural value too much so she it seems like she doesn't know how to deal with me yeah that's my impression I don't know I didn't ask about that [laughing] but that is my impression so she looked a bit nervous you know and then she tried to say something really politically correct with me [laughing] so I think, you know what I mean?

EJ: I think so?

Mi Sun: I don't know, I feel, my impression [is] often white students, they're overly concerned about overstepping boundaries.

Here, differences appear to be silenced due to aspects of indifference, ignorance or self-centeredness. Mi Sun found in this situation, and in others she described in our conversations, that students had a fear of saying the wrong thing, which in turn made Mi Sun uncomfortable herself. In the end she said that she stopped trying to make friends with (white) Canadians altogether. It is not that she does not engage with white Canadians, as she shares mutual friends with her white, Canadian husband, but only that she no longer goes out of her way to try and become friends with them. If multiculturalism is supposed to be a platform for inclusion, why is it that Mi Sun feeling as if she has to distance herself instead?

Abhi also reflected on this awkward inability to break “boundaries” when comparing his experiences in Canada with those in the US where he received two graduate degrees before coming to Canada.

Canadians are into their stuff and they don’t want to kind of break their boundaries and you know, talk much to people outside their field. In the US I used to kind of, I used to meet all my friends and I had a big friends circle in the US; in Canada, oh my god, I hardly have any friends in Canada (Abhi).

The international graduate students expressed a desire to share with the local community their own knowledge and experiences as much as they wanted to learn about their new community. For many of them the platform and the confidence to share with other Canadians was not fostered or encouraged.

I think it is a potential home... so, if I have some kind of emotional support like be part of the community, but I am not looking for my family I guess, like just be able to also just give back. I think that is something I feel that I don’t have yet, I haven’t found something I can give to the people in the community here in

Vancouver. I still don't know if [Canadians] need me for example but I think just if I find, if I can find that, this will be my home (Natalia).

As a result, many of the international students seemed to feel unwanted and unneeded, creating a fertile ground for their feelings of insignificance and lack of belonging.

This feeling of insignificance was also reflected in every day experiences where the students described not having a community that they felt could rely on.

I don't have enough friends here, you know, who I think I can bank on in the sense here if I need to go to the airport I call a taxi, in the US that never happened I had some friend who used to kind of tell me, hey I can give you a ride (Abhi).

Both Natalia and Stanley talked about their experiences at a local non-native English school very fondly and contrasted it with the experiences they were having as international graduate students at UBC. While their experiences were different because Natalia entered as a student and Stanley as an English instructor, the commonality was clear; both had felt welcomed, made friends, and felt as if they belonged when they were at the ESL School. They felt that differences were celebrated *and* explored and yet there was still a natural atmosphere of inclusion, excitement, interest and engagement in learning about different cultures.

The cultural engagement reflected by Natalia and Stanley in their English schools could be attributed to the fact that all of these students were international, and came to Canada with the motivation and desire to learn about a new culture and learn a new language. As a result, all of the students were potentially more open to also learning about other cultures as well. As Natalia explained, it as a place where “you have differences but you want to learn about those

differences, and try to understand, like what makes us different *and* also what makes us similar” (Natalia, emphasis added), something she did not feel happened on the UBC campus as much.

In contrast to these stories, both Nik and Caroline spoke about feeling like they had a community where their experiences and knowledge could be shared on campus. Both Nik and Caroline lived on-campus for their first two years of study, which, as discussed earlier, may have also played a role in their feeling that there was support and space for shared knowledge and cultural exchange on campus. When I asked Nik to discuss his experiences and friendships on campus, he described his “integration” into Canada as being easy. Most of his friends were either Canadian or American (he does not “distinguish between the two too much”). Nik spent time in America and felt that his knowledge of the North American culture through TV and his experiences living and studying in America aided him in his transition resulting in him having no culture shock in Canada and having successfully “adapted” to the North American way. And yet, both Abhi and Stanley spent time in America before coming to Canada as well and in contrast, Nik’s experience seems to be much smoother than theirs. While Abhi and Stanley both talked about the challenges of making deep friendships, connecting to campus, and at times feeling isolated, Nik described Vancouver and Canada as open and welcoming to him. While this may have to do with Nik finding a community through his on-campus housing experiences, this also brings to question, how much of this fear of talking about difference is about history and culture? And how much is about race?

Racialized differences

However much an individual might want to escape racial categorization and be seen merely as an individual, s/he finds her/himself confined by white societies' implicit and explicit definitions of whiteness and racial otherness. These definitions are not merely the property of prejudiced individuals, they are structural, inhering in the discourses and institutional practices of the societies concerned (Weedon, 1999, p. 152).

When Nina talked about her experiences as an American in Canada, she described a difference in how Canadians approach to race in comparison to her experiences in the US.

The way that, like my Canadian cohorts understand race is incredibly different. I don't think, so that was a moment in which I like I felt like there was no compatibility because the racial issues are so, unique in the US and I think incredibly prevalent, and ingrained in everything that we do that, here, like to hear one of my friends say that we should go beyond race or that race isn't important was like something I could not understand and it just, it became obvious that we were coming from two different perspectives and I think that was probably the biggest thing was I really realized that I was it was one of the main things. I realized I was coming from a different perspective and there are also things like M & M's are better than Smarties, but that's much lighter (Nina).

This idea of being “beyond” race and that racism does not exist, or is a one time occurrence when it does happen is supported by the literature on multiculturalism, a policy that is “inclusive” for all through the silencing of difference (Chan, 2007; Day, 2000; Dhamoon, 2009; Johnson & Reva, 2007). Often, this racialized silencing played out in the daily experiences of the international graduate students both on and off campus, furthering feelings of exclusion.

Sitting down with Mi Sun in our second interview, we looked over the photographs she gathered for her “letter home” project. When I asked her why she had chosen the photographs

she showed me, her main reason was that as she was shifting through photographs of her experiences in Vancouver and at UBC she noticed one distinct characteristic emerging from them: almost all of the pictures are of her and other students of color—either first generation immigrants or international students.

Mi Sun: One day I realized that most of my friends from UBC [are] international students who were maybe born but second-generation immigrant people of color not many white students yeah most of them are international students or Canadian but people of color, yeah.

EJ: Interesting, and why do you think that is?

Mi Sun: Yeah, so I thought about this many times why they are, my friendships with Chinese student [are] mainly because we're both non-native English speakers, so this is the one commonality between us and from East Asian countries so maybe we share similar cultural values, and the other thing is the majority of my program is white Canadian, or American student; they have their own circle, it's not easy to get into [the] circle. So I think that there are language barriers and cultural differences and also kind of the sentiment of exclusion but I don't think they plan to exclude us but it's real subtle; maybe they think, I don't know how to deal with them (Mi Sun).

Similar to the story she told about trying to reach out to white Canadians, Mi Sun again described a lack of engagement, a lack of understanding in how to communicate, and sometimes even frustration coming from the (white) Canadian students when she tried to interact with them. When looking at the pictures and noticing that all of her friends are either second-generation or international immigrants of color, she thought this had to do with being a minority in her department as a student of color, and with feeling excluded from the circle of white American and Canadian students. In this example Mi Sun did not explicitly say that her exclusion was based on race, but instead spoke of race within the context of language abilities and culture. As we continued our conversation, she problematized her experiences further.

Mi Sun: Canadians, they've never expressed this kind of thing obviously. [It's] always a subtle, so many times it's not easy to point out because it's really subtle, and then it has real cultural connotations, so sometimes it's not easy to tell if it's a cultural thing or they are they are racist or they don't, they just simply don't want to include me or we are just different physical area you know what I mean? So I can't clearly say what which one is which because everything is mixed together and it's not the English clearly yet it's complex and also I don't blame the way Canadian students, because it's not personal fault or personal misjudgement [we] stress different areas and maybe it's just a structural kind of how can I say structural ?

EJ: The system maybe?

Mi Sun: System, yeah, so I just want to point out that it's not personal or something, it's just that we have different states right, we are in a different space and different culture the problem is that both different culture and different space never meet each other or meet with just some overlap, a little bit that is the problem. [drawing circles with her finger in the air, which never overlapped] So I don't blame individuals.

Though Mi Sun does not “blame” the individual students she meets, she spoke about feeling like there is a larger cultural and systemic indifference to talking about difference, whether cultural, linguistic or racial difference. It is unclear if she chose not to talk about this directly as a race issue because she did not want to offend Canadians, or because she did not see it specifically as an issue of race. Regardless, in pointing to “cultural” differences, rather than race, I am reminded of Tiley’s (2005) argument that “‘race’ has now increasingly been superseded (although not entirely replaced) by recourse to a new emphasis on culture within western societies as the basic category for explaining difference and conflict... and for legitimizing inequality” (p. 177). That is to say, culture, in this case as part of a multicultural state, has now become a more comfortable way of talking about, and thereby legitimizing exclusion and discrimination when it comes to race.

Mi Sun described and physically painted in the air an image of non-converging social circles during our conversations about her friendships at UBC. She was not the only international graduate student to do so. Stanley also drew a similar picture with his hands in the air when he was mentioned the lack of community he felt on campus. Individual circles, side-by-side, and rarely overlapping—this, to me, is a strong visual image of the social and cultural alienation that many of the international graduate students experienced.

