

**DECOLONIZING THE SOCIAL IMAGINARIES OF BRITISH COLUMBIA'S
INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION PHENOMENON**

by

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Abstract

Working from an anticolonial and decolonizing framework, this thesis seeks to contribute to the current understanding of the K-12 International Education Phenomenon in British Columbia (BC), Canada. My research begins with the premise that online newspapers have become a popular channel not only for news agencies to distribute and disseminate information but also for readers to respond to news in real time and exchange opinions with each other. The advancement in electronic media leads to new forms of communication and offers “new resources and new disciplines for the construction of imagined selves and imagined worlds” (Appadurai, 1996, p. 3).

Using the concept of social imaginaries, my study argues that web-based news comment sections allow their readers to form a collective sense of the imagination by providing readers with the conditions of collective reading, commenting, critiquing and pleasuring. These readers begin to form a “community of sentiment” and a “group that begins to imagine and feel things together” (Appadurai, 1996, p. 7). Within this context, my research investigates the social imaginaries of international students and the host society as constructed on the online news platforms. Using an anticolonial and decolonizing content analysis, this research disrupts colonial gazes operationalized in virtual spaces: (1) objectification of international students and the subjectivization of host society; (2) imperial legitimization through policy; (3) reproduction of cultural and linguistic hegemony and (4) essentialization and racialization of international students as “too Asian”. The findings highlight that the BC International Education Phenomenon is shifting the social imaginaries of public education as well as the imaginaries of international students in public schools and

society. This exchange in turn not only objectifies international students as cash cows but also subjugates the host society to the branding and sale of BC education, which further perpetuates the historical imperial mission of colonization.

Lay Summary

Working from an anticolonial and decolonizing framework, this study investigates how web-based news media constructs international students and a public imaginary of society and citizenship. This research argues that web-based news comment sections allow their readers to form a collective sense of the imagination through collective reading, commenting, critiquing and pleasuring. This research uncovers four colonial gazes operationalized in virtual spaces: (1) objectification of international students and the subjectivization of host society; (2) imperial legitimization through policy; (3) reproduction of cultural and linguistic hegemony and (4) essentialization and radicalization of international students as “too Asian”. The findings highlight international students are objectified as cash cows and the host society is subjugated to the branding and sale of BC education, which further perpetuates the historical imperial mission of colonization.

Preface

This dissertation is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, G. Lin.

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Dedication

For Gladys

Prelude

Silence has always been a part of me, and sometimes silence is me.

“Remember, children have ears no mouth.” These are my mom’s words that have stayed with me all these years.

I don’t remember how old I was, but I must have been fairly young when my mom told me that a good girl must learn to be quiet and be invisible and not to repeat what is heard. Growing up in the latter years of the White Terror era in Taiwan, I was aware of my parents’ fear of being imprisoned or executed for their real or perceived dissent from the Kuomintang ruling class. At school, students were not allowed to speak their native tongue, “Taiwanese”. If they were caught speaking Taiwanese, they were punished. I was caught speaking Taiwanese many times and had to pay a fine¹ each time.

Against all odds, my parents were able to bring everyone to Canada in pursuit of a peaceful life and a better education for their children. Upon arrival, I entered a neighbourhood elementary school. One day I was playing in the playground during recess and all of sudden I heard someone calling my name. I looked up to see who was calling me. I saw my teacher, standing by the staffroom window, with a big smile. As soon as our eyes met, she shouted out from the window, “Gloria, speak English!”

I was confused for a second. I was not even speaking to anyone at that moment. Naturally, I looked around to see if anyone knew what was going on and saw that Irene happened to be playing next to me. Irene was a good friend. She loved her smarties, and always shared them with everyone. I suppose she looked like me -- black hair and yellow skin. She was “Asian,” but she was Cantonese. Even if we were speaking with each other in our own mother tongues, we would not have been able to communicate with each other. English was our common language. However, my teacher’s friendly reminder made me wonder: Should I

¹ Memory is a funny creature. It changes with time. Is it my memory or is it my sisters’ memory? I seem to remember different versions of the punishment. Punishment 1: students were made to wear a dog tag with “I will not never speak Taiwanese again” for a day. Punishment 2: students were made to fill up the blackboard with “I will not speak Taiwanese anymore” during recess. Punishment 3: students had to pay a fine.

have moved away from my friend and played with other kids who didn't look like me? Or, should I start speaking English as loudly as possible, so that my teacher who was inside the staffroom could hear me?

I want to speak back....

Inner voice: Yeah, no doubt this is a case of panopticism².

Gloria: What ism? MountainView is not a prison. It's my school!

"Sorry Gloria, take a closer look at the location of the staffroom in relation to the playground."

"Gosh...you are so cynical. It's there, so that the teachers are able to respond to a situation faster."

"Maybe so, but try to look past the obvious. I bet next time you are back here, you will look up to check if Mrs. H is there watching. Heck, you don't even need to be back here on the playground. You will be self-conscious about the language you speak everywhere you go."

"You mean I will start policing myself?"

"Yeah...so that you speak English, think English, be English!"

"Hmm...come to think of it. Over the years, I even forced my mom to speak English with me. I wouldn't respond unless she used English. What have I done?"

I have become a prisoner of colonialism. I internalize the colonizer's rules, police my actions and enforce the law of "English Only" on the people I love.

My native tongue (Taiwanese) and even my colonizer tongue (Mandarin) were not valid in this new country. My tongue was being colonized again by a White tongue. Ironically, the phantom who cut my Taiwanese tongue became a victim under a White man's blade.

As I tried to make sense of and come to terms with this foreign tongue and learn new social rules, my Taiwanese identity was denounced not by Her Majesty the Queen, to whom I had sworn allegiance, but by my Grade 10 Social Studies teacher, Mrs. K. In the middle of my presentation on Taiwan. I was stopped...

² Foucault, M. (1995). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Mrs. K: “Gloria, stop using “we” when you talk about Taiwan. You are not Taiwanese anymore. You are Canadian. Taiwan is not your country. Canada is. You should use third person when you talk about Taiwan. Do you understand?”

Gloria: Yes, Mrs. K.

Thus, in my Socials 10 class, my Taiwanese identity was erased.

These experiences did not discourage me from doing well in school. Instead, I worked harder, tried to conform, tried to fit in. I was a straight A student throughout high school and participated in clubs and school activities.

Inner voice: What do you think is happening here?

Gloria: (with confidence) I succeeded at fitting in and achieving the academic standards set by my teachers.

Inner voice: But your success was achieved at the expense of denying your home culture, your sense of self. Your existence before Canada was erased. All the connections with the land so dear to you, dismissed. You were told to take on a new identity.

I want to speak back....

Gloria: Mrs. K, where are you from?

Mrs. K: Born and bred here in Vancouver.

Gloria: “No, no, no. I mean where are you really from?”

“What do you mean? I am from here. False Creek has been my home. Did you know it was named by Captain George Henry Richards?” says Mrs. K. She frowns but continues...

“He was searching for a water link to coal deposits in the late 1850’s. Unfortunately, he found it to be a dead end, hence the name False Creek. At one point the creek was used for transporting lumber. There used to be mills on the south shores and large railway yards on the north shore. I believe by 1950 the creek was so dirty from all the pollution that filling it up was considered to be a solution. Thanks to Jim Pattison. His success with Expo 86 revitalized the area and the city began a series of residential development on the south shore.”

Gloria: “False Creek? You mean Snauq? I once heard a story about Raven³ telling Lee Maracle that the water used to be deeper and stretched from the sea to what is now Clark Drive in the east, Second Avenue in the South and just below Dunsmuir in the north. Raven remembers that there used to be a sandbar in the middle of it, so the name Snauq was given to creek.”

Mrs. K: “Raven who?”

Gloria: “It used to be a common garden shared by all the friendly tribes in the area. Raven told Lee Maracle that the area was once abundant with berries, wild cabbage, mushrooms and camas fields. The fish, oysters and clams abounded. Summer after summer Musqueam, Tsleil Watuth and Squamish nations used to gather there to harvest and celebrate births and weddings.

... (looking confused, Mrs. K not sure what to say...)

Gloria: I wish we had learned about this in class. If it weren’t for Raven coming to Lee Maracle’s dream telling her stories of this land, past, present and future, I would not know...”

³ Lee Maracle (2004). Goodbye Snauq. In *Our story: Aboriginal voices on Canada's past*. Toronto, ON: Anchor Canada.

It has taken me over a decade to understand my silences, to realize my being and becoming and to be at some sort of peace about my colonized self. I realize that my family's Oath of Allegiance to Her Majesty the Queen of Canada makes me a participant in the continuing colonization of the Indigenous peoples of this land. Being a descendent of the colonized, I am familiar with the history of my ancestors being colonized by the Europeans, the Chinese and the Japanese, but I had not considered the fact that my ancestors were also the colonizers of Taiwan, a beautiful island that was and still is home to indigenous Austronesian peoples. Today, there are approximately 500,000 Indigenous peoples from fourteen officially acknowledged tribal groups in Taiwan.

Growing up as a gendered and racialized immigrant youth in Canada, I did not become aware of the dichotomy between my settler and colonized identities which were further complicated by my encounters with racism and discrimination until my graduate studies. As I try to make sense of my experiences, I have worked with various international students and their families over the years and helped them settle into Canadian society. The importance of this study emerged through many of these complicated lived realities and encounters impacted by racism, imperialism and colonialism. This research process is an opportunity to speak back to colonialism and imperialism that continues to marginalize subaltern peoples.

1. Introduction

I start writing by acknowledging all my relations who have made it possible for me to complete this doctoral journey. This dissertation itself is a process of decolonization (Smith, 1999; Newhouse, 2008; Anuik, Battiste & George, 2010; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 2001) and the research topic aims to advocate for decolonization in this globalized world. As Smith (1999) points out, “decolonization is a process which engages with imperialism and colonialism at multiple levels” (p. 20). It is important for researchers to develop a deep understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations and values through which the process of decolonization informs research practices. This doctoral journey and this dissertation did not start off as a process of decolonization, but a turn of events allowed me to see how crucial decolonization was in my work.

Here, I engage in this storytelling process as an opportunity to learn to speak with an open heart, and to speak in a good way as the Anishnaabe say, with a good mind as the Haudenosaunee say (Newhouse, 2008). I recognize that the truth, respect, and trust relationship between the listener and reader (Archibald, 2008) holds me accountable to the credibility of my words and keeps me humble in my position as a graduate student reflecting on the teachings I have received from my teachers and friends. Finally, the story that I am about to share is a partial narrative of my experience as a student in a small graduate seminar. It is partial because it is limited by my understanding of the situation and my ability to recollect what took place in that class. Even though the story being shared here is based on my views and is restricted according to my location, it is a story that includes other people’s stories.

As Alcoff (1991) so eloquently explains, “ we are collectively caught in an intricate, delicate web in which each action I take, discursive or otherwise, pulls on, breaks off or maintains the tension in many strands of the web in which others find themselves moving also” (p. 21). It is because of what happened in this class (see story below) that made me completely change the way I approach my research topic. While I am taking a risk in being vulnerable and sharing, I am aware that my partial narrative is most likely oppressive to others. I am mindful that “words are medicine that can heal or injure” (Johnston, 1990, as cited in Archibald, 2008, p. 19). This partial narrative resonates with Ellsworth’s (1992) “pedagogy of the unknowable,” which sees each person’s partial narrative as “self-interested and predicated on the exclusion of the voices of others” and that the meaning of an individual’s experience “is never self-evident or complete” (p. 110). This is where I look to Kirkness and Barnhardt’s (2001) teachings of the four R’s: respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility as my guide to keep me honest, respectful, and responsible to all the beings I come into contact with in my writing and where I begin to tell my story.

I took an intensive summer graduate seminar on exploring non-traditional forms of scholarly writing in hopes of bringing creativity into my writing and overcoming my writer’s block. In one of the lectures early on, the professor showed us Brene Brown’s TED talk on “The Power of Vulnerability” where Brown discusses that vulnerability is the basis for courage, compassion and connection and that it is also what makes a person feel that she/he is worthy of love and belonging. Bringing Brown’s talk on vulnerability into our discussions on writing, our professor encouraged us to share our vulnerable side in order to tell a good story. I looked around the class (four racialized students, one white man and the rest white

women) and wondered how could one share one's vulnerable side with strangers having disparate experiences with race, gender, and class. Throughout the rest of the term, the white students were encouraged to share stories about magnificent nature and imaginary worlds while the racialized others were encouraged to share stories of violence and shame from racist encounters. A classmate shared her story of being given an English name by her high school teacher when she first came to Canada. On the first day of school, her teacher did not bother to take the time to learn how to pronounce her original name, but instead gave her a name that he thought better suited her. Her story was responded to by another classmate, who identified herself as a high school teacher who had asked one of her students to give her a Korean name. She proceeded to tell the class her Korean name and how pleased she was with the name. In shock and loss for words, I realized stories are sacred and are not meant for just anyone to hear, especially when both storytellers and listeners do not engage in a relationship following Kirkness and Barnhardt's 4 R's. One's vulnerability and courage could be eaten⁴ by a White person's desire to make connection with the Other (Birk, 2017). While this White person might have no intention of making light of her classmate's story and perhaps wanted to reach out and reassure her classmates' hurt, she maintained her position as a White saviour trying to liberate her Other-sister. As bell hooks comments:

To make one's self vulnerable to the seduction of difference, to seek an encounter with the Other, does not require that one relinquish forever one's mainstream positionality. When race and ethnicity become commodified as resources for pleasure, the culture of specific groups, as well as the bodies of individuals, can be seen as constituting an alternative playground where members of dominating races, genders, sexual practices affirm their power-over in intimate relations with the Other (bell

⁴ bell hooks (1992). *Black looks: Race and representation*. Boston, MA: South End Press.

hooks, 1992, p. 23).

In her article on “Story-telling for Social Change,” Sherene Razack (1993) discusses how “story-telling serves various groups differently and that it should never be employed uncritically in mixed groups” (p. 67). She refers to Lugones’ story on being invited to tell her stories, as a Chicana woman in an intellectual context that is predominantly white, Lugones asks “En que’ voz with which voice, anclada en que’ lugar anchored in which place, para que y porque why and to what purpose, do I trust myself to you...o accuse juego un juego de cat and mouse for your entertainment... o por el mio?” (p. 68). Razack (1993) further references Trinh Minh-ha’s observation on how stories can perpetuate domination in which a privileged audience, while listening to stories of the disenfranchised, can easily be entertained by the stories without questioning their own complicity in the oppression of others.

Reflecting on my research at the time, I was going to collect stories from international students, particularly about their homestay experiences in Canada. I did not want their stories to be commodified for consumption to reinforce White men’s imperial imaginary. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) describes the ways in which the West creates a dichotomy between the West and the Other by glorifying the West as superior, civilized and advanced while denigrating the colonized people and people of colour. I did not want their stories to be another colonial narrative, where the international students were being imagined as needing Canada’s generosity and Canada’s help to become civilized and enlightened. Thus, I have decided to focus my study on the ever-changing, complex global system of international education under the influence of neoliberal globalization in hopes of disrupting the discourses of imperialism and colonialism that have continued to evolve and take on new

forms of oppression in this globalized era. How do global forces and ideology work their way from transnational paradigm to national policies to local practices? How do discourses of imperialism and colonialism get incorporated into the social imaginary of international education? Through an anticolonial and decolonizing conceptual framework, this research reveals multiple layers of the objectification and subjectivization of international students and the host society⁵ through social imaginaries of international education in online newspaper media. In the following section, the rationale for focusing on online news media is discussed.

1.1. The Background and Rationale

Almost two decades ago, British Columbia (BC) school districts were granted permission to create for-profit companies to exercise entrepreneurial powers that would otherwise not be possible for them as public institutions. Since then, the phenomenon of International Education has gained significant momentum in BC's public education system. The phenomenon of International Education refers to the enrolment of full-fee paying international students in public schools and the policy changes that have taken place to support this phenomenon. Faced with declining enrolment and shrinking public expenditures, international student revenues give BC schools new sources of funding. In 2010/2011, the international student enrolment was about 8,812, which translated into more than \$129 million in revenue, double the amount it was a decade earlier in 2001/2002 (Kuehn, 2012).

At the same time, many public schools in BC have set up for-profit schools overseas

⁵ The term, host society, is defined in this study as a society hosting international students from abroad in the context of BC International Education Phenomenon.

(also known as BC offshore schools⁶) to help expand the Canadian education brand, EduCanada⁷, in an attempt to increase the country's market share of international students. Between September 2006 and November 2014, the number of BC offshore schools which received accreditation from the BC Ministry of Education and the respective authorities, increased from 7 to 41⁸. The field of public education has been rapidly transforming over the past decade. Education that was once regarded as a public good has become a commodity in need of marketing to attract fee-paying international students from overseas. Economic, or more specifically, neoliberal globalization, has steadily infiltrated the Canadian education system (Schuetze et al., 2011).

Similarly, debates about the definitions, origins and consequences of globalization have proliferated in the academic landscape. For example, scholars such as Giddens (1990) and Harvey (2000) describe globalization as an ongoing process of deepening integration among people, places, and systems around the world while new information and communication technologies (ICT) and mass transportation redefine time and space promoting new ways of production, a new global division of labour, and highly complex international flow of capital. The dominant form of globalization is widely recognized as a neoliberal one, which "is associated with a preference for the minimal state, concerned to promote the

⁶ These offshore schools are accredited by the Ministry of Education and offer the same curriculum as in BC. Graduates from offshore schools receive the BC Certification of Graduation (Dogwood) and are able to apply to Canadian or other western universities in the same manner as their BC peers.

⁷ The EduCanada brand is a joint initiative of the provinces and territories, through the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada and Global Affairs Canada.

⁸ Out of 41 BC accredited offshore schools, 32 are in China, 5 in South Korea, 1 in Colombia, 1 in Egypt, 1 in Thailand, and 1 in Qatar.

instrumental values of competition, economic efficiency and choice, to deregulate and privatize state functions” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 31). Neoliberal globalization is promoted by the intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), such as the World Bank (WTO) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which have all played an increasingly important role in defining the process of globalization and determining education policy since the 1990s (Moutsios, 2009). Education is thought to play a major role in meeting the perceived demands of globalization, because better educated and higher skilled workers are required in a knowledge-based system⁹ of production and services. At the same time, since education is a major area of national expenditure, governments in many countries are minimizing their roles in funding public education and amending policy to promote marketization of public education.

Public school systems in countries such as Australia, the UK and Canada are also implementing neoliberal practices and arrangements in response to government funding cuts (Arber, 2009; Matthews, 2002; Fallon & Paquette, 2009). In BC, Canada, this phenomenon of public school districts making profits from international student revenue dates back to 2001, when the Liberals won the biggest landslide victory in BC history. After their victory, several neoliberal reforms were introduced, including establishing a market and consumer-driven public education system. Hence, for the BC Ministry of Education and school districts, international student programs became a major part of the neoliberal restructuring of the public education system. On May 30, 2002, only one year after the Liberals took

⁹ One characteristic of the new globalized world is the emergence of the knowledge economy, a term which refers to trends in economies that are based on knowledge and information production and dissemination driven by technological and scientific advances (Powell and Snellman, 2004).

office, *Bill 34 of the School Amendment Act* was passed and came into full effect. Fallon and Paquette (2009) explain that *Bill 34* placed new demands on school districts to finance part of their operations and growth, which allowed the government to step away from providing full public financing. Moreover, by setting up separate business companies, section 6.1 of *Bill 34* enabled school districts to make risk-based decisions on both onshore and offshore commercial activities while limiting their liability. The BC's former Premier (then Education Minister) Christy Clark gave the following rationale:

We want to give school boards more freedom and flexibility. They've told us they need it to bring about improvements in their districts, and we're delivering. Board powers will be increased by this legislation.... It will allow them to create separate entities through which they can engage in a variety of entrepreneurial activities — something school boards have been asking for, for many, many years.... One for-profit school is already operating in China, and the money we are making there we are bringing back to British Columbia to support students here (Clark, 2002, p. 3005).

Reflected in this paradigm shift is a policy goal to move public education “away from full public financing and towards greater market responsiveness” (Fallon & Paquette, 2009, p. 146) through what I argue is a neoliberal imaginary of the public education system. Clark took a classic neoliberal move to further distant the BC government's role in providing resources to schools utilizing the neoliberal imaginaries of giving school districts more freedom, flexibility and control in their own finances and operations. Clark's neoliberal move positioned her party as a saviour by “delivering” a solution to a problem by giving school boards more power, through this new legislation to enable them to pursue private monies and thus not depending on public funding. This neoliberal imaginary of the public education system is very much in line with the rise of neoliberal globalization which has contributed to the reimagining of the public sector through privatization and decentralization around the world

(Torres, 2013). This neoliberal imaginary of globalization follows the logic that if nation states deregulate their economy, privatize their major institutions and pursue free trade, then their development is all but assured. Through this neoliberal imaginary, school districts brand and market their intellectual capital as a commodity for sale and compete against one another like private enterprises in an open market in this case for international students who now become objects to be possessed for capital gains.

These discursive moves of providing school boards with a solution to their underfunding problem, passing a legislation to give school boards more autonomy in their own finances and operations, and enabling school boards to pursue profit-making business ventures are the mechanism through which the neoliberal imaginary of globalization is realized and which underpins BC governments' policy direction. At the same time, the federal government has been expanding its role in fostering international cooperation in education by developing a comprehensive international education strategy as part of the *Global Markets Action Plan*. As approved in the *Economic Action Plan 2013*, ongoing funding of \$5 million per year is dedicated to branding and marketing Canada as a world-class education destination focusing on six priority markets (emerging economies): Brazil, China, India, Mexico, North African and the Middle East (including Turkey) and Vietnam. While public funding is available, it is being deployed for public relations and branding rather than to support the provision of services. The strategy seeks to double the number of international students by the year 2022, which will in turn, it is said, create jobs and generate economic growth in every region of Canada.

The BC government shares the same strong directive as the federal government in increasing the province's intake of international students. The 2008 Speech from the Throne emphasized BC government's goal "to enhance both our international educational initiatives and the marketability of our institutions abroad, particularly in the Asia Pacific, which is so central to the government's vision for a strong economy" (Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, 2008). The 2010 Speech from the Throne reiterated the importance of making BC a destination of choice for international students to study abroad (Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, 2010). In 2011, when Christie Clark became the Premier of BC, she carried forward Campbell's neoliberal discourse of marketization of education as part of her *BC Jobs Plan*. She announced an increase in BC's intake of international students by 50% by 2015. Clark claimed that every 10% increase in the number of international students would create approximately 1,800 new jobs and would bring in an additional \$100 million to the provincial GDP (Fowlie, 2011). The following year, as a part of the *BC Jobs Plan*, the BC government put forth the *International Education Strategy* (IES) of 2012 reinforcing its commitment in expanding BC's dominance in the "business" of international students globally.

In Canada, international education is one of the twenty-two priority sectors, generating more than \$455 million in federal and provincial tax revenues and supporting 86,570 Canadian jobs (Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, 2014). In BC, international education is now the fifth largest industry in the province, injecting about \$2.3 billion dollars into the economy and supporting 25,500 jobs (Ministry of Advanced Education, 2014). Between 2004/2005 and 2014/2015, BC has experienced over a 43% surge from 7,377 to

13,128 in the population of international students in public schools (BC Ministry of Education, 2009; 2015). However, what is so striking about the International Education Phenomenon is not only the significant economic gains generated from international students nor the rapidly growing population of international students, but the dramatic changes in ways that institutions, society and dominant ideologies perceive and construct international students in this new globalized world.

As Rizvi and Lingard (2010) point out, popular discourses on globalization are treating neoliberal globalization as a “historically inevitable” global order to which the world has to simply accept and adapt. These dominant discourses privilege economic profit over social welfare and normalize a ‘growth-first approach’ to policy (Peck & Tickle, 2002, p. 394). For example, in a study on the impact of full-fee-paying international students in Australian government schools,¹⁰ Matthews (2002) argues that the model of international students studying in government schools is taken from higher education contexts, which endorse neo-liberal economic ideologies and respond to global capitalism. Despite being state funded schools, Australian government schools “are being urged to accept international students on the grounds of economic necessity and apparent profitability in the context of a restructured global milieu” (Matthews, 2002, p. 383). Discourses of globalization are used to justify educational reforms based on economics rather than educational imperatives (Matthews, 2002).

Similar to Australia, the International Education Phenomenon (IEP) in BC also follows this neoliberal discourse of “there is no alternative” in which the marketing of schools and

¹⁰ Australian government schools are state funded schools.

curriculum to foreign investors has become an economic necessity and apparent profitability for public schools. Government funding is no longer an option. For example, in a Canadian study in which Schuetze, Kuehn, Davidson-Harden, Schugurensky and Weber (2011) analyzed the impact of neoliberal globalization on K-12 education, they found a common trend of governments redefining the purpose of school and education based on a market regime and on market values and observed a shift from a collectivist school culture to norms of individualism (e.g. through consumer choice).

As an immigrant settler in this society, I have worked with various international students over the years. In my experience, most international students come to BC seeking a Western education for social and economic advancement. The Western world regards the business of international students as benefiting both sides in a globalized world (The BC Jobs Plan, Canadian Association of Public Schools - International). For example, *A Guide to Public Schools in Canada* (2014) published by Canadian Association of Public Schools International, lists seven belief statements stating that international education strengthens public education in Canada, fosters multi-national relationships that have long-term benefits for Canada, reinforces Canada's position in a competitive global market, provides international students with an enriched experience in schools and homestay, adds to Canada's multiculturalism and prepares Canadian educators and students for life in the global community. However, research shows that many international students experience "one-way linguistic and cultural conformity, in which only international students are expected to accommodate cultural and linguistic difference" (Kubota, 2016, p. 355). Additionally, the silences about daily and institutional racism towards international students in schools, in policy, in

media and in the wider public have become normalized (Popadiuk, 2010; Reitmanova, 2008; Houshmand, Spanierman & Tafarodi, 2014). Issues of continuing colonization and internalized colonization go unaddressed in much of the research on the International Education Phenomenon. Thus, one of the goals of this research is to address issues of racism and colonization in BC's International Education Phenomenon. The next section lays out the purpose, research questions and significance of this study.

1.2. Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of my study is two-fold: (1) to explore how web-based news media constructs international students and a public imaginary of society and citizenship; (2) to explore domination, subjugation and other possibilities on the host society through these social imaginaries. One way to access social imaginaries of international students is through web-based newspaper reporting and commentary. In a world of rapidly changing technology, online newspapers have become a popular channel not only for news agencies to distribute and disseminate information but also for users to respond to news in real time and instantly exchange opinions and dialogue with each other. This is the hub where local, national and global information can be viewed by anyone with internet access around the world at any-time. The advancement in electronic media leads to new forms of communication and “offer(s) new resources and new disciplines for the construction of imagined selves and imagined worlds” (Appadurai, 1996, p. 3). In other words, mass media plays an increasingly significant role in the way people imagine how their community ought to be, who belongs, and how things ought to be run.

These digital newspaper platforms also offer a place for public engagement with policy in a manner that makes policy more accessible to the general public. For example, not many people know that with the passing of *Bill 34* of the *School Amendment Act*, our public schools have been running pseudo private schools and competing against each other for international students or that the BC education system has grown into a global network of more than 40 BC offshore schools running in eight countries. Moreover, the dissemination process of policy is often unidirectional travelling from government down to public media to public sphere; however, through the concept of social imaginary, I argue that, public policy such as that related to international students can be bi-directional, that is, there exists the possibility of public comment to travel back up: public sphere to public media to policy. In this regard, imaginaries also hold important implications for educational policy. Policies and the way policies are being disseminated online often construct if not reiterate similar social imaginaries of international students. The way policy makers talk about international students and the way policy papers frame international students also call on social imaginaries of these students to elicit public response.

In their book, *Globalizing Education Policy*, Rizvi and Lingard (2010) suggest (as mentioned in an earlier section) that “policies are not only located within discourses, but also in imaginaries that shape thinking about how things might be ‘otherwise’ — different from the way they are now. It is in this way that policies direct or steer practice towards a particular normative state of affairs” (p. 8). It is important to point out the distinction between discourse and social imaginary. Stephen Ball (2006) explains that policies are framed by broader discourses:

... we need to appreciate the way in which policy ensembles, collections of related policies, exercise power through a *production* of ‘truth’ and ‘knowledge’, as discourses... Discourses are about what can be said, and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority. Discourses embody the meaning and use of propositions and words. Thus, certain possibilities for thought are constructed. Words are ordered and combined in particular ways and other combinations are displaced or excluded. (p. 48)

In other words, policies can be conceived as both systems of values and symbolic systems. In this dissertation, I build on this insight in order to argue that policies and practices relating to international education trigger a multitude of material effects. These effects range from expanding BC’s international education sector, generating revenue for federal and provincial governments and local businesses, creating jobs to increase student enrolment and providing alternative sources of funding for BC’s public schools. Policies relating to international education also manufacture a space for those claimed effects to influence the collective sense of agency through readers’ use of online news commentary. Additionally, the collective communities created impact perceptions, practices and policies which keep this circular cycle continuing.

