IMAGINED COMMUNITIES, SYMBOLIC CAPITAL, AND THE MOBILIZATION OF INDIVIDUAL LINGUISTIC RESOURCES

by

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Abstract

Critical research in TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) involves a delicate balance between two paradigms. On the one hand, the researcher strives to unearth and explain processes of systemic inequality and perpetual marginalization, as English language learners worldwide strive to accumulate linguistic and cultural capital. On the other hand, the researcher must recognize that learners have the right to invest in English, imagine future identities, and conceptualize their journeys as language learners as connected to a “better life story” (Barkhuizen, 2010; Darvin & Norton, 2015). This study employs narrative inquiry in an attempt to reconcile the two paradigms and give a holistic account of students’ experiences. The narratives of eight international graduate students in Canada reveal that those who attended international schools and were immersed in Western popular and academic culture prior to their arrival were advantaged in academic, professional, and social contexts. Additionally, while all eight established social networks in Canada, only the one white student from Western Europe who majored in North American civilization had a social network comprised mainly of Canadians. Nevertheless, four students reported being well adjusted in Canada, personally and professionally – as each had used a set of strategies tailored to her/his individual situation to pursue an imagined future. Findings suggest that each international student must draw on her/his specific linguistic repertoire and intellectual resources to effectively navigate real and imagined communities.
Preface

The data set for this study was the International Student Survey (ISS) conducted by the Sociology Department at the University of British Columbia from 2006 to 2013.

The collection of the ISS data was approved by the Office of Research Services Behavioural Research Ethics Board, University of British Columbia. The certificate number of the ethics certificate was H06-80628. For the purposes of this study, the ISS data is secondary data.
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Dedication

To the students whose narratives appear in my thesis, with gratitude.
1. Introduction

1.1 Statement of the problem

This qualitative study takes up a critical theoretical lens to examine international students’ investments in Canadian higher education and their linguistic and cultural challenges in that postsecondary environment. Rather than making prior assumptions about the degree and nature of these challenges based on demographic factors alone (i.e. race, ethnicity, or L1), I apply narrative analysis to in-depth interviews with eight international graduate students, seven of whom are from “non-white, non-Western countries,” and about half of whom appear to have adjusted well in Canada. I investigate how certain students were able to deploy linguistic and intellectual resources specific to them as individuals to gain access to imagined (target) professional communities. Each student was interviewed for 30-60 minutes; their transcripts amounted to 194 pages of single-spaced text. In my analysis, I drew on the constructs of learner investment (Darvin & Norton, 2015), symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986) and imagined communities (Kanno & Norton, 2003; Norton, 2000/2013) to pursue these questions:

1. What is each international graduate student’s imagined community after graduation? What are students’ investments in these imagined communities?

2. To what extent does symbolic capital – i.e. social value placed on one’s linguistic repertoire, prior educational experiences, and country of origin – impact international graduate students’ capacity to navigate their imagined communities?

3. How can a learner draw on linguistic and intellectual resources that are specific to her/him as an individual to effectively navigate linguistically and culturally hegemonic imagined communities?
1.2 Research context: Exponential growth of international postsecondary education in Inner Circle English-speaking countries

According to an OECD report (2011), in 2009 almost 3.7 million tertiary students were enrolled outside their country of citizenship. The number of foreign students enrolled in the OECD, which contains all of B. Kachru’s (1986) “Inner Circle” English-speaking countries—the U.S., the U.K., Australia, New Zealand, and Canada—was nearly three times the number of students from OECD countries studying abroad. The report states that “in absolute terms, the largest numbers of international students were from China, India, and Korea. Asian students represent 52% of foreign students enrolled worldwide” (p. 318). Another report on trends in Canadian higher education produced by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (2007) shows that while the number of “visa students” fluctuated between 20 000 to 30 000 from 1976 to 1998, by 2006 it had tripled to 70 000 due to the expansion of neoliberal global markets (p. 16).

Figure 1. Growth of visa student population in Canada
The same report shows the extent to which other Inner Circle countries are attempting to attract foreign students:

The Australian government developed a package of measures, including a coordinated marketing effort, a national admissions system for international students and scholarships to attract the best and brightest graduate students to Australian universities. Australia already has well established marketing and recruitment programs in Asia. As they continue to implement new policies they are likely to become an even more attractive destination.

In the United Kingdom, the Prime Minister’s Initiative for International Education launched in 1999 was designed to promote the U.K. as the premiere destination for international students. … The targets were exceeded one year ahead of schedule, with an extra 93,000 in higher education programs and 23,300 in further education programs. The second phase of this initiative, launched in 2006, has set an even more ambitious target to attract an additional 100,000 international students to higher and further education programs by 2011. (p. 28)

These forecasts are reminiscent of corporate discourse that suggests a need to keep up with the competition. Though the report does not mention all the strategies used by the U.K. and Australia to attract international students, it does imply that Canada has not followed suit, and that its recruitment may lag behind the recruitment of these two countries at least partially for this reason. The statement about Australia suggests that it is attempting to attract the best and brightest international students through scholarships; however, it is very likely that much profit is also garnered from paying students.
In the U.S., the National Association of Foreign Student Advisors (NAFSA) has created a website called the International Student Economic Value Tool (2013).

According to the homepage of this site, international students “**build bridges** between the United States and other countries; **bring global perspectives** into U.S. classrooms and research labs… and **support programming and services on campus for all students** by paying out-of-state tuition, funded largely by non-U.S. sources” (bold text in the original). The NAFSA tool generates charts outlining profits by state and region, with the greatest profit and job creation occurring in the Northeast. A state-by-state comparison suggests that internationalization is most strongly felt in cosmopolitan urban centres.

![NAFSA Analysis: The Economic Benefits of International Student Enrollment to the United States - A Ten-Year Trend](image)

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**Figure 2. NAFSA International Student Economic Value Tool**
The creation of jobs for skilled immigrants in Inner Circle countries is not keeping up with the pace of international student enrolment in those countries. While the abovementioned OECD report (2011) states that the international student population in OECD countries grew from 1.6 million to 2.8 million from 2000 to 2009, a 75% growth in numbers, census data published by Statistics Canada (2008) shows that our job creation occurred at an annual average rate of 1.7% during this period, and that we were already leading the Group of Seven (G7) countries in this regard. Lack of employment in the West and an influx of international students at Western universities are two parts of one globalizing process; today’s technological infrastructure has resulted not only in the globalization of corporations, but also in a rise in subcontracted, part-time, and temporary jobs within those corporations, and a rise in the outsourcing of such jobs through the Internet to lower-salaried workers in foreign countries, particularly BRIC\(^1\) countries (Ardichvili, Page, & Wentling, 2003; Hildreth & Kimble, 2004), which send students abroad to universities in Inner Circle countries to receive training in English as well as in their intended professions.\(^2\) After international students return to their home countries, their investment in an imagined global community of language users – maintained by traveling abroad to professional development workshops, taking MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), and seeking international business partnerships – can be a lifelong challenge. Still, people rise to this challenge by pursuing opportunities to accumulate cultural capital, and by sending their children to Inner Circle English-speaking countries.

\(^1\) BRIC countries: the rising industrial nations Brazil, Russia, India, and China

\(^2\) In University Expansion in a Changing Global Economy: Triumph of the BRICS? (2013), Carnoy et al. point out that while BRICs have powerful economies, they still lack the perceived quality of higher education that would put them at the “cutting edge” of the information society.
to “ensure their own and their family’s longer-term status and security” (Bodycott & Lai, 2012, p. 266).

In a neoliberal global economy, people must work on their knowledge portfolios, either to avoid being the first to be laid off as more jobs get outsourced to non-Western countries, or to be among the first to be hired as jobs that require good English skills become available in their countries. For those in the latter position, acquiring disciplinary knowledge goes hand-in-hand with the acquisition of (standard) English, hence the pursuit of higher education in Inner Circle English-speaking countries.

1.3 Outline of this MA thesis

In my literature review I begin by outlining the theoretical framework for this study, Darvin and Norton’s (2015) model of learner investment, to underscore how English language learners seek to increase their symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986) and become part of real and imagined communities of English users. I then move on to sociocultural theories of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), which describe how learners’ socially constructed identities affect their participation in these target language communities and further opportunities to improve their English language skills. Since my study employs narrative inquiry to examine language learner trajectories, the third part of my literature review describes what previous studies using a narrative approach have revealed about learner identity and investment.

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3 As pointed out by Carnoy and Castells (2001), “workers are gradually being socially defined, less by a particular long-term job they hold, than by the knowledge they have acquired by studying and working. This knowledge ‘portfolio’ [which includes knowledge of languages] allows them to move across firms and even across types of work, as jobs get redefined.” (p. 7)
Next, I describe in detail my study’s contribution to existing research in SLA. While my research is ultimately concerned with social justice, it has found that support for international students may need to take a more individualistic approach not often undertaken in much critical SLA research. While all international students seek to increase their cultural capital, and many also seek to increase their linguistic capital through the study of English, the imagined communities of individual international students can vary greatly, as can their self-reported investments in international postsecondary education. Additionally, their linguistic repertoires, prior educational experiences, and social class positions suggest that international students cannot easily benefit from the same strategies or the same forms of support when navigating their target communities, even if these support systems purport to be tailored to international students from specific ethno-linguistic backgrounds. With the job market after graduation being highly competitive, an international student may do little more than provide profit for universities if s/he cannot successfully deploy a set of strategies appropriate to herself/himself as an individual to effectively navigate professional communities.

My methods section describes the data set for this study, the International Student Survey (ISS) conducted by the Sociology department at a large Canadian university. Despite the term “Survey”, the ISS is actually a vast bank of qualitative data, containing 395 interviews with international undergraduate and graduate students on their family and educational backgrounds, academic, social, extracurricular, and professional experiences in Canada, and imagined better life stories. I also discuss how I came to sample the eight participants for this qualitative study that employs narrative inquiry.
My findings detail how these eight international graduate students navigate their university experiences to varying degrees of success. I examine how four students feel marginalized due to their lack of linguistic and cultural capital, while three others were able to enact successful identity negotiation to gain access to desired social networks and communities of practice. I also examine how one student who has not yet formed a clear picture of his imagined community after graduation appears to feel less concerned about his linguistic and cultural capital than the other seven who are actively trying to immigrate to North America.

In the discussion section, I connect these findings to my three research questions. I recognize that learners have the right to invest in language learning, imagine future identities, and conceptualize their journeys as language learners as connected to a “better life story” (Barkhuizen, 2010; Darvin & Norton, 2015). However, some participants received educational advantages and possessed a greater amount of cultural capital prior to coming to Canada, and thus were advantaged in navigating their target communities. Nevertheless, each student used a set of strategies tailored to her/his individual situation to pursue her/his imagined future.

In the concluding chapter, I discuss the practical implications of my findings, particularly the implication that general academic and social support systems do not help international students attain the specific goals for which they have invested in higher education in an Inner Circle country. Rather, students need to be critically aware of how their investments are impacted by larger social factors which can be overwhelming if one does not have a personalized set of strategies to deploy one’s existing linguistic repertoires and cultural capital to effectively navigate real and imagined communities.
2. Literature review of language learner investment in imagined communities

2.1 Theoretical framework: Learner identity, capital, and ideology

At present, English is associated with economic and social advancement—learners believe that the language can help them join the ranks of well educated, culturally sophisticated, and globally connected professionals (Dagenais, 2003; Duff, 2008; Kanno & Norton, 2003; Kim & Duff, 2012; Norton, 2000/2013; Norton & Gao, 2008). International postsecondary students navigate their university experiences in light of the imagined communities they seek to enter. When a learner invests in an imagined community, s/he acts on and is acted on by the ideologies circulated in that community, which work to construct the learner’s identity and the value of her/his linguistic capital.

Figure 3. Framework for investment in language learning (Darvin & Norton, 2015)

However, even within linguistically and culturally hegemonic societies, any dominant ideology interacts with individual views so that our rationales for behaving in certain ways sometimes contradict one another within “a complex, layered space” (Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 7). Rather than fully subscribing to dominant ideologies or rebelling outright, most people act within a spectrum of consent and dissent, adjusting their behaviour to that which is most beneficial to them given their opportunities for
social positioning. Thus, people perform acts without fully subscribing to the ideology that informs them. In fact, De Costa (2010/2011) argues that opportunities for language learning are enhanced when learners negotiate alternative subject positions that are complementary to the prevailing ideology. Acknowledging this complexity in a society’s ideological makeup leads us to recognize that the dominant discourse is not as unified or coherent as it seems, leaving plenty of room for individual agency.

With regard to capital, Bourdieu (1986), who describes the three forms of capital as economic (related to wealth, property, and income), cultural (related to knowledge, educational credentials, and appreciation of specific cultural forms), and social (related to connections with networks of power), theorizes that (1) having plenty of capital helps individuals obtain more capital, (2) one form of capital can be converted into another, and (3) those who have plenty of capital structure society so that others cannot achieve the same amounts of capital. Yet in the same influential paper, he indicates that opportunities to challenge the status quo abound since the value of any form of capital is not fixed but negotiated in different fields or sites of struggle. To apply Bourdieu’s theory of capital to Second Language Acquisition (SLA), a language learner who recognizes that the value placed on her/his capital is subjective and contestable gains a new sense of self. Darvin and Norton (2015) argue that “occupying new spaces does not only involve acquiring new material and symbolic resources, but using the capital… already possess[ed] as affordances, and transforming this capital into something that is regarded as valuable in new contexts” (p. 8). For example, an English learner might use exceptional expertise in her/his academic field to gain entrance to a community of practice despite limited English skills. In that community of practice, the learner can use her/his subject area expertise to
scaffold the acquisition of English for specific purposes. Additionally, learners can act within existing social constraints to successfully increase their capital. For example, although international students may not be allowed to work off-campus during their degree programs to gain Canadian work experience, they might choose to build their resumes through on-campus jobs (e.g. research and teaching assistantships) and volunteering. Through this volunteering, they might cultivate professional networks that may allow them to find employment in Canada later on.

The third construct surrounding learner investment in the above framework is that of identity. Bourdieu (1990) defines a person’s habitus as that person’s sense of her/his “rightful” place in society. Habitus predisposes the person to do what is expected of her/him – as man or woman, black or white, middle class or working class – and to participate in the appropriate set of social practices. At the same time, he acknowledges that identity is also comprised of personal “sympathies and antipathies, affections and aversions, tastes and distastes… an environment in which one feels ‘at home’ and in which one can achieve that fulfillment of one’s desire” (Bourdieu, as cited in Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 9). Norton (2000/2013) extends Bourdieu’s idea of habitus versus desire to explain how each individual learner has a unique set of imagined communities and identities, re-envisioning alternate realities for herself/himself. Language learning is an investment the learner makes to achieve these aspirations. However, it is not language learning alone, but recognition of the learner’s existing cultural and linguistic capital by others within target language communities, that results in her/his goals coming to fruition.
2.2 Learner identity and cultural capital: How these affect participation in target communities and further opportunities for language learning

In this section, I first address how a language learner’s linguistic competence is socially constructed by groups in which the learner seeks social or professional participation. Second, I describe how SLA researchers drew on Vygotskian sociocultural theory (1978) to write landmark papers arguing that only receptive interlocutors will provide the necessary scaffolding for further language development. That is, a positive reception of the learner’s existing communicative competence, as well as her/his potential to improve in the target language, is key to gaining more opportunities to participate in social and professional activities. Third, I review studies of English language learners in elementary through tertiary educational contexts to demonstrate the vital role these sociocultural factors play in language learning and socialization.

According to Higgins and Sandhu (2014), English learners’ target language communities need not be seen as Western or white – sometimes, they are simply understood to be more worldly and cosmopolitan: “Rather than seeing languages as tied to monolithic ‘target’ cultures… learners often connect their language learning with a range of real, virtual, and imagined communities – only some of which are mother tongue users” (pp. 105-106). Additionally, Higgins (2011) has demonstrated how in the mediascapes of popular culture and cyberspace, there are flows of language and culture other than from centre to periphery. Yet this is not to say that we live in a world where everyone’s linguistic and cultural capital is equal; such capital may be judged by those with perhaps less proficiency in a range of languages and less familiarity with a range of cultures, but more authority to decide what constitutes linguistic or cultural competence.
As an example, Blommaert, Collins, and Slembrouck (2005) cite the case of a Bulgarian woman described by student researchers as speaking “no language”:

The fact of the matter was that this woman (who spoke Bulgarian, probably Turkish, and likely Russian) spoke none of the researchers’ languages: Dutch, English, or French. She was an accomplished multilingual individual, but not in the researchers’ multilingual repertoire. Contrast this with... the globe-trotting multilingual whose skill and competence in “language” is based on specific and limited language practices… purchasing services and objects, exchanging greetings and opening meetings… (pp. 210-211)

They conclude that linguistic competence is not an innate property of the individual; one is judged as possessing it based on whether one’s linguistic skills are seen to serve the purposes of communication in a given context. Therefore, many sociolinguists have found that the return on language learners’ investments, in the form of their participation in target language communities, hinges on their identity negotiation, and the value placed on their existing linguistic capital.