Dishi's explanation for this trend was that there is a lack of communication between different groups on campus causing people to "concentrate only on their inner circle" where the inner circle "reinforces itself." As a result, students become "isolated [in their] own circle [and] that identity gets stronger and stronger and finally takes over the other fields and causes problems" (Dishi). Dishi does not think "difference" really exists because it is socially constructed and is "all people's fear." He described sports as a way to help people of different circles to communicate and interact with people out of their own circle, enabling them to see similarities despite differences and feel less isolated.

Through sports we find out we share some same goals and same way of thinking and we can figure it out without socially constructed cultural factors like language, or the way we grew up. See, when I play sports with those people, the political institution in my country totally doesn't matter right? Therefore, I think when we are playing it can be proved that we are not different, we share lots of similarities.

I asked him to explain further what he meant by difference and he said, "Well, there are some difference[s], I'm not trying to deny this part, the thing is this difference is here, so that is we shall not emphasize this too much and build it like extend it to other field" (Dishi). In other words, not to emphasize differences so much that you cannot see the commonalities. As such, he

feels, “like it’s more like a personal issue. It comes down to whether this person is proactive or international or not” (Dishi).

Dishi gave me an example of when these differences did not matter during a soccer game once.

Dishi: We don’t have a strong, among my friend circles we don’t have this strong identity, and we don’t identify each other as Canadian, American, Chinese, or Japanese, usually we don’t do that. A story I had is once a time when I was in soccer, um we played Sunday soccer and I brought a friend, a local Canadian and I bring him to our soccer game. It’s a pick up game, it’s really easy going so at that time we had a, like a senior student from our department and he’s like our captain so he organizes the whole game, and before the game is said something, he said like the guys is getting a Ph.D. from our department he said something like okay, how are we going to make the team, um, let’s make the team by skin color. Laughing, my friends first time to that game. He got really scared, he laughing, he tugged my sleeve and was like hey, is this guy a racist [laughing] and I was like no, no, no.

EJ: So how did you make the teams?

Dishi: Well, sometimes, we really do that. [Laughing] We really divide by Asian and Canadian white people and yellow skin people. We just don’t care.

EJ: It’s not seen as being a negative thing?

Dishi: Yeah, it’s not even an issue. I’m happy with that.

Dishi would likely not agree with my interpretation of the significance race plays in his story.

Although Dishi acknowledges that discrimination and international student isolation is caused by “misunderstanding and miscommunication,” he does not describe, nor define himself racially and dislikes labels altogether. Arguably, by focusing only on similarities, Dishi is playing an instrumental role in the continued silencing of Canada and Vancouver’s long history of Asian stereotyping and segregation (Chan, 2007; Dhamoon, 2009; Johnson & Reva, 2007). In fact, I would argue that the manner in which he downplays the separation of teams by “white” versus

“yellow” skinned students is an embodiment of the multicultural discourse of what I refer to as “label and dismiss.” He labels, or acknowledges racial differences, while at the same time dismisses them as unimportant, or as “not even an issue.”

Rather than reflecting on the inclusive and exclusive roles that differences can play, Dishu chose to ignore the more complex dimensions of racial, cultural, and social identities. Instead of feeling excluded, or racially marginalized in this situation, he focused on the similarities that he had with his friends and team mates and identified more as a “cosmopolitanist” (Dishu). In embracing this identity, he resisted certain racial, cultural, and ethnic identities that had been imposed on him resulting in his finding the freedom and space for reciprocity and belonging. However, in doing so, perhaps unknowingly, he was also ignoring the multiple layers of racialization taking place in his own story.

As Seidman (2004) says, “racial identities take shape as part of establishing racial hierarchies; they are always political. White, Black, red [sic] or native [sic] America, and Asian are not just different racial identities but stand in relations of inequality to one another” (p.241). Dishu pointed out that his cultural transition into Vancouver was easier because it is “HongCouver” due to the large Chinese population (the Chinese are cited as the largest visible minority population in Vancouver, (Statistics Canada, 2006)). In addition, he is part of the dominant sub-group at UBC (students from “Asia” are the second largest population behind Canadian and permanent residents at UBC, (UBC, 2011)). Therefore, in the context of UBC and in this soccer game, he is given the privilege of having a team to play on, but where do the other students fit into this story? If you do not identify as “White” or “Asian” what team do you play on?

Alternatively, this alternate understanding of difference that changes the focus to similarities rather than differences can also be viewed as a survival mechanism in an effort to feel less marginalized and isolated. This kind of resistance to acknowledging difference or problems can be seen in Khari's discussion of race in his letter home. "There are very few Africans in Vancouver, but everyone respects us! There is nothing like race discrimination or anything close to that. So everyone has equal rights" (Khari). In our conversations together, however, he told me a story that seemed to show otherwise.

Khari: But then sometimes you know I'm in the bus, I do the bus a lot you know, three hours in a day, so sometimes I observe some things, like how do people perceive me or not perceive but how do they in terms of sociability or, so if I'm sitting in a bus for instance and then so maybe I'm at the front seat so it's a double seat you sit here and then there's [motioning next to himself]...

EJ: ...a seat next to you...

Khari: ...a seat next to me so people come in they'll first fill in all seats in the bus and then if there's not anyone left in the bus then they often come sit here so when that happens, something thinks in my mind. There's something wrong or going on or anyways, and sometimes I just understand that maybe people just don't want to sit and maybe they if there's empty seats, they will go to those seats first because there's but that doesn't bother me.

EJ: No?

Khari: And I don't think that many people, those boundaries, there might be other people but I don't think that [is] race, or whatever it is. This is a very diverse community with tons of people from different nationalities and different spaces too, and all communities living together and so I don't feel like I'm marginalized or whatever and I feel proud of myself so I think that, yeah, [laughing] it's great and I think that it's a good thing to feel that way...because if you start thinking, I think people [are] marginalizing me, that is bad. That is [a] stereotype and you always isolate yourself and you'll be disadvantaged of so many things. Yeah, so that's why. Everyone likes me, like oh Khari, he's a great guy, he's very social and you know we hang out with lots of people and we do a lot of fun stuff... so it's really nice experience

Both Dishu and Khari stressed the need to focus on similarities, not on differences, and the diversity of the community, not on marginalization. Being able to “adapt” to this way of thinking—a multicultural positioning that dismisses differences in an effort to focus on similarities—enabled them to find a space and sense of belonging in the Canadian culture. However, Dishu and Khari are the only two non-white students who have been able to do so. Complicating this further, these are also two students who felt support, belonging and encouragement upon arrival. Dishu moved in with Chinese friends when he first moved to Vancouver to help his transition, while Khari lived in on-campus housing, which he described as being incredibly supportive. It is possible that rather than being a result of their adaptation and acceptance of dominant discourses of internationalization, their ability to find a space and sense of belonging in the Canadian culture may have had more to do with having found a supportive community at the beginning of their studies. Therefore their feelings of belonging and acceptance may have less to do with how they have positioned themselves within the discourses of multiculturalism on campus and more with the inclusive community that they were able to find early on in their studies.

Being American

An interesting storyline that emerged from this research was that of the American students. There is a long history between Canada and America, and much of the Canadian identity is emphatically defined by *not* being America(n) (Pinar, 2011). Because the friction between these two identities was discussed at length in the conversations I had with the students, and because I interviewed three American students, I have given these discussions their own

space. This section not only highlights how a country's relationship with Canada can directly influence the students' experience, but also how even within an international graduate student population of the same nationality, identities, stories and understandings of identity and belonging can still vary.

Though their nationality was often invisible due to their skin color and limited accents, being an American complicated the experiences of the international graduate students who so identified. These students' identities in Canada varied and were formed and understood in different ways than students of other nationalities. All three of the American students described feeling an obligation, or a responsibility to represent their nation in response to the negative comments that were vocalized by Canadians about the United States. A clear discomfort and frustration with how often they felt this way came out in each of their stories. When describing this experience, they had mixed feelings about defending America.

The American students' frustration was less about the negative identity that was thrust upon them, but rather because they saw a similar stereotypical "American ignorance" in the Canadians' ability to critically examine their own culture and see the silencing, discrimination, superficiality and marginalization that also occurs in Canada. For Caroline, this was apparent when Canadian students would complain about the stereotypical consumerist American society. "There are significant differences in certain areas, but [Canadians are] pretty much just as much [of] a consumer as any average American, so that will frustrate me" (Caroline). For Sally, it was Canadians "denial of looking at their own sort of backdoor."

Canadians are always bitching about the US and their issues and that, oh at least we're not like the US, it's always that, at least we're not like the US. At least we're not as crazy as the US, at least we're not as gun toting crazy as the US. And they say it to me and I just want to be like oh my God come on, this is ridiculous

how much, I don't know. It's again, I always have this feeling about being an American that it's really easy to pick on America. It's incredibly easy. There's plenty to point out, but at the same time, there's plenty of shit in your own country (Sally).

Nina talked about the silencing of Canadian history when she wrote about her experiences of Canadian Thanksgiving in her letter home. She and her friends were trying to figure out the meaning of the holiday in Canada and the group consisting of both American and Canadians could not explain it. At the end of the discussion, the Canadians in the group concluded "it was basically the same story as American Thanksgiving, except with more of an emphasis on the harvest, and less guilt about killing thousands of Natives with small pox and measles" (Nina).