Rizvi and Lingard (2010) point out that while policies are always contested, value-laden, dynamic, and full of compromises, “the state uses its authority to justify policies, and in turn uses policies to legitimate its authority” (p. 12). They further explain that the state is able to manage community expectations and to develop politically vested citizen subjects through the interplay between justification of policies and legitimation of authority. However, policies cannot be sustained without popular consent. Social imaginary is one way that the state is able to massage community expectations and create a national narrative or a collective narrative that guides its citizens to make everyday practices possible. In this sense,

a social imaginary is “a collective conception that people have about the nature and scope of political authority” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 8). Charles Taylor (2004) defines social imaginary as “the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations” (p. 23).

As Anderson (1991) points out, the invention of print and capitalism has played a major role in shaping the public imagination as more people begin to think about themselves and relate themselves to others, they begin to imagine that they are experiencing the same kind of social change together. In this globalized, consumer society, online newspaper commentary spaces which are critical for the research undertaken here become “imagined communities” (Anderson, 1991) where intimate discursive interaction between users take place and identities are formed. These communities are “imagined”, because “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson, 1991, p. 6).

This public sphere is composed of active social agents who are defined by their relative positions within a field (Bourdieu, 1985). Many of these social agents which form part of the online communities used in this research openly offer information of themselves such as their job titles and/or their power positions relevant to the discussions and purposes of this particular field. Some of them are onshore/offshore administrators and teachers, educators, mothers, school staff, past and present students and unidentified online users. They are also social actors and subjects who play a part in reimagining how one positions oneself in rela-

tion to others (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). This particular field offers a public medium that's accessible to these agents and actors whose social, cultural and racial backgrounds vary greatly and who possess different power positions and capital (social and cultural).

Bathmaker (2015) explains, "Positions in the field then produce in agents particular ways of thinking, being and doing" (p. 66). In other words, this field is a space of complexities, constraints and possibilities where social actors are able to recreate social and cultural realities. As such in this study, online newspaper commentary is chosen to investigate the social imaginaries of international students associated with the phenomenon of International Education. The specific research questions include:

1. How do reader comments on online news stories construct social imaginaries of K-12 international students attending BC's public schools?
2. What shared norms, perceptions and values about international students are present in these comments and what do these comments reveal about the host society?
3. What do these constructed social imaginaries of international students reveal about the complexities, constraints and possibilities of hosting large numbers of international students?

1.3. Significance

Although much research exists in the area of international education, this study aims to contribute to the limited scholarship dealing specifically with the role of media in constructing social imaginaries of international students in BC's International Education Phenomenon. Additionally, the study brings an anticolonial and decolonizing perspective to this exploration. Much of the scholarship in the area of international education and about

international students in public schools focuses on issues such as student adjustment, student satisfaction and language and cultural incompetency (Popadiuk, 2010; Yan & Berliner, 2010; Arnott, 2012; Minichiello, 2001). A few studies examine the impact of neoliberal globalization on public education where neoliberal reforms such as privatization and deregulation are discussed in relation to the international student sector (Schuetze, Kuehn, Davidson-Harden, Schugurensky & Weber, 2011; Mazawi, 2013). Several studies focus on public education funding mechanisms and policy in relation to international student revenue (Fallon & Paquette, 2009; Erickson, 2003; Beresford & Fussell, 2009; Schuetze, 2008); others investigate education as a commodity and the impact of international student revenue (Kuehn, 2012; Kuehn, 2014; Matthews, 2002; Arber, 2006; Erickson, 2003). Little if any scholarship is available about the social imaginaries that are being constructed about international students. One of the few studies that explores the imaginaries being constructed about international students is an Australian study, where Arber (2009) investigates the ways in which international students are identified and positioned within school communities. By interrogating the day-to-day experiences of vice principals and schools in two government schools, Arber (2009) concludes that “it is not just education that becomes consumable, but international students themselves” as international students are “depersonalised” and “objectivized” in schools’ imagination and desire (p. 181).

At the same time, it has been said that international students themselves are complicit in the schools’ imagination and desires by actively participating in a process of travelling to far-off places, engaging in “intercultural interaction and pecuniary existences”, and “indulging (their) own and (their) family’s need and desire to commodify Western education”

(Arber, 2009, p. 182). Discourses of antagonism and desire, as Arber (2009) proposes, differentiate and locate international students outside of the host community. They are wanted when they “add value” to the community, but they are not wanted, if they are “antagonistically different” and are regarded as adding “negative value” to the community. This multilayered and complex phenomenon demands further research. Concepts such as imperialism and colonialism are important to this research yet they are rarely considered and theorized in the literature on international students and the International Education Phenomenon. My research will build on the important work highlighted above and will aim to uncover how readers’ comments from online news media construct international students in the BC’s International Education Phenomenon.

In the next chapter, an overview of the BC K-12 education system is presented with details covering both BC onshore and offshore education systems, as well as the historical, political and economic contexts of BC’s International Education Phenomenon. In Chapter 3, the key concept of this research, social imaginary, is further explored as well as its link to digital platforms. An anticolonial and decolonizing conceptual framework is outlined, followed by a discussion on relevant concepts including race, representation and difference, and imperialism and colonialism. In Chapter 4, anticolonial and decolonizing content analysis is laid out step by step and concludes with a researcher’s reflection. In Chapter 5, findings are presented according to the three research periods as defined and discussed in relation to themes that have emerged. In Chapter 6, I reflect upon the findings through an anticolonial and decolonizing conceptual framework. Four colonial gazes are shared: (1) objectification of international students and the subjectivization of the host society; (2) imperial legitima-

tion through policy; (3) reproduction of cultural and linguistic hegemony; and, (4) essentialization and racialization of international students as “too Asian”. Finally, the last chapter offers a discussion of the findings in relation to the three research questions and make suggestions on implications for future research and policy work.

2. Literature Review and Background: BC's K-12 International Education

2.1. Introduction

This chapter has two objectives. The first is to define international education and situate it in BC's context. This section presents the international education systems currently operating in BC's public schools. The more widely known system is called BC onshore schools, which refers to public schools admitting full-fee international students. The lesser known system is called BC offshore schools, which the public mainly learns about through news reports because these entities operate in foreign countries.

The second objective of this chapter is to conduct a critical review of literature that focuses on the historical, political, economic and social contexts and outcomes of BC's International Education Phenomenon. In this review I discuss both global and local forces that have impacted the development of international education. Canada's policy on international education experienced a multitude of change since the time Canada first joined the Colombo Plan¹¹ in the 1950s. For example, there was a significant rise of intergovernmental organizations setting universal benchmarks for education and removing tariff barriers and restrictions in trade and services in the 1990's. Since then, Canada and other nations have participated in international assessments set up by intergovernmental organizations to compete in the global international education market. International education that was once

¹¹ The Colombo Plan for Co-operative Economic Development in South and Southeast Asia was initially established to assist member states in strengthening their economic and social development, particularly areas that were struck by the communist political movements in Asia.

considered part of foreign aid has now become part of global trade since education itself has become commodified and rated. International education is now a major business sector in BC and is part of BC's economic policy. Taken together, the two sections of this chapter provide a landscape of transhistorical understanding of the challenges, opportunities and imagined futures of BC's International Education sector in a globalized world.

2.1.1. International Education Defined

The term, *International Education*, is ubiquitous in use; however, it means different things to different people. To make the matter of defining 'international education' even more complex, the term international education is often used interchangeably with other terms such as international affairs, international studies, international programs, global education, multicultural education, global studies, the international perspective, and the international dimension (Arum and Van de Water, 1992). For some people, international education includes educational initiatives that promote exchange opportunities for students and teachers to learn about different cultures and languages and to gain mutual understanding of each other's contexts. Oftentimes, such initiatives involve participants being fully immersed in another culture and language through academic studies and home-stay programs. For others, it means the inclusion of an international and intercultural dimension into school curriculum and exchange programs.

For the purpose of this research, international education in BC means the enrolment of fee-paying overseas students in public schools in BC (onshore schools) as well as fee-paying local students in both private schools and private offshore schools with association to public schools that offer BC curriculum taught by BC-certified teachers in international

students' own countries. The International Education Phenomenon in BC also involves the initiation of policies promoting structural changes in BC's public education system to allow for-profit programs to be run side-by-side with its public funded education programs. The international education system in BC capitalizes on its BC education brand onshore and offshore by offering the BC curriculum to foreign students who can afford to pay for the steep tuition fees. This system promotes academic mobility of teaching staff by only hiring BC accredited teachers and administrators. This requirement is supposed to ensure quality of education for students; it also provides job opportunities for newly graduated teachers who might not be able to find work at home or retired teachers and administrators who would like to experience working in a different culture. The BC International Education Phenomenon is also about competing with other countries in order to gain the largest market share in the global international education market and to attract and retain the best talent around the world.

2.1.2. BC International Education Systems

There are currently two international education systems in place in BC: BC onshore schools and the BC offshore schools. Both systems offer the BC secondary curriculum and grant BC Certification of Graduation, or "Dogwood Diploma" upon graduation. However, BC onshore schools are public schools in BC offering regular public education programs to international students, also known as non-resident students in BC, alongside "Canadian students"; whereas, BC offshore schools are set up in foreign countries and they educate citizens of those countries with the hope of them applying for post-secondary schools in Canada and/or joining the Canadian labour market in the future. BC offshore schools have since

evolved into a multitude of unique situations and types which are explained in the following section.

2.1.2.1. BC Onshore Schools

Many members of the public are aware of international students attending BC's public schools. According to The StudyinBC website, which is created by the British Columbia Council for International Education with support from the Province of British Columbia, superior education, extraordinary quality of life, friendly and diverse people, and mildest weather in Canada are the top four reasons to study in BC. The website's main feature is an interactive map of all BC's educational institutions falling under these three categories: K-12, Post-secondary, and Language programs. The K-12 programs usually include a Full Year Academic Program, Half-Year Academic Program, Two Month Program and Summer/Winter Camps. The BC graduation certificate, the Dogwood diploma, is granted upon meeting graduation requirements. Some schools offer enriched curricula options such as the International Baccalaureate (IB) or the Advanced Placement (AP). There are 60 public school districts in BC, but not all schools are involved in the International Education sector.

According to the *K-12 International Education Regional Roundtables Report (2013)*, a report put out by the BC Ministry of Education, forty-seven out of sixty school districts and sixty-three out of three hundred and fifty-six independent schools together served approximately 13,000 international students. This report is based on five roundtable discussions that the Ministry held in March and April of 2013 with public school trustees, superintendents, international education managers, teachers union representatives and representatives from

independent schools including directors and school administrators. The Ministry of Education was represented by staff, including the Assistant Deputy Minister, Governance, Legislation and Regulation Division and the Director of the International Education Branch. The roundtables were organized in response to a strategic framework for the K-12 education system developed by the Ministry of Education to support BC government's Jobs Plan and International Education Strategy. The Ministry identified six goals that were condensed into the two key priorities listed below:

- (1) Provide quality assurance through development of standards of practice.
- (2) Support government's objective to increase international student enrolment significantly (50% by 2015/2016).

Roundtable participants welcomed support in some areas from the Ministry, but "were concerned about the potential for unnecessary interference with high successful programs. They expressed concern that a sector that was built on carefully cultivated relationships would be harmed by the introduction of highly regulated processes" (p. 4). The participants outlined some of the following areas where the province could contribute:

- (1) Providing a more prominent provincial presence in the marketing of BC's International Education sector like other provinces.
- (2) Coordinating marketing efforts between K-12 and post-secondary.
- (3) Setting up greater offshore presence (including overseas offices) and diversifying offshore markets.
- (4) Assisting with risk management and liability issues.
- (5) Providing guiding principles for the operation of effective programs.

- (6) Coordinating resources for language translation assistance.
- (7) Supporting cost savings strategies for schools/districts (especially travel costs)

There was also resistance from school districts about increasing reporting to ensure quality assurance, standardizing tuition fees, charging a provincial surcharge and restricting the maximum number of students attending any one school. Some areas of opposition from school districts included the following:

- (1) A per-student levy or surcharge to fund various province-wide initiatives around branding and marketing would put programs in a competitive disadvantage compared to other provinces and countries and would put school districts at risk of balancing their budgets.
- (2) Increased reporting as a method of quality assurance would add to the burden of existing provincial reporting requirements.
- (3) Same level of autonomy in terms of setting their own fees and reaping the benefits was important to many school districts.
- (4) The purpose of operating offshore schools or its benefits to BC was questioned. Roundtable participants felt school enrolment capacity and homestay capacity would not be able to cater to short-term offshore students. They also did not see how a short-term program could benefit offshore students in terms of developing their language proficiency.

One area that requires more robust discussion is that international student fees fill public school funding shortfalls, a common perception being circulated in the news media and government reports. For example, in the roundtable report, international student tuition was said to have generated \$139 million in the public school system and \$29 million for independent schools in 2011/12. With tuition fees ranging from \$12,000 to \$14,200¹² per student depending on the school districts in 2011, total revenue generated from international student fees would seem like a significant amount that many school districts could not do

¹² Numbers taken from individual school websites in 2011.

without. However, when taking the operating expenditures per student in public elementary and secondary schools into account, which was \$10,405¹³ in 2010/2011, the calculation shows that there was only a small surplus to be made from international student revenue. This surplus was even smaller when the average public school operating grants per full-time enrollment was about \$6,740 in 2010/2011 (BCED, 2011).

For example, for schools that charged \$12,000 (plus \$200 application fee) per international student, assuming the operating costs of an international student was equivalent to the operating costs of a domestic student (not including the costs from providing English as an Additional Language support¹⁴), after deducting the operating costs of a full-time enrolment at \$10,405, only \$1,795¹⁵ was left. In this case, \$1,795 was not enough to supplement the \$3,665 shortfalls between the provincial operating grants (\$6,740) and operating expenditures (\$10,405) per student as believed.

However, schools that charged \$14,200 (plus \$300 application fee) per student, after deducting the operating costs of a full-time enrolment at \$10,405, could see a surplus of

¹³ Table 21. Operating expenditures per student in public elementary and secondary schools, “Summary Elementary and Secondary School Indicators for Canada, the Provinces and Territories, 2006/2007 to 2010/2011,” Statistics Canada. Operating expenditures include educator salaries, wages and allowances, fringe benefits, teachers’ pension funds and other operating expenditures. It does not include capital expenditures, such as school construction or the acquisition of new furniture, equipment and vehicles. It also does not include interest on debt services. It is important to note that the operating costs per student varies across school districts. The number presented here is an average provincial operating expenditure per student.

¹⁴ It is important to note that not all international students require English as an Additional Language support, so the costs of providing ELL support is left out in this calculation.

¹⁵ This number would be even smaller, because not all international students were newly admitted students and would not need to pay the \$200 application fee.

\$4,095¹⁶. In this manner school districts charging higher international student fees, were not only able to supplement the \$3,665 shortfalls between the provincial operating grants and operating expenditures per student, they also had a small surplus remaining in the amount of \$430 per student.

To be more specific, by using the data provided from School District 45 West Vancouver's Statement of Financial Information (SOFI) for 2011, for example, the West Vancouver School District's international student revenue was \$7,950,427 and the international student operating costs were \$5,149,914¹⁷. Based on these numbers, the international student net revenue would be \$2,800,513, which might seem to be a substantial amount for the school district's budget. By using the provincial average per FTE operating expenditures at \$10,405, the West Vancouver School District would need about \$73,172,122 in operating grant to cover the operating expenditures of all full-time students. When the Ministry operating grant was \$51,491,874, there was a significant funding shortfall of \$21,680,248. While there were other Ministry of Education grants such as Pay Equity and Official Languages Programs or other revenue sources from summer school fees, revenue generation programs or rentals and leases and so on, none of them (even when added together) was as notable as international student tuition revenue. Furthermore, it is unclear whether costs for support such as career programs, library services, counselling, and English as an additional language were accounted for in the total salaries categorized under "off shore students." Specifically, the total operating costs for

¹⁶ This number would be even smaller, because not all international students were newly admitted students and would not need to pay the \$300 application fee.

¹⁷ International students were referred to as "off shore students" on the SOFI and their operating expenditures included total salaries, employee benefits, services and supplies.

English as an additional language support for the entire district was \$845,049, which seems to be extremely low to support 587.7 students (ELL FTE taken from the Ministry’s K-12 Reporting on student statistics for West Vancouver School District in 2011). Again, the data does not specify how many students included in the calculation for ELL support were international students.

Table 1 provides examples of school districts that charged a higher international student tuition versus districts that charged lower international student tuition and compares the total operating expenditures of international students and the remaining revenue after deducting total operating expenditures. Table 1 also shows that the percentage of international students of the larger school population is on average below 3% with the exception of West Vancouver, which counts international students as being 7.8% of its total student population (as indicated in brackets).

School district name	Tuition fee (per school year) + Application fee in 2011	International student FTE for 2010/2011 (Total FTE is in brackets)	Revenue received for 2010/2011	Total operating expenditures of international student in 2010/2011	Net revenue after deducting total operating expenditures
West Vancouver	\$14,200 + 300	545.4 (7032.4) 7.8%	\$7,950,427	\$5,149,914	\$2,800,513
Vancouver	\$13,000 + 200	984.5 (54713.3) 1.8%	\$13,497,843	\$7,513,671	\$5,984,172
Coquitlam	\$12,000 + 200	907.6 (31106.0) 2.9%	\$15,370,648	\$9,467,827	\$5,902,821
Abbotsford	\$12,000 + 200	288.4 (19031.4) 1.5%	\$8,801,231	\$7,314,769	\$1,492,462

Table 1. International student fees by school districts in the metro Vancouver & Fraser Valley areas¹⁸.

¹⁸ Note. Data for international student tuition fees by school district is compiled from individual school websites (2011), from *BC Ministry of Education’s Student Statistics, 2011*.

The above table and calculations are also in line with another issue raised in the roundtable report: rural school districts do not compete on a level playing field with their urban counterparts and are often faced with higher recruiting and marketing costs as well as costs in providing English Language Learners (ELL) support. Many rural school districts find that they need to give higher agent fees and/or lower tuition fees when compared to urban school districts in order to compensate for costs associated with their remote locations and lower attraction.

Moreover, by including international student tuition fees as a source of revenue for school districts obscures the real problem of the government underfunding the public education system. It shifts the discourse away from urging the government to provide school districts with adequate funding towards encouraging school districts to compete for more international students. The neoliberal notion that “there is no alternative” is again echoed throughout this scenario. In a detailed analysis, Hemingway (2016) refutes the claim that education funding is at record levels and shows how provincial funding has actually shrunk to almost \$1,000 per student below the Canadian average.

2.1.2.2. BC Offshore Schools

BC offshore schools are the lesser known of the two international education systems. These offshore schools are accredited by the Ministry of Education and offer the same curriculum as what is provided in BC. A *Vancouver Sun* article titled, “Demand growing for BC curriculum in offshore schools from Egypt to South Korea,” a three-part series on the impacts of international education on BC, reports that in 2013/2014 there were 9,800 K-12 students working toward Dogwood diplomas at BC offshore schools (O’Conner, 2014).

These offshore schools are important to school districts, the BC government and Canada. They are regarded as feeder schools to BC K-12 and post-secondary education systems in Canada. These schools enable K-12 international students, who successfully complete the offshore curriculum, to come to Canada for short-term or long-term studies and apply for universities in Canada upon graduation. They also provide BC teachers who are fresh out of school jobs in order to gain teaching experience. Additionally, they ensure a modest revenue on a “cost-recovery basis” to the Ministry of Education. In 2013/2014, BC’s 42 offshore schools contributed \$4.35 million to the Ministry of Education (O’Conner, 2014).

According to the BC Ministry of Education website, there are currently 41 BC accredited offshore schools in operation: 32 are in China, five in South Korea, 1 in Colombia, 1 in Egypt, 1 in Thailand, and 1 in Qatar. Between September 2006 and November 2014, the number of BC offshore schools that received accreditation from the BC Ministry of Education and the respective authorities, increased from 7 to 40. Interestingly, around the similar time period, between 2006 and 2012, out of 60 school districts in BC, the number of public schools decreased from 1,655 to 1,604 (BC Ministry of Education, 2012). These offshore schools offer secondary education and must follow the BC curriculum, teach courses in English, employ teachers and administrators with BC teaching certificates, and have students write the required BC exams. These schools fall under the supervision of the Office of the Inspector of Independent Schools and are classified as Group 4 Schools. Group 4 schools are “non-funded schools that cater mainly to non-provincial students. They meet the same educational program requirements as Group 1 schools, their graduates are eligible to receive the BC Certificate of Graduation (Dogwood) if all teachers are BC certified, and these schools

must be bonded” (BC Ministry of Education – Office of the Inspector of Independent Schools, 2008, p. 2).

There are a number of reasons behind this move to operate offshore schools through for-profit School Board Companies (SBCs). A school board company is formed when a board incorporates a company that complies with the regulations set out in the *School Act* as well as the *Business Corporation Act*. The Ministry of Education encourages school boards to take on entrepreneurial opportunities such as running offshore schools that offer the BC curriculum and selling educational services and products. First, a SBC protects school districts from liability incurred through their entrepreneur activities while enabling them to raise revenues to compensate for reduced government funding (Fallon & Paquette, 2009). In other words, with the enactment of part 6.1 of Bill 34, public school districts in BC are encouraged “to move away from full public financing and towards greater market responsiveness” and are encouraged to compete with each other for potential students, particularly offshore students who offer the greatest revenue potential (Fallon & Paquette, 2009, p. 3).

Secondly, BC public school education is exported to other countries and as a result, the BC (Canadian) education brand is made widely known. By setting up offshore schools in other countries and exporting BC brand education products and services, these processes contribute to federal government’s efforts to establish a Canadian education brand around the world which helps attract talented people from around the world to study, work and potentially immigrate to Canada. Thirdly, offshore schools increase the chances of international students from BC offshore schools who have a Canadian education and Canadian school qualifications to come to Canada to pursue post-secondary education and join the Canadian

labour market in the future. With the diplomas they receive, offshore students can apply directly to Canadian or other western universities without taking TOEFL or other tests, be assured that their academic qualifications will be accepted on par with students who attained their high school diplomas in Canada. Finally, offshore students are encouraged to enroll in short-term summer programs and/or complete their high school study in Canada.

As domestic student enrolment continues to decline in BC, the Ministry of Education aims to ensure a constant supply of offshore students to Canadian schools (Waters, 2008). Inspector of Independent Schools, James Beeke, notes, the rationales for sending students from offshore schools to a BC school district in Grade 10 are to secure a consistent supply of students and income for the school district every year, to utilize existing facilities and buildings, and to replace declining enrolment (Waters, 2008). Beeke gives the example of sending 500 students to a school district and how this would not only fill up schools with declining enrolment but would also make a substantial profit margin that could be used to save programs that would otherwise be cut.

In a study on BC offshore schools in China, Schuetze (2008) shows that there has been a rapid growth for offshore schools in China. Since the mid-1980's when China opened up its education system to non-public institutions, more than 800 Chinese-foreign cooperation institutions, of which 80 were Canadian certified, were established as of the spring of 2008. Schuetze (2008) identifies a number of critical issues that might impact the viability of these offshore schools. Some of the problems include high teacher turnover, inadequate teacher supervision and continuing professional education, lack of regular communication between teachers and parents, and in some cases, sub-standard facilities compared to Canadi-

an public schools. One major discrepancy that Schuetze (2008) finds is that the Education Law of China requires all education, including non-public education, to be non-profit. Contrary to this policy, the offshore schools in China are proprietary and their investors seek a high return for their investment. Schuetze (2008) describes a BC certified offshore school in China, S2, established in 2003, as occupying the premises of a former theme park, part of which the owner wanted to develop as a resort and upscale housing. Schuetze (2009) explains that this ‘education plus real estate model’ is common and commercially successful, because these schools attract affluent families who can afford the school fees and at the same time may want to vacation at the nearby resort or buy property close to their children’s school. In her *Vancouver Sun* blog, Steffenhagen (2008, June 27) presented promotional ads from the Sino-Canada High School website.



Figure 1. A BC certified offshore school’s very own “Vancouver Resort” in China.

The image above shows a rendering of Vancouver's "Robson Street" with palm trees, creating a "Vancouver" resort on the campus of the Sino-Canada High School. The promotional ads ask, "Who wants his or her children losing at the first place? Every moment is crucial to a student. Choosing Sino-Canada High School is an express way to experience the authentic Canadian education; one step closer to the University of British Columbia." The website describes Vancouver as the "city of heaven" with beaches, lakes, forests and a mild climate that make it the first choice for holidays and immigration. The Vancouver replica, on the banks of Dingshan Lake, will be the model of Canadian lifestyle" (Steffenhagen, 2008, June 27).

Furthermore, Sino-Canada High School has an agreement with the Kootenay Lake School District. According to Steffenhagen (2008, June 27), the superintendent of Kootenay Lake School District, Brian Butcher, signed a deal with Sino-Canada high school, whose principal was Brian Butcher's brother, Mark Butcher in 2005. Despite the fact that the Kootenay Lake School District was heavily in debt, the agreement was for the district to provide "educational support" to Sino-Canada high school, which in return would encourage its own students to choose Kootenay Lake School District as their overseas education destination. There have been many controversies surrounding BC offshore schools in China, but Sino-Canada was most likely one of the most reported schools in the *Vancouver Sun*.

2.2. Contexts and Outcomes of BC's IEP

In this section, a detailed discussion on the historical, political, economic and social contexts and outcomes of BC's International Education Phenomenon is presented to set up a transhistorical overview of the development of BC's International Education industry. As

Kempf (2009) points out, “The ability of the colonial to adapt (and adapt to) any available space (be it physical or discursive) is reflective of the transhistorical imperative of the present contained in the colonial moment” (p. 21). Not only does the colonial encounter continue to persist in colonized and colonizing nations, it continues to uphold an image of what the future nation would become (Smith, 1999). The colonial encounter is not in the past. Colonialism is very much alive and continues to be part of the global transformation of political, economic and cultural life of both colonized and colonizing nations. BC’s International Education Phenomenon is one example of such a colonial expansion.

2.2.1. Historical Contexts and Outcomes of BC’s IEP

In order to develop a better understanding of “international education”, Sylvester (2002) suggests tracing international education beginning before the Second World War. He presents the World Congress of Education at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 as the first major international event that marked the beginning of international education. At the Congress, the delegates seemed to share a new international vision of education that would promote unity and peace of mankind beyond merely training the intellect. While some view this sentiment of inspiring humanitarian efforts through education as being rooted in virtue, morals, peace and unity, some argue that these early expressions of international education were founded on the rationale of colonialism.

For example, Matthews and Sidhu (2005) argue that education aid programmes “were intended to produce an acculturated, governing elite in the colonies who were anticipated to support Western interests” (p. 56). In Canada, international education was largely associated with the country’s foreign aid efforts, which expanded after the Second World War. In many

ways Canada's foreign aid efforts were connected to its British colonial ties. Canada began its foreign aid programmes at the same time as it founded the Colombo Plan¹⁹ with six other Commonwealth countries in 1950. By 1955, the University of Toronto had 25 to 30 Colombo Plan students from "Asiatic countries" (Hurley, 1955). Under various Canadian foreign aid programmes, the number of students and trainees in Canada increased from 709 in 1960 to 2,900 in 1966 (Strong, 1967).

Even though "the traditional Canadian ethos and soft power policy" is said to be anti-imperial and oriented toward creating "a just and equitable world order" (Trilokekar, 2009), in many ways international education as foreign aid is about creating local elites that later become potential people in positions of power to benefit Canada in its foreign affairs, trade, and other dealings. Soft power is "the ability to obtain one's own goals because others admire your ideas and want to emulate your example.... To enhance one's soft power it is necessary to share experiences with those whom you wish to co-opt to your way of doing things (Atkinson, 2010, p. 2). Providing foreign aid and training local elites share similar goals to the phenomenon of bringing international students to study in BC. Even though there are myriad of ways to reach different international student populations, the goal is all the same: making the world more like us whether through norms, ideas, or structures; it is about building soft power.

¹⁹ The Colombo Plan was originally called the Colombo Plan for Cooperative Economic Development in South and Southeast Asia and was later changed to the Colombo Plan for Cooperative Economic and Social Development in Asia and the Pacific. It was launched at the Commonwealth Conference on Foreign Affairs held in Colombo, Ceylon (now known as Sri Lanka) in January 1950.

2.2.2. Political Contexts and Outcomes of BC's IEP

Education has traditionally been recognized as a public good in Canada, with the rise of neoliberal globalization, the influence of neoliberal ideology in schools has made education a more tradable commodity than ever before.

... neoliberalism is ... a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. (Harvey, 2005, p. 2)

When discussing the concept of neoliberalism, Scholte (2000) elucidates that neoliberalism not only enjoys very powerful backing from big financial institutions, economic and financial policymakers and academics, particularly mainstream social scientists, but also prevails as the “reigning policy framework in contemporary globalization” (p. 35). Under neoliberal globalization, privatization and decentralization of public education are perhaps the most dominant reform efforts endorsed by most governments around the world (Torres, 2013). When the World Trade Organization (WTO) introduced the General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS) in 1986, the WTO was able to remove tariff barriers and restrictions in trade and services. By defining education as a service, the WTO succeeded in creating a free global market in education (Moutsios, 2009). Torres (2013) explains that from a neoliberal perspective, the marketplace is seen as the ideal regulator of products and services; thus, if education is regarded as a product or service, nation-states no longer need to fund education because the education marketplace will regulate itself, since neoliberalism is founded on the notion that there is no alternative.