When a person’s language skills are seen as inadequate for full participation in a target community of language users, the result can be a blow to that person’s self-perceived social competence as well as her/his opportunity to participate in social activities that would lead to further language development. In Fotovatian’s (2014) study of non-native English teachers doing their PhDs in Education at an Australian university, one participant states:

I don’t like to be mechanical [she is using this term as opposite of having a good sense of humour], I like my colleagues to know me as a fun friend, but my
English is not enough and sometimes I don’t know what themes they like to joke about and I am afraid I say something and they say she is rude, but they think I am very mechanical. I used to be a fun friend in my country. (p. 12)

This quote illustrates that when an English language learner leaves behind her/his country and immigrates to a new country where the only social support systems (initially) are professional ones, social rejection in the professional realm may result in feelings of greater isolation than it would in the learner’s previous country. Like Fotovatian’s participants, many of the participants in this study did not have extensive social networks upon coming to Canada – perhaps only a sibling, only a spouse, or no one at all. Not surprisingly, such people seek out new friends who speak their native language when they arrive in an Inner Circle English-speaking country, even as they are highly invested in improving their English. At the same time, more interaction with English-speakers is key to English improvement because the interaction between this community and the learner will provide the input for further Second Language Acquisition (SLA). If that interaction occurs with receptive interlocutors, it will scaffold language development by ensuring that input is at an appropriate level – similar to what Vygotskian educational theorists call the Zone of Proximal Development (cf. Vygotsky, 1978). However, if others deem the learner unable to communicate, they can block the learner’s acquisition of the language by ignoring the learner, talking at a level far above her/his comprehension, talking too fast, using culture-specific idioms, and making the learner feel excluded and incompetent.

in the mid-1990s. Lantolf and Pavlenko’s (1995) oft-cited study argues that linguistic development consists of the “transformation of innate capacities once they intertwine with socioculturally constructed mediational means” (p. 109). Norton Peirce (1995) also points out, in a key paper, that SLA researchers must view the language learner as having a complex social identity that must be understood with reference to larger, and frequently inequitable social structures which are reproduced in day-to-day social interaction… [as] it is through language that a person gains access to – or is denied access to – powerful social networks that give learners the opportunity to speak. (p. 13)

Similarly, Firth and Wagner (1997) dispel the dichotomy between language acquisition and language use since a learner acquires a language by using it in social contexts. They draw on Lave and Wenger’s (1991) notion of “communities of practice” to call attention to how the learner’s social interactions form the basis of her/his language learning. They also cast doubt on the deficit model of language acquisition by giving evidence that second language (L2) users successfully communicate with interlocutors who are willing to negotiate meaning. While Block (2007) notes that they did not explicitly discuss the issue of identity in their 1997 paper, he explains that this work opened up the field of SLA to sociocultural approaches that in turn led more researchers to explore links between identity and language learning. By the 2007 revision of their paper, Firth and Wagner acknowledge identity as a key construct in SLA:

Our participants were not defensibly—that is, to us, emically—identifiable as participants, learners, or even nonnative speakers—the standard identity categories of SLA. At the least, such categories were clearly not omnirelevant:
these individuals were also, varyingly, sellers, buyers, friends, business acquaintances, customers, and clients. … Who they are locally and discursively has an impact on how they use and learn languages. (p. 801)

Numerous studies since have investigated how language learners of all ages and levels acquire both language and culture through positive identity recognition, leading to legitimate participation in target language communities. On the other hand, if such recognition does not take place, learners are not likely to gain access to either the target language or the target culture. In a study of nine- and ten-year-old ESL students at a Canadian elementary school with a 73% Punjabi-speaking population, Marshall and Toohey (2010) found that teachers had such minimal knowledge about the out-of-school lives of the children that they were unable to build on the funds of knowledge of their pupils’ homes and communities. However, one teacher decided that her students would work with their grandparents to produce bilingual picture books about the grandparents’ life stories, i.e. “dual-language books in a resolutely monolingual school” (p. 236). Her students not only learned issues relevant to their family histories but also developed bilingual literacy – as a result, Marshall and Toohey speculate, of the picture book projects’ recognition of students’ cultural identity and, in turn, their families’ greater participation in the school community.

In another Canadian study, Duff (2002) spent half a year observing a grade 10 Social Studies classroom in which roughly 50% of the students were recent immigrants from East Asia while the other half had grown up in Canada. In this classroom, the Asian students were silent as the teacher and the students who had grown up in Canada engaged in fluid dialogue, rapidly changing topics from the Simpsons to Prince Charles, Wayne
Gretzky to President Clinton, Seinfeld and John Lennon to *Catcher in the Rye* and the band AC/DC. She concludes, “While Mr. Jones and the local students wove together their non-academic and academic texts, and responded enthusiastically to one another’s contributions, the ESL students almost never spoke because of the rich intertextuality and hybridity… the speed of turn-taking and topic nomination, and their lack of required cultural schemata” (p. 484). A student who grew up in Canada, whom Duff calls “Sue”, observes that the ESL students’ families did not live in a cultural vacuum – they had their own television and radio shows, newspapers, and celebrities; the children conversed and texted with their friends about popular culture they were familiar with. However, the lack of shared cultural references was hindering the ESL students from participation in conversations with English-speaking peers.

At the same time, cultural content need not be presented in the language it is associated with for development in that language to occur; indeed, in other cases language learning involves much cultural hybridity. A study by Lin and Man (2011) explores how rap, which originated in Black America, was appropriated by Hong Kong students to compose rap in Cantonese and Hong Kong English. By engaging in an extracurricular hip-hop club, these students from a Band 3 school (one of the secondary schools that admitted the lowest 33 percent of primary school leavers) cultivated identities as competent users of English that they lacked in the classroom. When they performed three English songs and one Chinese song at an English Festival, they boosted the morale of their school by demonstrating that Band 3 students could give a public performance that demanded a high level of fluency in English. This change in the social context in which their English skills were evaluated “provide[d] them with an identity
that would resonate with them and which would lead them to invest in English language learning” (p. 206).

In addition to showing links between a learner’s positive identity negotiation and that learner’s opportunities for further language development, sociocultural research in SLA also demonstrates the fluid nature of linguistic competence. A study by Lam (2000) describes how a teenage boy who immigrated to the U.S. from China was treated as a non-English-speaking outcast in school and yet cultivated an identity as a competent English user online among peers who frequented the website that he managed. Lam concludes that “identity is understood not simply as a process of socialization into existing social groups and discourse communities, but also as a reflective and generative process for constructing alternative social networks and subject positions” (p. 476). The same conclusion was reached by Zhou, Knoke, and Sakamoto (2005), whose qualitative interview study of ten Mainland Chinese graduate students at a Canadian university showed that while students improved their English and increased their knowledge of Canadian/Western culture, they did not necessarily participate more in class, thereby demonstrating their increased linguistic and cultural competence. Rather, a student’s degree of participation in each of her/his classes was influenced by such contextual factors as class composition (proportion of other minority students in the class), course content (familiar or difficult), and the reactions of professors and peers towards the student’s English proficiency. As one participant explained, “A student like me can be changeable” (p. 308).

In a similar paper which investigated Japanese women’s silence in Western university classrooms, Morita (2004) found that a Japanese graduate student called Rie
doing an MA in Educational Studies in Canada participated actively and meaningfully in Course J yet was a member of a silent group of ESL students in Course F. The difference arose due to her different relations with her instructors and classmates in the two courses: in Course F, Rie felt that international students tended to be ignored, while doctoral students and the instructor dominated the discussions, but in Course J, she felt that people listened to her with respect and gave her positive feedback. Moreover, the Course J instructor modified the pace and syntax of her speech and provided background information so that Rie and other international students could understand. When Rie wrote an email to the instructor of Course F requesting that she make similar adjustments, the instructor emailed Rie back saying that she had difficulty adjusting the course content for a “non-English speaker” and that she could not do more “without slowing down the rest of the class” (p. 593). Morita points out that Rie’s English competence was re-negotiated for each class, and in the class where she was constructed as adequately competent, she became an active and capable participant.

Such studies, conducted over the past two decades – ever since the sociocultural turn in SLA began to shed light on the connection between identity and language learning – illustrate just how much identity negotiation impacts the success or failure of language acquisition since it determines whether adequate opportunities exist to develop literacy, oral skills, and/or cultural socialization in the target language.

2.3 Narrative inquiry in TESL: A means to explain how individual agency works with and against larger social forces

In this study of how international graduate students navigate Canadian higher education, I have chosen to use narrative inquiry as a methodological approach to
examine how learners exercise their agency in social contexts governed by linguistic and
cultural hegemony. Since English language learner narratives are always located within
their social, cultural, and historical contexts (Higgins and Sandhu, 2014; Pavlenko, 2003,
2007), narrative inquiry, compared to other forms of research, is perhaps unique in its
potential to show the potency of systematic oppression while simultaneously showing the
power of personal agency. In this section, I first describe narrative studies that show how
English learners negotiate the value of their existing linguistic capital within culturally
hegemonic contexts to gain access to opportunities to practice their English. Second, I
describe narrative research that shows how individuals who increase their linguistic
capital benefit from the authority and social rewards this increase confers. Third, I
describe narrative research that shows how a critical orientation towards English learning
allows learners to use it for their own purposes. Fourth, I describe how all these means of
exercising individual agency in hegemonic contexts can be captured through a tool of
narrative inquiry called the “narrative frame,” which is key to this particular study.

With regard to the negotiable nature of learners’ existing linguistic capital,
Pavlenko’s (2003) study of NNEST (non-native English speaker teacher) narratives
found that these teachers felt their English competence to be devalued in professional
contexts after they left their home countries to pursue further TESOL training and teach
English in the States. However, these teachers were empowered by their MA TESOL
program, which espoused a critical orientation to TESL and was comprised of a
community that valued participants’ bilingualism instead of devaluing their non-native
English-speakerness. “I never knew I was a bilingual,” said a participant whose statement
became the published study’s title. Similarly, Barkhuizen (2010) uses narrative analysis
to investigate how a migrant pre-service EFL teacher from Tonga effectively contended with disparaging discourses that challenged her professionalism – she was seen not as an ideal “native English teacher” but as a “Tongan English teacher.” While he illustrates that Sela was the victim of a pervasive discourse of immigration that positioned her as disadvantaged in a number of respects – “linguistically, economically, educationally, emotionally and professionally” (p. 291), he also shows how she negotiates a positive identity within this discourse by demonstrating how uniquely suited she is to teach Tongan adult learners, the students she ideally desires to teach, as she is most familiar with the cultural values and practices of this community. To teach her Tongan students, Sela supplements a culturally inappropriate English curriculum with materials specifically for Tongan adult immigrants. Barkhuizen concludes that this teacher, “positioned… within the two dominant discourses of immigration and language teacher education… [nevertheless] makes [positive] identity claims about herself, who she is and who she wants to be” (p. 291).

Narrative analysis has also shown how English, though used as a language of social stratification, can prove extremely useful to successful learners because of the authority that it confers. Hayes (2010) offers a particularly dramatic illustration in the narrative of a Tamil English teacher in Sri Lanka whose school was caught in the crossfire between government forces and LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) fighters. This teacher explains how he was repeatedly able to negotiate the release of children from captivity because he spoke English:

Whenever in my area the schoolchildren were nabbed by the security personnel

I’d go with the principal and get the children released, saying they are innocent
and things like that, convincing them because I had English in my mouth. So I
was able to release them. So the police officer had a high respect for me, and
when he heard I had got caught in the melee or the battle they took me out. (p. 75)

According to Hayes, Krishnan’s ability to free the children every time they were captured
is a powerful illustration of the language’s instrumental value, conferring on its users
ethos and credibility. Certainly, other contexts exist in which English confers less
desirable traits on its users (e.g. Camilleri, 1996; Fitts, 2006; Lin, 1996), yet having the
language in one’s repertoire gives the speaker the option of whether to use it, while not
having the language does not provide the same option.

Additional narrative research on English learning in linguistically hegemonic
contexts show that successful learners can reap social benefits while learning English, if
they can effectively mobilize their existing linguistic resources and social connections
within those hegemonic contexts. Lam’s (2000) and Black’s (2006) case studies show
how young English learners develop identities as popular, multiliterate writers on the
English-dominated Internet through online fanfiction and/or fan websites – identities that
increase their motivation to develop English writing skills. Norton and Toohey’s (2001)
case study of a child immigrant to Canada from Poland shows how two important allies,
an encouraging English teacher and an older cousin who had good skills in both English
and Polish, helped that child to develop an identity as a good student and good language
African immigrants living in New Zealand found that parents were deeply aware of their
children’s more thorough integration into mainstream New Zealand society, which
involved their children developing a much higher proficiency in English than the parents
themselves possessed; however, the parents generally felt that the gains (access to English-speaking communities) outweighed the losses (underdeveloped skills in the mother tongue).

While much narrative research in SLA shows that the pursuit of English as a foreign language is a choice learners willingly make in order to exercise more agency over their lives, learning English cannot be framed uncritically since it is a former colonial language (cf. Pennycook, 2001; Phillipson, 2008). To be critical in its orientation, narrative research must explain how learners can appropriate English for their own uses – in terms of both pragmatics and social justice. For instance, Macalister (2012) shows that teachers of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) can collect learner narratives to understand what their students’ needs are; in his study, a narrative frame was used as a tool in the design of an EFL curriculum for trainee seamen in Kiribati (an island country in the South Pacific). Those who use English for a broader range of purposes – not just with specific on-the-job phrases but to socialize and form relationships with international colleagues – also need what Tsui (2007) calls “legitimacy of access to practice” in those professional contexts. Citing the case of Minfang, who sought to teach English although his native language was a nonstandard Chinese dialect for which he was looked down on by fellow Chinese EFL teachers, Tsui explains that a learner must legitimate her/his access to a target language community by acquiring competence as defined by that community. In Minfang’s case, that meant “being able to speak standard Cantonese, to code-mix, to use Cantonese slang, and most important of all, being proficient in English, particularly spoken English” (p. 675). By recounting this teacher’s difficult yet ultimately
successful professional journey, Tsui illustrates the potential for a marginalized learner to thrive despite systematic discrimination.

In sum, language learner narratives are central to understanding how people can effectively navigate the real and imagined communities they invest in. These language learner life trajectories can be captured through a “narrative frame” (Barkhuizen, 2014; Barkhuizen & Wette, 2008), a type of interview schedule structured as a story in skeletal form, as is the interview schedule used in this thesis. The aim of a narrative frame is for participants to produce a coherent narrative by filling in the spaces according to their own experiences and their reflections on those experiences. Barkhuizen (2014) points out that narrative frames are particularly useful for researching learner identity and imagined communities because migrants to Inner Circle English-speaking countries will imagine the lives they will live… and continue to imagine the future after they have arrived. They will imagine problems and, especially for those who undertake to learn English, they will imagine successes. … Imagining themselves as ‘ideal’, legitimate members of future-oriented communities has an impact on learners’ participation… and engagement in language learning. (p. 17)

While his research concerns long-term adult migrants, narrative frames can also be used in interviews with temporary migrants such as international students. Swenson and Visgatis (2011) used a narrative frame to collect the experiences of Japanese students in a study abroad internship and determine what changes could be made to the predeparture program. This frame contained of a range of temporally-sequenced topics, from predeparture expectations to experiences during the internship to reflections upon return to Japan. In contrast, a critical sociolinguist might approach a narrative frame with
a different research purpose – to collect learners’ accounts of strategies they have used to
gain legitimacy of access to practice, and the effect of these strategies on their language
acquisition. With those questions in mind, I now turn to this study’s intended contribution
to sociocultural research in SLA that employs narrative inquiry.

2.4 Contribution of this study to critical TESL research

This study aims to make two contributions to the existing body of critical research
in TESL. First, while such research has largely been focused on learners’ racial and
ethnic identities, this study aims to shed more light on the under-explored factor of class
in learner narratives. Second, while critical research in TESL has largely stressed the
importance of collective action against the status quo, this study focuses instead on how
learners might use individual strategies to achieve their imagined futures. An example of
an individual strategy might be the use of exceptional expertise in a particular area of
knowledge to scaffold the acquisition of English and cultivate a positive identity in
communities of practice.

Several researchers have pointed out that studies which advocate for social justice
often focus on race, gender, and ethnicity as major identity categories, but overlook class
when analyzing students, teachers, classrooms and institutions (Block, 2012; Collins,
2006; Ramanathan & Morgan, 2009; Vandrick, 2014). However, there have been some
notable exceptions. Kanno’s (2008) ethnographic study of four schools in Japan which
were targeted toward and attended by students of different social classes shows that the
schools differed in both their approaches to teaching English and the imagined
communities of English users that the students were being socialized into. Heller (2003),
in a paper on the commodification of the French language in Canada, suggests that
working-class native speakers of a language may have their linguistic competence in that language undervalued, while the same language opens up doors for individuals learning it as an additional language (e.g. in a more standard version) for professional development. Gunderson, D'Silva, and Odo conducted a longitudinal quantitative study of over 1,300 adolescent immigrants in a large Canadian city, and found that the largest numbers of ESL students who dropped out of high school were from ethno-linguistic groups mostly consisting of working-class migrants, while ESL students who persevered and in some cases academically surpassed their native English speaker peers came from ethno-linguistic groups mostly consisting of professional-class migrants. Comparing a working-class female language learner in rural Uganda with an affluent male language learner in urban Canada, Darvin and Norton (2014) describe class as determined by both economic and cultural resources. This interplay between economic and cultural capital is also acknowledged by Gao (2014) in a literature review of how Chinese families with economic capital are able to give their children better opportunities to learn the target language. Thus, while race and ethnicity have been thoroughly researched topics in critical SLA, class is an emerging site of investigation, and this study aims to contribute more to that area.

This study also suggests that critical sociolinguistic research might more often take into account learners’ individual linguistic and intellectual resources while connecting these to larger social forces. In doing so, critical sociolinguistic research might need to build more bridges with cognitivist SLA research that examines the mental processes behind language learning. Although no prior studies have investigated the role played by linguistic and cultural resources that are specific to the individual (e.g. intense
intellectual interests connected to learning the target language), cognitivist research in SLA suggests that this avenue of inquiry is necessary to understand why some learners thrive despite their racialized, gendered, or classed identities. In a seminal experimental study of how English learners become proficient in the language for academic purposes, Saville-Troike (1984) tested children who had been matched for English proficiency and socioeconomic status when they started a school year, yet differed in their performance at the end of the year. She found a high level of intergroup variability, and concluded that a large vocabulary base (cultivated through extensive reading practice) was the single most important area of second language competence when learning content through that language. Though her findings are now four decades old, their implications for sociolinguistic researchers are still significant. Although parents in non-Inner Circle countries are able to afford expensive extracurricular English programs, and people worldwide are exposed to U.S. popular culture, many English language learners are still hard-pressed to acquire academic vocabulary in the content areas unless they are dedicated to learning in those content areas, both in English and in their native languages. And although some parents from non-Inner Circle countries invest in international education beginning in elementary or high school, creating the ESL student demographic known as “Generation 1.5” learners, Roessingh and Douglas (2008, 2012a, 2012b) argue that many of these students will forever be chasing a moving target in terms of keeping up with native speaker peers’ academic vocabulary development unless they can scaffold their own academic language development and socialization through reading. Conducting research on high-school and university ESL students, these researchers have suggested that an iterative scaffolding process occurs between content knowledge and language
comprehension (Roessingh & Douglas, 2008, 2012b), meaning that students can use L1 translation strategies for subjects that they have studied in their home countries but become at academic risk “when they outgrow their ability to use L1 proficiency to make meaning in L2” (Roessingh & Douglas, 2012a, p. 85). In other words, when academic content becomes largely unfamiliar (i.e. not previously encountered in either L1 or L2), which may happen at different points in time for students with different levels of academic preparation – and is likely to occur for all students during the transition from high school to university – the L1 translation coping strategy can no longer be used. Roessingh and Douglas (2012b) also argue that the academic demands of university may best be reflected in the reading level expected; therefore, individuals’ ability to scaffold their own academic learning in English through translation into their L1 is very likely dependent on prior familiarity with Western-centred bodies of knowledge (which is related to international schooling and social class), level of expertise with the same content in the L1 (which is related to amount of personal interest in particular subjects), and the transferability of the knowledge gained in their L1 when they relocate to the West (e.g. Statistics is a far more transferable subject compared to Educational Administration, as the former is based on numbers while the latter is based on local and national contexts). Although many of these factors are bound up in larger social processes, they are highly specific to the individual, and may profoundly impact the outcomes of that learner’s investment in English learning.