Adamantly being told that they are different than Canadians, the American graduate students found it hard not to point to the many similarities in the two cultures, making it a challenge for the students to really understand their role as "international graduate students" in Canada. Being American played both a defining and ambiguous role in their identities as international students. On one hand, American students have been accepted and labelled as different, and as "outsiders" by the institution, and many times by the students around them. On the other hand they were often told that their differences were not significant enough to warrant the identity of "being" international. As Nina said, referring to the call for international graduate students for this research, "when I responded to your e-mail I felt like I was cheating" (Nina). She reflected further on this ambiguity saying "I don't know if that has to do with my whiteness or that I don't have a strong accent or maybe all of these things or that I look like much of the UBC campus." Still, American students were often reminded that they are not Canadian because of things that they say, or their slight accents. "Even though I don't have that strong of an accent, people are usually like, you're from the South somewhere" (Caroline). This perpetuates an

additional identity struggle around belonging, already challenged by the label of being an international student.

I don't think about student immigrants, but that's what I've been for five years now, right, it's weird. It's a weird sort of thing, what definitions you appropriate and what definitions you don't appropriate and for that I've never appropriated the immigrant status [the way] I did appropriate the International Student status at the University of Amsterdam (Sally).

Sally drew strength from the international identity at the university of Amsterdam in a way that she has not been able to find in Canada. In Canada, she is positioned instead as an American, something she feels through the constant reminder of her Americanness, often presented negatively. This label excludes her. As a result she not only feels a need to resist the common discourses around Americans but she is also constantly reminded that she does not belong.

Of course, it is important to note that not all three of the Americans felt this lack of belonging. Experiences outside of this identity also played large roles in shaping their feelings of belonging. While Nina described herself as having a transnational identity—coexisting between American and Canada—Caroline very much identified and felt a sense of belonging on campus within her residence and in her department.

Regardless, negotiating between similarities of cultures and differences in cultures was a challenge for all of the American students. Walking on their tip-toes, the American students found themselves mediating the discourses around Canadians' fear of talking about difference while at the same time their constant obsession about wanting to *be different* from Americans. While American students were technically international students due to their status in the country, they were caught in between being culturally too similar to feel like they could define

themselves as “international” while simultaneously feeling too different to be Canadian. This speaks back to Natalia’s story about the ambiguity of knowing which line to get in when crossing the customs border into Canada.

Alternate spaces of being: Finding new identities together

While racism, sexism and classism impose particular types of collective identity on individuals, resistance is possible. Subject positions that are grounded in alternative meanings of race, gender and class, developed outside dominant institutions, can also be powerful. They act as sites of resistance to hegemonic definitions of what people are or should be (Jordan & Weedon, 1995, p. 17).

for marginalized and oppressed groups, the construction of new and resisted identities is a key dimension of a wider political struggle to transform society (Jordan & Weedon, 1995, p. 5-6)

Many students told stories of shifting understandings of their own identities in relation to assumptions and defined categories that were placed on them in the community and Canadian society. Through these shifts they developed their own forms of empowerment by appropriating alternative and new ways of understandings their roots. Mi Sun always described herself as being Korean, but the “Asian” identity is one that she has learned to ascribe to since moving to Canada.

Before I came to Canada I never identified myself as Asian but after we came to Canada, and I start[ed] my program in Canada. In Vancouver I identify myself more Asian because mainstream Canada looks at me as an Asian right, so that’s why I be, that’s why I feel more comfortable with other Chinese or Japanese students (Mi Sun).

Though being labelled as “Asian” can have negative, exclusionary implications, as discussed earlier in this chapter, Mi Sun also embraced this label as part of her new identity in

Canada. In doing so, she empowered herself by using this external categorization as a way to connect with other “Asian” students and find a community where she is welcomed, accepted and can belong.

Just as the literature on international student experience suggests (Koehne, 2006; Montgomery & Macdowell, 2009; Tian & Lowe, 2009), although the students did not necessarily identify themselves as “international students” there was often a cohesion between international graduate students, as a group, that seemed to provide a space for students to bond and create friendship due to the similarity of them *not* being Canadian. Many of the international graduate students empowered themselves by “bonding” after class over the notion of being “different.”

Actually one of my really good, so [laughing], in a weird bizarre fashion I became really close to in my first year here, I became friends [with] an exchange student from Germany who’s in my department doing some of the masters classes and we started talking about like why is it that I’m not making any friends... I mean we’re fine in class we talk nicely in class we joke and laugh in the department but after the department when everyone leaves, they leave, so why is it that we can’t be close and [she], said the same thing, like she wanted to have, she thought that she would come here and make all these like great Canadian friends and she’s like just, not happening and you know I don’t know why. I don’t know why it is like that, that you can’t that it’s harder to make friends with the community that, that you try that you immigrate to (Sally).

In addition, there were also stories about how interactions within the international student communities provided a platform for personal growth and learning about new cultures that resulted in previous stereotypes and categorizations being broken. The international experience of living and studying abroad seemed to give many of these students a chance to explore cultures and learn things that they never knew before.

Khari: When I was in Africa I used to hear the stories from people who went abroad to Asia or whatever and the way, just typical things and so actually the community is very... that they don't normally want to interact with Africans, like black people. They often want to interact with white people not black people and I came here was, so I thought about Chinese and Koreans and whatever but then I said, well let me observe myself if what they were saying is true and then I found it's nothing like that. Because I have lots of Chinese and Asian friends I made lots of friends in St. John's and most of them are Chinese too and we have hung out a lot. We do whatever and actually we don't even, sometimes we feel like we're brothers and we don't see, we don't have the, those...

EJ: Walls?

Khari: Boundaries or walls.

EJ: Yeah.

Khari: Yes, like this is an African, this is an Asian.

Dishi also found that being in an international community has opened his eyes:

For example, like you know back in China especially when I left China in 2005/2004, nationalism, people are talking about Chinese nationalism, it was really strong and well, particularly nationalism against Japan, because of the war history back there, right? So when I came here I met some Japanese people and they are nationalists, well amongst how Chinese national media depict, describe about Japan, what we saw back in China, those Chinese people are very friendly to me and open [to] talk[ing] about the war history and sincerely offer their apology to this kind of history, which quite impressed me and this is something we, I feel like I have to get directly involved with these people, talk with them and find out what they really think instead of like just knowledge from this public media, mass media which might be distorted. That's just one case and also a lot of people I met here from Africa, I think there's this even called African awareness week or something like that so it really brings me some, like, first hand information about Africa which is well in back there we also talk about how Africans are poor or suffering, that's not first hand information, it doesn't really impress me so when I actually talk to those people I definitely feel like I directly talk to people it has changed my mind a lot.

Abhi also talked about learning about different cultural traditions and sharing different kinds of food. The inter cultural exchanges that the students were looking for in their overall experiences at UBC, they often seemed to find with other international graduate students. In fact most students described learning about Canadian history, culture and norms not through Canadians, as they had hoped, but through their international peers. It seems as though the international graduate students were becoming more internationalized through their interactions with each other, even if the inter cultural communication between them and Canadian students was absent.

Chapter VI: Making sense of it all

I began this thesis by discussing the epistemological underpinnings of how I approached, created, and conducted my research on international graduate student experiences. From there I outlined my understandings and perspectives on identity, power, knowledge and discourses in an effort to provide a conceptual map from which I would draw my analysis. I then situated the research of international graduate student experience in the context of the growing internationalization of higher education institutions in Canada and UBC in particular. In the next chapter each of the international graduate students I interviewed became an individual through the sharing of their backgrounds, cultures, feelings, thoughts, dreams, experiences, and identities in my conversations with them. In the following chapter I drew from my conceptual framework, the conversations I had with the students, and their “letter home” project to try and understand how the experiences of these individual international graduate students told both similar and contradictory stories of becoming and belonging from within the discourses of internationalization and multiculturalism at UBC. In this chapter, I will pull together all of these ideas, outline the implications of my research, and ask broader questions of the research itself providing ideas for future research.

Being & belonging

For the purposes of my research, the internationalization of higher education in Canada can be understood as having been guided by two main rationales. The first is an economic rationale concerned with current and possible future benefits of international students to the

Canadian economy. As such, internationalization is used as an “indicator for excellence,” (Harris, 2007, p. 248) that is a measurable resource for the government and institution. By increasing the recruitment of high caliber international students, the process of internationalization stimulates innovative research, helps create highly skilled workers who may remain in Canada, and creates international partnerships, which also benefit the economy. These discourses are reflected in the language of Canadian policy documents such as the branding of *Imagine Education au/in Canada*, and in the university documents such as UBC’s strategic plans. The importance of internationalization to both the government and universities is evidenced by the intense focus on recruitment in the policies outlined. These policies also favor continued Western dominance in the production of knowledge and research, strengthening Canadian and other Western markets.

The second part of this process, derived from the national rhetoric of multiculturalism, is the cultural rationale. This rationale is concerned with creating an image of Canada as welcoming to cultural diversity in an effort to attract students from an increasingly global pool of applicants. Both governmental and institutional policy statements emphasize the contributions that international students can make to increase the cultural richness of Canadian society fostering an environment of inclusiveness and acceptance. Multiculturalism is used as a unifying concept that encourages all citizens to play an active role in society and to celebrate diversity, difference, and culture as qualities essential to the Canadian identity. My research, supported by the previous research on internationalization, multiculturalism and international student experience (Altbach, 2004; Altbach & Knight, 2007; Cudmore, 2005; Day, 2000; de Wit, 2011; Dhamoon, 2009; Haugh, 2008; Knight, 2004; Koehne, 2006; Montgomery & McDowell, 2009;

Rizvi, 2010; Ryan & Viete, 2009; Tian & Lowe, 2009) has demonstrated that these discourses are manifested and experienced by the international graduate students in a variety of ways.