Neoliberal deregulation of markets is often seen as the defining characteristics of

globalization. This ‘new global geometry of power’ does not signal the demise of nation-state power by a ‘borderless economy’, but gives rise to a new supranational form of sovereignty negotiated by a chain of transnational corporations. These transnational corporations have redefined the scope of action of nation-states (Featherstone, 2006; Rizvi and Lingard, 2010) and have been determining education policy since the 1990s (Moutsios, 2008; Heyneman, 2009).

Olssen et al. (2004) illuminate that with the rise of supranational organizations such as the WTO, the autonomy and sovereignty of the nation-state are significantly impacted but not eroded. They argue that globalization does not shape education policy, but rather it is the neoliberal policies adopted by governments to protect their economic power in the global economy that shape education policy.

For example, in 1968 the World Bank set its educational goals based on a new economic development framework that focused on lifelong learning in a knowledge economy (Spring, 2008). “Similar to the World Bank, the OECD takes a human capital approach to education with a concern about social cohesion as related to global migration” (Spring, 2008, p. 345). OECD, an intergovernmental organization of 34 member states that account for 80% of world trade and investment, has been a leading force in the organization of new forms of governance in education at the global level. It plays a major role in setting frameworks, standards and benchmarks for education based on human capital economics (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010).

Regarding the value of education, the OECD (2009) explains that “Both individuals and countries benefit from education. The OECD explains that, for individuals, the potential

benefits lie in the general quality of life and in the economic returns of sustained, satisfying employment. For countries, the potential benefits lie in the economic growth and the development of shared values that underpin social cohesion” (p. 47). By assuming that the quality of national education and training systems can be assessed by international standards in order to determine the international competitiveness of national economies, “the OECD has been very successful in representing the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) as the most accurate and legitimate measure of comparative international educational performance” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 133). Out of a total of 65 countries participating, Canada was amongst the top five on the combined reading scale. Canada was also among the top eight in mathematics and the top seven in science (OECD, 2010). By scoring well above the OECD average in reading, mathematics and science, the Canadian education brand is well regarded in this global international education market.

While neoliberal globalization seems to be a universal phenomenon, Rizvi (2007) maintains that there is a wide belief about the “false universalism” of globalization and not enough effort has been made in historicizing it in relation to “the hegemonic role it plays in organizing a particular way of interpreting the world” (p. 256).

In a similar vein, Matthews and Sidhu (2005) criticize the majority of definitions on globalization as an outcome of “parochial and first world account of globalization which ignores the histories of capitalism, colonialism and imperialism” (p. 52). As Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) explains, “When the word globalization is substituted for the word imperialism, or when the prefix ‘post’ is attached to colonial, we are no longer talking simply about historical formations which are still lingering in our consciousness” (p. 24). She points out that in

the ‘reframed discourse of globalization’, the power and persistence of colonialism continues to thrive under the expansion of knowledge, economic opportunities and ‘the market’ (p. 88).

2.2.3. Economic Contexts and Outcomes of BC’s IEP

By the 1980s, globalization of societies, economy and labour markets had injected neoliberal economic priorities in post-secondary international education. In a 1988 discussion paper on the development of post-secondary international education in BC prepared for the Ministry of Advanced Education and Job Training, international education was being recognized as providing the following:

- (1) job opportunities for teachers, administrators, and support staff as well as for other service providers through ripple effects;
- (2) enhancement of scholarly research and learning through international exchange;
- (3) cultivation of soft power through connections made with international students;
- (4) improvement on post-secondary institutions’ global competitiveness as faculty and staff develop their cross-cultural and knowledge transfer skills;
- (5) future prospects for exporting BC’s education programs as BC’s education programs become recognized for their standards internationally;

The discussion paper shows a largely self-interested, competitive and economic orientation to the purposes and outcomes of international education. Specifically, the discussion paper reports that in 1986/87 there were 3000 international students attending colleges and universities in BC contributing \$30 million dollars to the province’s economy. At the same time, there were approximately \$50 million worth of international development projects and contracts involving BC post-secondary institutions. Even though the cost to Canada was es-

estimated to be \$62 million, international students were estimated to spend \$345 million annually and bring in \$25 million direct net return to the country. In other words, during the 1980's, international education was believed to have transformed BC's capacity as a regional resource-based economy to a global knowledge-based technology and production system (Gilgan et al., 1988). This kind of cost and benefit analysis is still used today to justify the expansion of international education for governments, institutions, and businesses. Based on this economic rationale, it would make sense for the BC government to provide more funding to public schools since the spending from international students contributes to taxes. However, this is not the case. In a report released by Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Hemingway (2016) explains that the number of dollars going into BC education has risen, however, as he states, that figure does not take into account that the costs of delivering the same level of education have also risen. Boasting about the increased dollar amounts of funding, the BC government "obscures the meaning of those numbers" by leaving out "the basic inflation rate and other cost pressures" such as BC Hydro and Medical Services Plan (Hemingway, 2016, p. 5).

In 2011 when then Premier Clark announced *The BC Jobs Plan* mapping the future of BC through international education and skills training, she shared her vision of the joint effort on international education at the national, sector and institutional levels. She states:

International students who study in BC create thousands of jobs and bring millions of dollars into local economies... Our universities are job creators. We are setting clear targets to dramatically increase the number of international students coming to BC. These students will also help build strong relationships between BC, Canada and the rest of the world. (Office of the Premier, 2009, p. 1).

The BC Jobs Plan is an example of the BC government adopting neoliberal values in their economic policy, which has a significant impact on education, since institutions at all levels are required to support the goal of increasing the number of international students studying in BC by 50% over four years (between 2012 and 2016). At the same time, the BC government solicits British Columbians for their support in servicing and hosting international students by presenting data showing big economic gains. Under *The BC Jobs Plan, International Education Strategy 2012* was developed with the following goals in mind:

- (1) to have ongoing conversations with all British Columbians on the development of BC's education sector
- (2) to strengthen ties between Canada and countries such as China, India, Japan, Korea and the Philippines through opportunities from international education
- (3) to benefit BC students, families and communities through stronger connections to the global economy and the global community

In this document, international education is perceived as a sector that provides British Columbians with international opportunities to participate in collaborative research, to work overseas, to exchange different teaching methods and perspectives and to secure international connections. By building stronger ties to the global economy and the global community, other opportunities become possible. One example is a foreign trade opportunity that sprung from having established a BC offshore school. According to the Northern Development Initiative Trust's website²⁰, School District 91 Nechako Lakes's business company operated the

²⁰ Northern Development is an independent, non-profit corporation established through BC legislation: *Bill 59*, the *Northern Development Initiative Trust Act* in 2004 and *Bill 6*, the *Northern Development Initiative Trust Amendment Act* in 2005. The Trust received a total of \$185 million from the BC government to stimulate economic growth and job creation in central and northern BC.

first of its BC offshore schools in Xianghe and Beijing China. The third offshore school of School District 91 was said to be constructed by using BC's wood products. From this construction project, BC lumber businesses were invited to participate in future projects in China, particularly in furniture production and building construction.

In addition, the Strategy points out that the "social and cultural benefits" gained from sharing classrooms and experiences with international students will enrich the lives of British Columbians. The report further addresses the significance of creating a globally-oriented education system that will position the "province's potential as a world leader in international education" by achieving the following goals (p. 14):

- (1) to encourage all educational institutions in BC to promote international education throughout their activities
- (2) to provide BC students with incentives to study and work abroad
- (3) to strengthen long-term relationships with international students and BC alumni
- (4) to increase the profile of international education abroad

One major difference between the discussion paper of 1988 and the strategy paper of 2011 is the emphasis on acquiring public buy-in of bringing in more international students. As of 2012, there were 94,000 international students of all levels in BC. In order to achieve the target of the 50% increase, BC needed to welcome an additional 47,000 international students over the next four years and reach a total of 141,000 international students by 2016.

2.2.4. Social Contexts and Outcomes of BC's IEP

As previous sections demonstrate, international education has not only become a status marker and an object of desire for international students, it has also become a booming

industry creating revenues and job opportunities and securing foreign trade relationships for host countries. However, these contemporary expressions of development and growth do not take into account that they are built upon a range of colonial practices and historical patterns of global inequities produced by colonial conquests (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). At the same time, on an individual level, it might seem that international students have agency and choice, but when the larger narrative about getting ahead in the world is requiring them to engage in these forms of education, many of them fall in line with the meta social imaginary of becoming more like the West.

In 1982, the West Vancouver School District was the first to admit international students. According to the West Vancouver School District's website, the International Student Program is committed to providing international students "the opportunity to study alongside Canadian students in the public education system," to foster culture exchange among its international and domestic students, and to promote "multicultural understanding and strengthen ties between countries" (West Vancouver School District, 2011). Similarly, on the Vancouver School Board International Education homepage, there is a slogan that reads: "Study in Vancouver: A Smart Way to Learn". The website describes Vancouver as a "beautiful coastal city" with "excellent schools" offering "high quality" programs and "excellent facilities". It also claims that local homestay families are "welcoming" and that "credentials earned in the Vancouver school district are recognized worldwide". There is a common assumption that by providing the same school curriculum and by placing international students next to Canadian students or with a Canadian family, both parties will interact with each

other and facilitate a cultural exchange that supports mutual understanding (Nadasen, 1990; West Vancouver School District, 2009).

However, despite these policies and promises, research indicates that social contact between international students and domestic students rarely happens and that domestic students show little or no interest in international students (Matthews & Sidhu, 2005; Poteet & Gomez, 2015; Pham & Tran, 2015; Canadian Bureau for International Education, 2015). In a 2014 International Student Survey conducted by the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) of more than 3,000 post-secondary international students at 25 universities and colleges across Canada, 56% of respondents reported being unable to make friends with Canadian students and 36.6% indicated that it was difficult to form friendships with Canadian peers. The survey shows that even those international students who planned to stay on in Canada long-term were not able to make friends with Canadian students — only 46% of them did eventually.

The 2014 CIBE International Student Survey was followed up with a series of semi-structured interviews with 16 students even though forty students were invited for interviews. The main barriers to friendship with Canadians identified from the interviews were cultural and linguistic differences, such as limited language skills and accents which contributed to students' lack of confidence in interacting with Canadian peers. Many students felt too shy during their first days in Canada to fully participate in campus-organized activities. Interviewees also cited institutional barriers such as providing two-way cultural exchange with Canadian students instead of focusing only on international students to attend diversity events on campus. This kind of institutional barrier is also cited in Koehne's (2006) study on

international students' subject positions. The study found that international students were disappointed with their international education experience, because they were merely expected to adapt to the local system and they had limited opportunities to share their knowledge and experience.

Even though the findings from the CIBE survey and interviews were based on the experiences of post-secondary students, they share many similarities with the experiences of younger international students. In fact, research shows that adolescent international students are a particularly vulnerable group due to their young age and living situation (Popadiuk, 2010). One major finding from Popadiuk's study on the transition and adjustment of Asian adolescent international students showed that problems facing international students were acknowledged and understood by school counsellors and teachers in their first year, but once international students were in their second year or beyond similar challenges would get minimized and be considered the students' own fault. Challenges that were understood to be cultural shock became international students' individual problems. Students were seen as "... depressed, anxious, exhibiting behaviour problems or failing academically" rather than "... still experiencing challenges with the new cultural context" (p. 239). In the same study, Popadiuk also identifies risks to international students such as sexual harassment, financial abuse and emotional abuse in various homestay situations.

In another study on the predictors of acculturation for Chinese adolescents in Canada, Kuo and Roysircar (2004) show that international students exhibit the highest acculturative stress level and the lowest acculturation levels when compared to Canadian-born Chinese adolescents or Chinese immigrant adolescents. Moreover, a study on the health needs of East

Asian international high school students in BC shows that this group of students are extremely vulnerable due to an absence of policy and regulations concerning their health and safety (Wong, Homma, Johnson & Saewyc, 2010). This study shows that the homestay industry remains unregulated. “Homestay families are considered as custodians, not legal guardians, and have no legal obligation to nurture youth (e.g., extracurricular activities, demonstration of caring) or provide guidance on emotional issues” (Wong, Homma, Johnson & Saewyc, 2010, p. 241). The study suggests that homestay students skip school more often and are over four times more likely to have used cocaine compared to their Canadian-born peers. Female homestay students are three times more likely to be a victim of sexual abuse and over three times more likely to use a narcotic substance prior to sex. Some very violent examples include the following: In 2016 a Japanese international student, Natsumi Kogawa, was murdered by a BC man and her body was interfered indecently (Lazaruk, 2018). In 2012 a Chinese international student, Lin Jun, was stabbed 55 times and then dismembered by a Canadian man and the body parts were mailed to different destinations across Canada (Sioui, 2012). In 2011, a South Korean international student was slashed by a 18-year-old North Vancouver resident and a 17-year-old Surrey resident with a machete and required 18 staples and 7 stitches to close a head wound. (Lindsay, 2011). These are troubling statistics and reports of larger issues of systemic oppression that need to be addressed.

2.3. Conclusion

In this chapter, I outlined some of the major global and local forces which influence the development of international education in BC’s public school system. International education which was once about providing foreign aid to assist developing countries is now a

global trade. As governments further withdraw their role in providing funding to education, public school districts are now running the business of recruiting students from overseas and expanding their market share in the global international education market. As discussed in previous sections, there are many historical, political, cultural and social contexts and outcomes that arise from BC's International Education Phenomenon. Research into these dimensions offer an opportunity to explore colonial encounters and conquests. As educational systems around the world have become more interdependent and complex, governments in many countries have adopted neoliberal values in response to perceived demands of globalization.

In order for BC schools to expand their International Education programs in both on-shore and offshore markets, they need buy-in from both the local communities and international students. Both sides need to believe that BC educational programs and products are superior and that BC schools offer the best if not better educational experience than their competitors. The subjugation of the host community is as important as subjugation of the overseas community to ensure the success and sustainability of BC's International Education industry. Smith (1999)'s analysis of imperialism is significant in that she highlights the 'Europeaness' or 'Westernness' that continues to enable Western nations to imagine the possibility of new markets, new wealth and new possessions out there to be discovered and controlled. In the case of BC's International Education Phenomenon, this sense of 'Europeaness' or 'Westernness' is realized through the standardization of education and promotion of economic expansion and political practice. International students believe in this sense of 'Europeaness' or 'Westernness' as superior to their own and imagine the possibility that this sense of superi-

ority is obtainable and once it is acquired, new wealth and possessions will follow. As Smith (1999) explains, “Colonial outposts were also cultural sites which preserved an image or represented an image of what the West or ‘civilization’ stood for” (p. 23). In the next chapter, I present an anticolonial and decolonizing conceptual framework to question, challenge, and interrogate the institutionalized power and privilege of BC’s International Education Phenomenon. I aim to show that this sense of ‘Europeaness’ or ‘Westernness’ is significant in understanding the constraints and possibilities of hosting international students.

3. Conceptual Framework: Decolonizing Social Imaginaries of BC's IEP

3.1. Introduction: Purpose and Context

In this chapter the central concept of social imaginary is discussed. In the latter part of the chapter, an anticolonial and decolonizing conceptual framework with a focus on race, re-presentation, difference, colonialism and imperialism is presented.

The impetus for this research was the introduction of three major policies in BC: *Bill 34 of the School Amendment Act* in 2002, the *BC Jobs Plan* in 2011 and the *International Education Strategy* of 2012, which have all stirred up rigorous debates in online news comment spaces in the last decade. Given that online news media has become a regular channel for policy dissemination and a popular source of information for the general public about politics, society, education and the economy in the recent years, these comments sections have provided important insights for my research specifically on how international students and the International Education Phenomenon in BC are imagined and constructed.

Pertinent literature has highlighted many studies on the subjugation of international students by the host society and resistance from international students towards the host society (Matthews and Sidhu, 2005; Stein and de Andreotti, 2015); however, there is limited research on the subjugation of the host society by the International Education Phenomenon or resistance from the host society towards this phenomenon specifically from decolonizing and anticolonial perspectives. In fact I was not able to find any studies with this particular focus. To address this gap in literature, this study adopts a qualitative methodological approach using qualitative content analysis that is informed by Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (1999) *Decolonizing Methodologies* and George Sefa Dei and Arlo Kempf's (2006) anticolonial perspectives.

These important theoretical concepts are used in my research to show the dialectic of convergence and divergence of colonialism and imperialism in relation to BC's International Education Phenomenon and how they play out on the web-based news comment sections. The inevitability and universality about the phenomenon warranted further investigation. In this manner, the objective of this study is to unpack and to critically examine the dominant social imaginary of BC's International Education Phenomenon as it circulates on web-based news comment sections of the *Vancouver Sun* and the *Tyee*.

This chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section, I begin by introducing the concept of social imaginary. In the second half of this chapter, I present an anticolonial and decolonizing conceptual framework with a focus on colonialism, imperialism, hegemony, racism and essentialization, which are important concepts for my study.

3.2. Social Imaginary

The concept of social imaginary is central to my research for three reasons. First of all, the International Education Phenomenon in BC thrives on the modern imaginary boasting Eurocentrism. As illuminated in Chapter 2, the early forms of international education (mostly through foreign aid programs based in Western countries) were founded on the principles of colonialism, which were intended to reinvigorate the legacy of imperialism by spreading a Westernized template of education, curriculum, pedagogy, and civiness (Matthews and Sidhu, 2005; Tikly, 2001). As the number of students travelling to study in the West continues to grow (OECD, 2014), Western education remains a desirable product in the global education market and the English language persists as the dominant global language. Stein and de Andreotti (2015) find that recruitment of international students and many

international students' experiences of racism are "shaped by a dominant global imaginary rooted in Western supremacy" (p. 228). This dominant global imaginary depicts a master narrative of the West being superior and a Western education is undoubtedly supreme to all others. Both international students and the host society are deeply affected by a mass-mediated imaginary that infiltrates every level of social, national and global life. Secondly, the concept of social imaginary is useful in exploring the International Education Phenomenon through the imagined community of online news media. Appadurai (1996) discusses imagination as a social practice, because the world we live in today is largely "mediated through the complex prism of modern media" (p. 31). For international students, both the adaptation to new environments and the incentives to move or return are deeply affected by a transnational mass-mediated imaginary. Similarly, for the host society, both the mixed feelings on changes in policies and social life and the clashing desires to host or to reject international students are also deeply affected by a mass-mediated imaginary that often transcends national borders.

Finally, the concept of social imaginary is also useful in examining links between policies and practice since "policies are not only located within discourses, but also in imaginaries that shape thinking about how things might be 'otherwise' - different from the way they are now. It is in this way that policies direct or steer practice towards a particular formative state of affairs" (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p.8). In order for Canada and individual provinces to compete in the global international student market, it requires a social imaginary, a collective consent to view the International Education Phenomenon as inevitable, desirable and entirely legitimate, which circles back to the neoliberal notion of 'there is no alternative' as discussed in previous chapters. This reality beckons a deeper look into the subjugation of

the host society, because in order for the subjugation of the Other to take place, the host society itself is also subjugated to the imaginary of us having world-class citizenship, life opportunities and quality of education.

I draw on Appadurai (1996), Gaonkar (2002), Taylor (2004), and Rizvi and Lingard (2010) for my conceptualization of social imaginary. The International Education Phenomenon in BC is a modern day example of migration and electronic mediation which fundamentally changes “the work of the imagination” (Appadurai, 1996, p. 4). The imagination which, according to Arjun Appadurai, “is central to all forms of agency, is itself a social fact, and is the key component of the new global order” (p. 31). To understand the concept of imagination, Appadurai (1996) considers the Frankfurt school idea of the mechanically produced images, Benedict Anderson’s notion of ‘imagined communities’, and the French idea of the ‘imaginaire’ similar to Emile Durkheim’s concept of collective representations or collective consciousness. He offers a framework of five interrelating dimensions (scapes) that are fluid and constantly shifting to explain the new “global cultural flows” of people, goods, images, ideas, and technologies (p. 328).

The global cultural flows come out of the complex and overlapping disjunctures of these five scapes: ideoscape, ethnoscape, financescape, mediascape, and technoscape. These scapes are foundational to the imagined worlds in which imagination becomes a “property of collectives” allowing ordinary people to access and consume goods, ideas, images, education, technologies, as well as, to feel and imagine things together (Appadurai, 1996, p.8). These ideas of Appadurai’s are crucial to the investigation of my study. For example, the International Education Phenomenon is symbolic of the way “mediascapes” create “scripts

... of imagined lives, their own as well as those of others living in other places” (p. 35). Similarly, while international students may act on their “fantasies of wanting to move” into a new “ethnoscape” (p. 34), the host society may be struggling with the ideoscapes consisting of discourses such as “education for all”, “freedom” and “rights” which may be in tension with discourses such as “education for sale”, “mortgage helper” and “cash cow”. Additionally, the host society may also need to reconcile changes in policies about accommodating international students which often impact local schools, communities and businesses.

Social imaginary is further explored in *Toward New Imaginaries: An Introduction*, where Gaonkar (2002) identifies five key ideas that outline the conceptual turn toward the social imaginary as defined by Benjamin Lee, Charles Taylor, Michael Warner and himself. The five key ideas from this work are important to my conceptual framework, because they are useful in describing and analyzing an imagined social entity that is formed on the web-based newspaper comment sections. Comment sections are largely based on first-person subjectivities and on relations which are among strangers. They feature a “we” representation, offering third-person objectifications of society such as the market and the mainstream, that exists in secular temporalities. Gaonkar (2002) summarizes the five key points as follows:

- (1) The concept of social imaginary links individuals to the collective through common everyday practices, which in turn allow individuals to identify themselves and their place in society.
- (2) A social imaginary is founded on stranger sociability, which is made possible through mass mediation.

- (3) A social imaginary reveals what individuals become when they become a collective or a national people who are posited in history and in relation to other national peoples.
- (4) Multiplicity of social imaginary shows that a national people live amid many other social imaginaries and are oftentimes constructed and circulated through media. Thus, it is useful in exposing third-person objectifications of society.
- (5) Agency of modern social imaginaries exists in various social temporalities and emanates a strong national identity.

This theorization is akin to Anderson's (1991) notion of national imaginary, which emphasizes the nation is an "imagined community" which is always conceived by those in power and in their dominant languages. The idea that a nation is an imagined community develops a consciousness shared by ordinary people in a society even if face-to-face contact is absent. It offers them certain identities while excluding others, creating a sense of "us" versus "them". This consciousness can be further explored by bringing in Charles Taylor's concept of social imaginary. Taylor (2004) explains that social imaginary consists of normative notions and images that make up common understandings and expectations being shared by ordinary people in a society. It allows people to carry out their everyday practices among each other and to live with purpose and legitimacy. Furthermore, Taylor shows that there is a recursive relationship between practice and the background understanding produced by imaginaries:

If the understanding makes the practice possible, it is also true that it is the practice that largely carries the understanding. At any given time, we can speak of the "repertory" of collective actions at the disposal of a given group of society. These are the common actions that they know how to undertake, all the way from general election, involving the whole society, to knowing how to strike up a polite but uninvolved conversation

with a casual group in the reception hall. The discriminations we have to make to carry these off, knowing whom to speak to and when and how, carry an implicit map of social space, of what kinds of people we can associate with in what ways and in what circumstances. Perhaps I don't initiate the conversation at all if the groups are all socially superior to me or outrank me in the bureaucracy or consist entirely of women (p. 25-26).

In this sense, as Rizvi and Lingard (2010) illuminate, the concept of social imaginary is similar to Pierre Bourdieu (1986)'s notion of 'habitus'. The latter refers to dispositions, practices, perceptions, habits and actions acquired and internalized through socialization. Like habitus, Rizvi and Lingard (2010) further explicate that a social imaginary is oftentimes not the fully articulated kind of understanding of the world, but it "involves a complex, unstructured and contingent mix of the empirical and the effective" (p. 34). In other words, it is multiple, highly contested and is "in a constant state of flux", yet it still offers a collective sense of imagination (coherence and identity) that is also subjected to new possibilities and change, both 'mundane' and 'radical'. Therefore, in the contemporary era, a social imaginary is no longer being carried out just in images, myths, parables, stories, legends and other narratives, but also in mass media (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Appadurai, 1996).

The concept of social imaginary involves a collective sense of agency while being specific to time and space, it is always multiple and highly contested within a particular community (Rizvi & Lingard 2010). As Gaonkar (2002) explains the idea of social imaginaries can be seen as

first-person subjectivities that build upon implicit understandings that underlie and make possible common practices. They are embedded in the habits of a population or are carried in modes of address, stories, symbols and the like. They are imaginary in a double sense: they exist by virtue of representation or implicit understandings, even when they acquire immense institutional force; and they are the means by which individuals understand their identities and their place in the world. (p. 4)

The key features to be drawn upon here are that the subject's identification is related to the Other. Social imaginary is what Taylor (2004) calls "our common understanding of what legitimates our social arrangements" (p. 24). Furthermore, social imaginary is not only embedded in the normative notions and images, but also in theories and policies (Taylor, 2004). Thus, the concept of social imaginary is central to this research, because it offers a theoretical lens to understand not just the subjectivization of international students but the subjectivization of the host society of international students as well. Subjectivization is the process through which a subject is formed or subjectivity is constituted (Foucault, 1982). Foucault (1989) defines subjectivization as "the process through which results the constitution of a subject, or more exactly, of a subjectivity which is obviously only one of the given possibilities of organizing a consciousness of self" (p. 330). It is important to emphasize that subjectivization is a process, which means it is continuous, contingent and fluid, because there are other possibilities of organizing self. It is also interactive between the self and others.

Much research shows that while international students do not receive subject positions passively, their identity can be imposed as they "develop their subjectivity through language, through acceptance and rejection of powerful discourses that speak imagined lives to them" (Koehne, 2006, p. 242). While some international students have inhabited these dominant subject positions to try to fit in a Western society, others have unsettled and even overturned these powerful Western subjectivities (Koehne, 2006). The interaction between oneself and others takes place within a set of formative practices that can be seen as modes of subjectivization. Some of these practices take place on the global level, where the dominance

of Western, English education is being promoted through transnational organizations such as the OECD. The social imaginary of studying overseas becomes a way of thinking, because international students who leave home to obtain an English education may internalize Western subjectivities in the hope that it will give them a certain return in life.

Similarly, as I argue in my research, that the host society of international students has also been subjugated to the same Western subjectivities. In order for international students to be seen as “cash cows” by the host society, the host society must also view itself as subjects of desire and be entangled in a play of power and domination. I argue that the subjectivization of the host society becomes a critical part of the collective imagination found in everyday life and in policy and practice of the host society. In other words, through social imaginary, the power of subjectivization is able to infiltrate everyday life, affecting changes in the attitudes prevalent in society. Explaining the complexity between power and subjectivity, Foucault (1982) writes:

power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individuals, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. (p. 781)

In this sense, Foucault’s “law of truth” gives social imaginary form and content. While social imaginary may be highly contested and constantly subject to change, it becomes part of the collective imagination which is shared in a society by ordinary people and “the common understandings that make everyday practices possible, giving them sense and legitimacy” (Rizvi, 2006, p. 196).

While the concept of social imaginary is a popular one, there have been some serious critiques about its perpetuation of monolithic and essentialized images of a community or society and how it is operating on a grand, and perhaps imagined, narrative of the West (Veninga, 2014). In particular, Taylor's work has been criticized for not considering "the ways that Western identity and history have been influenced by colonialism" (p. 43). Taylor (2010) has responded to these criticisms in "Afterword: Apologia pro Libro suo" in *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age* by stating:

My book lays out, unashamedly, a master narrative. The adverb bespeaks the view I hold, that we can't avoid such narratives. The attempt to escape them only means that we operate by an unacknowledged, hence unexamined and uncriticized, narrative. That's because we (modern Westerners) can't help understanding ourselves in these terms. (p. 300)

The sentiment that Taylor shares here is what Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) calls as the "imperial eyes" approach, which "assumes that Western ideas about the most fundamental things are the only ideas possible to hold, certainly the only rational ideas, and the only ideas which can make sense of the world of reality, of social life and of human beings" (p. 114).

In the next section, I propose an anticolonial and decolonizing conceptual framework for my research to examine the multiple layers of subjectivization through what I call colonial social imaginaries that are constructed of international students in web-based newspaper commentaries and have grave consequences for the society.

3.3. Towards an Anticolonial and Decolonizing Conceptual Framework

Many Canadians are largely uninformed or misinformed about international students and their positions and situations in a public school system. Research indicates that many Canadians know little about the circumstances, issues and challenges confronting adolescent

international students (Popadiuk, 2010; Kuo, 2006). This study draws from Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999)'s seminal work on Decolonizing Methodologies and Dei and Kempf (2006) and Kemp (2009)'s theorization on anticolonialism. An anticolonial and decolonizing conceptual framework seeks to unpack colonialism and imperialism at work in a contemporary location of news media with regard to the International Education Phenomenon in BC. The framework juxtaposes opposing forces of desire and resistance on having more or fewer international students who are commodified and imported. It explores legacies of racism, representation and difference.

3.3.1. Race, Representation, and Difference

Mass culture is the contemporary location that both publicly declares and perpetuates the idea that there is pleasure to be found in the acknowledgement and enjoyment of racial difference. The commodification of Otherness has been so successful because it is offered as a new delight, more intense, more satisfying than normal ways of doing and feeling (hooks, 1992, p. 27).