Therefore, this study of eight international graduate students in Canada aims to shed light on differences in learners’ linguistic and intellectual resources, which lead to substantial advantages for some learners in terms of academic preparation and shared
cultural references with host nationals. While exploring the as-of-yet underresearched factor of class, critical sociolinguists must more often take into account these individual differences should they wish to investigate linguistic and cultural challenges learners encounter in Inner Circle countries.
3. Methods and data set used in this study

3.1 Creation of the ISS

The data set for this study consists of responses to the International Student Survey (ISS) created by the Sociology Department at a large Canadian university. The word “survey” is a misnomer, as the ISS is a vast bank of qualitative data collected primarily for the purpose of giving undergraduate and graduate Sociology students hands-on experience doing qualitative research. Between 2006 and 2013, these students conducted semi-structured, one-on-one interviews with 395 international and domestic undergraduate and graduate students across the university, broken down as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year interviewed</th>
<th>International</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>36 + 1 diploma</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4. Breakdown of the ISS

The domestic student version of the interview schedule is 74 questions long, while the international student version is 101 questions long. For the most part, both schedules overlap, and are divided into the same eight sections which structure participant responses in a more-or-less chronological narrative. These sections are: (1) demographic information, e.g. family background, parents’ education and occupations; (2) pre-university education; (3) coming to Canada/this university; (4) services at the
university; (5) academics and work (including future career/migration plans); (6) social activities; (7) discrimination; and (8) a “Wrapping Up” section with general questions such as what the student likes most about her/his experience at the university, what s/he would improve if possible, and her/his greatest academic and social challenges. This broad overview of the participants’ experiences allows Sociology students to code the data for a wide range of research projects.

What makes the two interview schedules different is the longer length of the international one due to additional questions specific to international students. For example, while both domestic and international students were asked what schools they attended before they came to the university, whether these were public, private, or international schools, and whether they took any AP or IB programs, international students were also asked when they started learning English, whether they attended bilingual or English-only schools, whether they spoke English outside of school with their family and friends, if their university study in Canada was instigated by any special programs or agencies, and how many students in their schools back home went abroad for university.

The Sociology students who acted as interviewers were responsible for participant selection. Most sampled one domestic student and one international student from their own social networks, and more participants were recruited through notices posted on campus. Once each interview was completed, it was transcribed by the interviewer and became part of a shared data set in the Sociology department. One faculty member, who acted as principal investigator for the entire project, drafted the interview schedules and obtained permission from the university’s Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB)
prior to data collection. All participants were given a 20% off coupon for the campus bookstore and were entered into a draw for a $50 bookstore gift certificate.

In the few years since, one journal article has been published based on this data set, by the principal investigator and two of her colleagues (Kenyon, Frohard-Dourlent, & Roth, 2012). It deals with the experiences of American international students, who comprised the second-largest portion of participants by country (the largest portion being domestic students). The researchers investigated how American students resemble domestic students in some ways and international students in others, and point out that there are many other groups of students whose domestic or international student status is ambiguous. Their paper asserts that “by targeting services on the basis of these broad administrative categories, categories that were created for financial purposes, the university reduces the take-up of the very services students need” (Abstract).

I chose the ISS data set for my own study on international students’ investment in Canadian higher education because I also believe the same can be said for broad categories such as “native English speaker” and “non-native English speaker.” Support systems created on the basis of such categories exist for administrative purposes, but take-up of the services students need may be reduced because English support services rarely consider students’ imagined communities. For example, which of these students would need the most academic English support: a non-native English speaker with a high English proficiency pursuing a PhD, a native English speaker without much prior academic training, or a non-native English speaker whose English skills are not as developed as either of the previous two but who doesn’t plan to remain in an English-speaking country after graduation? One could argue that the third student needs it most.
because his English (both conversational and academic) is the least developed, yet his imagined community doesn’t require much use of English; he may be invested in Canadian higher education simply for the degree. Or one could argue that the first student would need it most because even though her academic English is the most advanced, she still faces substantial difficulties competing with peers in her discipline who have the same extensive subject matter knowledge and are native English speakers. The second student would probably need academic writing support during university, but may not be planning on entering an academic community following graduation. Therefore, the amount and nature of academic English support cannot be based on labels such as NES/NNES or on English proficiency alone, but must reflect individuals’ imagined communities for the services to be taken up to the fullest extent possible.

3.2 Use of the ISS data set for this study

In using the ISS data for my MA thesis, I decided to focus on graduate students since their prior postsecondary and professional experience would likely give them a more concrete sense of their life trajectories and investments for the future compared to undergraduates. I also desired to investigate frameworks of learner identity and investment under the guidance of my supervisor, whose research over the past two decades has been focused on these constructs (cf. Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000/2013). Of the 25 interviews with graduate students from 2008, the year of data that I had access to in a Sociology class that I took, 11 were with domestic students and 14 were with international students. From the 14 interviews with international graduate students, I selected the eight case studies. These eight interviewees met two criteria: (a) they were not from another Inner Circle English-speaking country, and (b) they
entertained the idea of immigrating to North America. From the eight interviews, I drew connections between what imagined communities in North America each student was invested in and the linguistic and cultural challenges s/he experienced during the pursuit of her/his Master’s or PhD degree.

During this stage of the analysis, I was open to gathering insights from any section of the interview schedule. Altogether, the transcripts analyzed for this thesis totaled 194 pages of single-spaced text. (See Appendices A and B for the interview schedules of domestic and international students.)

3.3 Strengths and limitations of the data set

The ISS has several strengths, the most notable of which is its size. With roughly 400 participants, it has a sample size that resembles the sample of a quantitative study. Thus, should more research be done on larger batches of interviews, recurring themes in a sample size this large have the potential to inform international student support systems.

Another strength of the data set is the strong potential for cross-comparison between the learner narratives due to the way the frame elicits the same topics from each participant. Cross-comparison is further aided by two questions in the final section of the interview schedule that ask participants about their most significant academic challenge and their most significant social challenge. Students’ responses to these two questions were important starting points for my own analysis.

As for the limitations of the ISS, these include lack of triangulation, lack of fuller access to the context in which the interviews took place, and problematic assumptions about participants in the interview schedule – each of which I now address in turn.
First, Barkhuizen and Wette (2008) claim that narrative frames work well for preliminary studies and should not be the only instrument used for a project. However, a Master’s thesis is in some ways an exploratory foray; I can apply findings from this study to the design of a mixed methods PhD dissertation.

A more significant concern than the non-triangulation of the data is that since I did not conduct or transcribe the interviews, but only had access to them in textual form, I lack information about the interpersonal context in which they took place. According to Pavlenko (2007), context is one of the three key concerns for researchers when analyzing learner narratives, the other two being content and form. While this data set does not offer much information on the interpersonal context between interviewers and interviewees, it can be complemented by a plethora of published research on the sociohistorical power dynamics between researchers and participants in both TESL literature and that of other social sciences.

The third limitation of the ISS, its problematic assumptions about some of its participants, reflects this sociohistorical context. I have found that certain sections of the interview schedule encourage generalizations about groups of international students based on race, ethnicity, or first language; for example, at the end of the second section, “Pre-University Education,” the following questions are added to the international student version of the survey:

FOR STUDENTS FROM NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING COUNTRIES:

12. When did you start learning English?
   • PROBE: Was it at school? At home?

13. Were any of your schools bilingual or English-only?
14. Did you speak English at home with your family? With your friends outside of school?

From this set of questions, we can see that the term “non-English speaking countries” is problematic due to the nature of World Englishes (cf. B. Kachru, 1992; B. Kachru, Y. Kachru, & C. Nelson, 2009; Kirkpatrick, 2007) and English as a Lingua Franca (cf. Jenkins, 2007; Seidlhofer, 2009). While many countries in the world do not use English as the common language of social interaction, people there can and do speak English for specific purposes. Also, in countries that are called English-speaking countries, there are minority populations who do not speak much English at home or in their communities. The vagueness of what constitutes a “non-English speaking country” means that participants may be judged as being from such a country based on the interviewer’s subjective interpretation. When it comes to the eight participants in this study, these questions were asked to a graduate student from India, where English is an official language, but not to a graduate student from France, where it is not. In the latter case, the interviewer starts to ask the questions, then says: “Oh, no, hang on actually that’s fine [pause] and [said very lightly] you’re from an English-speaking country, that’s fine.”

This statement reveals the sociocultural dynamic between interviewer and interviewee in one particular case, although the data is purely textual.

Assumptions about international students also appear in the section on discrimination. The first question in this section asks the student to identify her/his race

__________________________

4 While World Englishes are understood to be the English dialects spoken in non-Inner Circle countries (e.g. “Hong Kong English”, “Indian English”), English as a Lingua Franca refers to the English used to meet the needs of communication by two or more non-native speakers of English, e.g. during an international conference or business transaction. WEs are standardized but not “standard”, while ELF is spontaneous and situation-specific.
and ethnicity; the rest investigate her/his experiences with discrimination on different scales, e.g. at the university specifically or in Canada in general. Different questions probe for the individual’s experiences with discrimination versus her/his belief that discrimination exists for others of the same race or ethnicity, e.g.:

83. Since you came to Canada, have you had any experiences where you felt you were treated differently because of your race, ethnicity, or your nationality?

84. Have you had any experiences in Canada where you felt treated differently or unfairly for other reasons?

85. Do you feel that there are any challenges for people of your race, ethnicity, or nationality as a group in Canada?

86. Have you had any experiences where you felt you were treated differently because of your race, ethnicity or nationality at [the university] specifically?

Questions that ask learners to reflect on their experiences in Canada as arising from their race, ethnicity or nationality may encourage them to see their challenges as the product of cultural difference rather than competition over resources – a misperception challenged by critical sociolinguists (e.g. Kubota, 2004; Kubota & Lin, 2009; May, 1999). Still, such questions yield so much insight about the ideologies impacting international student and English learner narratives that I would hesitate to make them more politically correct. A “cleansed” interview schedule would not reflect the reality of naturally occurring discourse, and it is at the data analysis stage that this study can critically consider the socially constructed nature of linguistic competence and cultural difference.
4. Findings

4.1 Breakdown of the participants

Among this study’s participants, three were PhD students and five were Master’s students. Seven intended to try to find employment in North America in order to immigrate; the eighth was undecided as to where he settle after graduation, but was open to immigrating. (See Figure 5, with pseudonyms.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Country of origin</th>
<th>Degree program</th>
<th>Migration plans after graduation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Richard</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>Health Sciences (M)</td>
<td>Intends to find employment in the U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daisy</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Educational Administration (PhD)</td>
<td>Intend to find employment in Canada and immigrate to Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>Urban and City Planning (M)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sumire</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Occupational Therapy (PhD)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aiko</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Gender and Sexuality (M)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priya</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Statistics (PhD)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martine</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>Sociology (M)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhodri</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Engineering (M)</td>
<td>Undecided; open to immigrating to Canada</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5. International graduate students in this study

The narratives of the first four graduate students in the above chart (Richard, Daisy, Marie, and Sumire) were largely narratives of cultural conflict, highlighting participants’ dissatisfaction with their marginalized positions in their imagined professional communities. These students evinced a strong tendency to form binary contrasts between their home cultures and the host culture. Another three students (Aiko, Priya, and Martine) showed greater capability in negotiating the value of their previously existing capital to gain their desired professional networks and increased cultural capital. The last
student, Rhodri, had not yet formed a clear picture of his migration plans after graduation, and appeared to feel less anxiety about his linguistic and cultural capital than the others who were attempting to immigrate to the U.S. or Canada. In the rest of this chapter (Chapter 4), I present each student’s narrative in light of her/his imagined community after graduation, before moving to Chapter 5 for a cross-analysis of the students’ interviews.

4.2 Linguicism and marginalization: Richard, Daisy, Marie and Sumire’s narratives

Richard: “I come from a place where they are usually communicating with each other frequently, society is more communicative.”

Before coming to Canada, Richard worked for four years as a doctor in Peru. During this time, he sought a Master’s program in Health Sciences in North America to dedicate part of his career to research, and when the interview took place he was just beginning his studies. He tells the interviewer that he eventually hopes to work in health and population research at “an institution… that usually gives or suggests health policies… in America.”

Richard’s disclosure that he was a doctor prior to coming to Canada appears to surprise the interviewer, as seen in the following exchange:

Richard: I get my degree as a general practitioner, that’s the name [of] the degree in my country. … That is equivalent to the eight years that I think any other countries they have to do to get that degree. Yeah. So … that is the only degree that I have. And after that … I was dedicated basically to work as a general practitioner, as a medical practitioner.

Interviewer: Oh, so you’re a doctor.
Richard: Yes, [chuckles] in my country I worked four years as a doctor.

Interviewer: Oh. Interesting.

Richard: [chuckles] I didn’t tell you? [chuckles]

Interviewer: Oh no, I guess when people start programs you make assumptions, but, uh… [chuckles] Oh that’s interesting too... [Voice trails off] Um, let’s see. And when did you start, uh, when did you start learning English?

Richard: Basically in my country when … I was in the university I went to an English academy, an English school. And I started there to learn English in a program of two years. Actually in order to get the degree I had to pass an English exam.

Interviewer: Oh, interesting.

Richard: Of course you don’t need to be so good [chuckles] to pass the exam and maybe that’s why, sometimes I have problems…

Richard states that he found it hard at the beginning to have an acceptable TOEFL score, suggesting that he had to take the test more than once. Finally, he achieved his desired score, and has now been in his Master’s program for a month and a half. The things that have impressed him so far, he says, are the research opportunities and the “tremendous” diversity at the university. He describes his professors and colleagues as well trained and open to learning more about other peoples and other fields, and says that they stimulate him to develop his medical knowledge: “I feel more committed with my career because of that.”

Although he uses the adjectives “beneficial” and “helpful” to refer to the English support classes at the university’s International House, Richard is challenged by the
technical language of his courses. He needs to devote so much time to his reading that he cannot simultaneously handle a graduate assistantship (at least, according to him and his supervisor), which would offer further opportunities for networking and developing English skills for his profession. He says, “They are always considering the possibility that you not only study but also develop your career in that field, the field of your studies. … That is not one thing that I need now. Because they – my supervisor told me, suggested that it would be better if I only dedicated my time to study these first three months, two or three months, and then gain experience in the researcher role.”

The other major challenge Richard describes is making friends with international, English-speaking colleagues, rather than just the Spanish-speaking people he knows in a non-professional context. Describing the people in his department, who are from Saudi Arabia, Canada, and the U.S., he says: “Basically we treat each other professionally but we are starting to talk in not a professional way, just to hang out and to share a time.” Of course, he has only known them for a month and a half, yet his rapport-building with other Spanish speakers in non-professional contexts has been much more rapid. His sister, who has lived in Vancouver for four years, introduced him to other Latin Americans; of these friends, he says, “We all have the same language – but not even the same background because it is difficult to find people [from Peru]. But… what would help us to understand each other is definitely the language.” He elaborates: “And that’s why we can go out and we can have fun, right? ... Because the environment here is more professional. I know I can do friends here, probably it is still early to know but I know they are really nice people… if I can pass the language barrier then maybe I’m gonna make good friends and we can still have fun, and hang out, and all those things.”
When the interviewer asks him what he wishes could be different about his university experience, Richard makes interesting comments about intercultural communication. He says that so far, he has felt welcome, but adds,

Probably one of the things that you notice in comparison for example to my country is that there is a lack of – or not lack, but a – probably people could communicate [with] each other more frequently. Probably that is one of the things that I noticed, is that in some cases when you don’t have a chance people don’t communicate. It is not common here that somebody… tells you “hi” and start a conversation. That is something that you hardly notice here. It is not common here, right? People are usually independent… they seem to want to be alone, or seem that they want you to respect their privacy. … Of course every society has its customs, and probably that is one of the customs here. … That is something that I can notice because I come from a place where they are usually communicating with each other frequently, society is more communicative.

He goes on to say that he does not mean to judge, and is still getting used to the culture:

I’m not saying that that’s good and this is bad. … Because I think it has advantages when you are in a society that they are always in communication, always open to hear, to say, to tell each other what they think, right? And here, maybe I am wrong. … I see that from my perspective, right? From my point of view as a Peruvian, right? And as somebody who just came here recently.

Daisy: “Because of the education that we receive in China, people are more humble.”

Daisy, who has professional networks in Canada, China, and the U.S., first came to Canada to work as an interpreter and translator at a Chinese-run investment and
technology company in this city. She stayed two years and gave birth to her daughter in Canada. Then she went back to China for two years before returning to Canada for her Master’s in Educational Administration, while her daughter remains in China for now. Meanwhile, her husband lived in Los Angeles for two years to get U.S. permanent residency, then returned to China, though he visits the U.S. two or three times per year to run their hotel in Los Angeles.

Daisy chose her graduate program, Educational Administration, because that was her field of work in China; she was an administrator at a private school. However, she says, “My [Master’s] program is for the public K-12 system, and to be an administrator [in Canada], at least I have to have teaching experience and teaching certificate in here... so it makes it impossible for me to find a job related to my major after graduation.” At the same time, she has not given up hope: “My plan is maybe to practice upon graduation, not go back to China in a rush. I want to get local experience, and then probably I’ll get working experience for a few years. And then, I will think about maybe going back home in China or staying here.” Her plan is to apply for permanent residency and hopefully progress to citizenship before she leaves the country: “At least before I get citizenship, I want to stay here, but after I have the citizenship, I will probably go back to China. I’m not sure yet. … If there are more or better job opportunities for me in China, I will probably go back home.” Her imagined transnational future is inextricably linked with the one she envisions for her child:

Applying for the permanent residence and getting working experience is… for my daughter, because she will come here to study. … She will finish grade 2 or 3 in China after she knows all the Chinese characters and after she can read Chinese.
And, now take here is for her. [Daisy means to say that once her daughter can read Chinese, she will take her daughter to Canada.] The younger to start a language [i.e. English], learning that language, is the better.”

In the meantime, however, Daisy needs to secure employment in Canada as a first step. In the pursuit of her transnational imagined community, she reports academic and social challenges, but of a different nature than those reported by Richard. In terms of academic challenges, she feels that it is the Western-centred readings more than the English language itself that makes it hard for her to understand course material and participate in class:

I’m not very familiar with Western philosophers, and it’s hard. … There were so many new concepts and ideas that I have never heard of. And, also, the readings. There are too many readings in one course. … Almost a lot of things that [were] discussed in class, I have no idea what they were talking about. They were talking about the school system… and what is happening in school. It is different from Chinese school, from my knowledge. So, it’s very difficult to participate in the class discussion. … I still lack of local insight and local knowledge.