It is clear that the economic discourses dominate discussions at the governmental and institutional level. Thus, even the notion of cultural capital is couched in economic terms rather than an expression and celebration of difference and as a benefit to a society that prides itself on multiculturalism. The emphasis on recruitment of the “best and the brightest,” getting into the international student market, and building university prestige has started to overshadow the important social and cultural benefits that international graduate students, as people, can bring to the communities in which they study. With the continued dominance of the economic rationale, the “culture” that international graduate students bring with them is treated as a resource and a commodity that can be named and owned by an individual, group, or state. This dominant discourse ignores the unfixed social enactment of becoming, through relationships, histories and practices that reflects the lived experiences of international graduate students and multiplicity of their identities. In the discourse of culture as social capital, *international graduate students, in particular*, are valued as sources of international research and innovation. Their “culture” is packaged by the university as a representation of international diversity that in turn is used as cultural capital, which serves to help the global reputation of the universities in which they study.

While this management, or ‘packaging’ of culture, ideally celebrates differences, in practice, it does little more than what I call “label and dismiss.” Through the rhetoric of inclusion, it labels the ‘particular’ and ‘uniqueness’ of different communities while simultaneously dismissing the meaning of these differences. Rather, the label becomes a means to celebrate diversity without needing to seek deeper understanding. Whether it is the wearing of ‘cultural’ attire, the hanging of different national flags, or the sound of multiple languages on

campus, these presences provided little purpose beyond recognition, serving as a representation of diversity rather than as a starting point for a more in depth understanding through meaningful exchange. This idea resonated throughout the students' stories and is congruent with much of the wider literature on liberal multiculturalisms (Dhamoon, 2009). The students narratives, their own analysis of their experiences, and the analysis that I provided show that these discourses affected how the students experienced and were defined by these discourses in a multitude of ways.

When examined more closely, it is clear that the international student experiences are not only shaped by these institutional discourses, but also by their own desired imaginaries. All of the international graduate students I interviewed in this study came to UBC with the desire to make Canada their new home, even if this might only be temporary. They envisioned a place where their cultural differences would contribute to the diversity of the community in a meaningful way. These imagined communities did not always materialize. While the students voiced expectations of inter cultural understanding, learning and communication, many were instead confronted by the absence of such opportunities and by what was often perceived to be an uninviting discourse where inter cultural values held minimal relevance.

Although the international graduate students were welcomed through the language of inclusion and support, many of the students ultimately reflected on experiences of exclusion from the "norm." International student visas created ambiguities over residency status and excluded them from certain funding opportunities. Bureaucratic barriers often complicated their lives in ways Canadian students could not understand. The orientations themselves, while providing important information on government and legal "mumbo-jumbo," as Stanley put it, did not appear to provide many opportunities for meaningful exchange between students. Orientations focused on helping students "adjust" to life in Canada but did not provide

opportunities for the students to consider how they could contribute to the internationalization of the community. This served to reinforce the social and cultural exclusion that many of the students described. In addition, the international spaces on campus and other legal “mumbo-jumbo,” such as international student visas, ambiguities over residency status, and being deemed ineligible for certain funding opportunities, all served as symbols of the powerful structures that in one way welcomed the students into the Canadian and UBC community, while at the same time, categorized and restricted them from ever truly being a part of it. The institution appeared to project to the students a notion of acceptance and value in theory, but in practice, would turn around and give them different parameters for inclusion than the rest of the students on campus. This kind of spatial and theoretical segregation also reinforced the common economic rhetoric of international student wealth on campus, whether true or not. Thus, some students were continually reminded of their temporality and place within the institutional agenda of internationalization as “customers,” making it difficult for the students to understand where they, as beings, fit or belonged.

Therefore it becomes apparent that it is within the power of the institution to develop policies and practices that address these experiences, as the institution holds power to create rules and practices that shape international graduate student experiences. But it would also be naïve to assume that these students lack power and are mere reflections of the ever-evolving institutionally defined notions of internationalization. Though the discourses shaped the international graduate student experiences, they also had agency to either adhere to or resist these discourses.

From belonging to becoming

The students I interviewed shared a common desire for community and sense of belonging within institutional discourses, structures and practices. However, the understanding of these two concepts—community and belonging—often varied. As a result, how the students negotiated their understanding of themselves differed as well. By reframing internationalization and embracing culture in their own ways, the students often navigated their own paths through the dominant discourses.

Although the experiences of these ten international graduate students varied there were two overarching paths these students chose to follow. First, some of the students seemed to accept the dominant discourses and incorporate them into their own often complex and nuanced understandings of their cultural experiences at UBC. Other students challenged, questioned, and at times resisted these dominant ideals, developing alternate views of their cultural experiences at UBC. Both groups of students carefully navigated what roles the dominant discourses played in their lives.

Those who chose to embrace notions of the discourses of internationalization engaged with their learning and experiences on campus as a chance to gain capital for future benefits. Students like Dishi and Khari told stories that echoed the dominant ideas of multiculturalism and internationalization. They spoke about similarities, often acknowledging, but ultimately dismissing differences as superficial. Furthermore, they tended to focus on the inclusive nature of diversity, rather than the exclusivity that it can also cause. Living the “label and dismiss” mentality offered an inclusive sense of belonging, an example of how notions of multiculturalism can provide positive openings for understanding and acceptance. These students sought inclusion

through focusing on similarities and also embracing alternate identities such as being a “cosmopolitanist” (Dishi). Unfortunately, however, this can also lead the students to not reflect on the more complex notions of cultural, racial and social differences, the unintentional silencing of differences, and the effect this might have on other international graduate students’ sense of belonging and being.

Another response to the dominant discourse of cultural representation was that students found themselves re-representing themselves as “international students” by claiming new identities within this category. Often students appropriated definitions from within the framework and the discourses available to them in order to find a sense of belonging. Mi Sun did this by embracing the identity of “Asian,” while Sally embraced her immigrant status, open to being labelled as “different.” Through embracing these alternate identities, the international graduate students found paths towards community and understanding that were often unexpected before arriving. Moreover, students also resisted these discourses in other ways. For example Stanley and Khari, when faced with misconceptions and ignorance about where they are from, found strength in the “shared culture” of their home countries and instead of remaining silent, patiently took the time to “orientate” (Khari) other students about their nation’s histories. Ultimately, for students like Mi Sun, Sally, Stanley, and Khari this re-presenting of themselves became an act of empowerment, augmenting their voice.

What is particularly interesting about this kind of re-formulation of identity is that although many of the international students found themselves learning about new cultures—engaging with other international graduate students and even learning about the Canadian culture—this did not seem to be happening on campus with other Canadian students.

Lyakhovetska (2004, pp. 197-198), it should be remembered, found similar results in her study

of international graduate student experiences; that often friendships with Canadian students were similarly shallow and non-existent. In my research, however, there was not only an apparent lack of inter cultural interactions between international graduate students and Canadian graduate students, there often appeared to be a pervasive cultural anxiety and fear on the part of Canadian students of saying something ‘wrong’ that might be taken as insensitive or offensive, of exposing one’s own cultural ignorance of other cultures and nations, or possibly, a blanket indifference and self-centeredness towards learning about new cultures. This was evident in how the students spoke about their interactions with Canadians and “culture” on campus. Stanley, Abhi, Sally, Nina, Natalia and Mi Sun all felt that they often had shallow relationships with Canadians. While Stanley described the fear as there being some “mysterious” barrier that he could not explain about his experiences at UBC, Mi Sun explained the experiences she had with Canadian students as being “awkward” where the students were afraid to interact with her because they were “worrying about [her] cultural value too much.”

Pulling it all together

Finally, my research on international graduate student experience, within the context of internationalization suggests that there are many questions that need to be answered before we can understand these experiences more completely. Foremost it suggests that we can only understand these experiences and answer these questions if we allow the students to speak for themselves rather than assuming that we know what questions to ask. International graduate students do not understand or respond to their experiences with one voice. While my research focused on the discourses—both economic and cultural—which impact their lives, their

understandings and their identities, their responses were multiple and complex. As such, we need to avoid categorizing international graduate students as a single, collective whole. Doing so provides not only a limited way of understanding these students and but fails to recognize that although students may experiences or describe similar feelings of marginalization or privilege, it does not mean they will understand or respond to the power relations within that specific situation in the same manner. The diversity of student responses reported in my study, even within those cultures imagined to be the same, such as the American students, is an expression of how conceptions of self and feelings of belonging are affected by each particular students own positioning.

In sum, these students' stories make it clear that the rhetoric of internationalization and all of its processes cannot be understood as a shared lived experience. As such, there is a need for a more nuanced approach to understanding the international graduate student experience. The creation of a single category to define all international students, which is how these students are viewed in the dominant approach currently used in Canada, only perpetuates the limitations of this fixed understanding of this limiting concept and further erases the multiple differences that the students in my research described. Furthermore, it undermines the agency of the individual students while simultaneously silencing the individual students' voices, both of which I believe are imperative to a healthier practice of internationalization on campus.