While this quote from bell hooks is over 26 years ago, it still reflects the modern day representation of race and difference in which “desires for the ‘primitive’ or fantasies about the Other can be continually exploited, and that such exploitation will occur in a manner that reinscribes and maintains the status quo” (hooks, 1992, p. 367). As shown below, from the *W5* “Campus Giveaway” contention in 1979 to the Maclean’s “Too Asian” controversy in 2010, history seems to repeat itself where race and difference once again are manipulated and used in the objectification of “Chinese” or “Asian” students’ (foreign or not) race, ethnicity and the body for the pleasure of consuming the Other.

Mass media is used to declare and perpetuate the idea of us versus them. It is a tactic used by mass media time and time again to re-inscribe racial difference, us and them, and

foreigners versus Canadians in the name of fighting for justice and fairness. This kind of divisive rhetoric is not new. On September 30, 1979, Canada's most-watched current affairs and documentary program under the CTV network, *W5*, aired a segment called "Campus Giveaway" alleging international students from China were taking away legitimate university seats from Canadian students. While showing a classroom filled with Asian faces, the host of the segment stated:

there are so many oriental foreign students that they rarely mix with their Canadian classmates. It's as if there are two campuses at Canadian universities - foreign and domestic. Certainly this Chinese theatre attracts a full house, but not one Canadian student attended.

This statement is even more troubling because according to an audio-visual analysis of "Campus Giveaway" produced by the Council of Chinese Canadians in Ontario, the narrator, Former MPP Stephen Lewis, pointed out that the scene was taken out of context; the scene was taken from an orientation meeting for first-year Chinese Canadian students, so all students were Canadian. Canadian or not, the reporter from *W5* did not bother to check the status of these students and referred them as "oriental foreign" students. The normalization of categorizing certain group of people based on their racial and ethnic backgrounds and imposing binaries such as foreign and domestic, Canadian and Chinese (non-Canadian) on them, is a form of essentialization and racialization. Essentialism, as defined by Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffins (2001), is "the assumption that groups, categories or classes of objects have one or several defining features exclusive to all members of that category" (p. 77).

Essentialization in this sense is connected to Said (1979)'s notion of orientalism, in which

the Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of civilizations and languages, its cultural con-

testant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience (p. 8-9)

Essentialization works hand in hand with racialization, because

Racism ... is the result of processes of 'racialization' — that is, historical acts through which people's bodies are inscribed with symbolic meaning and on this basis, people are assigned social places. Racism is a set of contingent processes through which the meanings and experiences of the racialized are not only constantly reinscribed and reinforced, but also transformed. It is both a cause and result of racialization (Kobayashi & Johnson, 2007, p. 4).

Through processes of essentialization and racialization "Chinese" Canadians were constructed into a single category of "foreigners," who are different from "white" domestic Canadian students. Whether these "Chinese" Canadians were born here or not, they were racialized based on their "Asian-ness". By setting the Chinese (foreign) Canadian students apart from the "white" Canadian students, the "white" Canadian students could then legitimately make claims such as these outsiders were taking away "our" seats and the "white" Canadian parents could legitimately be angry and upset about their children's educational opportunities as concerned taxpayers.

The program also showed an angry Canadian student telling *W5* that she was not accepted into the University of Toronto's pharmacy program because foreign students were taking up all the spots. The student's parent was introduced by the host as "hardly a racist" and "understandably an upset parent and concerned taxpayer" (Council of Chinese Canadian in Ontario, 1979). The parent went on express that he would like to see the millions and millions of dollars that the government gives to universities be used on "our people" over "others" (CCCO, 1979). However, research showed that only students who were Ontario residents could be admitted into the pharmacy program at the time (Chan, 1983).

Similar controversy repeated itself in more recent years. In 2010 the term “Too Asian” circulated the mainstream media when Findlay and Kohler published an article in Maclean’s magazine titled: “The enrollment controversy: Worries that efforts in the U.S. to limit enrollment of Asian students in top universities may migrate to Canada²¹”. The article stigmatized certain universities with a reputation of overpopulated academically focused Asian students, who were single-minded and socially inept high achievers. The article explained the term “Too Asian”

...is not about racism, say students like Alexandra: many white students simply believe that competing with Asians - both Asian Canadians and international students requires a sacrifice of time and freedom that they are not willing to make. They complain that they can't compete for spots in the best schools and can't party as much as they'd like (too bad for them, most will say). Asian kids, meanwhile, say they are resented for taking the spots of white kids. “At graduation a Canadian — i.e. ‘white’ — mother told me that I’m the reason her son didn't get a space in university and that all the immigrants in the country are taking up university spots,” says Frankie Mao, a 22-year-old arts student at the University of British Columbia.

In both cases, Asian students became the object of the host society’s desire and dislike, especially for the Asian international students. When they are wanted, they are welcomed, but when they are unwanted, they become a target for various problems that the host society is facing. Race and difference become the basis of these desires and dislikes. This kind of racist and divisive media coverage of university program enrolment in which international students are portrayed as “cash cows” but also as “scapegoats” continues in recent years.

²¹ The article was first published under the title: “Too Asian: Some frosh don’t want to study at an Asian university”, which later retitled to “Too Asian? Some frosh don’t want to study at an Asian university”.

One *Vancouver Sun* article titled “Foreign students on the rise: What’s the reality behind the boosterism” dated August 18, 2013, described how Canadian universities and governments, including other countries such as Britain and the U.S., increasingly see foreign students as cash cows and rely on “foreign students as a way to fund their high education system”. Another article reported on a suburban Vancouver school district bringing in “\$16 million (from) selling 1,700 BC classroom spots to foreign students, largely from China and South Korea” in 2010 (Findlay, 2011).

However, at the same time, international students have been blamed for cheating the system and displacing domestic applicants (Todd, 2016; Todd, 2017; Clark, 2017). A retired university dean, SJ, sent a letter in response to Douglas Todd’s article titled “Mixed motives fuel rise of foreign students” dated August 29, 2016, depicting international students pulling down standards for written work and discussion due to their lack of English language proficiency. The retired dean suspected that the grades from students entering directly from Chinese high schools in China were highly questionable. Moreover, the retired dean spoke from his experience as a Language Proficiency Index marker, that “there is no question that some prospective foreign students are cheating on language tests.” The retired dean also stated that the wealth from international students allowed them to hire private tutors to improve their chances in college acceptance, whereas most Canadian students would not be able to afford hiring private tutors. Again, these international students were being suspected of cheating, because some of these tutoring services were believed to be “less-than-respectable cheating shops,” said the retired dean. What seemed to be most concerning for the retired dean was

that these international students were here to gain preferential access to the permanent residency.

In this section, I showed that race, difference and representation play a significant role in the othering of international students. They are oftentimes essentialized, racialized and reduced to a homogenous group with stereotypes assigned to them. Race is socially constructed and is “a result of a history of racialization in which human beings [have] attributed significance to phenotypical characteristics in order to justify the creation of differences and inequality. Race, in other words, is a product, not a cause, of racism” (Kobayashi & Johnson, 2007, p. 4-5). This is connected to Dei and Asgharzadeh (2001)’s anticolonial perspective in which “Race, racism, and xenophobia lie at the heart of all colonialist and imperialist enterprises. Historically, race and racism have been invoked to justify the subordinate and the superordinate positions of the colonized and the colonizer” (p. 309). To see the connection between race, difference and representation, one must understand how imperialism and colonialism relate to one another in the commodification of whiteness and of the Other as discussed in the following section.

3.3.2. Imperialism and Colonialism

As Smith (1999) points out, there are many definitions and usages of the term “imperialism”. In this research I will focus on her analysis of the relationship between imperialism and colonialism. She explains that colonialism is the fort and the port of imperial outreach as colonialism used to be about securing ports, occupying lands, extracting raw materials, acquiring labour and transporting commodities back to the imperial centre. She exposes a crucial point about the works of imperialism and colonialism stating that not only were the In-

digenous populations subjugated, but Europeans were also subjugated in order to serve the greater imperial enterprise. This imperial enterprise thrived on an image of what the West or “civilized” represented, and this image had to be created and maintained. She explicates, “Colonialism was, in part, an image of imperialism, a particular realization of the imperial imagination. It was also, in part, an image of the future nation it would become” (Smith, 1999, p. 64). This particular realization of the imperial imagination exploits “images of the Other, starkly contrasts the subtle nuances, of the ways in which the Indigenous communities were perceived and dealt with, which make the stories of colonialism part of a grander narrative and yet part also of a very local, very specific experience” (Smith, 1999, p. 64). The remnants of imperialism and colonialism are the colonial social imaginaries that penetrate every layer of modern world.

As Bhabha (1983) asserts, “the discourse of post-Enlightenment English colonialism often speaks in a tongue that is forked, not false” (p. 198). Anticolonial perspective breaks away from the previous limited understandings of the term ‘colonial’ as territorial imperialism or indirect and/or direct state or cultural control (Kempf, 2009). This departure exposes the ever-changing colonialism as it morphs into new forms of domination and imposition to accommodate the needs of the colonizer (Dei & Kempf, 2006). It recognizes that all knowledge is situated and informed within particular social contexts, thus subjectivity, positionality, location and history play a significant role in understanding the epistemologies of and about the colonized subjects (Dei, 2006). It also calls for accountability and responsibility of knowledge production, particularly when oppression is not experienced equally among groups and not all oppressed are affected the same way (Dei, 2006).

Furthermore, depending on the gaze on subjects, our situatedness as knowledge producers oftentimes privileges some bodies over the others (Dei, 2006). Therefore, Dei (2006) explains that “Unless we are able to articulate the grounds on which we share a dialogue and challenge the power relations of knowledge production, we will be shirking the responsibility of acting on our knowledge” (p. 4). This means asking questions such as where do domination and imposition happen? Where is resistance happening? It could be a physical or virtual institutional space, such as the online newspaper media platform, and/or the various sites where race, class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality and so on intersect. Kempf (2009) points out that the colonial moment occurs when these abstract concepts “are operationalized to confer power and/or punishment” (p. 16). He further argues that anticolonialism is “thus the de-operationalization of social locations as sites of concrete (material and nonmaterial) oppression” (p. 16).

For example, in the case of this study, a colonial moment takes place when comments such as “international students are cash cows” are posted on the web-based commentary. This comment which is a colonial moment that has substantial positive consequences for one actor or group at the expense of another is a form of domination and imposition. It taps into a particular colonial social imaginary that conjures the past when education was considered as an aid and the present when education is for sale and international students are seen as cash cows. However, for people who lack meaningful first-hand contact with international students, media representations are often taken at face value, despite their potential to distort or inflame. While the imaginaries conveyed by the media may be constructed, these imaginaries do have profound impacts on the lived material realities for international students.

While Gaonkar (2002) acknowledges the presence of colonialism and imperialism in the encounter of modernity in contemporary globalization, he sees the presence as being in the past and forces of global media, migration and capital are what are influencing the production of multiple modernities today. He states, “Equally important is the fact that the encounter with modernity does not take place in isolation but is invariably mediated by colonialism and the imperialism of the past and today by the implacable forces of global media, migration, and capital” (p. 4). I do not agree with Gaonkar that colonialism and imperialism are forces of the past, because they have fused with global media, migration and capital through social imaginary and a part of every fibre of our contemporary world.

An anticolonial understanding offers a holistic reading of material and non-material dominance and resistance by inquiring into the intersections of racialized, gendered, sexualized, and classed social processes (Kempf, 2009). Anticolonialism is about recentering the agency of the colonized within colonial relations of power. It is as much about ensuring the colonizer participates in the anticolonial struggle because the colonizer himself is also colonized (Dei and Asgharzadeh, 2001). Anticolonialism recognizes that colonialism is an integral part of the development of capitalism (Loomba, 1998). It seeks to uncover an ideological construct within the colonial apparatus that gives those in positions of power the means to assert dominance and imposition through a binary power relationship between superiority/inferiority, rationality/irrationality, masculinity/femininity, and mind/body (Shahjahan, 2011). Dei (2006) points out that the academic project of anticolonial thinking and practice is to interrogate Eurocentric conceptualization of colonial representations and colonial imaginaries of colonized bodies and their knowledge.

Finally, indigenous perspectives are an important part of anticolonial thought (Shah-jahan, 2011) and decolonizing of the mind is very much central in an anticolonial project (Dei, 2006). The agenda between anticolonial thought and decolonization is synonymous. Smith (1999) defines decolonization as having a critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations and values of settler societies and developing a critical response to the discourses of imperialism and colonialism. She further elucidates, decolonization requires a long-term commitment, as the process needs to evolve in order to counter the ever-evolving colonial paradigms that continue to marginalize subaltern peoples.

In the global trade of international education, one might argue that it is a fair trade of money for services or goods where both parties benefit. International students may be perceived as having purchasing power in buying goods and services while the host society may be perceived as providers of these goods and services. This research argues that the international education phenomenon is a continuing form of imperialism and colonialism working under the guise of neoliberal globalization and the knowledge-based economy. As discussed in this chapter, imperialism and colonialism are two different concepts, but are intricately interlinked. “The differential power relations associated with globalization are a continuation of historical Western imperialism that created the dire inequity between the First and Third world countries” (Rhee & Sagaria, 2004, p. 80). Rhee (2009) shows how the new imperialism works to establish transnational economic and cultural interests that create new global elites who are loyal to their transnational identities, both corporate and professional and not to their national, ethnic or cultural identities. Imperial social imaginary facilitates “the formation of a transnational class of professionals, who can live and travel globally

while freely conversing with their colleagues in English, the lingua franca of the new imperialism” (Rhee, 2009, p. 59).

Referring to Nandy (1983) and Smith (1999), Rhee (2009) further points out that education has worked historically to reproduce the “colonization of the educated mind” (p. 58) and that this education “has perpetuated the continuation of the hierarchy between Western superiority and dependency of the colonized in relation to epistemology, subjectivity, culture, and economy” (p. 57). The old power relations between the colonizer and the colonized continue to maintain cultural hegemony.

Decolonization is brought into my research to expose the workings of imperialism and colonialism in BC’s International Education Phenomenon. By examining the processes of objectification of international students and subjectivization of host society, decolonization reveals “colonization as a ‘shared culture’ for those who have been colonized and for those who have colonized” (Smith, 1999, p. 45). International students share a language of colonization, or as mentioned above, what Rhee (2009) referred to as the lingua franca of the new imperialism in the context of neoliberal globalization of international education. International students also share knowledge of the global elites and buy into the imperial social imaginary of international education. Smith (1999) explains that the colonized share the same struggle as the colonizers for decolonization since they share a language and knowledge of colonization²².

This relational tension is further reflected in the concept of anticolonialism, which “is a tool used to invoke resistance for the colonized ... (and it is also) ... a tool used to invoke

²² This point is further explored in Chapter 6.

accountability for the colonizer” (Kempf, 2009, p. 14). In this sense, I argue that decolonization and anticolonialism are complementary to each other and build on each other. Thus, anticolonial and decolonizing perspectives give me the tools to unpack the multilayered media constructions of the International Education Phenomenon in BC in order to investigate the covert and overt colonial domination and imposition hidden in the virtual social location of web-based news comment sections. Furthermore, many international students, who can afford to come to Canada for an education, may not be considered as a subaltern group due to their wealth and/or backgrounds. This makes it hard for people to see or to even want to see that international students are politically, socially and in some cases geographically outside of the hegemonic structure of BC’s international education system. This is because the host society has taken international students into Canada as commodities; as such it is inevitable they would face marginalization and oppression despite their wealth. Additionally, systemic and racial marginalization is not trumped by one’s economic status alone. On the other hand, it is hard for people to see that a host society that is being advertised as safe, orderly, clean and green with high living standards and supreme quality of education is in reality faced with problems such as affordable housing, medical services and education. At the same time, it is also easy to forget that Canada is deeply rooted in a history of imperialism and colonization in contrast to its friendly, peacekeeping and benevolent image in the world. Thus, a decolonizing and anticolonial conceptual framework provides the critical lens to expose the multifaceted ways imperialism and colonialism play out, particularly with regard to the subjectivization of the host society which has been overlooked by the vast research on international education.

In the next chapter, in order to address the ideas and concerns above and capture the contradictions as presented in the International Education Phenomenon in BC, an anticolonial and decolonizing qualitative research design is introduced for this study.

4. Methodology: Anticolonial and Decolonizing Content Analysis

This study utilizes qualitative content analysis from an anticolonial and decolonizing conceptual framework to critically explore the phenomenon of International Education as imagined on the web-based platforms of two of the most read daily newspapers (one independent and one corporate) in order to investigate the widely circulating dominant social imaginary of the International Education Phenomenon in BC.

Qualitative content analysis (QCA) involves a rigorous, systematic process of describing the meaning of qualitative material (Schreier, 2012). It is often used as a research method to examine public perceptions, particularly in the field of mass media. Traditionally, content analysis is a research method employed for making “objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (Berelson, 1971, p. 18). It treats the study of text as a scientific, rather than an interpretive exercise (Lewis-Beck, Bryman & Liao, 2004). However, in recent years, content analysis has become known for its flexibility and is utilized in quantitative, qualitative as well as mixed methods.

Qualitative content analysis has been defined as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). It is a methodologically controlled process involving a “qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort” to identify core consistencies and meanings within the context of communication (Patton, 2002, p. 453). Additionally, qualitative content analysis has become widely used in investigating social media comments in order to understand public perceptions of a specific

phenomenon during a particular timeframe (Glenn, Champion & Spence, 2012; Ernst, Schmitt, Rieger, Beier, Vorderer, Bente & Roth, 2017; Raby & Raddon, 2015).

I was drawn to QCA for my qualitative research somewhat organically. When I first started following comments left by readers on web-based news media, I was intrigued by the wide variety of comments from readers from various backgrounds, the immense depth of discussions, and the complex range of emotions all captured in the form of texts. These texts were not answers to a set of interview questions. They were not directed by a research agenda in any way. The only commonality among these comments was that they were about international education and/or international students in BC's public education system. Having read these comments several times, some preliminary research questions began to emerge, as well as some initial thoughts on categories and themes. I had questions such as: How to organize these texts in order to draw out the data relevant to my research questions? How to capture the meanings of these texts within their contexts while still addressing my research questions? How to utilize an anticolonial and decolonizing approach to address the research gap in the area of international education and international students? These questions led me to identify processes within QCA as a methodology.

According to Schreier (2012), a researcher can amend her coding frame to include new aspects that arise during data analysis; however, she must follow the newly selected aspects. This feature of QCA was helpful to me during my initial stage of formulating and finalizing research questions. Secondly, my experience in coming across reader comments and recognizing them as data led me to realize that my role as a researcher influenced my approach to critically engage research data. Anticolonial and decolonizing perspectives were utilized in

my approach to QCA. White and Marsh (2006) explain that researchers are able to adapt “content analysis to the unique needs of their research questions and strategies and (to develop) a cluster of techniques and approaches for analyzing text grouped under the broad term of “textual analysis” (p. 23). This systematic analysis of texts within their context of communication address both manifest content but also themes and key ideas found in texts as primary content. The ability of QCA to adapt to the unique needs of a researcher’s research questions and goals is particularly important, because in my case, it allows me to employ anti-colonial and decolonizing perspectives to inform my entire research design. I have therefore named my approach to content analysis as anticolonial and decolonizing content analysis.

In this manner, as explained in detail at the beginning of Chapter 1 of this dissertation, the context in which my research problems are conceptualized and designed is based on two major concerns. The first concern has to do with my responsibilities as a researcher and the implications of my research on participants and their communities. Storytelling which is often known to be a decolonizing process in the context of indigenous research, since it centers marginalized voices and provides them with a platform to be heard. As Smith (1999) points out what is “(i)ntinsic in story telling is a focus on dialogue and conversations amongst ourselves as indigenous peoples, to ourselves and for ourselves” (p. 145). Furthermore, each story is powerful in the sense that it contributes “to a collective story in which every indigenous person has a place” (Smith, 1999, p. 144). This methodology cannot be simply inserted into any research situation. Razack (1993) points out that storytelling as a method to oppose patriarchal discourse might not always feel empowering, because there is a “difference in position between the teller and the listener, between telling the tale and hearing

it” (p. 55). Razack (1993) explains that “...our failure to recognize the multiple nature of subjectivity and hence the complex ways we construct meaning, and a failure to develop an ethical vision based on our differences” are two major reasons for storytelling to fail. In this study, I have purposefully opted not employ narrative approach in my research due to a lack of awareness by the general public about international students and the International Education Phenomenon. Although, narratives and data collected from interviews (which are often associated with more anticolonial and decolonizing approaches to research) can be a powerful way of allowing others to “hear” and understand the struggles and experiences of participants, the pervasive attitudes of imperialism, colonialism and racism in our society (especially with regard to the International Education Phenomenon) oftentimes prevents people from listening to the stories with an open heart, “the Other” ends up being eaten, consumed and re-appropriated (bell hooks, 1992). Therefore, instead of focusing on international students’ voices and stories, this research focuses on unpacking the social imaginary that is constructed in web-based newspaper comments about international students and about the host society. The data taken from these social media platforms will be analyzed using what I have termed anticolonial and decolonizing content analysis.

The second rationale for my specific methodological approach has to do “with the institution of research, its claims, its values and practices, and its relationships to power” (Smith, 1999, p. 20). By taking a conscious decision not to ignore colonialism with regard to the area of my study, the lens used for the data analysis of this research will focus on covert and overt colonial domination, imposition and forms of resistance that exist in the virtual social locations of media platforms used in this study.

4.1. 8 Steps of Anticolonial and Decolonizing QCA

Bringing an anticolonial and decolonizing framework to bear on my use of QAC, I employ qualitative content analysis as informed by Schreier (2012) and Schreier (2014). Below I outline the 8 steps of anticolonial and decolonizing QCA and how they were employed in my research design.

1. Deciding on the research questions inductively and deductively
2. Selecting material
3. Building on a coding frame according to an anticolonial and decolonizing framework
4. Dividing the material into units of coding
5. Trying out the coding frame
6. Evaluating and modifying the coding frame
7. Main analysis
8. Interpreting and presenting the findings

Step 1: Deciding on research questions inductively and deductively

This study was first envisioned after I came across news stories and readers' comments on international students on web-based news media. Over the past decade, as digital news media platforms become more popular offering greater user accessibility, participation and interactivity, more people are able to engage in real-time discussions and debates about many topics of interest and concern to them. The readers' comments indicated the significance of a particular focus for the constructed social imaginaries of international students and the constructed social imaginaries of the host society.

As a researcher, I was intrigued by the interactions between commenters. Recent studies have found that interactivity is the defining feature of online news media (Chung, 2008) and that various forms and practices of interactivity attribute to “a strong identity, a sense of belonging and possibilities of exercising influence” for the users (Hung, 2015, p. 164). Chung’s research focuses on one of the many forms and practices of interactivity:²³ online commentary, where users with online accounts (such as a Facebook or a YouTube account) may become contributors to the news story by leaving comments, responding to other subscribers’ comments, by exchanging information, and by providing links, data and other resources to support their own arguments. These comments, links and data may persist on the page for others to see and in turn may generate further discussion.

At the same time, I saw a lack of research on international students and international education from an anticolonial and decolonizing perspective. The specific research questions did not emerge until I immersed myself in the texts (an inductive process) and theoretical frame (a deductive process). The inductive and deductive processes were not mutually exclusive of each other or necessarily followed an order. These two processes built on each other to form the following research questions:

1. How do reader comments on online news stories construct social imaginaries of K-12 international students attending BC’s public schools?
2. What shared norms, perceptions and values about international students are present in these comments and what do these comments reveal about the host society?

²³ See Chung, D.S. (2008). Interactive features of online newspapers: Identifying patterns and predicting use of engaged readers. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13, 658-679.

3. What do these constructed social imaginaries of international students reveal about the complexities, constraints and possibilities of hosting large numbers of international students?

Step 2: Selecting material

At the time of this study, there were 140²⁴ daily and community newspapers in BC covering regions from Vancouver Island, BC Gulf Islands, Vancouver, Coast and Mountains, Thompson Okanagan, Kootenay Rockies, Cariboo Chilcotin Coast and Northern BC. According to *Newspapers Canada*, a Canadian national association of the daily and community newspaper industry, there were 15 daily newspapers²⁵ and 135 community newspapers²⁶ in BC as of 2015. Among the 15 daily newspapers, *The Province* and *The Vancouver Sun* have the highest digital circulation: 279,586 and 331,527 respectively. Both newspapers are owned by Postmedia Network Canada Corporation, a young Canadian media company based in Toronto, Ontario. After the acquisition of Canwest²⁷ in 2010 and Sun Media²⁸ Corporation in 2015, the Postmedia Network Canada Corporation is now the largest Canadian news media providing news across multiple print, online and mobile platforms. A survey released by Vividata shows that Postmedia reaches 4 million readers through its newspapers and 3.7 mil-

²⁴ www.onlinenewspapers.com/canadabc.htm

²⁵ <http://newspaperscanada.ca/about-newspapers/circulation/daily-newspapers/>

²⁶ <http://newspaperscanada.ca/about-newspapers/circulation/community-newspaper-snapshot/>

²⁷ Canwest was a major Canadian media company was started in Winnipeg in 1974 and includes radio, television broadcasting and publishing assets.

²⁸ Sun Media Corporation was founded in 1978 and offers several tabloid and broadsheet newspapers in Canada.

lion through its websites on an average weekday. The majority of Vancouver Sun readers²⁹ are described as are well-educated professionals, who are age 35 or older, live in urban Greater Vancouver and likely to have a higher than average annual household income (\$75,000+).

Other community newspapers have minimal web presence, ranging from a downloadable electronic copy of the most recent newspaper to a simple website with sharing functions, such as Facebook and Twitter. Some smaller regional newspapers even share the same website with the major newspaper agency in the region. For example, Goldstream News Gazette, Oak Bay News, Peninsula News Review, and Sannich News all share the same website as Victoria News in the Vancouver Island region. The daily newspapers are the ones offering more complex websites with multiple area-focused blogs, interactive features, such as Facebook, Twitter, and comments.

Unlike most of the community newspapers, *The Tyee*, has a significant web presence. It is an independent news media in BC, which receives between 800,000 and one million pages viewed each month. It has more than 30,000 subscribers, who receive headlines by email, 42,000 Twitter followers, 10,000 Facebook fans and more than 19,000 registered commenters. *The Tyee* is mostly funded by Working Enterprises, a Vancouver-based labour-affiliated investment group that funds a wide range of socially-responsible organizations and by Eric Peterson and Christina Munck, a BC based Tula Foundation that funds various progressive programs in health, science, education, social justice and community engagement. For example, the Hakai Institute on the BC Central Coast is funded by Tula Foundation. The

²⁹ <http://www.vancouversun.com/features/sponsorship/facts.html>

rest of the funding for the *Tyee* comes from advertising and sponsorships. The majority of Tyee readers³⁰ are highly educated and environmentally conscious professionals, who are age 35 and older with a household income of \$60,000 and above.

Due to the lack of online infrastructure for most community newspapers in BC, the data for this research is only collected from the web-based comment sections of two B.C. newspapers: The *Vancouver Sun* and *the Tyee* since they are the two major newspapers with an online infrastructure that allows their readers to leave comments. These two newspapers also have the most rigorous online discussions. As digital news media platforms become a popular medium for news, access to web-based comment sections becomes more important than ever before. This online space allows internet users to access news and leave comments anytime and anywhere. It promotes a new kind of civic engagement. Additionally, the *Vancouver Sun* has a staff blog called the *BC Education Report*, that was started by Janet Steffenhagen in October 2007. Comments appearing on this blog, from October 2007 to June 2013 when Janet Steffenhagen left the *Vancouver Sun*, are also included in the data collection for my research.

While the period starting from 2001 when the Liberal party came to power and enforced *Bill 34* of the *School Amendment Act* marks a significant beginning and controversy about the International Education Phenomenon, the online platforms for these three major newspapers were not fully established until 2007 and 2008. Therefore, my data include comments collected only from the period between 2007 to 2016. Throughout my work, I have divided these years into three specific periods which were marked by political policies

³⁰ https://thetyee.ca/About/Tyee_AdKitJune2016.pdf

implemented during each period. The first period is marked from 2007 to 2011 as the years leading to Premier Christy Clark's announcement of her *BC Jobs Plan* in 2011. The second period is marked by the implementation of the *International Education Strategy* in 2012 and Canadian government's *Economic Action Plan* in 2013. During this significant time, while the offshore schools were not without their controversies, they were expanding rapidly and fostering many revenue-generating opportunities for BC public schools. It was a time when the BC government and the federal government both came to recognize the viability and sustainability of international education as an industry at home and abroad and rolled out a series of initiatives. Finally, the third period is marked from 2014 to 2016, when Canada's dominance in the global education market grew as did the rise of the national Canadian educational brand.

Once it was determined that these two newspapers would be used as the main sources of data collection for my study, each source was searched with the following terms: "international student", "foreign student", "international kid", "foreign kid", "satellite kid", "satellite student", "exchange student", "exchange kid", "international education", "international student program", "offshore school", "onshore school", "business company", "school district business company", "school board" and "entrepreneurial", "school board" and "business company", "school district" and "business company", and "BC brand" to find articles related to the International Education Phenomenon in BC from January 1, 2007 to December 31, 2016. Policy papers related to international education as referenced in the articles and comments associated were also collected as part of the data of this study.