Sometimes her classmates used acronyms for organizational structures that she was not familiar with; at other times, she felt frustrated whenever her Chinese friends in the program, who had been in Canada longer, discussed their ideas in English. However, she says, “I think that frustration and hard work make progress, and… yeah, sometimes it’s a good thing. Or, it’s not all bad.”

Another of Daisy’s challenges is to find employment in Canada, even part-time on-campus employment, commensurate with her level of professional experience. On
campus, she has not been able to obtain a research or teaching assistantship related to education, but works as an event assistant at the Graduate Student Society. Of this job, she says, “I think it’s more physical job that I had expected. … Most of the time you have to set up the room moving tables and chairs.” In order to gain entrance to her imagined professional community, she has decided to start by volunteering, working for a local crisis centre and visiting high schools to give presentations in stress management or suicide prevention. “But it only happens once a month,” she says. She hopes that this volunteering can give her experience with the B.C. school system and allow her to develop her presentation skills in English.

When asked how she spent most of her free time last week, Daisy says she was “working on the computer for [her] school [in China]. School wants to send students to Canada. So, I help them to get in touch with the local college.” Despite her own academic and professional difficulties in Canada and her general anxiety about her future career prospects after finishing her Canadian degree, she says that her career plan is to work as a guidance counselor at a school in Canada that recruits Chinese students to study here.

 Asked to describe the ethno-linguistic composition of her social circle in Canada, Daisy gives answers similar to Richard’s: she finds that people are generally friendly, and she has acquaintances who come from a range of countries, but it is difficult for her to get close to people who don’t speak her native language: “All my close friends are Chinese. … But also I have friends probably in my residence, and in my department. Those are from different countries. Some of them are from the States, or from Japan, from East Asian countries, and also from Canada as well.” Later on in the interview, she says, “I think I do have pretty close friends, Canadian friends. We met each other on the
I[nternational] House program at Christmas. I went to be a guest to their Christmas dinner. … So, we became friends. But not many. … I think maybe sometimes it’s hard to start a conversation with a Canadian. I don’t know if it’s because of discrimination or because of language or cultural barriers or anything. … If I don’t take the initia[tive], I will probably not get any friends.”

Speaking of challenges for Chinese people in Canada, Daisy says, “I think maybe because of the education that we receive in China, people are more humid [sic]. People are more (pause), they don’t boost themselves.” The interviewer supplies the right word: “Oh, they are humble?” “They are humble, yeah. Really humble and… shy. I think that’s a challenge to adjust to the life here in Canada. … I think Chinese people are, they don’t say that, ‘I’m the best, I’m great, I could do this, could do that,’ and not very good at sell themselves. So, it will be difficult for people to know you and have a positive opinion about you.” Through this statement, Daisy shows that she believes she cannot “sell” herself professionally, because self-promotion is not something she was trained to do in her culture.

When asked what she likes most about her university experience in Canada, she says it is the social challenge: “It probably would be better or feel more comfortable to hang out with Chinese friends and Chinese people. ... If you want to know Canadians, there are a lot of difficulties and frustrations you encounter.” Her biggest challenge is to make “not just acquaintance friends but close friends [with Canadians].” She does not speak of these difficulties, or her courses where the content is Western-centred, as entirely negative experiences, having said earlier in her interview that “frustration and hard work make progress.”
Marie: “In Jamaica we do things very spontaneous.”

Marie is doing a Master’s in Urban and City Planning. She says her parents struggled to give her a good education in the form of an undergraduate degree from the University of Technology in Kingston. During that degree, she didn’t have any family or acquaintances in the Jamaican capital, and boarding was very costly. Now, it is a similar situation in Canada, only this time she is the one investing in her own education. Describing this investment, she says: “When you leave Jamaica you go to Canada or the U.S. or England to study and you go back home… you have a better chance of getting the jobs than people who do study in Jamaica.”

Part of what drew her to Canada was six years of work in community development planning in Jamaica with Canadians. She says, “I was kind of impressed with the kinds of skills and the kind of new way of thinking that they brought to the process… how they see things very much different,” but she does not elaborate on these perspectives. Thus, it is unclear what concrete examples have given rise to her abstract assertion. What is clear from the assertion is that Marie believes Canadians to think differently from Jamaicans – indeed, she mentions perceived differences between the two groups’ ways of thinking throughout the interview.

At the same time that she values the views of colleagues from other countries, she believes the solutions to developing Jamaica are not to be found in North American scholarship: “When we are talking about developing a sustainable future… the North American way of doing things is not necessarily what we need to look at. … I think that in the developing world we do have solutions… if we start looking at working together
and start focusing on what we do best and stop looking at something that is elsewhere like North America.”

When asked about her migration plans after graduation, she says that she eventually plans to go back to Jamaica to be part of the process of development – but only after gaining “ten or twenty years” of work experience in Canada. She tells the interviewer that she wants to work here because “studying theory is one thing. Practice is another.” Even though she says her long-term plan is to return home, she intends to remain in Canada for at least half of her professional life, not because she believes Canadians have all the answers but because she can gain a lot of capital (economic and cultural) to bring back to Jamaica:

If I stay here I can gain resources that when I go back to Jamaica I can really have a very good life… resources can also mean personal development, it can also mean funding… you go back with something that you add value to what you have and when you go back there it’s more valuable than just staying here in Canada.

The rationale that Marie gives for investing in international postsecondary education is closely connected to her “better life story”, as we have seen with Daisy and Richard. She also makes similar comments to theirs about the social environment in Canada, describing people as friendly but hard to get close to. When she first arrived in this city at the start of her Master’s degree, settling in was relatively easy:

I find people to be very polite and helpful and just willing to assist you and even before you ask they are asking. So I think that’s what helped me to kind of feel a bit more comfortable. And then I started to go to church and those persons at
church they’ll prepare like food. … I mean a lot of food and a lot of love… and these are strangers! … In less than a week I was finding my way around…

It is important to note, however, that this hospitality was carried out on the part of an institution (i.e. a religious organization), and not by individuals themselves. While she experienced a warm welcome at the level of institutions, Marie found it challenging to get closer to individual colleagues and peers. For example, she felt intimidated by the gatekeepers in her professional community, particularly professors. These anxieties appear to have hindered the development of relationships with potential mentors. She says that although faculty in Jamaica behave in a more aloof way towards students (“You tend to approach your professor in a very formal way, very very formal”) she finds it easier to approach them than faculty in Canada:

I didn’t know what to expect so many times when I could have gone and shared the difficulties I was having with the professor, I wouldn’t do that. But if I was in Jamaica I wouldn’t be afraid to go and say, okay, I’m having these difficulties and I need some help. If I go to do that kind of thing here it’s very awkward for me. Because I just don’t know what to expect.

Academic writing is also a challenge: “When it comes on to assignment time I have a major block… I tend to talk like a Jamaican’s talk so that ordinary Jamaicans can understand. … But here… I’m recognizing that sometimes the language can, people will not understand how you write and that’s a big difference.” At this point the interviewer moves on to a different topic, rather than asking what she means by “Jamaican’s talk” or what aspect of her writing is not easily understood by Canadian readers (indeed, there could be a myriad of other reasons why she has difficulty getting her meaning across).
Reflecting on the culture in Canada, Marie says, “Canadians are very polite and sometimes they seem, nothing can go wrong for them.” She contrasts this disposition with that of Jamaicans: “We agree to disagree and sometimes we don’t even agree on anything but I mean, at least the point is out there and we argue, and we understand where people are coming from. Here it’s different. Difficult, because when people don’t agree with you you don’t know.” Another contrast between her Canadian university and her university in Jamaica, she feels, lies in the disconnection between the Graduate Student Society and graduate students at large. “To me it’s like two different bodies, graduate students over there and GSS have a society and I just don’t see the connection. … In first world you just leave everything to the government. … But in our reality we move things along. So we don’t just rely on a few people doing key things.” She also observes these cultural differences in extra-curriculars such as her dorm’s Residents’ Association, of which she is a council member: “I don’t know if it’s because it’s a different cultural context coming in now. … Where I’m coming from those things are mandatory. Students have to be involved to even get a place on campus. … Here you don’t necessarily have to participate in anything if you don’t feel.”

In addition to describing Canadians as politically passive, she describes them as lacking spontaneity in social situations (another kind of passivity):

Friends are very difficult to make. … Because, you can socialize but the socialization thing is very different… [here] people go on schedule meaning that if you want to go out and do something you have to go to a calendar and people schedule things in. I think that is also a block for me within the group thing
because in Jamaica we do things very spontaneous. We say how about, let us go
to dinner and we’re gone.

Marie goes on to say that her social circle consists of international students only: “The
people that I think are my friends here are all international students because somehow we
do relate.” When asked about Canadian students’ receptivity towards international
students, she says, “I think that they are being very receptive but I am not certain. I can’t
tell you where they are coming from if they really want to be friends because there’s this
politeness. … A politeness that you know, wanting to be very kind to you but I’m not
certain how genuine those are… you really have some nice people who you can over
time… detect that genuineness… but at first I wasn’t certain how to differentiate that.”

As a black student, she says that she has experienced racial discrimination, “but it’s
undertones. There are some people that when they talk to me they don’t look at me.”

Moreover, she mentions something similar to what Daisy says about her classmates
choosing topics that are barred to international students due to culture-specific content:

They’re having discussions and I am made to wonder if they think I don’t know
or notice these things [they discuss]. … And so I remember when I just came…
it’s as if okay, you don’t know this thing, you can’t contribute and so they’ll talk
around you. … Sometimes I really can’t control it but then… I relax a little bit
because I realize that people don’t really realize. … But then you feel as if you are
discriminated against.

She also says that during a job interview, one person was receptive to her while the other
wasn’t, and that it might have been due to race. Still, she isn’t sure: “And maybe too, I’m
thinking about it this way: If somebody comes to Jamaica and I’m in my organization and
I sit on the interview panel and they come and they really don’t know about the culture, the way of life at the organization, would I be willing to say okay, we could consider that person, maybe not.” At the same time, she doesn’t seem to think race would be an issue in Jamaica: “Even if somebody comes to Jamaica… I don’t feel ourselves being prejudiced because we are, we have five different races and we do collaborate well.”

Marie also wonders if racism is at work when she gets feedback on her papers:

Other international students face the same challenge… and we say, I think these people are racists you know (laughs). … Sometimes I think people will use the racist argument and sometimes I find myself doing it when you feel as if you are being challenged to come up higher.

The part about “being challenged to come up higher” echoes Daisy’s statement about the challenges of being an international student constituting a journey of self-improvement.

In the end, Marie concedes that the difficult thing about discrimination is that one can never be sure one is the victim of it, when the social environment does not permit its explicit expression: “If [racism is] there I would say that it is covert. Nobody gonna tell you… I don’t like you because you are black. They are not telling you that.” For her own case, she says, “I used to worry a lot, worry about things I had no control over. … But I think you have to worry more as an international student because at the end of the day it’s more difficult for you to get a job.”

Despite the challenges she has felt at this university, she still appreciates the prestige of studying here: “It’s one of the top 40 in the world. … It’s the possibility of improving your profile as an individual by just being connected… and also you have some great professors who have done some exciting work worldwide.” At the same time,
she would like to see more student participation in research: “I’d want to see… students to be more engaged with that process… where you can contribute to certain things and the avenues are there to contribute and you are motivated to do so.” Moreover, she says, “They also need to have opportunities for international students just coming in, for example, it’s difficult for international students to get a job on campus if they are not well connected, well positioned when you are applying to your advisors.”

She describes International House as not being of much benefit to international students since the services there are sporadic consultations with a time limit: “When you go to I-House you have specific time to meet with a person. … So, I think more can be done. I thought maybe I was one out of the few that struggle but every international student I talk with struggle. … SO I am not the only one.”

**Sumire:** “People really like games here. You have to perform.”

Sumire is the fourth student who speaks of linguistic and cultural marginalization leading to less than full participation in her imagined community. A third-year PhD student, she was working on her comprehensive exams at the time of her interview. Like Richard, Daisy, and Marie, Sumire did not receive discipline-specific English education until she began her graduate study abroad. After her undergraduate degree in occupational therapy in Japan, followed by four years of professional experience in Japan, she came to Canada to do an MA in Occupational Therapy in another city before pursuing her PhD in this city. When asked why she came to North America, she says, “Well, I think North America has developed research theories and techniques… when I was studying occupational therapy in Japan, even when I was working we learned, I learned a lot of Western models of occupational therapy imported from North America.”
Comparing her previous university to this one, she feels that the more multicultural environment of this university allows her more flexibility to negotiate how others perceive her linguistic competence. For one thing, professors here appear to be more tolerant of non-native English speaker graduate assistants, which has had a significant impact on her opportunities for professional development compared to those which were open to her during her MA:

[At my previous university] I applied for research assistant job… and I was rejected because of my lack of English competency. … [But here] my supervisor was saying, ‘Sumire, are you not going to work?’ and I was very surprised because it’s natural for them to, they are expecting international students to work. They don’t think, ‘Oh international students shouldn’t work… because of their lack of English competency.’ I appreciate that. … I don’t want to say that people in [previous city] discriminate against international students, but people here are more open to international students and immigrants. I’ve seen a lot of people from different countries working on campus and off campus. I don’t feel I’m incompetent as much…

Still, in both universities she has felt anxiety about the Western cultural expectation that students be vocal participants in their classes:

You have to be very active, actively involved in classroom discussions and even lectures; you are expected to have questions and to speak in class. So I had to improve my presentation skills… performing skills in class to be more active. … I still have difficulty. Maybe because of my English, but yeah maybe.
Similar to Richard, Sumire explains that she cannot spend as much time on professional development and social networking as a graduate student, instead having to devote most of her energies to reading and understanding the course material because it is written in her second language:

I am expected to participate in more social events and even exercise. But I have very strong work ethics because I am Japanese, traditional Japanese. I spent most of my time studying, studying, studying. … Although I’m fine in Japanese context but I see my friends expect me to come with them Friday nights, Saturday nights and Sunday. So I sometimes feel isolated but what can I do? I’m learning something very difficult in English as a second language. I can’t spend much time doing other things. A lot of grad students are very nice to me, very supportive but at the same time they are competing. We are competing each other to get grants, scholarship. So I can’t always come with them doing social work, social activities, events.

The irony of this orientation to her professional development is that graduate students must do “social work” as well as academic work – they need to attend conferences, build rapport with peers who will become their lifelong colleagues, and have leadership experiences on their CVs. At the same time, their place in their graduate programs will be jeopardized if their marks are too low, leading many students who struggle with academic English to focus on academics first and foremost, even if such an imbalance does not lead their being competitive in the job market later on. When asked what she plans to do after her PhD, Sumire says she that although she would like to stay in Canada, the situation appears as though she would more likely be hired in Japan: “I’m more competent in
Japan than in Canada,” she states. Moreover, she says that there are about 200 Occupational Therapy programs in Japan versus about 12-15 in Canada.

Despite these challenges, there are a few positive aspects to Sumire’s university experience. She has an award that covers all her tuition for four years, and a graduate entrance scholarship that is only given to one or two incoming students in her program. Secondly, she is satisfied with her progress towards her degree; she has completed her courses and will finish her comprehensive exams soon. Thirdly, she says she has a supportive supervisor, whose respect for Japanese culture seems to have partially compensated for Sumire’s lack of confidence:

She wants to learn Japanese and Japanese culture, so I appreciate that and more Japanese students are coming to my program. … The issues that I had is not just my issue and I can share issues and other difficulties with other students. I feel more valuable. I value myself by giving advice to new coming students because… I feel incompetent. I’m not doing as good as English speakers in class. I don’t (pause) I started to devalue myself. I’m losing my confidence. It happened when I was doing my Master’s and it’s happening right now. I really need to find things that I can contribute to.

Sumire yearns for some way to be active in her department because she feels that her participation mark in class is low: “I saw Canadian students speaking out more often and their comments make sense to me, although I still have difficulty explaining my ideas in a logical way. After I said something I found what I’ve said didn’t make any sense.” Rather than seeking friendships with domestic students who are native English speakers, she has formed a social circle that is mainly comprised of international students who speak
English as an additional language. Two of her close friends are from Japan; many of the rest are from other parts of Asia such as Singapore, Korea, and China. She says her best friend is from South Africa. When asked if she has any Canadian friends, she says: “Um, no, not really! … It’s hard to be honest to a Canadian but Canadian people are generally very friendly at first time but it’s very difficult to get closer.” (This statement is similar to other statements about Canadians made by Marie, Daisy, and Richard; hence Marie, like Sumire, has a circle of international student friends who speak English as an additional language, while Daisy’s and Richard’s social circles consist mainly of speakers of their native languages.)

Sumire makes an interesting statement about Canadians to explain her experiences of social marginalization: “I found most of Canadians, I don’t want to say all of Canadians, but a lot of Canadians hang out with their boyfriends or girlfriends not necessarily same sex friends.” Additionally, she says, “People really like games here. You have to perform. … I don’t know how to explain this. … It’s very language oriented. A lot of games are very cultural oriented. I’m not familiar with Canadian culture.”

In terms of whether she has experienced discrimination in Canada, she says she has not so far, but that could change once she starts her job search: “Although now that I’m a student and free (pause), I don’t find any discrimination, but I’m not sure what’s going to happen if I, I’m looking for jobs, I’m looking for very competitive jobs. … Now I’m a student I think a lot of people accept that, accept me as a student, but I don’t know if I’m getting into competitive areas I’m not sure if I’m discriminated against or not.”

Overall, her experience at this university is a step up from the other Canadian university where she did her Master’s. There is more diversity and friendliness towards
international students here, and she has a large scholarship to pursue her PhD. However, in terms of social and professional participation, many barriers still remain for her, and she does not appear confident that she will find employment in Canada after graduation.

In the next section, I discuss another three international graduate students who appear much more satisfied with their degree of participation in their imagined professional communities, despite also coming from non-Inner Circle countries and speaking “non-standard English.” To investigate why they might have been more advantaged in negotiating identities as competent English language users, I explore the avenues they took to gain cultural capital valued by cultural gatekeepers (either domestic students or an international set of peers) and the resources that allowed them to do so.

4.3 Cultural capital and positive trajectories: Aiko, Martine, and Priya’s narratives

Aiko: “…in a general sense [international school] helped a lot to think about things that are outside of Japan.”

Aiko first came to Canada to study at a local college. After two years, she transferred to the university to complete her undergraduate degree, and was pursuing her Master’s degree in the same field, Gender and Sexuality, when she was interviewed. Apart from one cousin, she has no Japanese family in Canada, but she has an American partner whom she is engaged to, and they are in the process of applying for Canadian permanent residency. Aiko says that being in Canada has changed her life goals:

My dream was to be a foreign ambassador, you know, a Japanese diplomat in other countries. But now I am not interested in government jobs or having a prestigious job anymore, I want to do something that I enjoy, something that I can give back to people. … Being in Canada and… knowing people who do things that I wouldn’t
have thought of doing has allowed me, in a sense, to be myself. To feel okay about wanting to do something that may not have meaning to other people.