In keeping with the educational goals of the country, the international graduate student population is expected to grow over the coming years. It is clear through my research, however, that only through an analysis and a detailed understanding of the international graduate student experience that Canada will be able to achieve this goal. The current dominant economic and multicultural discourses limits the understanding of these students' experiences, failing to

acknowledge the lived experiences of these students. International graduate students' different personal, social, cultural and political identities are being minimized rather than appreciated. It is these very differences that the international graduate students bring to Canada, and which they hope to share with other students, both international and Canadian, which would truly make UBC an international community and university. It is through this experience of sharing that students can find a sense of belonging. Something that can only begin to happen if Canada begins to create and promote a more nuanced and accurate discourse of internationalization with real actions of inclusion (not just statements that bring about ideas of exclusion), engagement, and most importantly a celebration of difference.

Limitations & ideas for future research

Except for Natalia, who has to return home due to her funding restrictions, all of the students expressed an interest in remaining in Canada post-graduation. As this study was not a longitudinal study I will not be able to follow these students to see what they decide once they graduate, a limitation of this study. A longitudinal study might have helped answer why some students remain in Canada and others choose to go elsewhere or home.

While having a diverse student response was valuable in showing the varied student experiences it also posed a limitation. I was not able to determine whether different students from the same country might have understood their experiences and responded in culturally similar ways. In future research it would be valuable to study how the individual social locations of each student within their home country affect their understanding of the education, identities and notions of belonging that they might feel upon enrolment at a university abroad, a question

that could only be answered by doing a more in depth historically, culturally and geographically particular study.

In my interviews I did not ask directed questions about race, ethnicity, religion, or class specifically, however these identities and more specifically the varying importance of these identities in the students' experiences, clearly came through in my research. In addition, the age ranges were too broad for me to really delve into the implications of the students' experiences regarding their ages, I only had one student with a child, so how the international graduate student experience is affected by being a parent could not adequately be addressed. Bearing in mind these limitations, my research also poses additional questions around identity construction. What are the intersections of the students' age, class, gender, race, nation and religion (or in some of these cases, lack thereof), and the affects that these have on the students' experiences on campus? Furthermore, in an effort to protect the confidentiality of the students I interviewed, I was unable to look at the differences in experiences across disciplines. It would be interesting to examine how the disciplinary area of study and the type of degree might impact the international graduate student experience.

Finally, though I did my best to address my personal location through reflexivity, respect, and awareness of my own position as I discussed in my methodology chapter, there is no denying that I bring to this research my own biases and have provided an available truth, but not *the* answer to my research questions.

Implications for UBC: Looking towards the future

My original interest for looking at international graduate student experience began with my desire to understand how it is that international students negotiate and understand themselves on their journey through the university. As such, I did not approach the interview in an attempt to assess the programs and services provided to students by the university however, many ideas, suggestions, and critiques did come out of the research.

If UBC hopes to create an atmosphere that is inclusive to everyone on campus, it is clear from this research that a focus on space, whether it be in the classroom, the departments, through living situations, or through social interactions on campus needs to be further examined. The students who found communities on campus at the beginning of their studies had a greater sense of belonging than the students who did not find this. Though the majority of the students who found these communities were the students who were able to live on campus, a sense of community and inclusion can and must be fostered and created for students who live off campus as well if UBC hopes to retain and attract other international graduate students in the future.

Orientations need to be centered not just on providing bureaucratic details to the students, but also on encouraging inter cultural interactions. In addition, a concerted effort needs to be made to reach out to the students off campus. Perhaps providing a second orientation in a more central space, for example at the UBC, Robson Square location, for those who cannot find the time to travel all the way across the city during their overly busy first days, but are still looking for some connection with the university during this time.

Moreover, an atmosphere of inclusion can also be fostered through a conscious effort by the professors *and* the students to create spaces in the classroom for reciprocity of learning that

do not simply point to differences, but encourages the exchange of knowledge and learning. Within the departments, where there appears to be limited space for interactions or feelings of belonging, there needs to be an effort to address and emphasize inter cultural exchanges. This can be created through increased social gatherings on and off campus, mentorship programs within the departments, and other such community oriented events.

Furthermore, it is an accepted idea in Canada and at UBC that international students create a diverse community that enriches the learning experiences of everyone on campus. However, it became evident that this enrichment was stronger between international graduate students then it was between international graduate students and their Canadian colleagues. Without an emphasis on helping both Canadian *and* international students understand and appreciate the value of differences all students will fail to gain the rich perspectives and the ability to live out the vision that UBC seeks of “fostering global citizenship” and “respect and equity” (UBC, 2010b, p.6). Thus, the campus as a *whole* needs to fully integrate notions of internationalization systemically so it is not a piecemeal effort otherwise some students will continue to have feelings of exclusion, silencing and lack of belonging.

References

- Adnett, N. (2010). The growth of international students and economic development: Friends or foes?. *Journal of Education Policy*, 25(5), 625-637.
- Alcoff, L. (1991). The problem of speaking for others. *Cultural Critique*, 20, 5-32.
- Altbach, P. (2004). Globalisation and the university: Myths and realities in an unequal world. *Tertiary Education and Management*, 10, 3-25.
- Altbach, P. & Knight, J. (2007). The internationalization of higher education: Motivations and realities. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 11, 290-305.
- Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. (2nd ed.). London & New York: Verso.
- Andrade, M. S. (2006). International students in English-speaking universities. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 5(2), 131-154.
- Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada. (2002, February 5). Making Canada more attractive to international students. Retrieved in October, 2011 from http://aucc.ca/_pdf/english/reports/2002/foreignstu_e.pdf
- Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (2007). Canadian universities and international student mobility. Retrieved in October 2011 from <http://www.aucc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/student-mobility-2007.pdf>
- Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (2008). Internationalization: A force for change at Canadian universities. Retrieved in October, 2011 from http://www.aucc.ca/_pdf/english/publications/internationalization_card_e.pdf
- Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (2009a). Building a competitive advantage for Canada. Pre-budget submission to The Honourable James Flaherty, Minister of Finance. Retrieved in October 2011 from http://www.aucc.ca/_pdf/english/reports/2009/prebudget_11_18_e.pdf
- Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (2009b). International students at Canadian universities: International student fact sheet. Retrieved in January, 2012 from http://www.aucc.ca/policy/priorities/international-students_e.html
- Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (2009c was d). Universities Matter: How Canada's universities contribute to economic recovery and long-term prosperity, pre budget submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance. Retrieved in January, 2012 from http://www.aucc.ca/_pdf/english/reports/2009/prebudget_08_14_e.pdf

- Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (2010). International student enrolment in Canada's universities has risen for the 15th year in a row – this year by 10 percent. Retrieved in March, 2012 from <http://www.aucc.ca/media-room/news-and-commentary/international-student-enrolment-in-canadas-universities-has-risen-for-the-15th-year-in-a-row-this-year-by-10-percent>
- Beck, K (2008). *Being International: Learning in a Canadian University*. Unpublished dissertation. Simon Fraser University.
- Beoku-Betts, J. A. (2004). African women pursuing graduate studies in the sciences: Racism, gender bias, and third world marginality. *NWSA Journal*, 16(1), 116-135.
- Berman R. & Cheng L. (2001). English academic language skills: Perceived difficulties by undergraduate and graduate students, and their academic achievement. *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 4(1-2), 25-40.
- Briguglio, C. (2000). Language and cultural issues for English-as-a-second/foreign language students in transnational educational settings. *Higher Education in Europe*, 25(3), 425-434.
- Byram, M., & Feng, A. (Eds). (2006). *Living and studying abroad: Research and practice*. Toronto: Multilingual Matters.
- Bryman, A., Teevan, J. J. & Bell, E. (2009). *Social research methods* (2nd ed.). Canada: Oxford University Press.
- Canadian Bureau for International Education. (2005). The national report on international students in Canada 2002. Retrieved in October, 2010 from http://cbie.ca/data/media/resources/2002_NationalReport_e.pdf
- Canadian Bureau for International Education. (2009). Canada first: The 2009 survey of international students. Retrieved in October, 2010 from http://cbie.ca/data/.../20091110_SurveyInternationalStudents_e.pdf
- Canadian Bureau for International Education. (2010). CBIE submission to the House of Commons standing committee on finance. Retrieved in March, 2012 from http://cbie.ca/documents/PressRelease_CBIESubmissiontoFINA_2010_Final_web.pdf.
- Canadian Council on Learning. (2007). Post-secondary education in Canada: Strategies for success, report on learning in Canada 2007. Retrieved in October, 2010 from <http://www.ccl-cca.ca/NR/rdonlyres/25B8C399-1EA3-428A-81A1C8D8206E83C6/0/PSEFullReportENLR16july08Bookmark.pdf>
- Chan, C. S. (2007). Race-based policies in Canada: Education and social context. In Joshee, R. & Johnson, L. (Eds.), *Multicultural education policies in Canada and the United States*