They are:

1. Hansard, 2007-2016
 - 38th Parliament - 3rd, 4th, and 5th Sessions
 - 39th Parliament - 1st to 5th Sessions
 - 40th Parliament - 1st to 5th Sessions
2. *Bill 34 of the School Amendment Act*
3. *BC Jobs Plan, 2011*
4. *BC International Education Strategy, 2012*
5. *Economic Action Plan, 2013.*
6. *K-12 International Education Regional Roundtables Report, 2013*
7. *BC Homestay Guidelines, 2018*
8. *Student Transitions Project, 2014*

Thus, the main sources and main forms of analysis for this research include the following:

1. Object of analysis (comments related to news articles, comments related to blog entries, policies, multimedia artifacts such as graphs, videos and photos attached to comments).
2. Process of analysis (text and context are examined jointly along with researcher's reflexivity³¹)
3. Social analysis (explanation of data within context)

The comments in the main data collected were chosen based on the following criteria.

1. Their address of international students or international education programs in K-12 school system. Therefore, comments from articles concerning international students at the post-secondary level were not included with the following exceptions:
 - a. Comments on international students at the post-secondary level were included only if government policies, specifically *BC Jobs Plan 2011*, *BC International Education Strategy 2012* and federal government's *Economic Action Plan 2013*, were part of the discussion.

³¹ Researcher is the main research tool, so the researcher must take into account her own position in the research context.

- b. Comments on international education as an industry or a global trend or a provincial/national priority.
 - c. Comments on international students at the post-secondary level were included if the BC brand was part of the discussion.
 - d. Comments on international students at the post-secondary level were included only if they mentioned the K-12 school system or BC offshore schools or graduates from these two systems.
2. News items that reported on K-12 international students without comments were noted and reviewed for background context, but not included in data analysis.

Comments from the *Vancouver Sun* and the *Tyee* are monitored differently. In order to add a comment on the Vancouver Sun's website, one must have a Facebook account. When a comment is posted, the commenter has the option to check off "Post my comments to my Facebook profile." If commenters do not wish their comments to be seen by their Facebook friends, they can simply uncheck the box. In order for a commenter's comments to be left on the website, the commenter must have at least 4 friends and a profile photo in order for the comments to be viewed outside of the commenter's own network of friends. If a commenter does not meet these requirements, their comments must be approved by a moderator before appearing on the site. A moderator approves comments based on the following commenting rules³²:

- 1) Be civil. You are talking to other people, so there's no need for name-calling, rudeness or personal attacks. Any use of obscenity is absolutely out of question.
- 2) Read the comments before yours so you can add to the discussion rather than repeating what others have said.
- 3) There is no place on this site for hateful comments. Any generalizations about a specific group or people or venom towards any individual won't be tolerated.

³² Rules are taken directly from the Vancouver Sun website: <http://www.vancouversun.com/news/story.html?id=7195492>.

- 4) A Facebook account, under your real name, is required. Fake Facebook accounts, or ones using pseudonyms, will be banned from commenting.
- 5) No soliciting.
- 6) No spam. No memes.
- 7) No impersonating others.
- 8) Stay on topic.

The site also has a function for commenters to report an inappropriate or abusive comment. Facebook tracks abusive reports and automatically bans repeating abusive commenters. Website staff also monitor comments and remove inappropriate or abusive comments. Facebook also automatically assigns the “Top Commenter badge” to commenters whose comments are often “liked” by others.

The *Tyee* follows a different system from the *Vancouver Sun*. A commenter can leave comments with a Facebook or Twitter or Google account. If not, commenters can sign up with Disqus, a discussion network that does not moderate nor censor comments but it follows a similar set of rules as the *Vancouver Sun* and appropriate actions will be taken accordingly (such as removing a comment, resetting a profile, or banning an account). The Basic rules for Disqus³³ are to ban the following:

- 1) Targeted harassment or encouraging others to do so
- 2) Spam
- 3) Impersonation
- 4) Direct threat of harm
- 5) Posting personally identifiable information
- 6) Inappropriate profile content

³³ Rules taken direction from: <https://help.disqus.com/terms-and-policies/basic-rules-for-disqus>.

Below is a summary chart of the number of articles and comments collected from the two online news media between January 1, 2007 and December 31, 2016 following the above criteria.

News media	Total number of articles found	Total number of articles that are relevant and contain comments	Total number of comments from relevant articles	Total number of comments during first period 2007-2011	Total number of comments during second period 2012-2013	Total number of comments during third period 2014-2016
The Tyee	155	40	157	58	29	70
The Vancouver Sun	142	46	585	0	68	517
Total	297	84	742	58	97	587

Table 2. Summary of data collected

There were a total of 40 out of 155 relevant articles with comments found in the Tyee and 46 out of 142 relevant articles with comments found in the Vancouver Sun between 2007 to 2016. Even though the percentage of relevant articles with comments was only slightly above 25% for the Tyee, there were an adequate number of articles covering the different periods for this study. As for the Vancouver Sun, the percentage of relevant articles with comments was about 32%, but no comment was found during the period between 2007 to 2011. I emailed Tracy Sherlock, the Education reporter for the Vancouver Sun, on April 2, 2014, about the lack of comments during this period, neither she nor her tech team was able to explain this glitch.

Step 3. Data sampling

An iterative or cyclical approach to sampling was used by going through several rounds of reviewing and revising the “initial sampling plan based on the results of the pre-

liminary data collection and data analysis” (Drisko & Maschi, 2015, p. 21). The first round of sampling was a global search using an initial set of search terms. After several rounds of manipulating the search terms a total of 197 articles were found. The next round of sampling involved following the strict sampling criteria as described above to select articles with comments that were relevant to the target group - international students in K-12 public education system. This round of sampling reduced the number of articles to 84. During this stage, it was important to “be self-aware and self-reflective to avoid obtaining a biased sample or one that did not allow for variation in meanings or viewpoints as best as this can be established” Drisko & Mschi, 2015, p. 21). What emerged from these rounds of iterative sampling then shaped subsequent sampling decisions. At this time, the comments were reviewed following the above selection criteria two more times until the researcher reached saturation, “the point at which no new information or new themes result from additional data collection and analysis” (Drisko & Maschi, 2015, p. 21). The purpose of iterative sampling is to yield more complete and more nuanced results.

Step 4. Building on a coding frame and Step 5. Dividing material into units of coding

The first step in building a coding frame was to immerse myself in the collected data which “provid(ed) a sense of the study as a whole and of its component parts” and helped to form “awareness to context and nuance” (Drisko & Maschi, 2015, p. 22). The following table was used to organize and divide data into units of coding.

Date	Title	Number of Comments	Commenters	Comments	Codes I	Researcher's Notes	Codes II	Categories	Themes and Concepts

Table 3. Coding Frame

The 'Date' column in this table referred to the date of the article published and provided a point of reference in terms of timeline and was especially important for the larger political context of this study. The 'Title' column referred to the title of the article. In many cases, the title of the article already gave away a sense of how inflammatory the comments were particularly from the *Vancouver Sun*. The 'Number of comments' column contained the total number of comments per article. This number oftentimes indicated the popularity of topics being discussed. The 'Commenters' column in this table showed the names of the commenters who left a message. In some cases, several names of commenters who engaged in a dialogue were included to show who was responding to whom and thereby providing richer and more comprehensive context. The 'Comments' column recorded a comment in its entirety without any edits. The 'Codes I' column in the table consisted of messy and longer descriptive codes from my initial attempt at reading both articles and comments and including my initial thoughts in the 'Researcher's Notes' column during this stage. The 'Codes II' column in this table provided more focused, descriptive codes from the second attempt at immersing in data and reviewing codes I.

While this study intended to conduct data analysis grounded in an anticolonial and decolonizing framework, the initial stage of coding was data driven to ensure that different views from the commenters were given priority over the researcher's conceptual frame-

works. The process of inductive coding helped create coding categories grounded in the original data. The 'Categories' column in this table included the main categories and subcategories identified both inductively and deductively. During this stage, deductive coding was most useful, because data was reviewed through an anticolonial and decolonizing framework to capture themes and concepts that were most relevant to the purpose of the study. Themes and concepts that emerged inductively and deductively were then noted down in the last column.

Step 6. Trying out the coding frame and Step 7. Evaluating and modifying the coding frame

As Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen and Snelgrove (2016) explain, “Coding reduces the amount of raw data to that which is relevant to the research question, breaks data down to manageable sections, and takes researchers through the transformation of raw data to higher-level insights or abstractions as the development of theme” (p. 104). As codes were developed, the next step was to create a hierarchy of codes “with central codes as key categories and many subsidiary codes elaborating the content in greater detail across several dimensions” (Drisko & Maschi, 2015, p. 25). Following Mayring's (2000) suggestion, reliability checks of the coding frame were undertaken after 10% to 50% of the texts were coded. At this stage, some codes that were rarely used were excluded and revisions were made as needed to create a revised coding frame that was used to complete the coding process for the remaining data (Drisko & Maschi, 2015). Since it is crucial that the coding frame addresses the overall research questions, categories were developed from a third read of the data and then a final review of Codes I and Codes II was undertaken.

The following 34 codes emerged from the first two rounds of coding:

1. International students as problem
2. International students at risk
3. International students commodified
4. Who are international students? (perceptions of international students)
5. Self-segregation/ghettoization
6. Assimilation
7. Integration
8. Global IS market
9. Greed/getting the biggest slice of pie
10. International students as consumers
11. International students as benefits to Canada
12. Imaginary cultural capital
13. BC brand
14. Eurocentrism / white supremacy
15. Canada is being ripped off / exploited
16. Canada for sale
17. Education for sale
18. Privatization of public education
19. Colonialism
20. Protectionism / nationalism
21. Canada's obligation
22. Canadian kids got left behind
23. Canadian Kids first
24. Canadian resistance to IS in public education
25. BC offshore schools as problem
26. Resistance from BC offshore staff
27. Racism
28. ESL as a negative marker
29. Asian as a negative marker
30. Fear
31. Anger/resentment
32. Confusion
33. Common sentiment
34. Divisive journalism

During this stage, the coding frame can no longer be modified and the main analysis phase then takes place where all material is coded. Major themes and concepts that emerged were analyzed and carefully detailed through an anticolonial and decolonizing framework.

Questions such as: “What story does this theme tell?” and “How does this theme fit into the overall story about data?” was asked as I began to determine what aspect of the data each theme captured and then a comprehensive and informative name was developed for each theme. The goal was to make sure individual themes were coherent and that the themes together addressed the research question in a meaningful way and captured the most relevant features of the data. At the end of this phase, the researcher had a clearly defined set of themes. Below is a selection of the coding sheet that was used as an organization tool for the data analysis.

Comments	Code I	Code II	Categories	Themes and Concepts
What happens in districts that don't have the cash cows of international students? What are our students getting for this cash?	cash cows cause equity issues Competition among SD	Canadian kids first	Perceptions of int’nl stu (PERC)	Objectification of international students (OBJC) Int’nl stu commodified (COMMOD) Int’nl stu as problem (PROBM)
Cash Cow. Maybe we should actually just service our own sons and daughters with our educational tax dollars. We should dismantle the expensive bureaucracy that administers these "rich foreigners" programs in high schools. As far as I see it, this just creates high priced jobs for administrators and otherwise downloads even more work on the classroom teacher.	cash cows rich foreigner More work for teacher	Canadian kids first	PERC	OBJC COMMOD PROBM
It appears this gap will be bridged to some degree by importing the " raw material /clientele " from Offshore with Foreign Students.	raw material to be imported	coloniza- tion	PERC	Subjectivization of host society (SUBJ) COMMOD Colonization
Homestays run about \$750 a month, at least in North Van. That includes meals. As far as I know, this is not taxed. I would love to get in on the homestay industry- some people out there are really raking in some big bucks, as they have as many as 4 homestay students.	good income for Canadian family greed	exploita- tion coloniza- tion	PERC Shared norms, per- ceptions and values of host society (NORMS)	SUBJ COMMOD Int’nl stu at risk (RISK)

Table 4. Coding Frame Sample

4.2. Researcher Reflections

According to Tracy (2010), there are eight criteria of quality in qualitative research: (a) worthy topic, (b) rich rigour, (c) sincerity, (d) credibility, (e) resonance, (f) significance contribution, (g) ethics, and (h) meaningful coherence. By following Tracy's (2010) criteria for quality, this research aims to meet all of the eight criteria through a qualitative content analysis following an anticolonial/decolonizing conceptual framework.

The topic of this research is relevant and timely to provide a richer picture of BC's International Education Phenomenon, particularly since governments at various levels are increasingly recognizing the importance of International Education as a viable industry and working together to maximize its potential profits. In the age of Internet, this research provides an interesting perspective in exploring a relatively unknown virtual community, the online news media. As more people from the public participate in this virtual space and discuss topics of interest to them, this research tells a story of the constructed social imaginaries of international students on this online community and reveals much about the shared norms, perceptions and values about international students from this online community. In addition, this research delves into the complexities, constraints and possibilities of what this online community discloses about the constructed social imaginaries of the host society and international students.

This research demonstrates rich rigour through uses of an anticolonial/decolonizing theoretical construct that is appropriate in showing the complex, multifaceted ways imperialism and colonialism play out, particularly, with regard to the subjectivization of the host society that has been overlooked by the vast research on international education. By utilizing

qualitative content analysis covering the period 2007-2016, this research has collected rich data that exposes much about the impact of policy changes on the constructed imaginaries of international students. The data also reveal much about the constructed social imaginaries of the host society's changing attitudes and values in this virtual space.

This research is characterized by self-reflexivity about subjective values, biases and inclinations of myself as the researcher since the inception of this research as discussed in detail in the first chapter. Although the process I have described in this chapter seems linear, logical and unbiased, it is important to point out that for me as a researcher, it was impossible to not see the data at every stage from an anticolonial and decolonizing perspective as I directed every aspect of the data gathering and analysis process. Despite my attempts at objectivity, it is inevitable that my bias is part of the process. My strengths and experiences as an anticolonial and decolonizing researcher as well as the research purpose, research questions, the content of the texts and subject in general have been a critical part of the research direction and process. The act of doing this research not only challenged me to explicitly identify my position as a researcher, it also engaged me in the process of decolonization by allowing me to reflect deeply on the workings of colonialism and imperialism both in the research itself as well as in my daily life as I saw the topic being analyzed and re-analyzed in various contexts. In this manner, I was engaged in a process of ongoing shaping and reshaping between myself as a researcher and my research endeavour. The realities of the phenomenon of International Students along with my questions led me to a methodology that allowed me to see the gaps in my own Eurocentric learnings as well as in the field which I felt a deep responsibility to address.

This research's credibility is marked by thick descriptions of data collected showing concrete details of various contexts presented in the data. A coding frame was used to ensure rigorous recording of discussions on a range of topics related to international students and international education according to the three periods as identified and by detailing the connections between commenters and their background information and positions taken. Triangulation and crystallization were carried out through collecting, comparing and analyzing data from two different sources of news media outlets and then contrasting the findings from online news media with relevant policies. Additionally, multivocality, which is closely aligned with crystallization (Tracy, 2010), is achieved through including multiple and varied voices from two different sources of news media. It is important to point out that the data collected and presented in the later chapters do not represent the entire society of British Columbians or those beyond. However, the data show a diverse group of commenters from different geographical regions, professions, years of experience in the field of education, cultural/ethnic background, experiences, ages, and gender. This background information about is shared by the commenters themselves as part of their online profile and/or part of their comments. Some examples of commenters' backgrounds are: teacher at Alexander Academy (a private high school in Vancouver), Head of English Department at Sino-Canada High School (an offshore school in China), Director of the Orca Centre at Maple Leaf Educational Systems (an offshore education system), an ESL/ELL teacher in an elementary school in the lower mainland, a former international admissions officer at the post-secondary level, store manager at Lucky Brand, registered sign language interpreter at School District 36

Surrey, self-employed owner-operator in Vancouver, and Chief Creative Officer at Lath Games Inc.

Most commenters identify themselves from a certain geographical region, such as Vancouver, White Rock, Langley, Dawson Creek, Prince George and Nanaimo. Some commenters identify themselves as 7th generation Canadian, 6th generation Canadian, international student or Chinese Canadian. Some commenters do not offer much background information and use pseudonyms as their login ID. Many of them leave comments more than once and have continuous dialogues with other commenters. As a researcher, I present all comments unedited and unformatted to ensure that the original voices are heard in order to provide readers of this research with a better sense of the constructed social imaginaries of international students and the host society as presented on this online space.

The fifth criteria of quality in a qualitative study is resonance, which refers to the “research’s ability to meaningfully reverberate and affect an audience” (Tracy, 2010, p. 844). Through the data presented, readers are able to understand the complex and subtle social behaviours, beliefs and values of the commenters in this online space. The findings offer implications for educators, homestay parents, policy makers and researchers to be able to intuitively transfer what they learn from the research to their own practice. One of the goals of this research is to help policy makers, educators, administrators and researchers to identify possible social, political, economical and ethical problems and allocate appropriate attention and resources to address them.

The sixth criteria of quality is significant contribution. This research aims for theoretical significance, heuristic significance and practical significance to move readers to further

explore, research, or act on the findings presented in this research. As mentioned earlier, there is a lack of research on international students and international education from an anti-colonial and decolonizing perspective. This research intends to address this gap in research and contribute to offering different understandings that emerge from the data analysis.

The seventh criteria of quality is ethics. This research practices relational and exiting ethics. Relational ethics involve the researcher being mindful of her own “character, actions and consequences on others” (Tracy, 2010, p. 847). Exiting ethics are ethical considerations that continue beyond the data collection phase. As the researcher of this study I do not wish to misrepresent the data collected and I repeatedly reflect on and question my ethical decisions. I consider how best to present the research so as to avoid misrepresentation and any unintended consequences. As stated in the beginning of Chapter 1, as the researcher, I am cognizant of the power of stories. Stories from international students have been collected, told and retold, but stories of the host society have not been investigated enough. The eighth criteria is meaningful coherence. I have attentively connected relevant literature to support my research foci, methods and findings. By utilizing an anticolonial and decolonizing conceptual framework, I was able to analyze my data and answer my research questions.

4.3. Conclusion

In this chapter, I introduced my methodology, decolonizing and anticolonial content analysis. This research begins with the intention of turning the research gaze upon power and privilege and tracing the legacies of imperialism and colonialism in the making of the meta-narrative of the BC International Education Phenomenon and international students as they

exist on a specific virtual space (particularly Asian students who are being targeted in the news media and online news readers' comments).

By revealing the processes of objectification of international students and subjectivization of host society, this methodology exposes how subtly colonial social imaginary is at work. In the next chapter, the findings from the data analysis are shared and discussed. The four major themes that emerged about the constructed social imaginaries of international students include the following: students as commodities, students as consumers, students as vulnerable minors and students as targets. The three major themes that emerged about the constructed social imaginaries of the host society include the following: (1) their negotiation between fear and desire of having more international students; (2) their resistance to the International Education Phenomenon; (3) their essentialization and racialization of international students.

5. Findings: Social Imaginaries of International Students and the Host Society

This findings chapter is divided into three sections based on three major time periods for data collection and analysis: (1) 2007-2011: post *Bill 34* of the *School Amendment Act* and pre *BC Jobs Plan*; (2) 2012-2013: BC's *International Education Strategy* in 2012 and the Canadian government's *Economic Action Plan* in 2013; (3) 2014-2016: the rise of the national educational brand and dominance in the global education market. In the sections that follow, I highlight the main news stories to set the context for the comments that were used as the main data for my study. Each section ends with a discussion of major themes in relation to each time period. There are four themes that emerged in relation to the constructed social imaginaries of international students: (1) international students as commodities; (2) international students as consumers; (3) international students as vulnerable minors; (4) international students as targets. Three themes emerged in relation to the constructed social imaginaries of the host society: (1) their negotiation between fear and desire of having more international students; (2) their resistance to the International Education Phenomenon; (3) their essentialization and racialization of international students.

5.1. Bill 34 of the School Amendment Act and the BC Jobs Plan 2007-2011

After the passing of *Bill 34* of the *School Amendment Act* in 2002, there were about nine BC offshore schools certified by 2007 (Steffenhagen, 2007, May 31), but little was known about them. The then Education reporter for the *Vancouver Sun*, Janet Steffenhagen, reported on these BC certified schools extensively in her *Vancouver Sun* blog, BC Education

Report, between 2007 and 2011 yet no comments from the readers were found. The *Tyee* had no coverage on these schools at all during the same period.

Steffenhagen's blog covered a whole range of stories about BC offshore schools including some that were quite controversial. These stories included information on some of the following issues: BC certified teachers' allegation of being instructed to avoid discussing human rights issues with their students in two offshore schools (Steffenhagen, 2007, May 31); BC's list of offshore schools being suspected of grade inflation (Steffenhagen, 2007, September 30); Education Minister Shirley Bond's visit to China to promote BC education (Steffenhagen, 2008, June 22); Abbotsford School District's \$400,000 a-year loan to its school district business company on a services basis contract (Steffenhagen, 2009, August 27); New Westminster School District Business Company's \$100,000 loan request that did not get approved by the school board (Steffenhagen, 2009, August 31); and the West Vancouver district principal, Rod Matheson's report of having just under \$100,000 of work related expenses (Steffenhagen, 2008, May 20).

It was very surprising that there were no comments about these new stories given the range and breadth of comments on the issue of International Education in general. Furthermore, it was also surprising that the *Tyee* did not pick up on any of these news pieces at all. The *Tyee*, however, did pick up news stories on the home front which were important for my research. The five main news stories chosen for this time period for my research from the *Tyee* are elaborated upon below.

News story #1: “As BC’s school enrolment drops” by John Malcolmson, *The Tyee*, February 12, 2007

This new story discusses how BC’s K-12 system continues to decline in recent years. Some of the contributing factors were: lower fertility rates; longer life expectancy; increased private school attendance (over public schools); relocation of workers due to economic downturn; disproportional concentration of immigrants in urban centres and so on. Below is a series of comments between commenters, Saltchucksteve, GWest and maestro, speaking to several critical issues about how international students are being used address the drop in the enrollment of domestic students.

Comment #1: (commenter: maestro)

the blessed "DOGWOOD edu- currency Totally against either PUBLIC or PRIVATE institutions bringing in Foreign Students...if these are both costing and displacing domestic BC students...who are then simply pushed to the back of the line. Maybe SALTCHUCKSTEVE can inform us more on what I was lead to believe,(and of which I also can't get a straight answer from the BC Ministry of Education), that if the Foreign student obtains their "DOGWOOD" ie Grade 12 DIPLOMA here in a BC School, in either a Private OR Public school..they have EQUAL access to post secondary , no different than any other domestic BC student who may have been here in the BC education system from K to 12... Ie IS this simply a "jump the queue " method for Foreign Students to acquire quicker and more direct access to TaxPayer -funded Post Secondary? My understanding is they may only need to complete Grade 12 here in BC to qualify , having taken the rest of their schooling elsewhere...but maybe someone can clarify this.

In his comment above, maestro coins the term “Dogwood edu-currency” to refer to how a Canadian diploma is believed to be a kind of currency that can help one get ahead in the global market. While many commenters validate maestro’s ideas, these concerns are complex to discern. According to the BC Ministry of Education, international students have to meet all

graduation requirements, including all required exams and assessments as prescribed for earning a Dogwood diploma³⁴.

However, extensive research tracking student transitions into post-secondary education sectors shows that 1,021 (or roughly 3%) of the 34,048 international post-secondary registrants in BC in 2012/2013 had attended the BC K-12 without attaining BC grade 12 graduation and 10% were BC grade 12 graduates (Heslop, 2014). The student transitions report also indicates that 1,150 (or 2.5%) of the total 45,425 grade 12 graduates were international students. These numbers show some discrepancies between the Ministry graduation guidelines and actual graduation statistics. The student transition report does not provide information on why and how 3% of international students who attended the K-12 system without completing graduation requirements were admitted into BC's post-secondary system. The report does show that most of the 4,808 international students enrolled in developmental programs, such as non-credit language training programs, were students who had not attended or graduated from the BC K-12 education system.

The commenter also shares his concerns about Canadian students being displaced by international students and losing out on educational opportunities. He further highlights that international students might have the same level of access to post secondary education as Canadian students without ever paying the same amount of tax dollars. His comments speak to the notion that Canadians ought to come first. His comments do not mention the significance of international student fees to the government, the institutions, or the economy as a

³⁴ Please see Chapter 2 for a more detailed discussion on graduation requirements.

whole. Nor do they acknowledge the decreased education funding from the government which is one of the main reasons placing schools in this predicament.

maestro's questions reveal two coexisting yet conflicting identities imposed on international students: international students as commodities and international students as customers. Although as commodities they are valued for economic benefits, as customers they are rejected for fear of them displacing Canadian students. These contradictory discourses of international students are further advanced in the comments below.

Comment #2: (commenter: saltchucksteve)

...Selling the promise of a Canadian education to parents in Korea, China and Japan is something that BC tax supported education should not be doing.... Most BC boards in the business use off-shore agents to promote their programs and arrange travel and government documents and commissions can be as high as 20%. Apart from the tuition cost "Home Stay" with a Canadian family can be up to \$1,500 to \$2,000 a month, it's no wonder that "hosts" want a couple of students at a time. It would seem to be a conflict for the students to stay with teachers or administrators, this is often the case. If they are staying for more than a year then they pay through the summer and often have to baby-sit and clean house for no reduction in fees.

In order to excel at home and become the *golden child*, the youth are pushed to the max to achieve high grades and attend Saturday school; as well as late night study sessions and cramming. Depression and even suicide are not uncommon. When the off-shore students arrive in BC some suffer culture shock as they are placed in basically "white" home stays. BC students have freedoms and don't study as hard as their Asian counterparts. With a lack of supervision the ambition and finely tuned study skills often evaporate, leading the student into questionable and unsafe behaviours. I know of cases from my own teaching where talented and bright foreign students have fallen off the path, (or chosen another one) failed the year and when forced to return home, killing their parents hopes and dreams for future security.

As BC tax payers should we be a part of this sham, created by a heartless government that seems to be bent on destroying public education in BC. I say NO. Stephen Dalley. Comox

saltchucksteve, also known as Stephen Dalley, from Comox, is a self-identified secondary school teacher. He points out the safety and wellbeing concerns of international students from his own experience in schools. Although there has been little media reporting on the health and safety of international students, studies show that international students are at risk of health issues and emotional and physical abuse (Chiang, 2012; Wong, Homma, Johnson & Saewyc, 2010). saltchucksteve's comment reveals another theme for this study that international students are vulnerable minors. As previously mentioned in Chapter 2, research on the unmet health needs of East Asian high school students in BC shows that drug and sexual abuse are prevalent especially among female homestay students (Wong, Homma, Johnson & Saewyc, 2010). saltchucksteve raises two important concerns with regard to international students: (1) that the homestay industry is under-regulated; and (2) the success rate of international students studying in BC is unknown/questionable. Although the homestay industry has been around for the past two decades, it was not until 2015 (only three years ago) that the BC government formally introduced guidelines for Kindergarten to Grade 12 homestay programs. The guidelines now include a number of safeguards as listed below.

Homestay program providers:

- (1) must maintain a screening process for host families, which include in-home inspections, criminal record checks and reference checks, to determine suitability
- (2) must provide training support for new host families and a process for regular host families to stay current with best practice
- (3) must place a maximum of two international students with a host family at a time

As for the success rate of international students, according to *International Students in BC's Education Systems* (2014), a summary research from the *Student Transitions Project (STP)*, in 2012/2013, out of the total of eligible³⁵ 45,425 Grade 12 students who graduated in BC, 1,150 (2.5%) were identified as international students. When comparing the statistics from *Student Transition Project* to the *Ministry of Education's Reporting on Kindergarten to 12*, there is a discrepancy of 1,526 students unaccounted for. The Ministry's student statistics for 2012/2013 indicates a total of 2,676 non-resident students in Grade 12 and a total of 1,150 eligible international Grade 12 graduates as reported in the *STP* summary. Even though the *STP* admits the counting system in the *STP* is problematic and the international students counts should be higher, the 1,526 international Grade 12 students who were not included in the calculation for eligible Grade 12 graduates, most likely did not successfully complete the courses required for graduation. These statistics demonstrate that the commenter's concerns with regard to the success rate of international students need to be further investigated and addressed.

Comment #3: (maestro responding to GWest's comment)

Foreign Students...is a trend I don't agree with. I can't identify any broader societal benefit emanating from it, but in fact only for the benefit of chosen few. This expanded discussion has made me surmise that all the mega Capital expenditures that have been made to upgrade/renovate existing schools and build new ones is simply for marketing purposes, both (i) internally (mind-candy for local Voters) and (ii) externally, ie to attract Foreign Students...who I understand pay approx. \$8,000 - \$10,000 per year, depending. Our own School District apparently has a party whose specific role is to travel to offshore countries and be a recruiter/be a salesman to attract foreign students.... If the student enrolments decline, and all indications are that they will, for several years, , the dynamics are no different (from) say a

³⁵ An eligible Grade 12 graduate is someone who has met all graduation requirements.

mill closure, or department store etc. ie not enough "raw material" or "clientele". That IS unfortunate but this IS the reality.

QUESTION: What happens in the real world??? ANSWER = Downsizing or closures. This REALITY must be sending shudders through the education professionals right up into the Universities How do they try to bridge this? It appears this gap will be bridged to some degree by importing the " raw material /clientele " from Offshore with Foreign Students. In my view...this declining enrollment situation should be looked at as an internal/ domestic matter and adjustments made accordingly...