Aiko’s initial dream of being a foreign ambassador is perhaps a product of the international schooling she received before coming to Canada. She describes her Japanese high school as having two divisions, “normal” and “international.” Each grade had ten classes of about forty students, and one of these ten classes was an international class. In that class, Aiko says, “out of 40 people, half of the people were… returnees, meaning that they had lived in other countries even though they were Japanese, or they could be foreigners too because of their parents’ job.” Students in this international stream had many more English classes than students in the normal high school, as well as English-, Chinese-, Spanish- and French-speaking teachers. Aiko reflects:

In a general sense it helped a lot to think about things that are outside of Japan. We had a school trip at the end of three years, and we went to China rather than going to somewhere in Japan. Or, we would have a conversation group where we can talk in English even though everyone is Japanese, or we would have a visit to places where there are a lot of foreigners.

In addition to being in the international stream during high school, Aiko did an exchange year, as did her two sisters; she studied in Chile, her middle sister in France, and the youngest sister in Honduras. During her study abroad year in Chile, she went to a British school with more “Caucasian looking Chilean people” than “Indian darker skinned people.” When the interviewer asks how all these high school experiences prepared her for university in Canada, Aiko replies that they did not prepare her academically: “When I came to Canada… I found a lot [of] academic components, I’m
talking specifically more about how to write an essay. What I learned in high school
didn’t help at all.” However, she says, “But in terms of attitudes or cultural
understandings, being open minded, those things [helped], yeah definitely.”

Upon transferring to the university to begin the third year of her BA, Aiko faced
substantial adjustment challenges, having come from a small college where all the
students knew each other and took classes in the same building: “I preferred that
environment.” Additionally, she decided not to live in student housing because she felt
“they do silly stuff, they do drinking and partying and stuff; I was not interested in those
activities. But at the same time I wanted to make friends or meet people who I feel
comfortable with.” She met people in classes, but it was difficult to keep in touch with
them since they also did not live on campus. This difficult adjustment period occurred
two or three years before the interview – how she describes her present life to the
interviewer suggests she has settled down since and found a niche in the city. “I was
really depressed. … I didn’t feel comfortable, I didn’t know people. I always kind of
stepped back from many situations where I needed to involve with people,” she says of
her early days at the university. “But now I think I know fairly good number of people
and I come to school not only to study but to meet people that I like.” (At present, she has
a partner and lives in co-operative housing with him and four others.) Close to 60 or 70
percent of her friends are international, she says, since they understand her experiences
better than Canadians:

It’s easier to talk to international friends. They have more things to talk about, more
shared experiences. … Like how difficult it is to open a bank account, to how we
miss our families or our countries. … It’s easier to talk to them because you know
they’ve gone through it. With Canadians you don’t know if they would get it because they have not been through it, unless they have lived in another country.

In addition to overcoming the social challenges of the past two or three years, Aiko has also overcome professional challenges. When she was a third-year student, she felt uncomfortable living off her parents’ money, yet her non-resident status prohibited her from working: “The fact that I was not able to make my own money really affected my self-esteem negatively.” However, she claims that in the last three years the government decided to allow international students to work up to 20 hours per week. This change in legislation by the time she was doing her Master’s degree coincided with her more developed social network at the university:

Finally, I think after I got to know professors and stuff, two of them offered me research assistantship jobs. So that was really good… my self-esteem in relation to my financial situation really dramatically changed after the government changed its policy for international students to be able to work. … Knowing that opportunity is there… made me feel different. But I think at the time I was too busy with my school work, so at the time I didn’t really work but knowing that I can still work is very different.

This statement is one of the most telling in her interview, showing that even though her actual work situation didn’t change, her self-perception did. Knowing that international students were being given employment and contributing to the host society made her feel more positively about her situation, and she was able to find a job when she was ready to work. After volunteering for a local non-profit organization for three years, she was asked to fill the vacancy left by a volunteer coordinator. Although she has since left that
job in order to focus on writing her MA thesis, after graduation, she says, “I might go into non-profit again, but maybe profit. I don’t know.” She also doesn’t know where she would settle permanently, but she and her partner plan to live in Canada for now.

When asked whether discrimination exists for Japanese in Canada, Aiko says she hasn’t experienced any, though she acknowledges it existed in the past, and may exist in less diverse parts of the country: “I know historically yes… but I should say I only know the extent of a big city. I don’t know, and probably why I’m not really interested in living in other cities.” She says her partner’s family has invited them to live in the States, which she does not want to do: “I want to live comfortably, not necessarily because I want to be with Japanese people, but because if there are more Japanese people or more groups of people from a different background there is more chance that people who live there are more accepting and acceptable of my culture.”

Martine: “English was my major, with a specialization in North American civilization.”

Like Aiko, Martine says she had more English instruction than the average person in her country due to an international education: “I went to a special program called an Anglo-American program that doesn’t really exist anywhere but at my high school. We had more English classes than the average student, some classes that were in English that usually people would take in French so like history and sports, that sort of thing. Math I think for one year as well.” After finishing grade 12, she repeated the grade in the U.S., and holds both French and American high school diplomas. Her first study abroad experience being in high school, and her first exposure to English in the content areas occurring in an international high school, are experiences that place her and Aiko in
contrast to Richard, Daisy, Marie, and Sumire, who did not study abroad until they decided to pursue graduate degrees in Canada.

Martine completed her undergraduate degree in Paris, majoring in English with a specialization in North American civilization. She began a Master’s degree in English before coming to this university as a one-year exchange student. During that year, she decided to transfer here and to change her major from English to Sociology, for reasons she doesn’t discuss. However, she does say that she was surprised by her acceptance into the Sociology program: “I was an English major back home so I find it strange enough in that way that I would manage to get into the Sociology program because I don’t have much of a sociology background.”

Although she has been in Canada for only about a year, she says that it is no less home to her than France: “It’s like being home in two places and never really being home because home is not one place anymore.” After her MA, she is not sure whether she will do a PhD, and is also unsure whether she will stay in Canada or go to France. The U.S. is a third option due to the prestigious nature of PhD programs there, “…but that’s the extent to which I would move,” she says. When asked where she would like to settle permanently, she cannot answer, but would like to raise her children bilingual in English and French. She also admits, “I do project myself into a teaching job and… I do see myself fitting better as a teacher or professor here than in France.”

Her desire to be a professor at a Canadian university arises from her positive perception of the Canadian tertiary education system. Unlike Sumire, who feels challenged by the amount of discussion required in Canadian graduate classes, Martine describes it as just the thing she had been seeking and didn’t find in France:
In Canada and the U.S. [class] is very discussion based… we can talk through like what we think… what we’ve understood from the readings. … Whereas in France a lot of times it’s more the teacher is standing and reading and doing a lecture and you’re taking notes and you’re never getting a say in anything, right? … There isn’t that sort of dynamic between the students that there is here.

She also has very positive views of Canadians. Regarding her arrival in Canada, she says:

There were a few days where I didn’t have a place to stay and I found this family that were willing to host me for a few days. … Like every single experience I’ve had with North Americans is exactly that, like they just welcome you into their life like you’ve always been there… they, like, lent me a bike, they showed me around, they invited me to one of the islands.

Thus, Martine’s greatest challenge since coming to Canada has not been with making friends or participating actively in her classes; it has been with academic writing. She is not a native speaker of English and has had to learn a new discipline. In addition, despite having been admitted to an MA program in Sociology, she had “never written a research paper… like looking for sources and reading articles and all that stuff.”

Moreover, she states: “Here they’re always so obsessed with plagiarism… I’d never heard about plagiarism once in my three years of Bachelors back home.” For these reasons, learning where to find and how to use secondary sources was a challenge, and she says that she had to teach herself how to use them in her own papers: “No one really ever like told me, like sat me down and went like, ‘So this is where you have to go, and this is what you’re supposed to do and that’s how you’re gonna get like your papers and your articles.’” Nevertheless, her high reading proficiency in English, given her
undergraduate major in the subject, likely helped her to navigate the enormous amount of information on the Internet in a new discipline, and her specialization in North American civilization likely helped her understand many topics in Sociology. Other than academic writing, she says she has no difficulty with her studies: “I have no problem like speaking in public, I have no problem understanding the ideas, so it really came down to it’s a new kind of writing that I have to get used to.”

Since she has been able to grasp the new field quickly, she has also been able to find time to work as a teaching assistant in addition to doing her course readings and papers: “I was like, ‘sure,’ ’cause since I do project myself possibly teaching in the future it’s also important to kind of like get a foot in the door.” Of teaching, she says, “What I like about this job is that… it works in relation with my studies so a lot of time what I’ve seen I’ll use for my lecture or I used a number of things that I’ve seen in class before and that’s part of what I like about it definitely, that it kind of works together and that they’re not in opposition in a lot of ways.” The seamless integration of Martine’s studies and work experience, which pleases her, stands in contrast to the clash that Daisy experiences between her major in Educational Administration and her menial job moving tables and chairs for the Graduate Student Society. Martine’s Sociology coursework and teaching assistantship also complement her main extra-curricular activity – being an administrator for the Pride club and facilitating a weekly discussion group. “I’m gonna do a lecture as someone from Pride in a couple of weeks in the psychology class,” she says. “Preparing my lecture, I showed a clip from this teen movie… like I am working toward my lecture but at the same time for me it’s really something that I enjoy doing so I don’t see it as work per se.”
Overall, she is busy but aware of her limits: “I also want to leave time, like I (pause) submitted a paper for a conference… I don’t wanna take on too many responsibilities now knowing that this is coming up.” Her involvement in scholarly activities suggests that she is confident presenting her research even if she has only recently entered this field.

Of the eight international graduate students in this study, Martine is only one of two who describes herself as active in research and conferences, and the only one who describes her social network as comprised mainly of Canadians. (She is the only white student of the eight, and the only one from Western Europe.) When asked how many French friends she has at the university, she says she has one, or very few: “I think that’s actually, I did that on purpose. … Because I, I’m in Canada to not be in France.” She calls it “great” to connect with French people from time to time (and calls one of her French friends “awesome”), but states that she doesn’t want to look back on her years in Canada and find that she only has had French friends:

I think you need to be aware of the ways in which your country is not the perfect place in the world, right? … I find that a lot of the time French people tend to… see France as this place where it’s perfect, and so much better, and I don’t like that attitude. … If you’re gonna be in Canada, not to say that you have to embrace Canada as the perfect place in the world but I think you have to see the pros and cons about each place and I find a lot of people just don’t do that.

While she has many Canadian friends, she says that she doesn’t have many international friends from countries other than Canada or France: “Maybe like a couple… that I meet through other friends… and through International House as well, but like not in my close
circle of friends.” When asked if she has experienced any discrimination based on race or ethnicity, she replies in the negative, saying that the only thing that might cause her to be discriminated against is her sexuality, which can remain undisclosed. She mentions that it would not be the same with race: “We live in this world where it’s noticeable if you’re a person of colour whereas if you’re white you kind of blend in… we would think of white as sort of like the default, the norm, kind of invisible whereas it is like if you are black or if you’re like something else right people pay attention to that…”

When asked if there are any additional programs or services that would have made her transition to the university easier, she says, “No, but again I shouldn’t think it should be generalized. I was in a position where for me the transition could be smooth and I don’t think that’s necessarily true [for everyone], right?”

Priya: “I had little bit difficulties... because we were not familiar with spoken English that much, [but] it was not that difficult because Statistics is mostly technical.”

Priya, who has lived in Canada for about six years, is a postdoctoral student at this university, where she did her PhD. She tells the interviewer, “I’m looking for permanent job and truly speaking I don’t have any preference over the academics jobs or the industry job, so whichever I get better offer, I will go for it.” She also says, “I would like to stay in Canada because I found in Canada is a welfare country and the lifestyle is better than USA.”

In terms of demographic background, Priya shares more in common with Richard, Daisy, Marie and Sumire than with Aiko and Martine, having completed her secondary education and undergraduate degree in a language apart from English, and having received her first English-medium instruction in her graduate program in Canada. Though
English is an official language in India, none of her high school courses were taught in English, except the English-as-a-foreign-language class: “I started speaking English after I came here because in India people usually learn English written like [i.e. in written rather than oral form]. We know the grammar and everything, but we don’t speak English.” Nevertheless, much of Priya’s academic preparedness for her Canadian graduate program arose out of her strong background knowledge in her field of study, Statistics. With some pride, Priya says she did her Master’s at the Indian Statistical Institute, saying that she took twenty courses within two years in addition to doing projects. For each course, there were “at least two exams, like midterm and endterm, and sometimes… weekly exams as well.” When asked how her previous education prepared her to study in Canada, she says,

> The name of the institute helped me a lot to get this admission because that is one of the best institute[s] in India (laughs)… To some extent it prepared us and also like the level of courses they offered also helped here – like theoretical background, like good hold of the subject.

In addition, her Master’s degree appears to have been unique in that there were fewer students than teachers: “The institute I came from, the teaching student ration (sic) is always more than one. Like there are more teachers than the students in class.” Of the 14 students in her class, eight went to North America at the same time to pursue PhDs.

Despite this rigorous training, when Priya applied to the university her Master’s degree was not enough to enter the PhD program immediately; she was informed that she had to be a Master’s student again for one year since the university did not recognize Master’s programs from India. This would entail taking six courses and getting good
marks in all of them, as well as passing a qualifying examination. Nevertheless, the university offered her full financial support, including teaching and research assistantships until the end of her PhD. Thus, Priya steeled herself to meet these requirements and turned her attention to the process of settling in. This involved gathering support and advice from many people, and she says that graduate students and postdoctoral scholars helped her “establish [herself] in the city,” that professors helped her “choose the courses… towards [her] transfer,” and that the Canadian lady whose house she shared helped her adjust to Canadian culture.

After about a year in Canada, Priya moved to accommodation on campus. At the end of another year, she moved off campus with a partner whom she says was born in India, though she does not mention his citizenship. They now have a child and have bought a home in an outlying suburb, and both are employed by the university as postdoctoral scholars.

Asked about any English language struggles, Priya says they existed at the beginning but do not bother her now. The harder part of her adjustment, she says, came from learning how to do computer programming, and having to teach a course on a programming language she did not know:

There was a little bit language problem, but later it has never occurred… I can easily handle that, but for the application for our programming part, we [in India] had never been exposed to computer that much or programming, so that thing I have to learn. And the other thing is TA. … I did not have any idea about the programming language using for that course, so I had a kind of negative response because I had to learn, but I don’t know why they gave [me] that. … Later, it was
smooth and then I got involved in a project at St. John’s Hospital, so I never had any problem with funding, so I always had full funding, like full scholarship. I did not have to do TA much, I just did TA as a kind of an extra thing during the summer.

When the interviewer asks what kind of project Priya was involved in at St. John’s, she says it had to do with genotyping: “I did not deal with the patients directly, but I dealt with the data generated from the patients. … I was a student getting a full fellowship from them to conduct my PhD work.” Her postdoctoral position is on a different research topic altogether: “It would be going to be on bio-fuel kind of data... Bayesian models, so I don’t have any idea about that. I have to learn.” Still, her advisor’s belief that she was capable of learning on the job led to Priya’s being hired by his colleague. “When I was at the finish line… one of our professors said… he was looking for a postdoc, so my supervisor told me you can talk with this guy. … So [we] both were actually kind of matched, so I started that postdoc.”

Later in the interview, she states that she prefers research to teaching, which is corroborated by her choice to teach only in the summer. Her passion for scholarship is evident in the way she describes her interdisciplinary research community:

You can collaborate with other departments very easily, which is very good thing when you can collaborate with person from Medicine, [or] from Agriculture, and you can apply your method and you can test your method. You can test your knowledge with other people. That’s really good… also peoples are friendly in general. … There is a kind of a good community here.

5 A pseudonym.
When the interviewer asks her what she has found challenging as a graduate student in Canada, she describes that challenge – collaborative research – with enthusiasm:

You have to be on the speed all the time… To communicate with the people, it’s really important… It’s not it’s your own thing. Like you don’t have to just sit and read and read… the rather important thing, is basically you have to communicate with the other people and also like help them as well. Get information from them and incorporate all the information in your research, so it’s more likely a group work rather than individual work.

These professional social circles, comprised of an international set of colleagues who communicate in English, are unlike her personal social circles that consist of Hindi speakers. In response to the question of what proportion of her friends are from India, she says, “95%.” In Canada, she does not appear to be self-conscious about her race, ethnicity, or first language. The only source of anxiety is her citizenship status when it comes to securing a job:

There is a strong community from India, so they have been here for many years, so it’s not that difficult… there’s not much minority problem, but when you are applying for job – high level job – then there is the issue of not being the Canadian citizen or permanent residentship. … I was applying for job, there was always a preference for Canadian citizens or permanentship, which I was not. … One person straightly told me, ‘Like you are not Canadian citizen, you are not PR, then why I should… appoint you?’ … The appointment should be totally on the technical things like how eligible you are. … It should be dependent on your level of expertise; you have – the knowledge or like experience.
Thus far, Priya has had five or six years of Canadian work experience in her field, and seems to feel well adjusted in Canada both personally and professionally, but all her work experience has arisen out of academic fellowships (PhD and postdoctoral). Outside of academia, she senses that she will remain uncompetitive until she attains citizenship or permanent residency status: “We did not think about [moving to] other country like Europe, or Australia, New Zealand, but if we don’t get anything here, then definitely we have to look for other options.” Unlike Sumire, Priya doesn’t mention going back to her home country, and lists other Western countries as alternative options if her employment search proves unsuccessful in Canada.

The other graduate student from India, Rhodri, is the eighth and last participant in this study. While Priya has a clear goal of migrating to Canada, having spent many years here, Rhodri has just arrived to do his Master’s and his migration goals are uncertain (though he is open to the possibility of remaining in Canada after his degree). His investment in Canadian higher education is therefore different from Priya’s, and so is his way of navigating his university experiences at a stage when his future imagined communities are largely undecided.

4.4 Investment in the degree but not the culture: Rhodri’s narrative

*Rhodri: “I might stay here for the lifetime or else I might go to some other part of the world which will suit me.”*

Rhodri says that he began learning English in preschool in India, and that he attended schools which were English-only. This fact, however, does not mean he attended an international school – he may have attended a public school functioning under a government assimilationist policy that mandated English and/or Hindi as the
medium of instruction. He says that students in his high school could take other
languages as second or third languages; thus, he studied his mother tongue (Tamil) as a
secondary language. He went on to do his undergraduate degree in Engineering at “one of
the premier institutions in Chennai,” the part of India where he is from.