- (pp. 131-145). Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Chapdelaine, R. F. & Alexitch, L. R. (March/April, 2004). Skills difficulty: Model of culture shock for international graduate students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 45(2), 167-184.
- Christy Clark wants more foreign students in B.C.. (2011, September 20). *Vancouver Sun*. Retrieved in March, 2012 from <http://blogs.vancouversun.com/2011/09/20/christy-clarks-plan-for-attracting-foreign-students/>
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2006). Off-campus work program launched. Retrieved in April, 2010 from <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/departement/media/releases/2006/0601-e.asp>
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2008a). Backgrounder: Post-graduation work permit program. Retrieved in April, 2010 from <http://www.cic.gc.ca/ENGLISH/departement/media/backgrounders/2008/2008-04-21.asp>
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2008b). Canadian Multiculturalism: An inclusive citizenship. Retrieved in March, 2012 from <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/multiculturalism/citizenship.asp>
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2010a). Government of Canada welcoming growing number of Indian visitors, students and immigrants. Retrieved in April, 2010 from <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/departement/media/releases/2010/2010-09-09.asp>
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada, (2010b). Government of Canada works to welcome more Chinese students to Canadian colleges. Retrieved in April, 2010 from <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/departement/media/releases/2010/2010-09-14.asp>
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada, (2011a). Economic impact of international education in Canada. Retrieved in March, 2012 from <http://www.international.gc.ca/education/impact.aspx?view=d>
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada, (2011b). Pilot project launches in British Columbia to offer more opportunity to international graduates. Retrieved in February, 2012 from <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/departement/media/releases/2011/2011-02-22.asp>
- Council for International Exchange of Scholars (n.d.). Fulbright Scholar Program. Retrieved on April 25, 2012 from http://www.cies.org/about_fulb.htm
- Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. (2009). A brand for education in Canada fact sheet. Retrieved March, 2010 from <http://www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/128/brand-information.en.pdf>
- Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. (2007). Learn Canada 2020. Retrieved March, 2010

- Cudmore, G. (2005). Globalization, internationalization and the recruitment of international students in higher education, and in the Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 35(1), 37-60.
- Day, R. J. F. (2000). *Multiculturalism and the history of Canadian diversity*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press.
- Davidson, P. (2010). Notes for a presentation to the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade. Retrieved in April, 2012 from <http://www.aucc.ca/media/room/news-and-commentary/notes-for-a-presentation-to-the-standing-senate-committee-on-foreign-affairs-and-international-trade>
- Davies, C. A. (2008). *Reflective Ethnography: A guide to researching selves and others*. (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.
- DeShields Jr, O. W., Kara, A., & Kaynak, E. (2005). Determinants of business student satisfaction and retention in higher education: applying Herzberg's two-factor theory. *International Journal of Education Management*, 19(2), 128-139.
- de Wit, H. (2011). Globalisation and internationalisation of higher education. *Revista de Universidad y Sociedad del Conocimiento (RUSC)*, 8(2), 241-248. Retrieved in April, 2012 from <http://rusc.uoc.edu/ojs/index.php/rusc/article/view/v8n2-dewit/v8n2-dewit-eng>
- Dhamoon, R. (2009). *Identity difference politics: How difference is produced, and why it matters*. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Dowd, A., Sawatzky, M. & Korn, R. (2011). Theoretical foundations and a research agenda to validate measures of intercultural effort. *The Review of Higher Education*, 35(1), 17-44.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. N.Y.: Herter and Herter.
- Foucault, M. (1998). *Aesthetics, method, and epistemology: Essential works of Foucault, (Vols. 2)*. J. D. Faubion (Ed.), New York: The New Press.
- Foucault, M. (1982). The subject and power. *Critical Inquiry*, 8(4), 777-795.
- Grayson, P. (2008). The experiences and outcomes of domestic and international students at four Canadian universities. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 27(3), 215-230.
- Griffiths, M. (2003). *Action for social justice in education fairly different*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Gu, Q., Schweisfurth, M. & Day, C. (2010). Learning and growing in a 'foreign' context:

- intercultural experiences of international students'. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 40(1), 7-23.
- Hammersley, M. & Atkinson, P. (2007). *Ethnography; principles in practice* (3rd ed.). London: Routledge.
- Hellsten, M. & Prescott, A. (2004). Learning at university: the international student experience. *International Education Journal*, 5(3), 544-351.
- Hall, S. (1990). Cultural identity and diaspora. J. Rutherford (Ed.) *Identity: Community, culture, difference*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.
- Harris S. (2008). Internationalising the university. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 40(2), 546-357.
- Haugh, M. (2008). The discursive negotiation of international student identities. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, (29)2, 207-222.
- Hughes-Warrington, M. (2010). The ethics of internationalisation in higher education: Hospitality, self-presence and 'being late'. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 44(3), 312-322.
- Hsieh, M. (2006). Identity development of East Asian Female International Students with implications for second-language learning higher education. *Education*, 127(1), 3-15.
- Jordan, G. & Weedon, C. (1995). *Cultural politics class, gender, race and the postmodern world*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers.
- Joshee, R. & Johnson, L. (Eds.). (2007). *Multicultural education policies in Canada and the United States*. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Kapur, D. & McHale J. (2005). *Give us your best and brightest: The global hunt for talent and its impact on the developing world*. Washington, DC: Center for Global Development.
- Kim, L.S. (2003). Multiple identities in a multicultural world: A Malaysian perspective. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, 2(3), 137-158.
- Kitzrow, M. A. (2003). The mental health needs of today's college students: challenges and recommendations. *NASPA Journal*, 41(1), 165-179.
- Knight, J. (2004). Internationalization remodeled: Definition, approaches, and rationales. *Journal of Studies in International Education*. 8(4), 5-33.
- Knight, J. & de Wit, H. (1995). Strategies for internationalisation of higher education: Historical and conceptual perspectives. In H. de Wit (Ed.). *Strategies for internationalisation of higher education* (pp. 5-32). Amsterdam: European Association for International

Education.

- Koehne, N. (2005). (Re)construction: Ways international students talk about their identity. *Australian Journal of Education*, 49(1), 104-119.
- Koehne, N. (2006). (Be)Coming, (Be)Longing: Ways in which international students talk about themselves, *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 27(2), 241-257.
- Kvale, S. & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.
- Lacina, J.G. (2002). Preparing international students for a successful social experience in higher education. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 117, 21-27.
- Lee, J., & Rice, C. (2007). Welcome to America? International student perceptions of discrimination. *Higher Education*, 53(3), 381-409.
- Lin, J. C. G. & Yi, J. K. (1997). Asian international students' adjustment: Issues and program suggestions. *College Student Journal*, 31(4), 473-479.
- Lyakhovetska, R. (2004). Welcome to Canada?: The experiences of international graduate students at university. In L. Andres (Ed.), *Student affairs: Experiencing higher education* (pp. 189-216). Vancouver, Canada: UBC Press.
- MacKinnon, D. & Manathunga, C. (2003). Going global with assessment: What to do when the dominant culture's literacy drives assessment. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 22(2), 131-144.
- Matus, C. (2006). Interrupting narratives of displacement: International students in the United States. *Perspectives in Education*, 24(4), 81-94.
- Major, E. M. (2005). Co-national support, cultural therapy, and the adjustment of Asian students to an English-speaking university culture. *International Education Journal*, 6(1), 84-95.
- Marginson, S. (2002). The phenomenal rise of the international degrees down under. *Change*, 34(3), 34-43.
- Marginson, S. (2010). Higher education in East Asia and Singapore: rise of the Confucian Model. *Higher Education*, 61, 587-611.
- Mauthner, N.S. & Doucet, A. (2003). Reflexive accounts and accounts of reflexivity in qualitative data analysis. *Sociology*, 37(7), 413-431.
- May, S. (1994). *Making Multicultural Education Work*. Bristol: Longdunn Press.
- McIntosh, P. (1988). White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack. Retrieved in December

2011 from www.onpha.on.ca

- Messner, P. E. & Liu, N. (1995). The test of English as a foreign language: examination of the “cut-off scores” in US universities. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 9(2), 39-42.
- Miles, M. B. & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ministry of Advanced Education. (2005). Report on international education review. Retrieved in March, 2010 from <http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/publications/documents/InternationalEducationRptFin2.pdf>
- Misra, R., Crist, M., & Burant, C. J. (2003). Relationships among life stress, social support, academic stressors, and reactions to stressors of international students in the United States. *International Journal of Stress Management*, 10(2), 137-157.
- Montgomery, C. & McDowell, L. (2009). Social networks and the international student experience: An international community of practice? *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 13(4), 455-466.
- Mori, S. (2000). Addressing the mental health concerns of international students. *Journal of Counselling & Development*, 78(2), 137-144.
- Naples, N.A. (2003). *Feminism and method: Ethnography, discourse analysis, and activist Research*. New York: Routledge.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2006). Education at a glance: OECD indicators 2006. Retrieved in March, 2010 from <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/32/0/37393408.pdf>
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2009). Education at a glance 2009: OECD indicators. Retrieved in March, 2010 from <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/41/25/43636332.pdf>
- Pidgeon, M. & Andres, L. (2005). Demands, challenges, and rewards: The first year experiences of international and domestic students at four Canadian universities. Vancouver: Department of Educational Studies, University of British Columbia.
- Pierce, B.N. (1995). Social identity, investment, and language learning. *TESOL Quarterly*, 29(1), 9-31.
- Pillow, W. (2003). Confession, catharsis, or cure? Rethinking the uses of reflexivity as methodological power in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 16(2), 175-196.
- Pinar, W. (November, 2003). *The internationalization of curriculum studies*. A paper presented at

the biannual meeting of the Mexican Council of Education's National Conference on Education Research, Guadalajara.