Given my understanding of the funding formula for BC Students, which is approx. \$5800 per student, compared with say \$10,000 from Foreign students...the differential is approx. \$4,000. Is this extra funding " worth it " ? Does it actually trickle down to the benefit of the domestic BC Student? How does the existence of a foreign student tip the scales re: Class - sizes ? Do they create various interesting domino - effect scenarios ? Do just enough of them keep a teacher or teachers on the payroll? ...ie not all classes in all schools are at their maximum legislated sizes ? If not for the foreign students embellishment of enrolments numbers, I can see situation where perhaps only (2) teachers would be needed instead of (3)....

In the above comment, maestro speaks about how having more international students to reverse the trend of declining enrolment does not benefit society as a whole, but only a chosen few. His comment reminds me of the roundtable report presented in Chapter 2 that international student enrolment contributes to the disparity between urban and rural schools, the haves and the have-nots. By comparing schools and students to mills and raw materials, maestro commodifies international students as importable resources. maestro's perspective resonates with the discourse of the knowledge-based economy – instead of 'raw resources' that were the mainstay of much of the Canadian economy, the knowledge-based economy uses and creates other kinds of resources which involve a commodification process. His comment on fixing declining enrollment domestically shows his disagreement with importing students from offshore to fill the spots and a distrust in the sustainability of the international student supply. He seems to indicate that recruiting students from offshore

countries simply hinders the school districts from addressing declining enrolment in the long run.

Furthermore, he questions whether the approximate \$4,000 surplus made from each international student actually translates into anything for domestic students. The need to do a cost and benefit analysis of international students comes from the constant negotiation between fear and desire for more international students. The desire for more international students is a desire for more revenue. The fear of more international students is a fear of not making enough of a profit and ending up causing problems for schools, for domestic students or for the society as a whole. Although maestro's arguments are valid, his calculations are slightly off, because the operational grants from the BC government are far below the operating expenditures as shown in Chapter 1. For example, in 2010/2011, the provincial operating grant was \$6,740 and the operating expenditure was \$10,405 per student. If schools were to charge \$13,000 per international student, after deducting the cost of educating this student, the remaining amount would be about \$2,500. Even with this \$2,500 surplus per international student, the schools would still be running a deficit. This calculation shows that the government's underfunding of the public education system is the real source of the problem and that international student revenue is just a bandaid solution.

News story #2: "At risk: BC's vital foreign student industry" by Crawford Kilian, *The Tyee*, November 15, 2007

This second news story which was relevant for the data collected in my study describes knowledge as one of BC's most important exports because willing international students pay a premium for Canadian courses. Kilian (2007) refers to a report by Roslyn Kunin

and Associates (2006) on the economic impact of international education at public post-secondary institutions. This report states that international post-secondary students brought in just over half a billion dollars in direct spending, created 6,000 jobs directly and another 3,100 indirectly³⁶.

This report was presented to the Accountability Branch of the Ministry of Advanced Education. The article details the recruitment of K-12 international students in BC and presents it as a profiting business venture for many school districts. The document also indicates that fluctuation of the Canadian dollar did not seem to negatively affect student admission, but that a lack of a national education strategy could hinder Canada from competing with other countries for international students. The comments that follow are in direct response to this news story by Kilian.

Comment #1: (commenter: umslopogaas)

Cash Cow. Maybe we should actually just service our own sons and daughters with our educational tax dollars. We should dismantle the expensive bureaucracy that administers these "rich foreigners" programs in high schools. As far as I see it, this just creates high priced jobs for administrators and otherwise downloads even more work on the classroom teacher.

The commenter, Umslopogaas, refers to international students as “rich foreigners” and “cash cows”, which are frequent terms used to describe international students in this online platform. Umslopogaas’ questioning of the distribution of international student fees comes up often by other commenters, but this information is actually publicly available and

³⁶ The data provided are from BC Stats customized Table in which direct, indirect and induced employment generated by international students is show in 15 sectors, such as construction, retail trade, transportation and warehousing and government sector. Government sector had 4,690 direct, 60 indirect and 90 induced jobs generated by international students.

can be determined by examining *School District's Statement of Financial Information (SOFI)*. For example, on West Vancouver's 2017 SOFI³⁷, it shows a total of \$8,799,667 of actual operating revenue from international and out of province student tuition. The operating expenses by function include, \$1,918,351 for teacher salaries, \$21,834 for principals and vice principal salaries, \$267,481 for support staff salaries, and \$270,087 for other professional salaries. An additional \$666,304 is listed for employee benefits and \$1,871,378 for services and supplies. Therefore, the actual total operating expenses spent on international and out-of-province students was \$5,141,241, which leaves about \$3,658,426 unaccounted for. Interestingly, none of the commenters questions districts for the unaccounted revenue from international and out-of-province students' tuition nor why this money is not being used to provide much needed resources for teachers in their classrooms, especially given that that many comments (including that of Umslopogaas) speak to a common imaginary of international students as burdens on teachers, students and schools. International students become targets when the perceived benefits from them are no longer valuable or desirable. They are then blamed for the situation while the BC government's responsibility for properly funding public education remains out of view.

Comment #2 & #3: (commenters Fii & realisticman)

Homestays run about \$750 a month, at least in North Van. That includes meals. As far as I know, this is not taxed. I would love to get in on the homestay industry- some people out there are really raking in some big bucks, as they have as many as 4 homestay students. Then there are the Korean families providing homestays for Korean children who come here in the summer, and take a "summer camp" program at one of the private schools. Most of these

³⁷ Data retrieved from <https://www.westvancouver schools.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/SOFI-1617-FINAL-FULL-PACKAGE.pdf>

are truly very boring for the kids as they are simply money grabs and the poor kids are stuck in some classroom all day with crappy materials. Sorry, that isn't summer "camp". These same families are running side jobs as "agents" and finding private tutors for the kids....

Good point Fii. Homestays run about \$750 a month, at least in North Van. That includes meals. As far as I know, this is not taxed. I know of a few good (union) working families that seem to always have a new foreign student helping pay off their mortgages. EDITED: PLEASE LEAVE OUT THE PERSONAL GOADS AND INSULTS. TYEE MODERATOR.

As is evident from the comment above, international students are regarded as a direct source of income for many local Canadian families. In responding to Fii's comment, realistman indicates that the homestay fee is not a taxable income. Homestay compensation is a tax-free allowance that varies from district to district (Southeast Kootenay School District, 2018; Okanagan Skaha School District, 2018). For example, homestay families in Southeast Kootenay School District receive a monthly allowance of \$660 per student and homestay families in Okanagan Skaha School District receive a monthly allowance of \$800 per student. The fees might vary but it is the federal tax system that determines whether an income is to be taxed. In this regard, international students are often referred to as "mortgage helpers" in online platform comments. Many BC families take in multiple students. These comments point to another theme from the study: international students as vulnerable minors. Since homestay fees are not fixed, some students are exposed to scams and even risks³⁸. Furthermore, as Fii points out, some families host up to 4 students even though according to the *BC Homestay Guidelines* (2018), a maximum of only two homestay students are allowed per

³⁸ International students at risk is a separate theme that is discussed later in the chapter.

family. These comments speak to the inconsistencies in homestay regulations among homestay families and school districts.

Moreover, Fii's comments seem to be stereotyping "Korean" families who provide homestay for Korean international students and enrol them in boring summer camps. He also discusses the possible violation of ethics by Korean families who take on other roles such as "agents" charging a fee for finding private tutors for the students. By singling out "Korean" homestay families, while not mentioning the racial background of other families providing homestay, Fii stereotyping them without providing concrete information such as what "boring summer camps entail or why only Korean families are enrolling their homestay students in them. Ironically, Fii seems to not have any issue with families who take in multiple students and "(rake) in some big bucks", since Fii would like to follow suit as well.

News story #3: "Burnaby accepts international students but limits space for local kids" by Janet Steffenhagen, the *Vancouver Sun*, August 17, 2009

This article discusses how an out-of-district student, Tristan Joe, was refused entry into an honours arts program at Burnaby North Secondary, because the school limited seats for out-of-catchment applicants and fee-paying programs such as the international student program and the hockey academy. Furthermore, although Tristan was unsuccessful in getting into the school, his family was asked to host a Grade 10 student who would be attending the Burnaby North hockey academy. It is unclear from the article whether the Grade 10 student was an international student.

As the above comments show, there is a wide range of misconceptions about international students in the BC public education system and a multitude of challenges in hosting these students in schools, at homes and in society. These misconceptions and challenges are compounded with additional domestic problems in the public education system that make international students an “easy target” to blame. This next comment is taken from the *Vancouver Sun*. It is a response from a reader, the principal of Churchill Secondary School in Vancouver, to the news story above.

Comment #1: (Commenter: Andy Krawczyk)

International students “easy target”. It always makes for a good story. Local students is being left out of chosen school because an “outsider” - an international student - has taken up the spot the local student could have had! It makes for good headlines - and begs for good damage control by the affected school district (This year it is Burnaby - last year it was West Vancouver). The problem, however, does not go away. It’s repeated and most probably will continue to grab headlines in the future - just in another district.

The reason for that is embedded in the governance of our public school district. And it is not just about funding. The possibility of additional funding for the entire school district is certainly a driver for the decision to bring in the international students (as in the opportunity to introduce students to other cultures). That funding, by the way, often times helps to build up the special academies which then “inside school district” students want to apply for.

However, the additional reason why this issue will not go away is also embedded in a joint desire by all those who have a place in decision-making in school districts (trustees, parents, teachers, thevancouverSunistrators, and even students) to keep class size down and maintain options as much as possible. When that is an objective, then artificial cutoffs are created - ensuring that the total number of students can be managed while maintaining the possibility of funding to run the programs everyone wants. It is a classic case of (wanting) it all and blaming the easiest target when that is not available.

Andy Krawczyk, the commenter, points to the power of the insider/outsider debate, where international students get blamed when something goes wrong. This comment is an important example of the theme of international student as targets. Even though the article

does not specify whether the student who got into the Hockey Academy was an international student or an out-of-catchment domestic student, the title of the article points to a specific target. The optics of a public school that accepts international students by turning away a local students is easy to make into a good headline, a good story. However, as Andy Krawczyk shares it is the joint desire by all decision-making parties, who want to “maintain options,” that impact enrollment policies which make the international student dollars hard to turn away.

The next news story is the last one in this section. It describes the direction that the BC government was taking with the *BC Jobs Plan*. The comment provided below represents a common sentiment among the commenters about investing in our children and our education first.

News story #4: “With Jobs Plan, Clark promises to sell BC” by Ben Christopher and Andrew MacLeod, *The Tyee*, September 23, 2011

A *Tyee* news story details the then Premier Christy Clark’s announcement of the BC Jobs Plan, which focused on jobs, tourism and innovation with a heavy emphasis on attracting foreign investment and foreign customers. Critics said that the plan was all about a media strategy with very little substance.

Comment #1: (commenter: Fiat lux)

BC Corporation. It seems Christy Clark has accepted her role as Gordon Campbell's successor as CEO of BC Corp. This was once the BC government before it was transformed by Chairman Gordo into a for-profit corporation that tries to maximize its revenues & minimizes its social costs: both at the expense of the citizens of BC. We, the people, demand that education in BC be first & foremost for the young people of BC this means providing first-class education at all grades & post-secondary institutions from first-class teachers at prices that everyone can afford. When Germany, the

leading industrial country in the world, can offer free post-secondary education then so should BC. It is shameful that BC Corp collects more from student fees than from business taxes. When we have accommodated all OUR children in OUR universities, then perhaps, we might look at inviting a few others. It is our graduates who need to find & make jobs here in BC, not the children of rich foreigners...

In the above comment, Fiat lux, the commenter calls the BC government, BC Corp, and states that it is selling BC's education to rich foreigners at the expense of BC taxpayers. While Fiat lux's comment is meant to criticize the government, international students become the racialized targets in the process. Fiat lux describes a neoliberal take-over in the government that started with Gordon Campbell and then Christy Clark that resulted in cut-backs in social welfare programs and reduction of taxes on businesses. Fiat lux's comment seems to suggest that the government ought to provide adequate resources to help build an education system that is affordable for everyone and invest in *our* own BC graduates to help them find jobs here. Although, it is unclear who exactly is included in Fiat lux's "OUR", but it is clear that international students constitute the Other.

Discussion

Together the comments shared in the first time period of my study (2007-2011) demonstrate the following themes: international students as commodities, international students as vulnerable minors and international students as targets. As commodities these students are objectified as articles of trade or commerce rather than as members of "OUR" province or "OUR" nation. As the comments indicate, they are often referred to as cash cows and mortgage helpers. Being perceived as commodities further puts these young international students at risk for scams or exploitation in their homestays. This commodification process is what constitutes the knowledge economy as previously discussed since Canada is in the

process of moving away from a 'raw material' driven economy to a knowledge-based economy. Thus, International students are targeted when their presence disrupts the hegemonic norms and spaces of dominant society as well as when their perceived added value diminishes.

This period between 2007-2011, was a time when BC's public education was underfunded and became ever more dependent on international student revenues. School districts were competing with each other locally and overseas for international students. BC offshore schools were under attack for their quality, integrity and credibility, but were expanding at an incredible speed. Many parents and teachers felt public schools should serve only domestic students and no one else. International student revenues seemed to create further disparity between the urban and rural, as well as the affluent and disadvantaged schools. The homestay industry was under-regulated and international students were exposed to health and safety risks. It was during this time that the BC government rolled out the *BC Jobs Plan*. The *BC Jobs Plan* states, "In 2010 alone, international students spent more than \$1.8 billion in BC, supporting 22,000 jobs and generating \$70 million in government revenue. That makes international education BC's fifth largest export - with an almost unlimited potential for growth" (p. 14).

The next two sections of my findings show a period of time when the BC government and the Canadian government had aligned their policies and created a national strategy for international education and a national brand for Canadian education.

5.2. BC IES and Canada's EAP: 2012 and 2013

The findings section below includes news stories and comments after the *BC Jobs Plan* was announced. As such, many comments reinforce the message that the international student market is lucrative and highly competitive; that it creates jobs and boosts the BC economy and that it is crucial for the BC government to act quickly on securing the market. It is even compared to other natural resources industries and is highly regarded in the BC economy.

News story #1: “The pros and cons of foreign students.” By Douglas Todd, the *Vancouver Sun*, August 16, 2013

This first news story of this section discusses a global trend of more and more universities and governments see foreign students as cash cows funding their higher education systems. This article is based on an interview of Veteran University of BC political scientist, Philip Resnick. Resnick states that while the international student phenomenon contributes to students broadening their horizons when studying abroad, it also causes social inequality, because only the rich or the upperclass can afford to study and live in Vancouver, BC. The article asks the controversial question: “Are foreign students squeezing locals out of Canada’s leading universities?” Resnick urges the public to pressure the provincial government to release more precise data on this topic. Resnick also speaks to the importance of investing in the best and brightest in BC and not always looking elsewhere for overseas talents. The two comments presented below respond directly to this story.

Comment #1: (commenter: Jeff Hemlin)

Foreign Students are a \$8 billion cash injection to schools here, directly creating and maintaining employment for 10's of thousands Canadian educators. We have been overtaken in this highly competitive market by both Australia and the UK. Australia's international education providers bring over \$20 billion into that country annually.... With our falling birthrate in Canada many school districts are contracting, closing schools and laying off teachers. Foreign students would allow many of these schools to remain open and those teachers working. I'm with the BC Government on this issue - this is a clean and green opportunity that will directly create thousands of jobs here in BC and will increase our exposure worldwide as [a] tourism market and exporter.

Jeff Hemlin's comment mirrors Christy Clark's neoliberal view on international education. His comment objectifies international students as "a cash injection", and invokes the notion that schools are sick and need to be revived. In this case the cash injection is believed to help create and maintain jobs for Canadian educators. The commenter also refers to international students studying in BC's public schools as "a clean and green opportunity", because they create jobs and promote the BC brand internationally. The reference to clean and green has the connotation of being environmental friendly, which seems to suggest the opportunity is perhaps ethical, sustainable and has zero or minimal negative impact on the environment. Similar to the comments of the first period of my study, this comment also objectifies international students as a commodity and normalizes a fierce global trend of marketing and competing for students. Furthermore, the commenter points out that other countries are getting ahead in the game of selling a Western education and their national brand, and questions why Canadians have not caught up with these countries and are in fact falling behind?

Comment #2: (Commenter: Dave Hester)

Foreign students should be forced to pay 20 times the rate as a Canadian born students. Multiculturalism is a myth that has never worked and never will work.

The above comment shows a common constructed social imaginary of international students; that they ought to pay much more than their Canadian peers to study in Canada. For the commenter, Dave Hester, having international students in the school system is purely rooted in economic returns. Following Dave Hester’s suggestion of having an international student pay “20 times the rate as a Canadian born student”; what would that number look like? Although BC’s K-12 system is tuition “free” for domestic students, school districts do have to provide a budget covering full-time-enrollment (FTE) operating costs among other costs. According to the public school per student FTE operating costs³⁹ for 2016/2017, the average operating costs for full-time enrollment is \$11,242 with the highest, \$29,584, in Stikine School District 87 and the lowest, \$8,469, in North Vancouver School District 44.

Dave Hester’s comment also reveals that having international students is not about cultural exchange, because as he states multiculturalism is a myth that just does not work. A theme that emerged from this comment speaks to the social imaginaries of the host society racializing and essentializing international students. While multiculturalism became official Canadian policy in 1971, the reality of multiculturalism remains complex and at times volatile. Canada has an oppressive and violent history of the Chinese Head Tax between 1885 and 1923, the Komagata Maru exclusion in 1914, the legacy of Indian residential schools between the 1980s and the 1990s, and the present-day missing and murdered indige-

³⁹ Data is presented for the purpose of completing the Statement of Per-Student Operating Costs. Data retrieved from: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/independent-schools/funding>

nous women among many other horrific historical events. Even on the topic of international students, many comments essentialize racial, ethnic and cultural diversity.

News story #2: “BC’s push for more foreign students full of risks say critics” by Katie Hyslop, *The Tyee*, September 7, 2012

This news story discusses the problems of adding 14,100 more students to the already 94,000 international students in BC for over four years as proposed by the *BC Jobs Plan* . Teachers and students were concerned about this new international student strategy without more cash, space or faculty. The two comments below are chosen from this news story.

Comment #1: (Commenter: Jeff59Langley)

It sounds like we are charging these people a lot. In fact, it is a small fraction of what education costs in Asia, or USA and that is why they come here. Their impact is far beyond just the schools. The impact on our society of having large numbers of these astronaut people, who just occupy space, and are not a part of our society is huge.

Stop this nonsensical selling of Canada to a bunch of users who are simply searching for the cheapest and safest alternative. Instead, let's focus on CITIZENS, who will become educated, and build our future. Stop the prostitution of Canada to the wealthy children of the wealthy rulers of corrupt regimes around the world.

In the comment above, Jeff59Langley, states that having more international students is an act of selling out Canada to people who are not part of Canadian society and are just here to take advantage of the cheaper and safer education alternative than in Asia or the United States. He juxtaposes citizens “who will become educated, and build our future” with “wealthy children of the wealthy rulers of corrupted regimes around the world” (who are here just to take) and suggests focusing on the ones who are here to stay. He essentializes international students as rich foreigners, who are from corrupted regimes around the world. Like many commenters, he also questions the economics of bringing in more international

students and urges the government to provide the economic resources to reinvest in public education. According to Hemingway (2016), BC had the second lowest funding in Canada, nearly \$1,000 per student lower than the national average in 2010/2011. By using the word “prostitution” Jeff59Langley seems to indicate the government’s unworthy act of deflecting responsibility in investing in public education and in bowing to foreign investors and foreign money.

Comment #2: (commenter: Granville)

Risky? You betcha! Attracting foreign students in a game of educational tourism, is a good way to make money short term. They are charged \$20,000.00 per year, and they help the school districts balance their budgets, but it is like basing your economy on lottery revenues; they are fickle. There is, as we speak, a legion of recruiters travelling the globe to attract students to BC. Sometimes they have good years and sometimes not. Either way, it is a risky game, and subject to influences beyond our control.

We are capitalizing on our province's reputation for natural beauty etc. That is fine as long as it works. What we really need are truly innovative programs for these kids once they arrive and I suspect that is not happening. What we really need is an educational system that can make the decisions to balance their budgets and provide sound education without being topped up by foreign currency. Instead we have a get-rich-quick approach that just papers over the cracks.

In the comment above, international education is being referred to as ‘a game of educational tourism,’ which is known to yield good returns except it could be subject to unforeseen influences. The word, ‘tourism’, seems to emphasize tokenistic/transient consumers/participants in education. Granville, the commenter, offering a rather different view from the other commenters, raises questions about the value of the education that international students receive and shows concern for the educational experiences of international students. His comments seem to suggest that he does not have high regard for the quality of education-

al services provided and that international education is just a business of making quick money from BC's reputation for natural beauty. He suggests creating innovative programs for international students, but states that it is unlikely to happen. Finally, his comments reiterate a common sentiment that using international student fees to balance the budget is only a temporary fix.

Granville's comment reveals a complex web of taken-for-granted perceptions and values that are shared among many online commenters. Two themes emerge from this comment: international students as commodities and the host society's negotiation between fear and desire for more international students. Even if many of the commenters in the online news platforms disagree or dislike using international students as cash cows, they seem to be able to relate to school districts depending on international student fees to keep schools open and programs running (as long as it is not at the expense of local students' educational opportunities). Many commenters see that bringing in more international students means more revenues and job opportunities for the local businesses and families, but they also fear the uncertainty associated with this seemingly profitable and easy source of income. This social imaginary illustrates the contested nature of the temporality of international students' presence, the uncertainty of the international education industry and the constant negotiation of opposing impulses towards international students. This negotiation hides behind the politically neutral language of market demand and supply of international education. As Arber (2009) explains, "In its multiple and shifting forms, neoliberal ideology reconstruct(s) internationalisation and globalisation as a 'utopian paradigm' and celebrat(s) the pre-eminence of market

forces and the inherent worth of individualism, consumerism, competition and minimal governmental interference” (p. 176).

The next news story turns overseas to BC offshore schools reporting on a familiar accusation - BC offshore schools grade inflation. Four comments from this news story are discussed and analyzed below.

News story #3: “Teacher allege grade inflation, contract violations at a BC certified school in China” by Janet Steffenhagen, the *Vancouver Sun*, November 23, 2012.

This news story reports that teachers at a BC offshore school in China were allegedly told to inflate grades by the officials with Tianjin Maple Leaf International School. The teachers were asked to “fake grades to push the kids through the BC program in order for them to graduate and be accepted into North American universities.” They also filed complaints about their working and living conditions. The teachers were harassed on and around campus for complaining to the ministry and the news media. The school principal denied any allegations of grade inflation. The school’s BC agent did not answer directly about grade inflation, but confirmed that the school had mold. He explained that due to high humidity mold is a common problem in Chinese cities, but the school’s surfaces were cleaned and repainted on a regular basis. He mentioned that most teachers adapted well to their new working and living environments, but every year some did not manage well.

Comment #1: (commenter: Charles Nicole Blattmann)

I believe BC is making some money from licensing their curriculum to China. The BC teachers are there likely because they can't find work here, or they enjoy egg noodles. You might want to read about the Douglas College scandal, as it has all the earmarks of this. Students in China are paying for grades - grades which they'll

use when they go to attend BC universities. In many countries in Asia, it is common to pay for grades without actually earning them. If I was a student in BC, I'd be very concerned about this.

The first point the commenter makes has to do with the economic benefits from offshore schools that need a closer examination. According to Schuetze (2009), offshore schools pay fees of \$2,500 for the candidate status application and then \$3,500 for the certification application to the BC Ministry. All the direct costs of the recurrent inspections (air fare, accommodation and professional fees for external members of the inspection team) must be borne by the schools. In addition, there are fees such as a one-time fee of \$350 per student for record-keeping and examination distribution and a fee of \$200 for each Grade 12 Provincial Exam including the cost of marking. However, Schuetze (2009) explains that these fees are inconsequential to the true costs incurred by the Canadian taxpayer from maintaining and further developing the BC curriculum and preparing and administering the annual provincial exams if calculated on a per capital basis. Schuetze's (2009) finding suggests that school districts do not actually make a profit from these offshore schools, which is contrary to the reasons for setting them up in the first place.

The commenter, Charles Nicole Blattmann, is not surprised by the story on grade inflation, because there was a news story about Douglas College's partnership programs⁴⁰ in China earlier in the year 2012. He indicates that buying grades is a common practice in some countries in Asia; however, this practice extends beyond international students to the wider domestic higher education reality as well. The shift to seeing students as consumers and to

⁴⁰ Douglas College's offshore programs were under scrutiny when several former Douglas College teachers alleged the College for granting credentials to unqualified students and reversing failing grades.

charging higher tuition fees in higher education has led to a culture where students feel they have the right to demand high grades. This comment speaks to the social imaginary of international students on this online space as cheaters. The comment on enjoying egg noodles is racist and orientalist in that it essentializes the Chinese culture by minimizing it to egg noodles and renders B.C. certified teachers who teach at offshore schools suspect (e.g. The assumption is they can't find real teaching jobs in the West).

Comment #2: (Commenter: Darren Brown)

I taught at the Dalian school for 11 years and thoroughly enjoyed my experiences. I used Addison-Wesley textbooks and other ministry approved resources that were in use by schools in BC during that time. My test/quizzes/ exams were based on the BC Ministry of Education PLO's and most often included past provincial exam questions. In my 11 years I was never once instructed to inflate anyone's grade but I cannot speak directly to the Tianjin school nor the staff members involved in making the allegations. The annual Ministry Inspection teams ensured that our lesson planning, curriculum delivery and assessments were on par with those of British Columbia. Incidentally our schools underwent annual inspections whereas schools in BC undergo inspections every 5 years. A school in Ft St. John (just a randomly named city - nothing implied) could be up to suspect grading practices just as easily as an offshore school but the only difference is they could possibly get away with it for 5 years rather than one. To further ensure the offshore schools were meeting provincial standards it was required that our students write ALL provincial exams even AFTER they became optional for BC students. All of the teachers were either BC certified teachers or completing their BC certification because they were transferring their certification from other provinces (Ontario, NB etc). Many of our principals were former principals at BC schools who should know how to run a BC school. Two of the current principals have been promoted from within the organization. In my time in Dalian there were some teachers who disliked the school and disliked the country. Many of them did their contracts and looked for work elsewhere but some decided to get on a pulpit and shout from the rooftops regarding their displeasure. In any organization there are going to be people with an axe to grind. I cannot say for certain that this is the case here but it would be wonderful to hear some more balanced viewpoints from all the teachers in Tianjin to determine if there is in fact a systemic problem rather than a disgruntled, and active, few. Moving to a new country requires adaptation and some of the colleagues I worked with were unable to make that adaptation and for some that affected their outlook on

the school and it affected their interactions with fellow staff members and their students in negative ways.

To the person who suggested that I worked there because I could not get a job elsewhere or I just liked to eat noodles I pity your myopia and would challenge you to discuss with the hundreds of teachers who worked offshore and overseas why they did so. I'm sure a bit of information rather than wild speculation would change your views. I held jobs in BC teaching and I believe I was well regarded by my employers. I have since returned to BC and am working here. Also I did eat noodles last night for dinner because I could really eat them anywhere.

In this comment, Darren Brown, offering his own personal experience working as an offshore school teacher in China for 11 years, responded to Charles Nicole Blattmann's comment. His comment counters many stereotypes that some commenters have on the quality and viability of offshore schools and offshore teachers. His comment shows resistance toward biased imaginaries constructed about offshore schools and staff in this virtual space. He urges for more balanced reporting on the offshore schools, so that a more rigorous discussion can be carried out on the grade inflation issue as well as the quality of educators in offshore schools.

Comment #3: (Commenter: Kelly Nicolas)

“Janet, you interviewed the staff but did it occur to you to interview the students? As a journalist your reporting is supposed to represent all sides and reflect the truth, so wouldn't the easiest way be to talk to current and graduate students of Maple Leaf? I have now taught in Canada, China (at Maple Leaf) and in the UK and I can attest that not only did I not, nor was instructed to, inflate the grades, but that any high grades the students received were solely due to the fact of their own incredible determination and hard work ethic. I think a better story for you to report is why are students learning a curriculum in a second language excelling over those whose English is their native tongue? Which begs the question what's happening with our education systems on the home front? Maple Leaf is by no means the holy grail of schools and does have its own internal political and administrative issues of its own. However, to suggest students grades are inflated is not only insulting to the teachers but to the students as well.” (Kelly Nicolas, “Teacher distress at a BC certified school in China.” 11/23/2012).

Despite all the negative comments on the quality and integrity of the offshore education system, there are some comments pointing out the biases and racism in news reporting and in the comments left by the readers. Like the previous comment, Kelly Nicolas's comment discusses poor journalism and questions about what counts as knowledge. The commenters seem to indicate that by not presenting all sides of a story and leaving students' voices out renders the story incomplete, which is unfair to the students and teachers. As someone who has taught in both Canada and China, Kelly Nicolas attests to the quality of the education of students in China. It would be interesting to have a comparative study done on the academic achievements between onshore and offshore graduates, since the comment seems to suggest that offshore students are doing better than domestic students.

Discussion

During the second time period of my study (2011-2013), a uniform policy direction was observed between the BC government and the federal government through the implementation of *BC's International Education Strategy* and the Canadian government's *Economic Action Plan*. Both policies spoke to the importance of international education for Canada's economic future. While proponents of international education seemed to keep echoing Clark's neoliberal ideology, there was also a growing resistance to the push for more international students. The theme of the commodification of international students has continued during this time period as they are seen by some commenters as a cash injection and international education as a clean and green opportunity.