When asked why he came to Canada for graduate school, he says, “I had more of
an experience towards theoretical kind of subjects and coming over to… er, an advanced
developed country like Canada or the U.S. would be a practical experience for me.”
When asked to compare his education in Chennai with his education in Canada, he again
mentions a division between theory and practice: “In India, the syllabus is really good…but the way that they examine is really bad. But in Canada they give more emphasis on
practical knowledge and experimentation… so that way it is better.” This division seems
to be one that Rhodri has subjectively constructed, for when he is asked how his previous
education prepared him for graduate school, he says that his Bachelor’s degree gave him
“background experience on most of the concepts… fundamentals [in Engineering], as
well as “a couple of years of experience as a research trainee… in Chennai.” An
alternative explanation for his pursuit of Canadian higher education could be more
personal: he says that the university conducts research in his field of interest and that his
supervisor provides him with funding.

Although Rhodri appears dedicated to study in his field, he appears to be having
difficulties with academic English. He says he is “just taking two courses this time and
auditing one course” (the “this time” implying that three courses was too heavy a load the
previous semester). It appears that his English is not that fluent compared to other
participants in this study, despite his English-medium schooling in India – his interview
is short, 13 pages, compared to those of most participants, which are at least 20 pages long; some are even over 30 pages. He also says, “I have mixed opinions from different persons for whether to go for internships right now… or do my thesis in full flow… I’m still in a dilemma to choose what I’m going to do right now.”

Rhodri doesn’t mention any part-time jobs, but is involved in extra-curriculars centred around being an Indian international student. He says he spends five to six hours per week on UTSAV (ISA) (Indian Students’ Association) and SEWA (another South Asian club whose name is the Sanskrit word for “selfless service”). He tells the interviewer, “You get to know more and more people… especially from our own community… so that helped me a lot… in getting more information as I said already.” Later, when asked what proportion of his friends are from India, he says, “99.99%.” His response to the question “Have you found any differences between making international friends and making Canadian friends?” suggests he has not sought many non-Indian friends, and is hypothesizing what it would be like to befriend people not from his home country: “It doesn’t matter if a person is from any background… as long as he is willing to make friends… it shouldn’t be a problem.” The interviewer then asks, “How receptive do you think Canadians are being, in being friends with international students?” “They are quite open to anyone… as I said already… it depends upon the individual person” is the reply.

When asked if he has experienced discrimination in Canada, he says, “No… I’m quite happy with what people feel toward racism here. I’m covered.” The interviewer then poses the same question as a general one – “Do you feel that there are any challenges for people of your race, ancestry, or nationality as a group in Canada?”
Rhodri answers, “Definitely, they are shining in every part of the world. … [But] they are capable of managing in any situation, coping up with any problems.”

With regard to his migration plans, he says, “I might stay in order to get a job. … If I get better options than what I get here I might go for the new place… or probably another part of Canada.” He also says, “If I’m interested in more education I might enroll for [a] PhD.” Asked where he would settle permanently, he says, “In the long run the place must be habitable by most of the Indian community… so that I might bring my parents also to stay along with me. So… I might stay here for the lifetime or else I might go to some other part of the world which would suit me.”

Like Priya, Rhodri seems content to have an ethno-centric circle of friends (though Priya’s professional network is international). When asked what his greatest social challenge is, he says, “I haven’t faced any challenge as such.” However, when asked about his greatest academic challenge, he says it is his entire graduate program: “My Master’s is a big challenge for me… and hopefully I might clear it.” Thus, his adjustment difficulties in Canada appear to be mostly academic. He still appears to be in the early stages of determining what his imagined community might be, and does not speak of struggles related to gaining entrance into such a community.
5. Discussion of findings

5.1 Research Question #1: What is each international graduate student’s imagined community after graduation? What are students’ investments in these imagined communities?

Most of the participants in this study have hopes of finding employment in Canada or North America. Richard hopes to work for a health policy organization and says, “I know [in] America I can find them”; Daisy plans to bring her daughter to Canada because “the younger to start a language… the better”; Marie wishes to gain Canadian work experience for “ten or twenty years” before returning to Jamaica to share her professional expertise; Aiko is applying for Canadian permanent residency with her partner; Priya has gotten married, had a child, and bought a home in Canada; Sumire and Martine would rather be academics in Canada than in their home countries. Only Rhodri appears equally open to staying or leaving after graduation, depending on the opportunities that arise for him.

While almost all of these students are highly invested in remaining in Canada, differences are apparent in the investments of students whose interviews contain strong feelings of cultural marginalization and cultural polarization, and the investments of students who say they have not experienced such marginalization (e.g. Martine and Aiko). Many of these feelings appear to arise from individual attitudes, while others appear to arise from funds of cultural capital. Those that arise from funds of cultural capital will be discussed with regard to the second research question. To answer the first research question, “What are students’ investments in these imagined communities?”,

6 However, Martine suggests that discrimination may exist for others, and Aiko says that it may exist in less diverse parts of the country.
individual differences exist in terms of each learner’s attitude towards the knowledge s/he has come to Canada for.

The four students who experience the most cultural marginalization speak at length about how the host country’s cultural capital is essential to their “better life” story – their investment in this cultural capital is an investment in a cosmopolitan education which they believe will advance them professionally. Marie says, “If I stay here I can gain resources [so] that when I go back to Jamaica I can really have a very good life”; Sumire says that “North America has developed research theories and techniques… when I was studying occupational therapy in Japan, even when I was working we learned, I learned a lot of Western models of occupational therapy imported from North America”; Richard admires the fact that the university has “people that come… from different part of the world” and “professors [who are] really well-trained.” As for Daisy, she plans to have her daughter complete certain grades in China and others in Canada to gain the best possible combination of Chinese and English education: “She will finish grade 2 or 3 in China after she knows all the Chinese characters and after she can read Chinese. And, [at that point] take here is for her.” These graduate students do not appear to view themselves as having hybrid cultural identities or as part Canadian; each speaks of himself or herself as a Peruvian, Chinese, Jamaican, or even a “traditional Japanese” person who is acquiring the English language and foreign cultural capital to enter her/his imagined international communities. Therefore, their quest to accumulate cultural capital may inadvertently fuel the systemic inequality and perpetual marginalization they face as English learners. As long as they remain largely focused on ways that their imagined communities can enrich them, they may not recognize the ways in which their existing linguistic and intellectual
capital can be assets to those imagined communities, a self-recognition that is necessary step to negotiating better subject positions.

The other four participants in the study – Rhodri, Martine, Aiko, and Priya – are able to draw on their existing linguistic resources to the extent that they feel they are contributing to the university community in significant ways. Rhodri, for example, has found a niche in a South Asian, Tamil-speaking group of community service-oriented students, while the other three have used their other intellectual resources (apart from the English language) to gain legitimacy of access to practice in professional communities that would allow for further opportunities for English development. It is these four cases that yield the most “new” information for critical sociolinguists, as I will discuss below.

Rhodri, who constructs his investment in Canadian higher education as the pursuit of a degree rather than belonging in an international group of peers, says that co-ethnics constitute “99.99%” of his friends. The only extra-curriculars he is involved in are South Asian cultural clubs that help him connect with other Tamil-speakers, including the interviewer. When asked if he has made friends through these clubs, he replies in the affirmative, pointing out that the interviewer is one of them: “Yeah… (in Tamil) you’re there (laughs).” Asked about his main social challenge, he says, “I haven’t faced any challenge as such.” While it is possible that he has retreated into a Tamil-speaking community after being socially rejected by English-speakers, there is no concrete evidence in the interview to suggest this is the case. However, there is strong evidence that Rhodri is more interested in improving his English for academic purposes than for social purposes. When asked why he came to Canada to study, he replies, “There were two reasons: one was the research field of interest which matched mine and second was
the funding which was provided by my supervisor.” Having found a niche among the university’s South Asian student groups, Rhodri appears to be navigating his social networks according to his investments for the future. While he appears to be challenged by academic English and is striving to improve his grasp of the language for research purposes, he does not appear to think of English as his primary language of socialization. Wherever he settles, he says that the place “must be habitable by most of the Indian community.” In his narrative, we can see that an international student with an ethnocentric social circle may feel relatively well adjusted to the host society if that student’s imagined communities are in line with her/his expectations when s/he came to Canada.

However, Rhodri is a singular case; many of the other participants have sought and struggled to build international social networks. When seeking to enter these imagined communities, they must find ways to compensate for the linguistic capital that they are perceived to lack with alternative intellectual resources. Martine and Priya, for instance, draw on their expertise in their fields of study – Sociology in Martine’s case and Statistics in Priya’s case. Martine’s passion for her discipline and for teaching manifests itself in the way she discusses at length how her courses and research relate to her job as a teaching assistant: “…a lot of time what I’ve seen I’ll use for my lecture or I used a number of things that I’ve seen in class before and that’s part of what I like about it… that it kind of works together and that they’re not in opposition in a lot of ways.” Priya, like Martine, describes her greatest investment in Canadian higher education not as an increase in cultural capital but as a passion for her field of study: “You can collaborate with other departments very easily, which is very good thing when you can collaborate with person from Medicine, [or] from Agriculture, and you can apply your method and
you can test your method.” She also says, “Get information from them and incorporate all the information in your research.”

These two graduate students show the importance of exceptional keenness towards one’s major in order to remain motivated despite academic English challenges or cultural marginalization. When she first came to the university, Martine had some background in North American civilization due to her undergraduate degree in English, but had to teach herself how to write a research paper in the social sciences. Priya was asked to do a year of Master’s coursework because the university did not recognize Master’s degrees from India, even though she had graduated from a prestigious and rigorous program in her home country. Through these challenges, Martine’s passion for the social sciences would have helped her to persist through the vast amount of reading in her second language, and Priya’s determination to be a scholar-researcher in Statistics helped her to maintain her patience during her first year of Master’s coursework so that she could go on to do a PhD. By drawing on their individual intellectual resources to support their linguistic development, Martine and Priya have gained entrance to their imagined communities.

Aiko, another participant whose narrative of study abroad has a positive trajectory, demonstrates another quality of the apparently well adjusted international student – an openness to let the host country change one’s identity, which is different from seeking to change one’s identity in the new place. When she began her undergraduate career in Canada, she intended to be a foreign ambassador; now, at the end of her Master’s in Gender Studies, she simply wishes to have a personally fulfilling rather than a prestigious job – “I want to do something that I enjoy, something that I can give back.” She also says that she now “feel[s] okay about wanting to do something that may not have meaning to
other people.” Her friends are still mostly international, like her friends in the international stream during high school, but she does not value these social networks primarily for the prestige associated with their cosmopolitanism. Rather, she says that she prefers to befriend international students because they “have more things to talk about, more shared experiences. … Like how difficult it is to open a bank account, to how we miss our families or our countries.”

Aiko, Martine and Priya appear to invest in Canadian higher education to pursue imagined communities that reflect their interests and values as individuals. We not only pursue the cultural currency that all others pursue, but also have our own “sympathies and antipathies, affections and aversions, tastes and distastes,” seeking sociocultural environments where we feel comfortable to enact our personal conceptions of a better life (Bourdieu, as cited in Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 9). As Martine and Priya have both gained entrance into a previously imagined community – the North American academy – Martine’s imagined future identity in Canada appears to be that of a Sociology professor who lectures on gay rights, while Priya’s imagined scholarly community consists of quantitative researchers in a range of disciplines who, like her, do not “just sit and read and read… [but] communicate with the other people and also like help them as well.” Aiko’s future career, though currently undetermined, is one in which she will seek to give back to people since being in Canada has introduced her to those who “do things that [she] wouldn’t have thought of doing.” Interestingly, these three women appear to be equally well adjusted in Canada even though their social networks are very different: only Martine has integrated with Canadians; Aiko feels more at home with other international students from different countries, and Priya with other students from her
home country (though she thrives on an exchange of ideas with an international set of colleagues). Only Martine describes Canada as home; Priya and Aiko describe themselves as feeling comfortable in a foreign country because there is “a strong community from India” (Priya), or because the ethnic diversity of this city leads to “more chance that people… are more accepting and acceptable of my culture” (Aiko). Their narratives suggest that cultural adjustment does not so much depend on social integration with host nationals to the fullest possible extent, but on finding communities that share one’s values, experiences, and interests.

5.2 Research Question #2: To what extent does symbolic capital – i.e. social value placed on one’s linguistic repertoire, prior educational experiences, and country of origin – impact international graduate students’ capacity to navigate their imagined communities?

Bourdieu (1986) refers to social, economic, or cultural capital that has been perceived and recognized as legitimate as “symbolic capital.” Whether different forms of capital are perceived as legitimate depends on the ideological standpoints through which they are assessed. In answer to my second research question, I address how a linguistically and culturally hegemonic society that values English above other languages and Western knowledge above other forms of knowledge leads to international graduate students’ marginalization in professional contexts.

Martine, Aiko, and Rhodri are the three participants in this study who have replied in the negative to the question about whether they have experienced discrimination based on their race, culture, or ethnicity since coming to Canada. However, Martine says, “I was in a position where for me the transition could be smooth and I don’t think that’s necessarily true [for others].” Aiko qualifies her answer by saying, “I should say I only
know to the extent of... a big city.” Rhodri doesn’t appear to have had much voluntary contact outside his own ethno-linguistic group. Therefore, in this section I will focus on Martine and Aiko since unlike Rhodri they have attempted and been successful building an international social network of English speakers (in Aiko’s case) or a Canadian social network of English speakers (in Martine’s case).

Martine and Aiko have a form of social capital that none of the other participants in this study have: international schooling and international social networks prior to coming to Canada to pursue international postsecondary education. Thus, their main investment in Canadian higher education, rather than to gain more such networks, might have been more orientated towards self-exploration. In addition to their existing store of social and cultural capital, both received instruction in English during high school in the subject areas – not just English language class. Martine has an American high school diploma and a BA in English, as well as a partially completed MA in English from France. She took Sociology courses as an exchange student in Canada before deciding to transfer to the Canadian university to pursue an MA in Sociology. Aiko was in the international stream of her Japanese high school, did an exchange year at an English-medium international high school in Chile, and did her undergraduate degree in Canada. She reflects that even before she came to Canada, her high school experience “helped a lot to think about things that are outside of Japan.” Thus, Aiko and Martine grew up with cultural capital that would help them establish rapport with foreigners. Additionally, English instruction in different subjects would have given them a vaster range of topic-specific vocabulary compared to most international students, and taught them how to use it in context, allowing them to understand their course readings in Canada with more ease.
(as shown by Martine’s ability to grasp a new discipline within a year) and to participate more actively in both academic and non-academic discussions.

Martine, the only white student in the study, also appears to thrive on the level of prestige that French culture has in Canada. Of these eight students, she is the only one who says her social network is comprised mostly of Canadians rather than other international students or other students from her home country. The rest of the participants describe how Canadians were friendly and helpful to them upon their arrival, but Martine’s description is unusually passionate and reflects almost instant intimacy with people whom she had just met:

I found this family that were willing to host me… they were just, like, wonderful, like every single experience I’ve had with North Americans is exactly that, like they just welcome you into their life like you’ve always been there, they’ve never seen you before, doesn’t matter right, they just open their arms to you and they… lent me a bike, they showed me around, they invited me to one of the islands…

Marie similarly finds Canadians to be welcoming, but her account of arrival in Canada is different from Martine’s in interesting ways:

I find the people here to be very friendly. And, in Jamaica, I’m coming from a country that, you just don’t do certain things but then here, I find people to be very polite and helpful and just willing to assist you and even before you ask. … So I think that’s what helped me to kind of feel a bit more comfortable. And then I started to go to church and those persons at church they’ll prepare like food and they’ll invite you and the food was just so much at times. I mean a lot of food and a
lot of love.. and these are strangers! So I think that made me kind of [feel] I was a bit comfortable just settling in.

While both students experienced a welcoming atmosphere in Canada when they first arrived, there are important contrasts in their narratives. Martine was invited to the vacation home of a Canadian family she had just met. Marie joined a church group that offered free meals, and she received “food and a lot of love” from strangers, though this is a common practice of religious organizations. Martine voices a strong statement and generalization about North Americans – “every single experience I’ve had with North Americans is exactly that, like they just welcome you into their life like you’ve always been there” – contrary to many of the social experiences voiced by non-white, non-Western European participants in this study. Moreover, Marie began to sense social aloofness from Canadians as time went by: “…people go on schedule meaning that if you want to go out and do something you have to go to a calendar and people schedule things in. I think that is also a block for me within the group thing because in Jamaica we do things very spontaneous.” She also later came to wonder if racism was present in some of her social interactions, though she could never be sure: “Nobody gonna tell you… I don’t like you because you are black. They are not telling you that.”

In sum, the students who appear to have had the least anxiety about their cultural capital in relation to the host culture have had the advantage of an international education in their home countries prior to pursuing postsecondary education in the West, and in the case of Martine, the advantage of coming from a country whose culture holds prestige in North America. For these reasons, these students do not appear to relate English primarily to the acquisition of cultural capital to be transformed into economic capital.
Rather, they have used English to socialize with others on a daily basis in their home countries (about half of Aiko’s high school classmates were not native Japanese speakers) or build a community around appreciating English language and culture (Martine’s undergraduate degree was in English), thereby using the language for personal interests which may have little to do with neoliberal ideologies of capital accumulation. With less pressure to accumulate cultural capital, they have been able to cultivate a more personal and genuine appreciation of English language and culture, which appears to have led to the ease with which they have been welcomed into the host society.

While Martine, the only participant in this study who says her social network consists mainly of Canadians, is the only white Western European, the narratives of three other participants – Rhodri, Priya, and Aiko – illustrate that Martine is not the only one who feels socially well adjusted in Canada in terms of professional and personal networks. Therefore, it appears that international students can use a wide range of strategies, tailored to their individual situations, to pursue their imagined communities through Canadian higher education.

5.3 Research Question #3: How can a learner draw on linguistic and intellectual resources that are specific to her/him as an individual to effectively navigate linguistically and culturally hegemonic imagined communities?

Seven out of the eight international graduate students in this study have attempted to cultivate English-speaking social networks. However, unless international students are able to draw on linguistic and intellectual resources that are unique to them as individuals to effectively navigate linguistically and culturally hegemonic imagined communities, they may become overwhelmed by their language challenges and lack of cultural capital.
Thus, they may hesitate to approach those who they perceive might construct them as deficient in English ability or unaware of local or national issues. Of her classes, Daisy says, “They were talking about the school system in B.C. … So, it’s very difficult to participate in the class discussion. … I still lack of local insight and local knowledge.” Marie feels intimidated to approach her professors in Canada about difficulties she is having with academic writing, though she says, “If I was in Jamaica I wouldn’t be afraid to go and say, okay I’m having these difficulties and I need some help.” In addition to being challenged by academic English, these students may feel anxiety in everyday social situations. Of his colleagues in the Health Sciences department, Richard says, “I know they are really nice people and… if I can pass the language barrier then maybe I’m gonna make good friends.” Sumire, who has been in Canada much longer than Richard and who has already made English-speaking friends, does not feel that she has enough time to spend with those friends because of the challenges of her English coursework: “I sometimes feel isolated but what can I do? I’m learning something very difficult in English as a second language. I can’t spend much time doing other things.”