- Pinar, W. (2011). Nationalism, anti-Americanism, Canadian identity. In L. Yates & M. Grumet (Eds.), *Curriculum in today's world: Configuring knowledge, identities, work and politics* (pp. 31-43). New York, New York: Routledge.
- Poyrazli, S., & Kavanaugh, P. R. (2006). Marital status, ethnicity, academic achievement, and adjustment strains: The case of graduate international students. *College Student Journal*, 40(4), 767-780.
- Ren, J., Bryan, K., Min, Y. & Wei, Y. (2007). Language preparation and the first year experience: What administrators and policy makers should know. *Florida Journal of Educational Administration & Policy*, 1(1), 11-24.
- Rizvi, F. (2005). Identity, culture and cosmopolitan futures. *Higher Education Policy*, 18, 331-339.
- Rizvi, F. (2010). International students and doctoral studies in transnational spaces. M. Walker, & P. Thomson (Eds.), *The Routledge doctoral supervisor's companion: Supporting effective research in education and the social sciences* (pp. 158-170). London: Routledge.
- Rhee, J. (2006). Re/membering (to) shifting alignments: Korean women's transnational narratives in US higher education. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 19(5), 595-615.
- Ryan, J. & Louie, K. (2007). False dichotomy? 'Western' and 'Confucian' concepts of scholarship and learning. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 39(4), 404-417.
- Ryan, J & Viète, R. (2009). Respectful interactions: learning with international students in the English-speaking academy. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 14(3), 303-314.
- Roslyn Kunin & Associates, Inc. (RKA, Inc.). (2009). Economic impact of international education at public post-secondary institutions. Retrieved in April, 2012 from <http://www.international.gc.ca/education/impact.aspx?lang=eng&view=d>
- Schmitt, M. T., Spears, R., & Branscombe, N. R. (2003). Constructing a minority group identity out of shared rejection: The case of international students. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 33, 1-12.
- Seidman, S. (2004). *Contested Knowledge*. London: Blackwell Publishing.
- Senyshyn, R. M., Warford, M., & Zhan, J. (2000). Issues of adjustment to higher education: International students' perspectives. *International Education*, 30(1), 17-35.
- Singh, M. (2009). Using Chinese knowledge in internationalising research education: Jacques

- Rancière, an ignorant supervisor and doctoral students from China. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 7(2), 185–201.
- Smith, D.E. (1990). *The Conceptual Practices of Power*. Toronto: University of Toronto.
- Smith, L.T. (1999). *Decolonizing Methodologies Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed Books.
- Slaughter, S. & Rhoades, G. (2004). *Academic capitalism and the new economy*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Statistics Canada (2006). Visible minority population, by census metropolitan areas (2006 Census). Retrieved in March, 2012 from <http://www40.statcan.gc.ca/l01/cst01/demo53g-eng.htm>
- Stewart, D. L. (2008). Being all of me: Black students negotiating multiple identities. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 79(2), 183-207.
- Stilwell, M. (2010). International students boost B.C.'s economy. Retrieved in November, 2010 from http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news_releases_2009-2013/2010RES0004-001409.htm
- Tian, M. & Lowe, J. (2009). Existentialist internationalization and the Chinese student experience in English universities. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 39(5), 659-676.
- Tikly, L. (2004). Education and the new imperialism. *Comparative Education*, 49(2), 173-198.
- Trice, A. G. (2004). Mixing it up: International graduate students' social interactions with American students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 45(6), 671-687.
- University of British Columbia. (n.d.a). Most frequently asked questions. Retrieved in February, 2012 from <https://www.cs.ubc.ca/students/undergrad/programs/second-degree/info-international-students#q1>
- University of British Columbia. (n.d.b). Funding for international students. Retrieved in March, 2012 from <http://www.grad.ubc.ca/awards/four-year-doctoral-fellowship-4yf>
- University of British Columbia. (n.d.c). Tuition Fees. Retrieved on April 26, 2012 from <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=14,266,0,0>
- University of British Columbia. (2005). UBC grows by more than 3,500 students. Retrieved in March, 2010 from <http://www.publicaffairs.ubc.ca/media/releases/2005/mr-05-102.html>
- University of British Columbia. (2009a). UBC facts & figures (2008/2009). Retrieved in March, 2012 from <http://www.publicaffairs.ubc.ca/services-for-media/ubc-facts-figures/>

- University of British Columbia. (2009b). New to UBC. Retrieved in April, 2012 from <http://www.students.ubc.ca/newtoubc/orientations.cfm?page=imagine>
- University of British Columbia. (2009c). International Strategic Plan. Retrieved in November, 2011 from <http://research.ubc.ca/vpri/international-strategic-plan>
- University of British Columbia. (2009d). The University of British Columbia Strategic Plan. Retrieved in November, 2011 from <http://strategicplan.ubc.ca/the-plan/download-pdf-of-the-plan/>
- University of British Columbia. (2009e). Diversity and Equity Strategic Plan. Retrieved in November, 2011 from <http://diversityatubc.sites.olt.ubc.ca>
- University of British Columbia. (2010a). International Student Handbook. Vancouver, BC.
- University of British Columbia. (2010b). Cultural Transitions. Retrieved in March, 2012 from <http://www.ku.ubc.ca/current-students/cultural-transition.html>
- University of British Columbia. (2012a). UBC Fact Sheet. Retrieved in March, 2012 from <http://www.pair.ubc.ca/statistics/profile/profile.htm>
- University of British Columbia. (2012b). International Partial Tuition Scholarship. Retrieved on April 25, 2012 from <http://www.grad.ubc.ca/awards/international-partial-tuition-scholarship>
- Weedon, C. (1987). *Feminist practice and poststructuralist theory*. London: Blackwell Publishers.
- Weedon, C. (1999). *Feminism, theory, and the politics of difference*. London: Blackwell Publishers.
- Wihlborg, M. (2009). The pedagogical dimensions of Internationalisation? A challenging quality issue in higher education for the twenty-first century. *European Education Research Journal*, 8(1), 117-132.
- Wilcox, P., Winn, S., & Fyvie-Gauld, M. (2005). It was nothing to do with the university, it was just the people: The role of social support in first-year experience of higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 30(6), 707-722.
- Yang, R. (2003). Globalisation and higher education development: A critical analysis. *International Review of Education*, 49(3-4), 269-291.
- Zhao, C.-M., Kuh, G. D., & Carini, R. M. (2005). A comparison of international and American student engagement in effective educational practices. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 76(2), 209-231.

Appendices

Appendix A: “Letter Home” project

First, thank you so much for participating in this study. I am aware that you are volunteering your time and I appreciate it immensely!

For the second portion of the study I would like you to write a “letter home” to someone you are close to. This can be a family member or a friend. If you prefer, you can write the letter to someone you feel particularly close with in the community here in the Vancouver area. This letter is *for research purpose only* and you are under no obligation to send the letter once you have finished it. With that being said, please put effort into it as if it was a real letter you are writing home.

In the letter I would like you to write about your experiences here as an international student. You can write about classroom experiences, social experiences, academic experiences, experiences in the community, making friends, understanding Canadian culture to name a few topics. Feel free to reflect back on the interview we just had and touch on a topic brought up if you would like time to explore a particular idea further.

There is no “right” or “wrong” letter, so have fun with this project! You can add photographs to the “letter,” draw or paint a picture, or even make a map if you think these will help explain how you are feeling about your experiences or get an idea across more clearly. Go ahead and get creative!

I will be contacting you to follow up with this letter and to plan a second interview. At this point we will choose a time for me to pick up a copy of the “letter home” and our second interview.

I want to re-iterate that this letter will be kept strictly confidential, and will only be used for my research.

Please feel free to contact me directly at any point if you have any questions regarding the letter and the follow up interview.

Thanks, and enjoy!

Elizabeth

Appendix B: Sally's letter home



Are you an International Graduate Student here at UBC?

And in your second year or above

Come participate in research about the international student experience and have the chance to tell YOUR story about YOUR experiences at UBC and in the surrounding community!!!

For more information and to participate in this research please contact: Elizabeth Brin – email address provided

Elizabeth Brin
Phone number provided
Elizabeth Brin
Phone number provided
Elizabeth Brin
Phone number provided
Elizabeth Brin
Phone number provided
Elizabeth Brin
Phone number provided
Elizabeth Brin
Phone number provided
Elizabeth Brin
Phone number provided
Elizabeth Brin
Phone number provided

Appendix D: Initial contact letter

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Department of Educational Studies

Mailing address:

2125 Main Mall

Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z4

Tel: (604)-822-5374

Fax: (604)-822-4244

<http://www.edst.educ.ubc.ca>



Principal Investigator: Dr. Robert VanWynsbergh, Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Studies, University of British Columbia.

Co-Investigator(s): Elizabeth Brin, Department of Education Studies, University of British Columbia.

Dear [name of participant to be added here],

I am contacting you to invite you to participate in a study about your experiences as an international graduate student here at the University of British Columbia (UBC) as I am very interested in your views on this matter. I hope to have two interviews with you that will last about one hour each. In addition I also ask that you participate in a project where you will create a letter home addressed to someone important to you about your experiences here at UBC. This will be shared with me and discussed during the second interview. The information from the interviews and the letter will be kept strictly confidential and used to help me with my research about the graduate student experiences at UBC.

Please see the attached consent form that provides more details about the purpose of the interview, the procedures, your rights as an interviewee, and contact information. Though I will be contacting you within a week after you have received this invitation to answer any questions you may have and explore your interest in participating please feel free to contact me before then. Thank you for considering my request.

Kind regards,

Elizabeth Brin

Appendix E: Consent form

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Department of Educational Studies

Mailing address:

2125 Main Mall

Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z4

Tel: (604)-822-5374

Fax: (604)-822-4244

<http://www.edst.educ.ubc.ca>



Principal Investigator: Dr. Robert VanWynsbergh, Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Studies, University of British Columbia.