A new theme, essentialization and racialization of international students emerged in many of the comments during this time period. Some commenters present racist, orientalist

and essentializing perspectives of the countries that host offshore schools and question the integrity and honesty of the educators who work there and render the students who attend suspect. On the other hand, a few commenters also show resistance towards the normalized imaginary of International Education Phenomenon. Other commenters point out that the government has lost its way and try to urge the government to reinvest in their own public education instead of encouraging school districts to seek more international student revenues. The many perspectives that emerge during this time period speak to the greater visibility and impact of the complex International Education Phenomenon in BC.

5.3. The rise of the National Educational Brand: 2014-2016

The third time period of my findings looks at the media comments about international education between 2014-2016. While Canada was working towards securing its place in the global international student market, a significant teachers' strike that lasted over four months took place in BC. In 2014 when September came around, the BC's public school system was still in the midst of a teachers' job action that started in June. Amongst other concerns, many school districts were concerned about losing their international students and some offered interim programming to prevent withdrawals. One school district was so desperate to keep their international students that the administration in a middle school asked 160 international students to cross the picket line in order to attend their classes. This action upset many teachers, students and parents of the community given that more than 500,000 BC's public school students respected the picket lines and did not go to class.

Nick Moore, the President of Comox Valley Teachers' Association spoke to Global News reporter/anchor, Aaron McArthur, about the incident and said that while the teachers

understood the district had a legal obligation to teach these students, asking international students to cross a picket line fed into the controversy of having a pseudo-private school operating inside a public school and relying on it to subsidize the public education system (Judd, 2014). BC parents and students also felt that the district was being unfair in accommodating only international students and not doing anything for local students and tax-paying families during the strike. The following comments from Global News provide some background context of the social and political climate at the time of the 2014 teacher's strike:

What am I paying taxes for my grade 12 student to have an education? It is not fair that the international students are being taught while my child sits home! Laura Patrick - *Global News* Commenter -

Just because (international students) have paid for the right to an education doesn't mean they should take priority over kids who have a right to an education period. Sasha Tennant - *Global News* Commenter -

Global News Commenters, Laura Patrick and Sasha Tennant, raise an important question on fairness and the right to education. They both point out that if districts had a legal obligation to international students on the basis of being fee-paying customers, their children should have been granted the same right to education for being tax-paying citizens. This controversy exacerbated further when the strike continued into September and there was no sign of the strike ending and the Consulate General of China got involved. The stories and comments below address many of the controversial issues during this time period.

News story #1: BC school shutdown has China 'concerned' by Tracy Sherlock, Chuck Chiang and Rob Shaw, the *Vancouver Sun*, September 12, 2014

This first news story is about parents of international students from China in particular, exercising their rights as customers. They urged the Consulate General of China to inter-

vene. In BC, there were about 11,000 international students studying in public schools. They had already missed about 20 days of school between June and September due to the teachers' strike. The news story ends with results from a survey released by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, showing 43% of business owners agreed that their business would suffer if the strike continued, 45% of these independent business owners stated that the savings on teacher salaries during the strike should be used to pay down provincial debt. There are three comments chosen from this news story.

Comment #1: (Commenter: RB Dale)

They are not outsiders, they are customers. Pissed off customers who paid \$13,000+ in advance to buy an education for their child and the supplier of that product has reneged on the deal. And they get no refund. If you paid \$13,000 for something promised to you but then the company never delivered, you'd probably be just as pissed off as they are.

Although the news of officials from the Consulate General of China meeting with officials from the BC Ministry of Education caused an uproar on the online news platform, some commenters thought the international parents were simply exerting their rights as customers. It is interesting to juxtapose the construction of parents of international students as 'customers' and the construction of parents of domestic students as 'taxpayers'. To identify themselves as taxpayers, these parents are resisting against the notion that schooling is a business. The neoliberal project of making everyone a consumer/customer remains incomplete. As evident from his comments, RB Dale does not see international parents as outsiders but rather as customers who have not received the "goods" they paid for, which should be rightfully theirs. When being perceived as customers by the host society, international stu-

dents all of sudden have rights associated with the new status. This speaks to the influence of neoliberal ideology and free-market logic on BC's public schools - that of customers first!

Comment #2: (Commenter: Albert Tsui)

Another commenter, Albert Tsui, also brought in the notion of international students and parents as customers and as fee-paying customers entitled to the same right to education as local students.

foreign students have the same right to be educated, and not taking as political pawns So narrow minded to discriminate them. As customers, they pay the full school fee as, they have the same right to enjoy the education just as we taxpayers in this particular area of service, they should and can stand up for their rights to get the service. If Canadian students got poor education in China , would they seek help somewhere? BBB or Canadian embassy? Same logic. I would suggest they file an application of class suit in BC law courts or small claims court, BC government should not profit from a dispute where foreign students suffers. From those who neglect their rights to education as learners, no matter where they come from , shame on your unjust and unfair comment. Besides, for those who criticizes there are too many Chinese looking people in the education system as foreign students, please refer to W5 incident. Canadian Chinese is an integral part of the demographic in the lower mainland school districts.

Albert Tsui's comment shows resistance towards essentialization and racialization of international students, by reminding people not to repeat the same misinformation and discrimination as "Campus Giveaway". As discussed in Chapter 3, "Campus Giveaway" is a documentary program on universities giving away seats from Canadian students to international students. The show was aired by CTV's *W5* program on September 30, 1979. Albert's comment points to a major area not explored in the phenomenon of public schools and fee-paying international students, which are the tensions that arise as the general public

tries to make sense of how the policies relating to K-12 international education impact their lives and communities. The debates online allude to questions such as: are international students outsiders? Are they customers? Are they cash cows? Are they all of the above? What does their purchasing power grant them exactly? It also raises questions about whether domestic students are customers or not? The decision of granting international students access to school during the strike added to the animosity toward international students in our society. But, at the same time, many people question some of the discriminatory remarks.

The comment below contrasts the view of international students as customers with purchasing power, but instead they are being subsidized by Canadian taxpayers.

Comment #3: (Commenter: Simpson Aiden Bart)

... (international students) cause problems in the class room because they don't speak english. so teachers want aids. so i pay more property tax, and i don't even have children!

It is hard to decipher exactly how much B.C. taxpayers subsidize international students. For example, international students use public funded schools built for local students, public funded libraries and community centres built for local residents paid by taxpayers. This set-up also makes taxpayers wonder where tax dollars go and whose education is actually being paid by them. The costs and benefits of having international students in public schools is a reoccurring sentiment that was evident throughout different time periods, because to mix a pseudo-private business entity inside a public funded school brings up the debate on public versus private good. This sentiment comes from the constant negotiation between fear and desire for more international students. When the added value from international students seems to be gone, the fear of subsidizing them becomes dominant. When

the added value from international students seems to increase, the desire for more of them becomes dominant. Bart's comment also seems to reflect the notion that education is a private good and there is no benefit to the public when an individual child is schooled.

The next news story is about one frustrated teacher who spoke out against his union's tactics while the strike was still going on. Although the news story does not mention international students at all, several commenters bring them into their discussion.

News story #2: "Dissenting teacher: 'We have to own part of this'" by Katie Hyslop, August 7, 2014.

Langley teacher, Rob Erickson, did not agree with the tactics the union was using to negotiate a contract with the employer and felt that the job action put more pressure on teachers, parents and students than it did on the government.

Comment #1: (Commenter: CT)

This strike will cost the province a lot more than they are saving. What "international student" would book a year in BC with a teacher's strike on? They pay over \$20,000 a year in fees and that helps fund the system for Canadian students. Knowing how competitive the market for international students is, we can predict a dip in foreign enrollment. Not too many kids want a year in BC so much that they will come here to twiddle their thumbs. The scenery is just not that good. For what it is worth, the government has changed my mind on this issue. Offering parents a per diem bribe for the fall is, I think, unprecedented. It is a cheap, nasty trick and I don't think they could legally do that. I am on the teachers side from now on. We need a change of government, even if it does mean swallowing the NDP dogma. The Liberals are getting too blatant. They need to go.

The comment above demonstrates how international students are inserted into discussions pertaining to the labour dispute in the form of 'economic loss', resonating the theme international students as commodities. The fear of losing international students which would

lead to revenue loss for school districts and local businesses and in turn job loss for teachers and businesses owners is echoed by many commenters. This rhetoric of economic loss shifts the focus away from the BC government and blames teachers for walking out on their students and for making school districts take huge losses in international student revenue. Commenters state that the strike is bad for business and also bad for the BC brand.

When the strike continued into September, the fear of losing international student revenue turned into frustration and anger. Even the news stories on BC teachers' labour dispute went from stating that the Minister of Education was cautioning teachers to be reasonable with their demands to emphasizing that the teachers' strike was causing a significant economic loss in international student revenue for school districts. Then, when the Chinese Consulate got involved, the new story and comments turned to target specifically "Asian" families for getting the Chinese Consulate involved. These "Asian" families were also blamed for their lack of understanding of teachers' right to strike and that the act of strike is an exercise in democracy and in principle.

News story #3: "Many Asian families place blame for strike firmly with teachers" by Chuck Chiang, the *Vancouver Sun*, September 14, 2014

The following news story starts with a vivid description of how some Asian cultures honour teachers through giving gifts on Teachers' Day and celebrating the birthday of Confucius. Then, the new story turns to saying that the Chinese community in BC is not happy with their teachers and are unlikely to honour them in the same way as these Asian cultures are accustomed to doing. The new story compares a poll taken in the Chinese community to a poll taken among the general BC population on who was to blame for the current labour

dispute. The poll from the Chinese community showed that 44% placed the blame on both the teachers and the provincial government -- 40% solely blamed the teachers and only four percent blamed the provincial government. The general poll showed an evenly split opinion: 36% of the respondents supported teachers and 35% supported the government. The news story ends by depicting these Asian families in a negative light for not supporting BC teachers, because for these Asian families the act of a strike is seen as a direct insult and offence on teachers' moral and social obligations.

Comment #1: (Commenter: Deborah Jean Vandendool O'Reilly)

I think we best be concerning ourselves with BC children. International students & their parents need to understand this is Canada not china & they can't just buy whatever they want & put our children out in the cold. Yes you bring a lot of money to Canada but your also taking class spots from our children.

Deborah Jean Vandendool O'Reilly's comment seems to reiterate the sentiment of Canadians first. The comment suggests ignorance or denial of the reasons that international education was expanding so rapidly. The role of the government funding public services seems to be completely forgotten or hidden in this comment. When the government distances itself from funding responsibility and encourages school districts to seize market opportunities for the sale of education curriculum and services, this is an example of the government's neoliberal agenda. The news story seems to construct a social imaginary of wealthy Chinese international students and parents using their economic capital to buy up class spots and dictate the BC education system. This comment, which essentializes and racializes international students, seems to convey resentment and frustration from a Canadian parent about how international students' wealth seems to buy them privileges over Canadian students.

Comment #2: (Commenter: Moira Cregan)

I am sorry, but I am a Caucasian and I cannot tell you how strongly I support the teachers and their union. I want my children to learn when at school and not have them struggle all day with ESL kids that cannot speak English. This is not China and the two official languages are English and French not Cantonese or Mandarin. If you cannot speak the language, you should not be in an English speaking school!!!

The disturbing comment above also reflects the theme, essentialization and racialization of international students. The comment expands on how Mandarin speaking Chinese international students from China are dragging Canadian students behind in class. The comment conjures up two racist and divisive stereotypes: 1) Mandarin and Cantonese are like Canada's two official languages, because Canada is becoming too Asian. 2) ESL students hinder domestic students' academic progress. The commenter who clearly self-identifies as Caucasian sets herself apart from the Asian parents on the basis of her ethnicity which she aligns directly with her ethical stance on supporting teachers and their union. The underlying message seems to be the lack of ethics and civility on the part of Asian parents not only due to their lack of support for teachers and their assumed lack of knowledge of the official languages of Canada, but also for their decision to place their children in the mainstream educational system where they prevent other students from learning because they are "ESL kids".

In the next news article reporting about the lack of Canadian students going abroad to study, one commenter boasts about Canada being a great nation and English being the main language of trade, so there is no need for Canadians to leave Canada and study abroad.

Why would you leave a great nation to go study in Africa or the Middle East? English is the main language of trade as well. We just lucked out. (Andry Armstrowski, "Lopsided exchange: Far fewer BC students study abroad than come here." *The Vancouver Sun*. 09/08/2014.)

The above comment seems to suggest a common constructed social imaginary of the host society, the subjectivization of host society, in this case, by the imperial imaginary of international education. The imperial imaginary of international education perpetuates the reproduction and dominance of Western knowledge and the English language and in doing so devalues the worth of other languages and countries.

News story #3: “BC announces scholarship to Asian students” by Chuck Chiang, the *Vancouver Sun*, June 20, 2015.

This news story states that Education Minister, Peter Fassbender, made an announcement offering 120 public school and post-secondary students from China, Japan, and South Korea scholarships of \$1,250 a year to study in BC. This announcement came after Fassbender’s trip to Beijing and Tokyo, where the province signed agreements to increase admission intake in Canadian offshore schools as well as for student and teacher exchanges.

Comment #1: (Commenter: Kai Chase)

OMG - christy clark you are shameless. You have become an international student fee (ISI) pimp at the expense of our own kids. You can be sure the best of the best will come to our schools all of which means our students scores will be scaled down in many cases. Of course, the bottom line with that is they won't get into UBC or SFU as their marks just won't be high enough. I know of a straight A student that didn't get accepted to UBC yet some ISI students can't string a proper sentence together. It's absolutely deplorable what goes on to get that almighty international student dollar. The students struggle because their English is so horrible, their grades are awful and many end up on academic probation because they're barely passing. Then comes the temptation to cheat...which is another huge well kept secret that nobody wants to discuss.

In the above comment, Kai Chase seems to be exasperated by the BC government's scholarship proposal and refers to Christy Clark, the Premier of BC at the time, as an "international student fee pimp." The word, "pimp," invokes the notion of prostitution and suggests that Clark is exploiting the public education system and domestic students to gain international student revenue. A theme that emerges from the comment here is the essentialization of international students. Kai Chase's statement about the "almighty international student dollar" conjures up the historically dominant and well-entrenched stereotypes of international students using their money to buy their way into the Western education system and taking away spots from local students. His comments on international students are both essentializing and contradictory since at first he describes international students as "the best of the best" and then states that "their grades are awful...they are barely passing". Kai Chase's illogical rationalization appears to affirm his moral integrity over the shameless and those who are tempted to cheat. His comment also seems to resonate with the analysis shown previously which indicates that reduced funding for schools has led to other policy decisions regarding the number of seats in programs such as the hockey academy or international education or other specialty programs. Artificial cutoffs are created to ensure that all students can be managed while maintaining funding for various programs in demand.

Comment #2: (Commenter: Kim Anderson)

Just what we need, more filthy locusts swarming over here and raping our resources... It's not immigration; it's colonization. And it's happening in every way imaginable and our own politicians are ushering it on. This place is ruined and will never be the same. Not to mention this colonization has plummeted the average penis size around here....it's way down now! Tiny little ching ching ding dongs....so gross.

Kim Anderson's comment is probably one of the most racist and demeaning opinions posted in response to the above news story. This essentializing and racializing comment dehumanizes international students as a much feared, devastating natural disaster of swarming locusts, which violently attack "our resources". The commenter blames the politicians for ushering on what she refers to as colonization. Further her comment accuses international students or perhaps "Asians" of colonizing Canada and altering the average size of a particular body part by using extremely racist language. Even though the *Vancouver Sun* does have a moderator-monitoring system in place, in this case, the moderator seems to have missed this comment. It is also worth noting that none of the commenters reported this comment to the *Vancouver Sun* moderator. By not reporting such insulting and racist comments, it makes one wonder whether the other commenters also agreed with Kim Anderson or that they were so desensitized by this kind of derogatory remarks that nobody bothered to report it. Her referencing back to a better time – 'things will never be the same' – invokes a historical sensibility. It is evident that this commenter has little if any understanding of what colonization means more generally and in the context of the Canadian nation.

Comment #3: (Commenter: Kristine Walker)

Newsflash: The BC Liberals do not care one whit about students in BC from low income families. Ask any teacher and they will tell you about the increased incidents of mental health issues and poverty among our youth. We see it increasingly in our schools. When will people realize that every stupid announcement from the Liberals is another attempt to bribe people into voting for them? They are not interested in improving health care or education for British Columbians; only defunding and dismantling it.

In the above comment, it is the government that comes under fire rather than international students. The commenter seems to resist the normalized imaginary of the International Education Phenomenon. Like many commenters, Kristine Walker's comment suggests that the government does not have British Columbians' best interest in mind and that it is destroying public education through manipulative election platforms and agendas.

Comment #4: (Commenter: Mark Steacy)

The absolute sad thing about this is that those Asian students will leave Canada after they graduate, going back to their home countries to further businesses /research etc there. Wouldn't it be better to give it to locals to receive a great education and remain in Canada to further our growth. To do it just for the cultural interaction is extremely short sighted. Most of those Asian students remain within their own nationality groups.

And to do it to further more Canadian teachers going to these Asian countries to teach.....hello - these countries cannot get enough English teachers as it is and are begging English teachers to come and teach there.

The above comment raises the point about the temporality of international students. From an investment point of view, the commenter states that granting international students scholarships is not a productive investment. Scholarships should go to Canadian students, who would stay and return the investment as productive citizens. Although Mark Steacy may have a valid point, according to Statistics Canada, "between 2004 and 2013, 20% to 27% of international students became permanent residents in the 10 years following the receipt of their first study permit, depending on the cohort of arrival" (Lu & Hou, 2015). These are relevant statistics given the systemic challenges of becoming a permanent resident in Canada especially with the changing rules for various immigration programs, which make it difficult for international students to successfully navigate the system (Neatby & Yogesh, 2017, Octo-

ber 12). This comment also speaks to a common bias about “Asian” students only hanging out with their own cultural groups, which is considered counterproductive to the goal of cultural interaction. Furthermore, it supports the colonial imaginary of international education where English teachers are in high demand. Canadian teachers can teach anywhere in Asian countries with their Canadian credentials. This comment reveals the reoccurring theme of essentialization and racialization of international students.

Comment #5: (Commenter: Tolga Berger)

As international student I pay everything my own, I enjoy no benefits from the Canadian government, we have private insurance, our school fees are thrice the price of locals and we even pay taxes in some way. Giving scholarship to students who decide to stay here and become a benefit for the Canadian society is a good thing.

Out of 138 comments responding to this article, the above comment is the only one from an international student. Tolga’s comment indicates that as an international student, he is far from the kind of international students being described on this online platform. This commenter corrects some information about what international students pay and participates in the discussion about education as an investment with returns to the wider public. His comment also speaks to the fact that there are international students who intend to stay in Canada after they graduate and become Canadian citizens.

News story #4: “The hidden cost of foreign student policy” by Douglas Todd, The Vancouver Sun, December 24, 2016.

This is the last news story during this time period. The news story states that BC has one-third of Canada’s 330,000 international students. Critics show that Western international student programs have lost their humanitarian ideals and become a cut-throat business at-

tracting second-tier students. The article states that health care, for example, is a disguised burden on taxpayers. According to a registered immigration consultant, Purewal, international students receive health care without contributing to the universal health care program⁴¹. Based on the average cost of \$6,000 a year in medical expenses per student, the province could be looking at \$635 million added to the health care system. The news story also points to the decline in government funding, which caps domestic enrolment while international student enrolment is on the rise. Additionally, the article states that, the quality of education suffers because international students (who only have rudimentary conversational English) comprise the majority of some classes. According to the article, in one professor's teaching experience, he witnessed that Canadian students who start off "...tolerant - eventually become disheartened and bored, if not overly resentful."

The following comments are in direct response to this article.

Comment #1: (Commenter: Alice Hart)

I live in Ladner, BC and have experienced these high school foreign students (specifically Asian) up close and personal crowding the tiny streets of Ladner in groups of 25 only speaking their language and not attempting once to communicate with the community. They clammer into the tiny public library directly after high school and sit in large clumps discussing all of their work in Chinese. I am told by the head of the International student program that these kids are here to learn English and yet, I see no attempt on their part to attempt to integrate or speak English. I was told that these students were part of the globalization agenda and they were good for the planet. When I asked the superintendent in Ladner what these students contributed to the community apart from taking up space, not paying taxes for public amenities and only speaking in their own language, she told me they were good

⁴¹ Some school districts include health insurance in their program fee while other school districts charge a premium fee around \$950 for one school year. K-12 international students do not pay into BC's health care system like BC residents do through taxes. They only pay a small premium.

for retailers. If that's all these people are good for, I think they have no business being here jeopardizing our locals children's education and stifling our kids chances of even getting in the local universities and colleges. I think it's an absolute tragedy that our education has been commodified to the point that our communities are being destroyed, our public transit is overflowing, our communities amenities are overpopulated with non residents and our universities are turning into money making shams. Canada is being aggressively destroyed and education is under attack.

This comment like many others shared earlier, is racist and essentializing. The logic seems to mimic Clark's promotional speech on the economic benefits of having international students. The commenter laments the commodification of public education, which has brought in an influx of non-residents. These non-residents are marked as people who overcrowd community amenities and public transit, as well as, people who destroy a sense of community in neighbourhoods. Furthermore, they are seen to threaten the education opportunities of local students. While not directly stated, the commenter seems to suggest that the increase of non-residents is destroying Canada and its education system.

Discussion

The findings from third time period of this study (2014-2016) mark a volatile time for both the host society and international students. During the teachers' strike, because of the actions of the government and the way the news media reported the strike, international students became easy targets. Furthermore, their consumer rights evaporated when they were asked to cross the picket line while all other students were forced to stay home. Some commenters saw international students as having privileges to which their children did not have access. This decision imposed by the school districts to have international students cross the picket line amplified the social imaginary that international students were destroying public

education and eroding the sense of school community and belonging. When news broke out about the Chinese Consulate being asked by the Chinese international parents to intervene in a domestic matter and when Chinese international parents were said to blame teachers for prolonging the strike, the resentment from many members of the host society towards international students and parents increased even more significantly.

Meanwhile, during this crisis in BC, the provincial and the federal governments were promoting international education locally and overseas. The government signed agreements with several Asian countries, when many members of the host society were expressing racist sentiments similar to the Maclean's article "too Asian" controversy (Findlay & Kohler, 2010). The news of giving away scholarships to international students and related comments shifted the blame from the BC government for not doing its part in ending the teacher strike to targeting international students' parents for interfering with a local political matter. Being perceived as outsiders, cash cows and temporary visitors, international students became easy targets to blame. While many of the themes from the previous time periods continued to impact the comments above, a new theme "too Asian" was evident during this third time period. Due in part to the news media, reporting played a crucial role in shaping readers' emerging beliefs, attitudes and perceptions about the world around them. "China" became a constant cause of annoyance, frustration or trouble for the imaginary host. It is not surprising that China became the main target, given that it accounted for over 39% (51,130 out of 130,053) of the international students studying at all levels in BC⁴² in 2015 and 37 BC certi-

⁴² <https://news.gov.bc.ca/factsheets/international-students-in-bc>

fied offshore schools⁴³ in 2017. Additionally, immigrants who were labelled as “Asian” also got pulled into this controversy. The boundary between international students and immigrant students was blurred. The anti-immigrant rhetoric resurfaced as one comment stated, “immigration at all levels [have] watered down the quality of life for Canadians” (Christopher Wallace, “The hidden cost of foreign student policy.” *The Vancouver Sun*. 12/27/2016.) Racial stereotypes such as “rich kids from China,” “cash cows,” “liars and cheaters,” “Commies,” and “ESL” were used to describe and homogenize many racialized students. These terms are so frequently used that they have become normalized in the imagination of many Canadians. They are terms used to mask racialized speech to sound race-neutral or to appeal to dominant racial stereotypes that are historically embedded, collectively shared and rarely challenged.

5.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, the discussions from each time period highlighted the major themes that emerged during those time periods. These themes included, international students as commodities, international students as consumers, international students as targets, and international students as vulnerable minors. I also discussed several themes relevant to the constructed social imaginaries of the host society including: negotiation between fear and desire for more international students, resistance towards normalized imaginary of International Education phenomenon and essentialization and racialization of international students. Most of these themes ran through all time periods, but the theme of resistance towards normalized imaginary of International Education phenomenon was most evident in the second period

⁴³<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/international-education/offshore-schools/certified-offshore-schools>

likely due to the teachers' strike at that time. Essentialization and racialization of international students was most evident in both second and the last time period possibly due to the remnants of the teacher strike and the media discourse on China and Asian families. The theme of complexities, constraints and possibilities that emerged for host society is an important area that will be taken up in my discussion chapter, along with a further reflection on my research findings from an anticolonial and decolonizing perspective.

6. Discussion: Decolonizing Social Imaginaries of International Students

In this chapter, I reflect on the theoretical implications of the findings from Chapter 5. Through an anticolonial and decolonizing framework, my discussion uncovers how imperial imaginaries and colonial imposition are operationalized and resisted in virtual social spaces. By naming these hegemonic imaginaries, I have attempted to disrupt the following four colonial gazes: (1) objectification of international students and the subjectivization of the host society; (2) imperial legitimization through policy; (3) reproduction of cultural and linguistic hegemony and (4) essentialization and racialization of international students as “too Asian”. It is important to reiterate that anticolonial thought “pursues a politics of domination which informs and constructs dominating imaginaries of both the colonizer and the colonized,” because colonialism is not simply about what is foreign and alien, but anything that is imposed and dominating (Dei, 2006, p. 3).

The first colonial gaze I reflect upon is the objectification of international students and the subjectivization of the host society, which I argue, are two processes that take place at the same time. They are interconnected, constantly moving in a loop and feeding into each other. There is a relational connection between the objectification of international students and the subjectivization of host society, because both the colonized and the colonizer ‘share a language and knowledge of colonization’ as mentioned in Chapter 3. In order to uncover what such relations imply, anticolonial and decolonizing thought demands an interrogation of the connections between difference and identity, and between the self and the other. Dei (2006) explains,

An examination of difference implies seeing difference and sameness between self and other, the individual and the community, as well as also within the self. The self and group are important sites of the affirmation of identities. Within the identities of the colonized and the colonizer, there is a relation suggesting that the idea of identity cannot be dismissed. Individual and collective identities each constitute a critical core of who one is and who we are.... it is difference that separates one identity from another at one level, while also ensuring the difference can co-exist with sameness (p.8).

These co-existing relations between difference and identity, between the self and other, and between the individual and the community are foundational in capturing and understanding how domination and imposition take place and how colonialism and imperialism have evolved and resisted in the contemporary world. As time has progressed in BC's International Education Phenomenon, it has become apparent history and context are crucial for anticolonial and decolonizing undertakings (Smith, 1999; Dei, 2006).

The second colonial gaze I reflect upon as part of my analysis is how policy has been an effective tool in legitimizing imperial domination and imposition. Using the knowledge of the past responsibly is a key principle of conducting anticolonial and decolonizing work, because it recognizes the epistemological stance of the knowledge producer and its significant impact on the knowledge producer's "gaze" on subjects, which at times grants power and privilege to some and disempowers others (Dei, 2006). The knowledge of the past also helps the knowledge producer to make sense of how colonialism has continued or discontinued over time (Dei, 2006). As previous chapters indicate, the shift from providing foreign aid to international students to importing international students as a source of revenue is an example of how policy has changed in a recolonizing direction. The colonial and imperial imposition and domination have also evolved with time.

The third colonial gaze that I discuss in this chapter is the reproduction of cultural and linguistic hegemony. In this study, language is very central in practices of exclusion, Othering, stigmatization and resistance. In the case of BC's International Education Phenomenon, the English language is utilized as a mechanism of linguistic racism, which in turns acts as the symbolic capital that serves to discriminate and disadvantage international students. On the global level, English language dominates the world as a common language for international relations and businesses. The constructed social imaginaries of the host society reveal that language is often used as a marker to operationalize racial and colonial exclusions in the online comments.

Lastly, the fourth colonial gaze is the essentialization and racialization of international students through what I refer to as "too Asian" (Findlay & Kohler, 2010). Racialization is a form of social exclusion, which is a historical construction that allows the dominant group to oppress the Other through differential and unequal treatment. As the data illuminate in this study, skin colour and speaking Mandarin (or Chinese-sounding languages) are the two top markers associated with labels such as lazy, rich, undeserving, exploitative, cheating, dishonest and deviant. The act of labeling allows the dominant group to justify their exclusion, domination, and suppression. Additionally, online news media platforms operate as a forum of imaginary social interplay between the host society and the silent or absent international students.

Throughout history, education has been a powerful and effective mechanism in colonizing minds and cultural politics (Dei, 2006). The International Education Phenomenon in BC is an example of how the "colonial and re-colonial tools of subjugation extend beyond

formal schooling to include the way in which imperial forces of global markets (through the over glorification of market economy, modern communication methods and networks of information) are meeting the stated and unstated objectives and goals of formal education” (Dei, 2006, p. 7). The next section elaborates on each of the colonial gazes presented above and uncovers the domination and imposition of colonial relations in BC’s International Education Phenomenon as evidenced in the data collected for this research.