At the same time that they describe their challenges, Sumire, Richard, Marie and Daisy speak at length about the differences between their cultures and Canadian culture. While Richard has not yet built close friendships with English-speakers, he says, “I come from a place where they are usually communicating with each other frequently, society is more communicative.” When reflecting on why an international student may have difficulty promoting herself/himself as a professional in the West, Daisy says, “I think Chinese people… don’t say that, ‘I’m the best, I’m great, I could do this, could do that,’ and not very good at sell themselves.” Marie, who has noticed that Canadians do not
reveal that much about their political opinions, explains this aloofness as the product of cultural norms rather then others’ maintained distance from her: “Canadians are very polite… nothing can go wrong for them,” whereas in Jamaica people “agree to disagree and sometimes… don’t even agree on anything… [but] at least the point is out there.” When Sumire describes how she doesn’t accept her friends’ invitations to socialize on weekends, but focuses on her studies, she places herself in contrast to them by saying, “I have very strong work ethics because I am Japanese, traditional Japanese. I spent most of my time studying, studying, studying.”

These statements suggest that one way to navigate a new culture where one’s pre-existing cultural capital is undervalued is to reconstruct one’s marginalization not as the effect of inferior social status but as the effect of being true to one’s cultural identity. Daisy says she is unable to sell herself because of her humility, a virtue acquired through her Chinese education; Sumire defends herself against being constructed as an anti-social student by claiming an identity as a hard worker. Richard explains Canadians’ lack of communication with him by saying they are not as communicative as Peruvians, while Marie states that Canadians do not open themselves up to her because they are not as forthright in sharing what they really think compared to Jamaicans.

Norton (2000/2013) points out that immigrants who are marginalized due to first language seek to reposition themselves in relation to native English speakers by grasping for alternative, more positive identities. In her study of five immigrant women who had recently immigrated to Canada, one of the participants projected the identity of a wealthy foreigner rather than an immigrant to gain the respect of people in her workplace: “I was talking with the ladies who work with me about a land that I’m selling in Peru” (p. 142).
She thus uses her economic capital as leverage for her lack of linguistic and cultural capital. In other words, people may hold fast to their cultural identities to reposition themselves in advantageous ways, a phenomenon also noted by Kubota and Lehner (2004).

While this strategy may have its psychological benefits, it does not help the immigrant achieve what s/he may ultimately be seeking: complete and legitimate participation in professional contexts. Although Felicia (Norton’s participant) upheld her Peruvian identity and gained the respect of her co-workers, she continued to be more of a listener in many of their conversations, fearing that if she spoke out, her limited English would be detrimental to her social position. Other learners who would challenge their eternally peripheral positions in communities of practice might need to endure more scorn and conflict, yet the seeking of increased participation is the basis for carving out one’s place in the new society. For example, another participant in Norton’s seminal study, named Martina, fought for a more respected role in her workplace, despite her co-workers’ disdain:

In restaurant was working a lot of children [i.e. teenagers], but the children always thought that I am – I don’t know – maybe some broom or something. … They talked to each other and they thought that I had to do everything. And I said “No.” … She is younger than my son. I said, “No, you are not doing nothing. You can go clean the tables or something.” (p. 136)

Here, we can see that Martina attempts to negotiate a better position in relation to her interlocutors by exploiting her own kind of cultural capital (the advantage of being older than they are and a mother) as leverage against their much better English. At the same
time, she also strives to improve her English because she knows that it is the key to acquiring greater respect from her co-workers:

Later when some customers came in and I called these girls, they went but they made faces. I felt bad and I wanted to avoid this situation. In the evening I asked my daughter what I have to tell the customer. She answered me “May I help you” then “pardon” and “something else.” When I tried first time to talk to two customers alone, they looked at me strangely, but I didn’t give up. I gave them everything they wanted and then I went looking for the girls. … They were surprised but they didn’t say anything. (p. 136)

Similar to Martina, Priya was initially underestimated in a professional setting and was made to prove herself. Her academic department told her that she had to complete another Master’s degree because the university did not recognize degrees from India. Priya is proud of her first Master’s degree, telling the interviewer that she completed twenty courses in addition to projects, and took many exams (sometimes on a weekly basis), all of which gave her a good theoretical foundation in Statistics. Like Martina, who challenged her co-workers’ disrespectful attitude, Priya challenged her department’s policy about foreign Master’s degrees. At the same time, she saw the need to repeat her coursework in English, in Canada, to claim equal status with Canadian PhD students who had done their Master’s degrees here. In the end, she was able to work out a compromise with the department: she would start out as a Master’s student, and if she excelled in her courses, she could transfer to the PhD program after one year. Speaking of this experience, she says,
They would not recognize any Master’s program from outside country. … They gave me Master’s admission not PhD admission. So I go to Master’s admission, and then… like I talk with them and said I don’t want to get another Master’s degree. Then they said, “Okay there are some stringent criteria. Like after one year you can transfer to the PhD program, but you have to take like five, actually six courses, of three-credit courses, and there you have to score a very good percentage…” and also, I have to pass the qualifying exam [before transferring to the PhD]. So I took the courses according to their rule and then I applied for transfer and also I appeared for the qualifying exam and then I passed that, so after one year, I transferred to the PhD program.

Priya relates this story with a sense of triumph; she played the game “according to their rule,” got good marks in the courses, and passed the exam within one year. This process appears to be her means of demonstrating her competence to her department, a competence that might have remained in question had she continued to insist on the validity of her first Master’s degree. Instead, she proved the quality of her training in India by excelling in her Canadian coursework and examinations and quickly transferring to the PhD. By the time she was about to graduate from her PhD, she says she was “matched up” with her professor’s colleague, who was looking for a postdoctoral assistant to work on a project completely unrelated to Priya’s dissertation topic. Nonetheless, her professor’s recommendation and the other scholar’s decision to hire Priya reflect their trust in her competence. However, one significant factor in Priya’s positive trajectory is that her professional development appears to have depended more on her expertise in Statistics than her English language skills, a fact that she herself
acknowledges: “We were not familiar with spoken English that much, [but] it was not that difficult because Statistics is mostly technical.”

In sum, when assessing the likelihood of finding employment and immigrating to Canada, an international student might first ask herself/himself whether s/he is invested in being part of a multicultural community of English-speakers, or whether s/he is content to contribute to Canadian society within a community that speaks another language. If the latter is the case, the student may nevertheless become a well adjusted transnational, as shown by Rhodri’s narrative. However, if the individual seeks legitimacy of access to practice in an international professional community, the second question s/he might ask herself/himself is whether s/he has an international schooling or background that would be valued by cultural gatekeepers. If so, navigating imagined communities may prove easier for that student than most, as shown by the narratives of Martine (who has a mostly Canadian social circle) and Aiko (whose close circle of friends consists of international students from a wide range of countries). If the student does not have an international education prior to coming to an Inner Circle country to pursue a degree – this international education being indexical of a large amount of cultural capital and not only economic capital – the student would then need to ask herself/himself what individual linguistic and intellectual resources s/he can use as cultural leverage to gain entrance to imagined communities and to scaffold the acquisition of domain-specific English used in those communities. If the individual appears to be less focused on this problem and more focused on the acquisition of cultural capital that s/he currently lacks, s/he may only fuel her/his own cultural marginalization, as in the cases of Richard, Marie, Sumire and Daisy. Conversely, by drawing on intellectual resources specific to them as individuals,
international students may be able to gain full participation in imagined communities, as Priya has done, despite being non-white, non-native English-speakers from non-Inner Circle countries.
6. Conclusion

6.1 Theoretical implications of the findings

Darvin and Norton’s (2015) investment model of capital, ideology and identity illustrates several affordances for English language learners in linguistically and culturally hegemonic societies. Two of these affordances have been well documented in critical sociolinguistic research, which has found that the value of a learner’s cultural capital is contestable and negotiable (Norton, 2000/2013) and explored how learners do not passively submit to dominant language ideologies but evoke different ones in different contexts based on opportunities for social positioning (De Costa, 2010, 2011). However, another affordance that was crucial to Norton Peirce’s (1995) landmark case studies on learner identity and investment has received comparatively little attention in critical SLA theory. This affordance is the fact that language learner identity is not only defined by Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus* (1990), the environment created by culture or class, but also by individual sympathies and antipathies, tastes and desires (Bourdieu, as cited in Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 9). While the sociocultural turn in SLA research has highlighted the fact that opportunities for language learning are restricted or enhanced by learners’ group affiliations, models of learner socialization must also take into account strategies that different individuals use to gain access to and navigate their imagined communities. Do they use alternative identities (e.g. older person/mother) to reposition themselves in more authoritative roles, as Martina did with her young English-speaking co-workers, or do they construct ethno-centric identities (e.g. wealthy foreigner) that are self-reassuring, as in the case of Felicia, but also maintain the learner’s peripheral and marginalized status in the host community (cf. Norton Peirce, 1995)?
While the success stories of non-white international students from Outer or Expanding Circle countries may appear atypical at first glance, an examination of these narratives reveals the naturally occurring strategy of drawing on personal intellectual resources, such as expertise in a particular field, to gain entrance to international professional communities and scaffold the learning of English for specific purposes. Moreover, if barriers exist to finding work in the host country, an international student might find a regular volunteer job suited to her/his background and gain work experience until an opportunity arises to apply for a work permit – or use her/his academic excellence and professional credentials to compete for research and teaching assistantships in the university which are not subject to citizenship status. In other words, critical sociolinguists and language learners alike may find individual linguistic and intellectual resources more useful for navigating imagined communities than increased English fluency for general communicative purposes, which is not a particularly unique form of cultural capital. Nor does it appear to give any of the participants in this study, who all demonstrate a high proficiency of spoken English for general communicative purposes, a competitive edge in professional contexts or social currency in the host society.

6.2 Implications for practice

This study’s findings suggest that institutional support systems must be more tailored to the needs of individual international students. Students need more targeted support than that offered by a writing centre which helps with academic English, an international house that organizes events and field trips, and a counseling office where international students can discuss their adjustment challenges. Universities must provide
opportunities to learn English for the specific purposes that international students have in mind, given their imagined communities. Furthermore, support systems must be flexible enough to meet each student’s needs given that student’s personal linguistic and intellectual resources. Here, I discuss the forms that these ideal academic, professional, and social support systems might take.

Since the academic performances of the participants in this study appear to be related to amount of prior exposure to academic English in the content areas and quality of academic training in their first languages in their chosen majors, when each international student arrives in Canada s/he will need a highly individualized program of support. SLA research on Second Language (L2) writers suggests that their challenges are not only with the English language itself; other challenges arise due to lack of previous training and experience in academic writing (Matsuda, 1997; Wei & Liu, 2012), lack of topical familiarity or knowledge of the audience (Uysal, 2008), and unfamiliarity with discipline-specific conventions (Hyland, 2003; Johns, 2011). Therefore, students who struggle with academic writing, regardless of their first language, need a substantial amount of feedback and instruction, one-on-one and in small groups, to help them overcome their challenges. This would require more time on the part of teachers, as well as administrators’ willingness to make class sizes smaller – incurring greater financial costs on the institution for such provisions to be realized.

When it comes to social and professional support systems, each international student must be able to draw on her/his repertoire of skills and past experiences to contribute meaningfully to the university community. Such a contribution may or may not have to do with being an ambassador for one’s culture. In fact, certain studies
illustrate how international students can use universal communication skills to gain legitimacy of access to practice if the community of practice is structured in ways that do not put international students at a disadvantage to cultural insiders or native English speakers. In one of these studies, Leask and Carroll (2011) document how upper-year students at an Australian university were assigned to mentoring pairs consisting of one domestic and one international student, with each pair mentoring a number of first-year students (both international and domestic) in the running of small on-campus businesses. When the researchers administered a survey to participants in this extracurricular club, called Business Mates, they found that both mentors and mentees “indicated consistently over two years that their involvement… had made them more likely to work in class with people from a different cultural background to their own and to socialise with people from a different cultural background to their own” (p. 653). It appeared that the club, which gave equal weight to domestic and international students’ cultural capital, not only fostered cross-cultural friendships but also led to participants’ increased likelihood of initiating future cross-cultural collaborations.

In another action research study, international students were valued for both their cultural resources and their individual intellectual resources. Guo and Chase (2011) documented a cross-cultural Teaching Assistant workshop for 149 graduate students, 49% of whom were from China, at a large Canadian university. The workshop had two components: cross-cultural communication and effective teaching strategies. In the cross-cultural communication component, trainees engaged in critical dialogues about the flexibility, dynamism and complexity of cultures, while in the teaching strategies component, they shared classroom management techniques, ways to organize content,
audio-visual aids, and other pedagogical strategies. The cross-cultural component of the training program allowed them to draw from their cultural backgrounds to inform the curriculum, and the practical component highlighted common teaching challenges for the participants to advise each other on, based on their individual skills and experiences.

Aside from receiving institutional support, international students need to receive the support of key individuals in their learning trajectories (e.g. academic supervisors) who would be the primary co-constructors of their linguistic competence. These individuals play a significant role in legitimizing international students’ access to further opportunities for professional language socialization. In this study, Richard, who was offered a research assistantship by his department, was told by his supervisor that he might better focus on his studies for the meantime. However, a research assistantship would also have provided many more opportunities for Richard to learn English for his profession, and would have perhaps contextualized the theories in his coursework. It would also have provided a means to learn English for specific purposes through legitimate peripheral participation. Besides, as shown by the interviews of two other participants, Aiko and Sumire, being able to work lends a significant boost to international students’ feelings about their linguistic competence and their sense of belonging.

When it comes to social support for non-professional contexts, this study finds no connection between positive feelings of social adjustment and an ethno-linguistically diverse social network. Of the three students who had the most success integrating into their imagined communities – Martine, Aiko, and Priya – one socialized primarily with Canadians, another primarily with international students from all over the world who
communicated in English, and another primarily with speakers of her native language. However, all developed advanced English skills required for their professional aspirations. Bennett, Volet, and Fozdar (2013) suggest that international students might develop more intimate friendships with other international students since they support each other through challenges that domestic students cannot fully identify with. It is commonly observed that people form different types of groups based on different interests and experiences; hence, we must recognize the value of every kind of social network, and not stigmatize those that appear homogenous to outsiders. If universities supplement one-off cross-cultural activities that encourage international and domestic student mingling with longer-term programs that allow for rapport-building among different groups of students (be they from the same country, from two different countries, or from a wide range of countries), each international student might become well adjusted in the host country by cultivating a unique arrangement of social networks that best fits that student’s imagined communities and investments in international postsecondary education.

6.3 Limitations of the study

As a qualitative interview study with eight participants, this thesis clearly has limitations with regard to generalizability. What it lacks in that respect, it aims to compensate for by yielding insights into the variability between international students, even those from the same ethno-linguistic background (e.g. Priya and Rhodri, Aiko and Sumire). Furthermore, the study’s focus on international students’ individual linguistic and intellectual resources is an attempt to distinguish it from much critical sociolinguistic
research of a qualitative nature, which is often based on students’ negotiation of their cultural capital as members of particular ethno-linguistic groups.

Another significant limitation of this study is the nature of the data set, which was not designed to answer any particular group of research questions. However, given that data analysis and adjustment of research questions is a recursive process in qualitative studies, knowledge about international students’ investment in Canadian higher education can still be gleaned from a holistic interview schedule like the ISS, especially given its roughly chronological (past, present, and future) narrative frame.

A third limitation of the data set is that it is secondary; I have no information on the participants aside from what appears in their transcripts. However, even in textual form, the interviews yielded insight into the sociocultural dynamic between interlocutors, as when Martine was deemed to be from an “English-speaking country” whereas Priya was not – even though English is an official language in India and not in France, and the language is used extensively in both countries. Nevertheless, more information on the dynamics between interviewers and interviewees would have been collected had the interview analysis been triangulated with other research methods. This brings me to the issue of how complementary research might shed more light on the findings of this thesis.

6.4 Directions for future research

From this qualitative, interview-based study on international graduate students’ investment in Canadian higher education, we can see that critical research in SLA might more often take into account English learners’ individual linguistic and intellectual resources when assessing what linguistic and cultural challenges they are likely to face and designing support systems to help them navigate their imagined communities. During
their period of study, international students may be highly invested in immigrating to the host country, or be equally open to returning to their home countries. Some may wish to participate actively on campus, but only in groups that speak their first language – these students likely require academic English support but may be less invested in intercultural activities outside of the classroom. Most students, however, appear to wish to enhance their cross-cultural communication skills as necessary career preparation. For them, we need to develop more sophisticated models for understanding their academic and professional language socialization than those based on demographic labels – models that take into account how their investments for the future and their individual linguistic and intellectual resources affect what they need to learn and how they will go about doing it.
Bibliography


Appendices

Appendix A: ISS interview schedule (international)

Study of International Student Integration at UBC:
A Research Exercise for Sociology classes on Qualitative Methods

In-Depth Interview Guide for International Students

January 2, 2013

We’ll be talking today about your experiences as an international student at UBC and your future plans. I just want to repeat again that you can stop the interview at any time or let me know if there are any questions you don’t want to answer.

I. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION
Let’s start with some background information about you.
1. Where are you from originally?
2. Where else have you lived?
3. Some people are citizens of multiple countries. Can you tell me all the citizenships you have?
4. Had you been to Canada before you started at UBC? Had you been to UBC before?
   • PROBE: How old were you? Why did you come?
   a. How did that visit affect your decision to come to UBC?
5. Do you have any family in Canada?
   • PROBE: Who? Where in Canada do they live? How much time do you spend with them? How did that affect your decision to come here? How important is it to you to have family here?
6. Have any other members of your close family lived outside of__________(your home country)?
   • PROBE: Who? Where did they live? Why?
   • PROBE: Did that affect your decision to come here? How?
7. Did you grow up primarily with both your parents?
   a. What did they [your parents] do for a living?
   • PROBE for whomever the respondent grew up with.
8. What is the highest level of education each of your parents has?

II. PRE-UNIVERSITY EDUCATION
9. Tell me about the schools you attended before you came to UBC.
   • PROBE: Public or private? International schools? Location?
10. Did you take any university classes in__________(your home country) before you came to UBC?
    • PROBE for AP classes and IB classes, too.
    • PROBE: Or in any other countries?
11. Did you take any university classes in Canada before coming to UBC?
   • PROBE: Tell me about that. Where? What classes? Why did you decide to do that? What was that experience like?