Co-Investigator(s): Elizabeth Brin, Department of Education Studies, University of British Columbia.

Purpose:

I am interested in learning more about your experiences as a graduate student at the University of British Columbia.

Study Procedures:

The location of the first interview will be at the University of British Columbia or at a more convenient location should you request it. In the first interview I will be asking you general questions about UBC, Vancouver, Canada, classes, and adjustment to university life. I will also be asking questions regarding your interaction with students both on campus and off. After this interview I ask that you spend time on your own to write a “letter home.” In this letter I would like you to talk about your experiences further. You can write about topics mentioned in the first interview, or another topic on international student experience of interest to you. You are also welcome to draw pictures, maps, or use other art forms to express your ideas. We will then have a second, follow up interview where we will address any questions about the previous interview and discuss the “letter home” that you have created.

Both interviews will take approximately one hour of your time. They will be audio-taped and the whole tape will be transcribed. If you wish, you may listen to a copy of the tape or view the transcriptions. A copy of the “letter home” will be kept by the researcher. The tape, transcriptions and letter will be used to aid Elizabeth Brin in her research and thesis.

Potential Risks:

There are no anticipated risks for participating in the interview. I understand that discussing personal experiences at UBC could, for many reasons, be uncomfortable, but this experience can also be extremely beneficial. If at any time you would not like to answer a posed question, you are welcome to do so. Similarly, you may also request that I not use a particular selection of your own personal discussion should you choose.

Potential Benefits:

Your participation in this research may or may not have any benefits. The very act of the discussing and reflecting your experiences at UBC could be an enjoyable experience however. Indirect benefits include a chance for potential findings in the research to be explored further in later research conducted by me. This could then result in better student support programs being implemented at UBC, ultimately making the international student experience more enjoyable.

Confidentiality:

Your confidentiality is assured and very important to me. As mentioned before, should you not want a particular personal statement to be used you may indicate so at anytime during the interview. Your name will not be used in any reports or in the translation of the tapes. All documents will be identified only by code number and kept in a locked filing cabinet. Transcript files will be saved with a password known only to Dr. Robert Vanwysnberghe and Elizabeth Brin.

Remuneration/Compensation:

Compensation will be in the form of a gift to UBC. Upon completion of the research, \$25 will be donated to UBC specifically directed for the use of helping an international graduate student cause on campus.

Contact:

If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact Dr. Robert Vanwysnbergh or Elizabeth Brin

Consent:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardy to your enrolment at UBC. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights and treatment as a subject you may contact the Director of Research Services at the University of British Columbia, at (604)-822-8598.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records. Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

Student's Signature

Date

Student's Name (please print)

Appendix F: Sample coding examples

This is a simplified version of my coding. As can be seen in my analysis, these categories and thematic statements often overlapped.

Codes	Example quote(s)	Thematic statement(s)
-housing -inclusion/exclusion - community -on/off campus -isolation -belonging	<p>“You just have all of this doubt and panic that you don’t really have any base to go to. So you don’t really have a home you don’t really have a good place where you can, you don’t even have a community... so you’re kind of left to the elements” (SALLY)</p> <p>“It gives you this sense of community that you’re contributing and people are usually pretty grateful for your efforts right away so you kind of see this immediate satisfaction” (Nik)</p>	Students in on-campus housing found more support, community and belonging initially

Codes	Example quote(s)	Thematic statement(s)
-orientation -(lack of) cultural interactions -community -friendships -initial experiences -on/off campus	<p>“I didn’t make any friends for life, just met people for that time and then never saw them again.” (Natalia)</p> <p>“point of entry” (Stanley)</p>	Students searched for interactions and support in orientations. Students in on-campus housing found it more than off campus students

Codes	Example quote(s)	Thematic statement(s)
-space -isolation -loneliness -inclusion/exclusion -invincible -community -belonging -interaction	<p>“It is like an island here, like we’re surrounded by water and surrounded by forest and you come in and you are with students so it’s a completely different thought process than if campus were more integrated” (Sally)</p> <p>“it seems as though Vancouver is oblivious to the fact that there is a major public university here” (Nina).</p>	A sense of exclusion from spaces on campus often enhanced feelings of exclusion, loneliness & isolation ultimately affecting their sense of belonging on campus

Codes	Example quote(s)	Thematic statement(s)
-being an international graduate student -definitions of self -temporality -inclusion/exclusion -pushing/pulling -labeling -identities	<p>“going to Service Canada to get a replacement SIN card, and there are different requirements, they begin by asking for the birth certificate which is what they require for Canadian nationals and I haven’t got a birth certificate, but they ask me are you from, are you Canadian? I’m like no. But it’s a perfect example. I mean it’s not one that really affects my self-conception as much. Maybe it does, just a little bit” (Stanley)</p> <p>“implied temporality” (Nina)</p> <p>“You’re always like you want to be here, but you have all of [that] institutional pulling and pushing that is kind of reminding you that you’re still from this other place” (Natalia)</p>	External bureaucratic barriers molded students’ experiences, sense of belonging and notions of identity

Codes	Example quote(s)	Thematic statement(s)
-academic experience -inclusion/exclusion -silencing -privilege -capital -interactions -knowledge -reciprocity	<p>“ticket to going around the world, to travel around the world to look for a job” (Dishi)</p> <p>“I would, at this moment I would like to invite Khari to come in front and tell us something about Swahili. I know he speaks Swahili and it would be really neat to hear about if Swahili has tense, and aspects and if it doesn’t” (Khari)</p> <p>“I think that in the 1000 readings I have made, only four mentioned something about other the countries, but neither of the papers were about our region. And the professors and my classmates don’t have too much information. It’s kind of frustrating because I cannot give examples. When I tried to connect some theoretical things from one of my courses with situation from Chile you could almost hear crickets” (Natalia)</p>	<p>Feelings of academic inclusion and exclusion existed depending on the positionality of the students and their views on ideas of Western Knowledge. This also affected their sense of belonging differently.</p>

Codes	Example quote(s)	Thematic statement(s)
-diversity -internationalization -visible/invisible -nationality -race -history -differences -similarities -interactions -labeling	<p>“different languages everywhere and different cultural festivals and stuff” (Dishi)</p> <p>“You hear them but you don’t have them sharing their experiences together in an initiative, so I imagine an international university like a place that facilitates that kind of encounter” (Natalia)</p> <p>“I mean most people used to ask me where are you from? And I was like [I’m] from Tanzania. Tanzania? Some of them - where is Tanzania? Is it in Latin America? It’s like come on, [laughing] how is it possible you don’t know where Tanzania is? It was really, it was like, why don’t people know where my country is? Oh man, and it was like, so you guys need to have an orientation about [it]” (Khari)</p>	<p>Categorization of differences and similarities played different roles in each students’ experience of internationalization</p> <p>(ideas of multiculturalism)</p>

Codes	Example quote(s)	Thematic statement(s)
-friendships -community -shallow -awkwardness -silencing -reciprocity -engagement -interactions	<p>“know something about my country or my region, they ask more questions that people who don’t know, if they don’t have, they didn’t know what to, what to say, or even know what to explore” (Natalia)</p> <p>“I found that she’s [a female colleague] really polite and really nice person but whenever I meet her she looked a little bit awkward because so I think that she maybe she’s worrying about my cultural value too much so she it seems like she doesn’t know how to deal with me yeah that’s my impression I don’t know I didn’t ask about that [laughing] but that is my impression so she looked a bit nervous you know and then she tried to say something really politically correct with me” (Mi Sun)</p> <p>“Canadians are into their stuff and they don’t want to kind of break their boundaries and you know, talk much to people outside their field. In the US I used to kind of, I used to meet all my friends and I had a big friends circle in the US; in Canada, oh my god, I hardly have any friends in Canada” (Abhi)</p>	Fear of overstepping boundaries, lack of interactions and the silencing of differences lead some students to feel like they had shallow friendships and no community

Codes	Example quote(s)	Thematic statement(s)
-racialized experience -community -shallow -awkwardness -silencing -reciprocity -engagement -labeling -similarities -differences -culture -denial -empowerment -inclusion/exclusion	<p>“to hear one of my friends say that we should go beyond race or that race isn’t important was like something I could not understand and it just, it became obvious that we were coming from two different perspectives” (Nina)</p> <p>“Canadians, they’ve never expressed this kind of thing obviously. [It’s] always a subtle, so many times it’s not easy to point out because it’s really subtle, and then it has real cultural connotations, so sometimes it’s not easy to tell if it’s a cultural thing or they are they are racist or they don’t, they just simply don’t want to include me or we are just different physical area you know what I mean?” (Mi Sun)</p> <p>“And I don’t think that many people, those boundaries, there might be other people but I don’t think that [is] race, or whatever it is. This is a very diverse community with tons of people from different nationalities and different spaces too, and all communities living together and so I don’t feel like I’m marginalized or whatever and I feel proud of myself so I think that, yeah, [laughing] it’s great and I think that it’s a good thing to feel that way...because if you start thinking, I think people [are] marginalizing me, that is bad. That is [a] stereotype and you always isolate yourself and you’ll be disadvantaged of so many things. Yeah, so that’s why” (Khari)</p>	Varying racialized experiences made students feel both included and excluded depending on how they viewed differences and the role that differences played in their daily lives as international graduate students. (ideas of multiculturalism)