FOR STUDENTS FROM NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING COUNTRIES:
12. When did you start learning English?
   • PROBE: Was it at school? At home?
13. Were any of your schools bilingual or English-only?
14. Did you speak English at home with your family? With your friends outside of school?
ASK ALL:
15. What, if anything, do you think your schools did to prepare you for UBC?
   a. Were there any special programs or agencies that you think particularly helped prepare you for your university experiences here?
      • PROBE for any specific programs, agencies, university-prep classes, English language training, etc.
16. Did any other students from your school go abroad for university?
   • PROBE: Where did they go? Do you know them?
   • IF THEY GO TO UBC, PROBE: Do you keep in contact? How was your decision to study abroad influenced by their decision?

III. COMING TO CANADA AND UBC
17. Why did you decide to come to Canada to study?
   • PROBE FULLY
   • PROBE: Did you consider other countries like the U.S., the U.K., Australia? Why did you rule them out?
18. Why did you decide to come to UBC specifically for university?
   • PROBE FULLY
19. Tell me about when you first arrived in Canada.
   • PROBE: What was that experience like? When did you first arrive? Where did you go? Did you know anyone? What were your first impressions?
20. What are the major differences between UBC and the education system in __________ (your home country)?
21. What have you found to be the most difficult things to get used to about UBC?
22. And what have been the most difficult things to get used to about Canada?
23. How did your expectations of UBC match the reality you found when you arrived?
   a. How did your expectations of Vancouver or Canada match the reality you found when you arrived?
24. Do you see yourself as an international student at UBC? Why or why not?
   FOR AMERICAN STUDENTS ONLY:
25. How would you say that your experience adapting to UBC as an American student is different or similar to international students from other countries?
26. How would you say your experience adapting to UBC is different or similar to the experience of Canadian students from other provinces?
ASK ALL:
27. How was the experience of getting a study permit and dealing with immigration?
• PROBE: Was it a smooth process? Did you have any problems? Did you get the help you needed?

28. Did you have to get any permits or deal with immigration offices from the ________ government (your home country government)?
   • PROBE: What permits did you need? Was it a smooth process? Did you have any problems? How did you get the help you needed?

29. How was the experience of getting Canadian health insurance?
   • PROBE: Was it a smooth process? Did you have any problems? Did you get the help you needed?

30. What has your experience with the health care you’ve received here been like?

31. Have you had any financial issues as an international student at UBC?
   • PROBE: Paying for tuition? Cost of living?
     a. Are you able to go home and visit your family during the year?

32. Have you had any problems with any financial institutions here?
   • PROBE: For example, setting up a bank account? Getting a credit card? Transferring money or receiving a money transfer?

IV. SERVICES AT UBC
33. Did you receive any help or support when you first arrived in Canada? Tell me about that.
   • PROBE: Did anyone meet you at the airport? Short-term housing? Food?

34. Did you participate in any orientation programs for new or international students at UBC?
   • IF NO, PROBE: Why not?
   • IF YES, PROBE: Tell me about those. What have you found to be the most helpful? The least helpful?
   • PROBE: At the GALA orientation, they provide a lot of information on study permits, entry visas, health insurance, employment, and the services and resources offered on campus. How useful was this information?
   • PROBE: Could this information have been useful for you if it had been delivered differently? What could have made it more useful?

35. Have you met with a Student Advisor?
   • IF YES, PROBE: What was that experience like? What sorts of topics did you cover? Did you find it helpful? Was there anything else you hoped to get out of it?
     a. Was the advisor from International House?

36. Have you had any involvement with International House?
   • IF NO, PROBE: Why not?
   • IF YES, PROBE: Tell me about that. What have you done? What have you found to be the most helpful or enjoyable? What else would you like to have there?

37. What comes to mind as some of the student services that you’re aware of?
38. What has your experience with student services been like?
39. What has your experience been like with UBC financial aid or scholarships?
   a. Did this meet your expectations?
40. Where are you living now?
41. What do you think of the housing accommodations where you are now?

IF NOT IN UBC HOUSING:
42. Have you ever lived in UBC housing?
   a. IF NO: Have you tried to get UBC housing or dealt with the housing office? What was that like?
   b. IF YES: What was your experience in UBC housing like?

IF LIVES OR HAS LIVED IN UBC HOUSING:
43. How did your experience in UBC housing affect your housing decisions for later years?

ASK ALL:
44. How were your experiences finding housing after your first year?
45. Overall, how would you say the transition to life in Canada and at UBC has been so far?
46. Can you think of any services or programs that you did not encounter that would have eased your adaptation to UBC?

V. ACADEMICS AND WORK
47. What has influenced your choice of specialization?
48. How are your classes so far?
   • PROBE: Have you had any problems or challenges with them? Did anything about them surprise you?
49. Have you received any help with course registration or deciding what classes to take? Tell me about that.

FOR NON-FIRST YEAR STUDENTS:
50. What do you think of the university now compared to in your first year?

ASK ALL:
51. Are you also working in addition to your studies?

IF WORKING:
52. What is your job?
53. How did you find it?
54. How satisfied are you with the job?
   • PROBE: What do you like or dislike about it?
55. How many hours a week do you work?
56. Would you like to work more hours or fewer?
57. Why did you decide to work in addition to your studies?
58. Do you ever send any money back to your family or do they ever send any money to you?
59. Have you had any problems balancing work and your studies?
   • PROBE: Is it related to your visa? Is it related to being an international student?

ASK ALL:
60. What are your career plans?
61. How has your time in Canada influenced your career plans?
62. Are you planning to stay in Canada after university? Or would you like to go somewhere else? Where?
63. Have you heard about any government immigration programs to help foreign students stay here after graduation? Which ones?
   • PROBE: Have you heard of the Canadian Experience Class visa program?
   • PROBE: Have you heard of the International Graduates program that is part of the B.C. Provincial Nominee initiative?
   IF YES:
   a. How did you hear about them?
   b. Do these programs influence your decision to stay at all?

IF NOT PLANNING TO STAY IN CANADA:
64. Where would you most like to settle permanently?

IF WANTS TO LIVE OR SETTLE IN CANADA:
64. Would you like to bring your family here eventually?

VI. SOCIAL ACTIVITIES
66. What kinds of groups or activities are you involved in at UBC?
   • PROBE AS NECESSARY: What kinds of things do you do in these groups?
67. What types of groups or activities are you involved in outside of UBC?
   • PROBE AS NECESSARY: What kinds of things do you do in these groups?
68. How much time a week would you say you spend in extracurricular activities?
69. How useful have you found these groups for making friends?
   • PROBE: Have you made friends through the groups from people from your home country? With other international students? With Canadians?

IF NOT INVOLVED IN GROUPS:
70. What kinds of groups would you like to join?
71. Why haven’t you joined any groups?
72. Are there activities you’ve done back home that you’ve been able to continue here? Are there any [others] you’d like to continue here?

ASK ALL:
73. What other kinds of social activities do you spend your time in?
74. How have you spent most of your free time in the last week?
75. What proportion of your friends here would you say are from __________ (your home country)?
76. What proportion of your friends here would you say are international students from other countries?
77. Have you found any differences between making international friends and making Canadian friends?
78. How receptive do you feel Canadians are toward being friends with international students? Or with students from your country?
79. How often do you communicate with your family back in __________ (your home country)?
   • PROBE: How do you tend to communicate? By phone? By e-mail?
80. How often do you communicate with your friends back in __________ (your home country)?
   • PROBE: How do you tend to communicate? By phone? By e-mail?
81. On holidays do you stay here or go back home? What did you do for the last holiday?
82. Are there any other social activities you’d like to get involved in here?

VII. DISCRIMINATION
Now I’m going to ask you some questions about how you’ve been treated here in Canada.
87. First, can I ask you how you identify your race or ethnicity?
88. Since you came to Canada, have you had any experiences where you felt you were treated differently because of your race, ethnicity, or your nationality?
   • IF YES, PROBE: Tell me about that. How did you deal with it? What did you do?
89. Have you had any experiences in Canada where you felt treated differently or unfairly for other reasons?
   • IF YES, PROBE: Tell me about that. How did you deal with it? What did you do?
90. Do you feel that there are any challenges for people of your race, ethnicity, or nationality as a group in Canada?
   • IF YES, PROBE: Explain a little more about that.
91. Have you had any experiences where you felt you were treated differently because of your race, ethnicity or nationality at UBC specifically?
   • IF YES, PROBE: Tell me about that.
FOR AMERICAN STUDENTS ONLY:
92. How do you think the election of Barack Obama has affected the world’s perception of the United States as a country, and of Americans?
   a. Has this impacted your experience at UBC? Or your experience in Canada?
ASK ALL:
93. In what ways have your practices or behaviour changed because of being in Canada?
94. Is there anything we haven’t covered that you’d like to mention about discrimination you’ve come across in Canada?
   • PROBE FULLY

VIII. WRAPPING UP
The interview is almost done. I just have a few general questions about your experiences at UBC overall.
95. Overall, what do you like most about your experience at UBC so far?
96. What about UBC would you change or improve if you could?
97. What have been the biggest challenges for you academically?
98. What have been the biggest challenges for you socially?
99. Is there anything you haven’t mentioned that you think would have made your transition to university here easier?
100. How do you think that you, as an international student, are different from non-international students at UBC?
101. Is there anything we haven’t covered that you’d like to mention about the experience of being an international student at UBC?

Thank you very much for your time and help with this project.
It’s possible that we may want to interview people again next year or in the future to follow up on students’ experiences at UBC over time. Could we contact you again later to see if you’d be willing to participate in another short interview?

**IF YES, FILL OUT FUTURE CONTACT FORM**

**IF DOES NOT WANT FUTURE CONTACT:**

There is going to be a draw for a $50 gift certificate at the UBC bookstore. Would you like to be entered in the prize draw?

- **FILL OUT ONLY BOTTOM PART OF FUTURE CONTACT FORM, RELATING TO PRIZE DRAW**
Appendix B: ISS interview schedule (non-international)

Study of International Student Integration at UBC:
A Research Exercise for Sociology classes on Qualitative Methods

In-Depth Interview Guide for Non-International Students

January 2, 2013

We’ll be talking today about your experiences as a domestic student at UBC and your future plans. This study is a comparison of domestic and international students. I just want to repeat again that you can stop the interview at any time or let me know if there are any questions you don’t want to answer.

I. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION
Let’s start with some background information about you.

1. Where are you from originally?
2. Where else have you lived?
3. Where does your family live now?
4. Some people are citizens of multiple countries. Can you tell me all the citizenships you have?
   IF ORIGINALLY FROM OUTSIDE CANADA:
   a. Were you born a Canadian citizen, did you naturalize, or are you a permanent resident?
      • PROBE: When did you become a citizen? Why?
      • PROBE: When did you become a permanent resident?
   IF PERMANENT RESIDENT OR NATURALIZED CANADIAN:
   5. When did your family move to Canada?
   6. Why did they come to Canada?
   7. What type of visa did your family come on – did they come as economic (highly skilled) immigrants or investors, for family reunification, or as refugees?
   ASK ALL:
   8. Since the term started, how much time have you spent with your family?
      • PROBE: For example, how often do you see them in a typical week?
   9. Did you grow up primarily with both your parents?
      a. What did they [your parents] do for a living?
   10. What is the highest level of education each of your parents has?

II. PRE-UNIVERSITY EDUCATION
11. Tell me about the schools you attended before you came to UBC.
    • PROBE: Public or private? International schools? Location?
12. How well do you think your schools prepared you for UBC?
    a. Were there any special programs or classes that you think particularly helped prepare you for your university experiences here?
       • PROBE for any specific programs, university-prep classes, etc.
13. Did you take any university classes before you came to UBC?
• PROBE: Tell me about that. Where? What classes? Why did you decide to do that? What was that experience like?
• PROBE for AP classes and IB classes, too.

III. COMING TO UBC
14. Why did you decide to come to UBC for university?
• PROBE FULLY
IF FROM BRITISH COLUMBIA:
15. Did you specifically want to stay in British Columbia for university?
• PROBE: Why or why not?
16. What proportion of the students from your high school came to UBC?
   a. Was that a factor in your decision to come here?
ASK ALL:
17. Tell me about when you first started at UBC. What was that experience like?
   • PROBE: Did you know anyone? What were your first impressions? Did anything surprise you?
18. What have you found to be the most difficult things to get used to about UBC?
19. How did your expectations of UBC match the reality you found when you arrived?
   a. How did your expectations of studying in Vancouver match the reality you found when you arrived?
20. Do you see yourself as a domestic student at UBC? Why or why not?

IV. SERVICES AT UBC
21. Did you participate in any orientation programs for new students at UBC?
   • IF NO, PROBE: Why not?
   • IF YES, PROBE: Tell me about those. What have you found to be the most helpful? The least helpful?
22. Have you met with any advisors or counselors since you started?
   • IF YES, PROBE: What was that experience like? What sorts of topics did you cover? Did you find it helpful? Was there anything else you hoped to get out of it?
23. What has your experience with student services been like?
24. Did you receive any financial aid or scholarships to attend UBC?
   • PROBE: Who are they from?
25. Have you had any financial problems since you started the term?
26. Where are you living now?
27. What do you think of the housing accommodations where you are?
IF LIVING AT HOME:
28. How has the experience of living at home while studying here been for you?
   • PROBE for advantages and disadvantages.
IF NOT IN UBC HOUSING:
29. Have you ever lived in UBC housing?
   a. IF NO: Have you tried to get UBC housing or dealt with the housing office? What was that like?
   b. IF YES: What was your experience in UBC housing like?
IF LIVES OR HAS LIVED IN UBC HOUSING:
30. How did your experience in UBC housing affect your housing decisions for later years?

ASK ALL:
31. How were your experiences finding housing after your first year?
32. Overall, how would you say the transition to student life at UBC has been so far?
33. Can you think of any services or programs that you did not encounter that would have eased your adaptation to UBC?

V. ACADEMICS AND WORK
34. What has influenced your choice of specialization?
35. How are your classes so far?
   • PROBE: Have you had any problems or challenges with them? Did anything about them surprise you?
36. Have you received any help with course registration or deciding what classes to take? Tell me about that.

FOR NON-FIRST YEAR STUDENTS:
37. What do you think of the university now compared to in your first year?

ASK ALL:
38. Are you also working in addition to your studies?

IF WORKING:
39. What is your job?
40. How did you find it?
41. How satisfied are you with the job?
   • PROBE: What do you like or dislike about it?
42. How many hours a week do you work?
43. Would you like to work more hours or fewer?
44. Do you ever send any money back to your family or do they ever send any money to you?
45. Have you had any problems balancing work and your studies?

ASK ALL:
46. What are your career plans?
47. Do you think you’d like to stay in Canada to work after university, or would you like to go somewhere else?

IF WOULD LIKE TO WORK ABROAD:
48. Where?
49. Why?
50. Would you like to settle there permanently or just work there for a short time? Why?

VI. SOCIAL ACTIVITIES
51. What kinds of groups or activities are you involved in at UBC?
   • PROBE AS NECESSARY: What kinds of things does the group do?
52. How much time a week would you say you spend in extracurricular activities?

IF NOT INVOLVED IN GROUPS:
53. What kinds of groups would you like to join?
54. Why haven’t you joined any groups?
55. Are there activities you’ve done back home that you’ve been able to continue here? Are there any [others] you’d like to continue here?
56. What other kinds of social activities do you spend your time in?
57. How have you spent most of your free time in the last week?
58. What proportion of your friends here would you say are Canadian?
59. What proportion of your friends here would you say are international students?
60. What proportion of your friends here would you say you knew before coming to UBC?
61. Are there any other social activities you’d like to get involved in here?

VII. DISCRIMINATION
Now I’m going to ask you some questions about the treatment you’ve received from others.
62. First, can I ask you how you identify your race or ethnicity?
63. Have you had any experiences at UBC where you felt you were treated differently because of your race, ethnicity, or ancestry?
   • IF YES, PROBE: Tell me about that. How did you deal with it? What did you do?
64. Have you had any experiences outside of UBC where you felt you were treated differently because of your race, ethnicity or ancestry?
   • IF YES, PROBE: Tell me about that.
65. Have you had any experiences where you felt treated differently or unfairly for other reasons?
   • IF YES, PROBE: Tell me about that. How did you deal with it? What did you do?
66. Do you feel that there are any challenges for people of your race, ethnicity, or ancestry as a group in Canada?
   • IF YES, PROBE: Explain a little more about that.
67. Are any of these issues concerns for you?
   • PROBE FULLY

VIII. WRAPPING UP
The interview is almost done. I just have a few general questions about your experiences at UBC overall.
68. Overall, what do you like most about your experience at UBC so far?
69. What about UBC would you change or improve if you could?
70. What have been the biggest challenges for you academically?
71. What have been the biggest challenges for you socially?
72. Are there any additional programs or services that you think would make your transition to university here easier?
73. How do you think that you, as a domestic student, differ from international students at UBC?
74. Is there anything we haven’t covered that you’d like to mention about the experience of being a domestic student at UBC, compared with international students?
Thank you very much for your time and help with this project.

It’s possible that we may want to interview people again next year or in the future to follow up on students’ experiences at UBC over time. Could we contact you again later to see if you’d be willing to participate in another short interview?

• IF YES, FILL OUT FUTURE CONTACT FORM

• IF DOES NOT WANT FUTURE CONTACT:

There is going to be a draw for a $50 gift certificate at the UBC bookstore. Would you like to be entered in the prize draw?

• FILL OUT ONLY BOTTOM PART OF FUTURE CONTACT FORM, RELATING TO PRIZE DRAW
Appendix C: ISS participant recruitment letter

E-mail Contact

Study of International Student Integration at UBC: A Research Exercise for Sociology classes on Qualitative Methods

The following e-mail message can be used by class members who are unable to find international students to interview through their own personal networks. Such class members should forward this message to any students they know at UBC.

Hello,

My name is ______________________ and I am a UBC student enrolled in SOCI 503, Qualitative Research Design and Techniques. As an assignment for the class, I need to conduct an interview with an international student at UBC. The interview needs to be with a permanent student who is planning to get their degree at UBC, rather than a temporary exchange student.

If you are NOT eligible for the study, would you please forward this message on to other students who might be eligible, or to any other students you know (since they may know people who are eligible)? Thank you!

If you ARE an international student and would be willing to participate in an interview, would you please e-mail me at _______________________ or call me at _______________________. The interview will probably last about 30-60 minutes and will be an informal discussion of your experiences as an international student at UBC, your reasons for coming here, and your future plans. Participating is entirely voluntary and your identity will be kept confidential. As an incentive for participation, you will be given a 20% discount code for the UBC bookstore (which can be used for discounts on clothing, stationery, gifts, and general books) and can enter a prize draw for a $50 gift certificate to the bookstore.

Thank you very much for your help.
___________________ (your name)