6.1. Objectification of International Students & the Subjectivization of the Host Society

The accumulation and consumption of imaginary cultural capital gives international students a changing sense of identities, legitimacy and accomplishment. Stuart Hall (1990) suggests that identity should be thought about as “a production, which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation” (p. 222). The way in which international students are positioned and subjugated by the dominant social imaginary of the West is a “continuous play of history, culture and power” (Hall, 1994, p. 225).

With the rise of globalization and the shift towards a knowledge-based economy, a range of norms, values, claims, beliefs and narratives while oftentimes inconsistent, perpetuate an imperial imaginary. As mentioned before, international organizations such as OECD and the World Bank, play a major role in reframing policies on education to ensure the production of human capital and promote national competitiveness in the global context (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). The colonial history between the West and its colonies including cultural exchange; mutual understanding and politics of foreign aid and soft power are not fixed in

the past, but continue to influence the myriad of ways we are positioned, and position ourselves within the grand social imaginary of the West. Dei (2006) explains that stories of colonialism depict the colonizer as “an innocent, benevolent and [imperial] saviour” “This historical relationship of the colonizer and colonized continues to inform contemporary subject identity formation and knowledge production. It shapes and informs identities by recreating colonial ideologies and mythologies” (p. 3).

The imaginaries of studying abroad, speaking English, landing a high-paying job, looking successful and happy are constructed, marketed and fed to families from non-English speaking countries, particularly in China, South Korea, India, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Singapore. These imaginaries can be seen in a study abroad website catering to Taiwanese students, <https://tw.english.agency>, that gives the following reasons for studying in Canada:

1. Safe political system and campus environment:

...Canada is a safer country than other European countries and America, especially in the era of terrorism and campus shootings... Whether it is at schools, homes, movie theatres or gyms, there are security personnel everywhere watching out for everyone.

2. Stable economy and affordable cost of living

...Canadian economy is relatively stable. Additionally, it has comprehensive social welfare and medical care systems, and its immigration regulations are relatively flexible... International students who are capable can have more choices upon graduation. Compared with Britain, America and Australia, the cost of studying in Canada is relatively low while offering the same first-class education. Canada is the first choice for high CP (price-performance ratio).

3. Diversity

...residents are mainly immigrants from all over the world, and the proportion of Asians is very high. Whether at work or at school, the chances of encountering racial

discrimination and bullying are low. (Canada) is inclusive of Chinese students.

The above description of Canada not only contains false information and exaggerations, but also manipulates imperial social imaginaries of international education to attract students. It presents Canada as civilized, benevolent and free of terrorism and racism. It misleads its potential clients about diversity in Canada, because as this research shows, racism is targeted particularly towards “Chinese” international students and parts of Canada are considered “too Asian”. Nevertheless, this website taps into imperial social imaginaries by linking first-class education to immigration and job opportunities.

Many families are willing to uproot their young ones and send them off to countries such as Canada to ensure they are able to mimic the accents of English-speaking natives, because the “mastery of language affords remarkable power” (Fanon, 1967, p. 18). Countries, like China, even import the whole BC education system certified by the BC Ministry of Education to educate their young citizens to mimic the West. This process of uprooting and leaving behind one’s native tongue, culture and education is an act of partial erasure of one’s own culture and language, and in many ways of oneself.

hooks (1992), referring to black people, asks them to ask themselves who they identify with, whose image they love and how they can “counter the seduction of images that threaten to dehumanize and colonize them” (p. 6). In the case of the international students in this research, they are constructed as commodities and consumers and counted as dollars. The objectification of international students as commodities also involves the subjectivization of the host society to sustain and expand the greater imperial project whether consciously or unconsciously. The imperial project of international education thrives on the imaginary

of what the West (or the “civilized”) represents to the Other, and this image is (re)created and maintained in order to continue the colonial dominance of the “West over the rest”.

Most research focuses on the objectification of international students and commodification of BC education and ignores the importance of recognizing the subjectivization of the host society which takes place at the same time and is so well intertwined that it is unrecognizable in itself. As discussed in Chapter 2, Arber (2009) shows that international students are depersonalized and objectivized in schools’ imagination and desire. In this research, I push this observation further by suggesting that the host society has also become depersonalized and subjectivized in this global capitalistic imagination and desire. Now almost everything if not all is for sale. The commodification of whiteness has promoted a contemporary obsession of white representation. The process of subjectivization takes place for the host society when it commodifies itself for sale, when it participates in the global trade of international students, when it desires the revenues that international students bring in, and when it regards international students as cash cows.

As the data has demonstrated, the constructed social imaginaries of the host society seem to suggest the prestige of the BC brand and the English language. One commenter coins the term “Dogwood edu-currency” as he describes how the Dogwood diploma is high in demand and can act as a form of currency to purchase future possibilities. This comment suggests an essentialist view of what is/should be of value for international students and with regard to their education. The essentialist view promotes the commodification of difference (hooks, 1992) in which consumption of the BC brand, Canadian culture and Vancouver lifestyle, allow the Other to eradicate whatever the difference s/he inhabits. BC education is up

for sale and those who do not have access to it should want it. The experience of living among Canadian families and studying alongside Canadian students is marketed and packaged for sale. The BC brand works, because it seems to promise more than just a diploma but rather a whole range of possibilities of becoming more Western, more white, more English-speaking, more civilized, and more educated. The Other buys into this imaginary and so does the host society. The constructed social imaginaries of the host society seem to perpetuate cultural and linguistic hegemony in which the English language, Western culture, Canadian brand, and Vancouver lifestyle are better than the Other's. One commenter states that he lucked out being a Canadian and wonders why anyone would want to do an exchange abroad. This comment along with many other similar ones shared earlier imply that the Other is inferior. This kind of thinking is internalized by the individual over time through uncritical societal inputs and capitalist governmental policies. This kind of thinking is equally harmful for those in positions of colonizer (the host society) and colonized (the international students in this case). The social imaginary of Other as inferior and the West as superior is maintained through transformed, but continuing processes of colonization in the present.

6.2. Imperial Legitimization through Policy

Continuing with the discussion above, I argue that the data illustrates how international education represent another phenomenon of colonialism and imperialism under the guise of globalization and the knowledge-based economy. Driven by economic needs and changing ideologies in educational policies, school districts and the BC government have undergone major reforms in the last two decades including: *Bill 34 of the School Amendment Act*; *BC Jobs Plan* in 2011; *BC's International Education Strategy* in 2012; and Canada's

International Education Strategy: Harnessing our knowledge advantage to drive innovation and prosperity in 2014. These four policies were examined in detail in this research in earlier chapters, but are discussed here briefly for the current argument. *Bill 34 of the School Amendment Act* enables school boards to set up businesses companies while limiting their liability to commodify and sell education products and services onshore and offshore. The *BC Jobs Plan* plays a critical role in promoting the provincial government's position on recognizing international education as an industry and competing globally with other nations. It sends a message to schools, universities, colleges, institutions and other businesses related to international education that the BC government supports them and encourages the expansion of the international education industry.

When these policies were reported on the *Tyee* and the *Vancouver Sun* websites, many comments left by the online news readers did not directly discuss the specifics of the policies but rather what the policies promised to accomplish through international education. One main discussion that came out of the news reporting on *Bill 34 of the School Amendment Act* was the rise of BC Offshore Schools in China. *BC Jobs Plan* in particular stirred up many discussions on international education as one of BC's major industries. Even though *BC's International Education Strategy* and *Canada's International Education Strategy* did not get mentioned in these comments directly, the rhetoric surrounding international students bringing in revenue and statements about international education as a viable industry was loud and clear.

Bill 34 of the School Amendment Act is foundational to the expansion of the international education market both locally and overseas. As mentioned previously, the imple-

mentation of *Bill 34* has allowed the government to transfer part of its responsibility of providing resources to public education to school districts themselves; government packages this reframing of responsibility in free-market terms such as “choice”, “financial freedom, power and flexibility” and “school autonomy”. The rationale provided to school districts in regard to the section on entrepreneurial powers of *Bill 34* for school districts during the adoption process through the Legislature was summarized by Fallon (2006, p. 19) as follows:

(1) The school boards’ ability to generate revenues through other sources allows them to better meet local educational needs. “There are opportunities to bring some money home for BC kids” (Hansard, (2002c), 7(7), p. 3250).

(2) The school system tends “to focus on the means of education without sufficient attention to the outcomes. The system is driven by the interests of the system or the service provider rather than the interest of the learner and the public” (Hansard, (2002a), 6(14), p. 3007-3009).

What this rationale leaves unstated is the imperial imagination embedded in policy. As Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) points out, “Imperial imagination enabled European nations to imagine the possibility that new worlds, new wealth and new possessions existed that could be discovered and controlled” (p. 23). These sections of policies indicate how imperial imagination was embedded in policy. By granting school districts entrepreneurial powers, new wealth and new possessions could be seized and new territories could be occupied for setting up offshore entities. At the same time, Western knowledge was distributed with posts set up around the world. This imperial imagination permeates throughout both provincial and federal policies as discussed below.

In *BC Jobs Plan* (Clark, 2011), BC's education system is recognized as one of the infrastructure sectors. The other infrastructure sectors are transportation including ports, marine and aerospace. The Plan describes international education as a 'social gateway' allowing British Columbians to form new relationships with people from other countries, especially the Asian Pacific. BC school district superintendents, public school principals, BC agents for public school districts, university deans, and other administrators of higher education make frequent trips abroad and are in the business of setting up new commerce relationships all of which are considered normal under globalization and neoliberalism. The Plan praises the BC's education system as being among the world's best, but one that is barely 'tapped' for its potential to support *our* economic growth. The Plan depicts that the rapid economic expansion in Asia Pacific countries is an opportune time to promote international education in these countries, because more parents want to send their children abroad for an English-language education. It paints the picture of having international students in BC as a win-win situation with both short term and long term gains. The long term advantage involves international students becoming highly skilled workers and staying in BC to build careers in the province. The short term benefits are cited in terms of their spending and its direct contributions to local economies, more jobs and millions of dollars in government revenue. These messages echo the goals set out in *BC's International Education Strategy* (Government of British Columbia, 2011) and *Canada's International Education Strategy* (Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, 2014).

BC's International Education Strategy (Government of British Columbia, 2011) and *Canada's International Education Strategy* (Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada,

2014) signify alignment between the provincial and federal governments in developing a BC/Canadian brand and set guidelines for the roles each entity plays in the business of international education. There are common goals among these initiatives: to encourage economic competitiveness, to create jobs, to ensure economic growth, to generate long-term prosperity and to address future skilled labour shortages. The common goals of these initiatives echo what Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) explains about how “in complex ways imperialism was also a mode through which the new states of Europe could expand their economies, through which new ideas and discoveries could be made and harnessed, and through which Europeans could develop their sense of European-ness” (p. 22).

Whether it is *Bill 34 of the School Amendment Act*, the *BC Jobs Plan* or the BC’s *International Education Strategy* and Canada’s *International Education Strategy*, they all offer a single grandiose answer to concerns about skilled labour shortage, economic gains, and cultural exchange between the host society and international students. These policy responses are an example of “Eurocentric theorizing of the colonial encounter” (Dei, 2006, p. 4) under the guise of mutual understanding and lifelong friendships between the host society and international students.

Dei (2006) explains that “Eurocentric theorizing is best captured in representations of minoritized/colonized bodies and their knowledges, and through the power of colonial imageries” (p. 4). In this sense, how the host society perceives international students reveals the host society’s values, norms and beliefs. Based on the data presented, a large percentage of the online commenters seem to reflect racist attitudes as well as an orientation to greed and exploitation. The potential revenues from international students are believed to drive further

disparity between administrators and teachers where the administrators are thought to get a bigger paycheque while teachers are left with more work. International students as a future source of labour may not come by so easily as imagined, because they are up against many challenges and are often at risk of neglect, racism, discrimination, violence, and depression.

Colonialism used to be about occupation of land and exploitation of natural and human resources. Today, it can be refracted around culture, language, lifestyle, nation, race, and class as sites of difference (Dei, 2006). These four BC Education strategies mentioned above offer a new mode of colonization under the guise of internationalization. They call upon imperialization of Western education and culture. Branding BC or Canadian education is an example of imperialization of Western education, culture and lifestyle. Branding legitimizes the superiority of Western colonial culture. Drawing from Jurgen Habermas (1984)'s concept of colonization of lifeworld, Michelle Stack (2016) discusses how the "lifeworld of academia is colonized by the systems world of branding and so people begin to see their own success as determined by their ability to align or realign themselves with the brand of the institution" (p. 101). As more academics align or realign themselves with the brand of the institution, their actions reinforce educational excellence based on brand distinction and superiority. They are subjugated to promote the institution brand so much so that "[p]eople's individual reputation becomes their brand" (p. 101).

The international education phenomenon in BC is an example of a global system of imperialism and power. The reproduction of Western knowledge, language and culture grant the host society "flexible positional superiority" (Said, 1979) that allows it to almost always maintain its position of power and dominance. The discussions on the online platforms used

to collect the data of this study exhibited these kinds of eurocentric and colonialist thinking. One common constructed social imaginary of the host society in relation to international students was its superiority over international students and other countries.

At the same time, international students, as colonized subjects, see themselves as lacking Western education, culture, language and lifestyle. They struggle in their attempts to align or realign themselves with the Western imaginary of academic excellence and professional success. The host society continues to benefit from these colonial impositions. As Rizvi and Lingard (2010) demonstrate, English is an instrument of global hegemony “driven by British imperialism and the ascension of the US economy following the Second World War” (p. 178). The notion hegemony of English language and culture is further explored in the next section.

6.3. Reproduction of Cultural and Linguistic Hegemony

Dei (2006) speaks about the power of language, as “the substantive technology through which social exclusion is built through power and hegemony. It operates to silence and deny certain experiences, histories and identities” (p. 16). Dei (2006) cites Ngugi wa Thiong’o (1986), who explains the extensive power of language:

... the biggest weapon wielded and actually daily unleashed by imperialism against that collective defiance is the cultural bomb. The effect of a cultural bomb is to annihilate a people’s belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves. It makes them see their past as one wasteland of non-achievement and it makes them want to distance themselves from that wasteland. It makes them want to identify with which is furthest removed from themselves; for instance, with other peoples’ languages rather than their own (p. ii).

Under the influence of neoliberalism and globalization, the International Education Phenomenon in BC is thus a reproduction of cultural hegemony which perpetuates the superiority of the West. Mastery of the dominant language takes on the form of currency, represents power and constitutes civilization (Kempf, 2006). As colonialism seeks to establish sustainable hierarchies and systems of power, the colonial social imaginary acts to “uphold the colonizers’ sense of reason, authority and control” (Dei, 2006, p. 3). English has become the default language of choice as the global market intensifies and has further contributed to the expansion of cultural and economic imperialism (Kempf, 2006).

For example, transnational organizations, such as the OECD, uphold international benchmarking of educational standards and performances that reinforce the image of a high quality English education which promises success in global competition and commerce. Ironically, according to the latest PISA average scores in 2015, Singapore, Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, Japan, China and Korea are the top seven places that scored higher than Canada and the US in Math, Reading and Science. Despite the high PISA rankings, international students from these countries continue to participate in adopting dominant subject positions of obtaining an English education by travelling to Canada and other Western countries. They are conditioned to do so both socially and historically. Although the PISA results are clear, many online commenters continue to share the assumption that BC education is among the world’s best on international assessments.

This phenomenon is an example of remnants of colonialism where Western hegemonic conception of performance measures are historically and socially constructed. These measurements continue to work their magic in preserving a state of hegemony, where the subal-

tern countries such as China, Japan and Korea, are subjugated to accept their positions but also uphold the same view as their oppressor, the West. Scoring higher on the PISA tests does not improve one's status. Participating in PISA tests is simply an act to comply with Western hegemonic conception of performance measures and acknowledge their importance and relevance in today's singular global world, a compliance with globalization. Standardized tests distort policy and practice but do not improve student achievement (Griffin, 2015). PISA, among other international assessment tools, helps to make educational systems ready for the 'laws of the market' (Goedl, 2016; p. 163). The BC brand remains a favourite among international students, because Canada has maintained its status on the hegemonic hierarchy.

Another means of reproduction of Western hegemony is the classification of international students as people for whom English is their Second Language (ESL). I use the distinction Western hegemony rather than limiting it to just Canadian or BC, because "ESL" is a Western label of classification that has the effect of imposing a hegemonic and deficit-oriented process of Othering on international students by their English-speaking peers (Talmy, 2004; Garnett, 2008; Kanno & Applebaum, 1995). Even though the label, ESL, has evolved to English Language Learner (ELL) or English as an Additional Language (EAL), research shows that the 'ESL' label is still widely used. This label neglects the diversity that students bring (Gunderson, 2000) and frames them as students who have deficit-oriented qualities, such as limited English proficiency, non-mainstream, or are educationally disadvantaged (Talmy, 2004; Garnett, 2008; Kanno & Applebaum, 1995). It also institutionally categorizes students as "exoticized Newcomers, cultural and linguistic Others, by an array of

national and local institutional policies, school curriculum and instructional practices, by teachers, and by students themselves” (Talmy, 2004, p. 169).

Furthermore, Garnett (2008) points out that the historical and current “ESL policy” for secondary schools in British Columbia aims to assimilate ELL into the mainstream. “Non-mainstream” and “non-native” become markers for ELL students based on their linguistic “deficiencies” and failure “to measure up to an implied or explicit standard” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004, p. 372). Studies show that the ‘ESL’ label becomes “a stigmatizing identity category, with student attitudes toward it ranging from ambivalence to outright hostility” (Talmy, 2004, p. 150). In the case of students labelled as “ESL students”, many have lost their motivation to move beyond the English level required by their “ESL programs” as they have been deemed as “second-rate citizens of the school” (Kannon & Applebeu, 1995, p. 47). Labelling is a tool for exclusion, Othering, and stigmatization. It can carry out racial and colonial exclusions to maintain the status quo, which in the case of this study is in part through media discourses of and about the public education system. These discourses reproduce hegemonic imaginaries by failing to critically engage questions of power, resources, equity and difference.

Many online comments show that individuals were irate when a group of students spoke their own language in a public space. Bhabha (1990) argues that racism is still rampant in a multicultural society, because the “universalism that paradoxically permits diversity masks ethnocentric norms, values and interests” (p. 208). In this manner, it can be said that it is easier to blame the large number of international students for institutional shortcomings than to look at the implicit colonial hegemony that has been the norm since the first group of

Chinese people arrived in BC in the 1850's. Building on Gramsci's concept of hegemony, Said (1979) explains that the cultural hegemony is implicit in Orientalism, which provides for durability, strength and flexible positional superiority for "the Westerners in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the upper hand" (p. 7).

When the Chinese labourers were hired in Canada at much lower wages than their White peers in the 1850's, White labourers blamed the Chinese labourers for taking away their jobs. They did not see the racial discrimination against the Chinese labourers by the White employers. When the Chinese labourers were needed to take on dangerous jobs such as igniting bombs in building the Canadian Pacific Railway, they were allowed to be in Canada. Once there was no use for them, the Government of Canada forced them out by imposing the Chinese Head tax. This same kind of racism and discrimination was observed in *W5's Campus Giveaway* controversy in 1979 and the *Maclean's Too Asian* conflict in 2010.

Apple (2004) explains that the notion of hegemony acts to "saturate our very consciousness, so that the educational, economic and social world we see and interact with, and the common sense interpretations we put on it, become the world tout court, the only world" (p. 4). I argue that international students, specifically, the concept of "Imaginary International Students", is an overarching construct representing the popular images of the exotic Others caught in what Edward Said (1978) called 'binary oppositions' invented to justify the cultural hegemony exercised in the West. A binary opposition, as defined by Said (1978), is an imaginary difference that is socially and institutionally constructed to privilege the West and disempower the East in "a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony" (p. 5). International students are caught in the following binary rela-

tions: colonizer/colonized, civilized/primitive, developed/underdeveloped and superior/inferior, which are manufactured, embraced, despised, desired and feared by the West. It is through “the expropriation of knowledge and culture useful to the West, the repressing of other possible forms of production of knowledge by the colonized, and the forced learning of the dominant culture and ideals” that Western European and North American rationalism become ethnocentric (Vallega, 2011, p. 215). In the case of BC’s International Education Phenomenon, the reproduction of cultural hegemony is significantly linked to essentialization and racialization which are discussed in the next section.

6.4. Essentialization and Racialization of International Students as “too Asian”

One of the major themes that emerged in the data from this research is the essentialization and racialization of international students as “too Asian”. The language and tone that some commenters used to talk about international students is dismissive and oppressive. “China” becomes an all encompassing essentializing term for all so called “Asians”. As Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2001) point out “the Orient is not an inert fact of nature, but a phenomenon constructed by generations of intellectuals, artists, commentators, writers, politicians, and, more importantly, constructed by the naturalizing of a wide range of Orientalist assumptions and stereotypes. The relationship between the Occident and the Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony” (p. 168). For example, in the case of the BC government giving scholarships to students from China, Japan and South Korea, China receives the most if not all the heat from the commenters. This resentment is perhaps linked to a wider reaction towards people from China ‘taking over’ Vancouver. Even though comments that *The Tyee* and *The Vancouver Sun* deem vulgar and

insulting are removed according to each newspaper's forum rules, racialization can still be observed in what remains. Phrases such as: "filthy locusts"; "large clumps discussing all of their work in Chinese"; "cause problems in the classroom because they don't speak English"; "you take my money and give it to some kids from China?" are some examples of racism expressed by the commenters. Racism is one of many forms of imperial and colonial attempts of positioning the Other.

Memmi (1965) discusses how the process of Othering is about the construction of imaginary differences as real by assigning values to these differences. In the case of Chinese international students from China, as the data shows, they are perceived as taking away resources and hurting Canadian students' education opportunities. They are deemed as cheaters who cheat to get into BC schools. They are described as lacking English proficiency and interest in learning the language or getting to know the community. They are seen to be only interested in speaking with their own kind. Their education, medical coverage and social services are believed to be subsidized by Canadian taxpayers. These differences become justifications for their differential and unequal treatment. Further, this kind of justifications often leads to denying them opportunities for success and worse putting them at risk of neglect, ignorance, and abuse.

In this research, many commenters express a mix of emotions: helplessness, disappointment and disbelief about public schools relying on international student fees as a source of revenue. This concern is presented as a problem that cannot be resolved but rather one that must be accepted by mainstream society. In some cases commenters transfer their disappointment, frustration and resentment of the government to international students and their

parents. These comments echo the sentiment expressed by the “white” Canadian students and “white” Canadian parents in the “Campus Giveaway” documentary as discussed in Chapter 3. International students are essentialized and racialized into a single category of “Asian” foreigners taking over Vancouver and taking away resources and opportunities from their “white” Canadian students.

Accompanying some commentators essentialization and racialization of international students are emotions, such as anger, resentment, frustration, disgust and entitlement. From an anticolonial perspective, Dei (2006) discusses how racialization contributes to the fabrication of whiteness:

A great part of the problem confronting Euro-American/Canadian education is the incessant scripting of Western civilization, the fabrication of whiteness and the racial boundary policing that come with these practices. The dominance of Western civilization and the accompanying racial supremacy is anchored in a fabrication of whiteness. Historically, this fabrication required immense psychological, physical and intellectual energies to maintain the alleged purity of Europe and the West.... Today, this fabrication continues to exact a heavy material, physical, psychological and emotional toll on those segments of our communities racialized as different (p. 7).

In this research, there are commenters who call out racist remarks and derogatory terms. There are commenters who defend international students’ characters and work ethics and resist the blaming and scapegoating and focus on analyzing the real problems at hand. Similarly, there are some teachers who acknowledge the difficulties international students encounter and the amount of hard work they put in their studies, but most of their main concerns still circle back to international students taking away their time and resources from local disadvantage students. These beliefs in society and the educational systems contribute to

the construction of colonial social imaginaries that are implicit in the comments that reproduce cultural hegemony.

I argue that the essentialization and racialization of international students on web-based news platforms gives us some indications of what is happening in schools and communities. Pham and Tran (2015) reiterate, even though there are a growing number of studies indicating that institutional culture, campus environment, and conditions and availability of support and contact are some of key factors influencing the quality and frequency of intercultural interactions between international and domestic students, the majority of literature is still based on a deficit and Eurocentric perspectives that state that international students' deficiencies in language and cultural differences are the sources of the problem. Essentializing international students' English language ability and cultural proficiency is racializing and further places the blame on them; thus reproducing cultural hegemony.

6.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I further reflected on the theoretical implications of the findings presented in the previous chapter and highlighted the following overarching colonial gazes in the social imaginaries of international students on web-based news platforms: (1) objectification of international students and the subjectivization of host society; (2) imperial legitimization through policy; (3) reproduction of cultural and linguistic hegemony and (4) essentialization and racialization of international students as "too Asian". These gazes do not happen in isolation but rather all contribute to the overall colonial and imperial social imaginaries of international students in BC's International Education Phenomenon.

Through these colonial gazes BC's International Education Phenomenon can be seen as a civilizing mission of exporting BC curriculum to "help" the Other. In this manner, this colonial project, in the guise of benevolence, perpetuates the legacy of imperialism by spreading a Westernized template of education, curriculum, pedagogy and, civiness (Matthews and Sidhu, 2005; Tikly, 2001). As an European project of modernity in the sense that there is only one way of being in the world, it is about assimilating the others. This one way of being in the world, such as being able to access the existing global hierarchy of knowledge economy, has made international students internalize the effects of a new educated self, which is "constructed as intrinsic ambition and aspiration... to become a part of the new imperialism... [voluntarily]" (Rhee, 2009, p. 75).

While international students are affected by this new imperialism, so is the host society. Through the objectification of international students, the host society is implicated in a process of subjectivization. As the object of its own dreams and desires, the host society commodifies its education and its lifestyle. Education is up for sale. Lifestyle is up for sale. The commodification of whiteness has promoted a contemporary obsession of white representation. The host society believes that it has something of value that international students desire and charge them according to how it sees fit. The process of subjectivization takes place for the host society when it commodifies itself for sale, when it participates in the global trade of international students, when it desires the revenues that international students bring in, and when it regards international students as cash cows.

Cultural exchange and mutual understanding were the key phrases for BC's International Education in the past. Under the influence of neoliberal globalization, the process

of imperial legitimization through policy utilizes catch phrases such as “freedom” and “choice” to further perpetuate the new imperialism by producing global elites who take on new transnational identities as an English-speaking elites. In this process of Othering, international students are racialized and essentialized as “Asian,” “rich,” “hardworking,” but “non-participating” (i.e. no fun) “cheaters”.

Moreover, the absence of international students in these online platforms allows for free expression from the dominant culture but prohibits the diverse voices of the Other. In this manner, these online spaces become a place for reinforcing racialization, circulating misinformation, and perpetuating stereotypes and dominant ideals as the hegemonic norm.

7. Concluding Reflection on the International Education Phenomenon in BC

At the beginning of this thesis, I reflected on my experience of growing up in Canada. It was not until my graduate studies that I came to realize my settler immigrant identity and the responsibility, conflict and struggles that come with that realization. In positioning myself as a Taiwanese Canadian settler/colonized immigrant woman, I am claiming a genealogical, cultural and political set of identities and experiences. As a result, my positioning has a direct and profound impact on my approach to the process of research.

During the course of my study, when I decided not to centre the voices of international students, it became very challenging to do decolonizing work. Linda Tuhiwa Smith (1999) writes that research “is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world’s vocabulary”, because it “is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism” (p. 1). Working from colonial approaches, many researchers have taken advantage of research communities by collecting and using their stories for their own benefits and leaving the community exploited.

As I explained in Chapter 1, the voices of the marginalized are important and powerful in challenging the status quo, but only if people are open to hearing them. From my own experiences in and outside of academia, I have become more aware of how people have become desensitized to the stories of the marginalized including international students (who are often not regarded as ‘marginalized’). Many members of the general public seem to have blinders on which prevent them from seeing international students as subaltern peoples due to one very obvious bias - their wealth. However, as discussed earlier, the wealth of in-

international students affords them with very little status and power given that the host society views them as commodities and given that racial marginalization is not trumped by wealth alone. As a result, they face oppression and marginalization. Additionally, they become targets for fraud, exploitation, inferiorization and abuse as is the case in this research. For example, a recent CBC report shows that international students are at risk of scams, isolation, sexual abuse, exploitation, illness, and unwanted pregnancy (Xing & Zhou, 2018). Without providing an inclusive, respectful and appropriate opportunity for the speakers to share and the listeners to listen with an open heart, the stories of the marginalized, including international students, can simply get consumed without further thought or action. Additionally, not all international students can be painted with the same brush – many come from families of lesser privileged backgrounds where they spend every penny they have to educate their children in the hopes of a better future for the entire family and often the entire community.

Hence, I purposefully chose to center some voices of the host society as represented by online news commenters; not to privilege them or to give them further power in order to maintain the status quo, but as a way to raise awareness of racism, essentialization, colonialism, ignorance, and entitlement that is entrenched in our society and to encourage a path toward decolonization.

In this final chapter, I begin with a brief discussion of how my work has addressed my original research questions and then provide further implication of my study for research in the area of international students and international education more broadly, as well as implication for further research in policy and practice related to international students in BC's

public education system and implications for further research using social media and virtual platforms.

7.1. Research Questions and Findings

To answer my first research question, I investigated how online news comments construct social imaginaries of K-12 international students attending BC's public schools. In the comments collected from two different online news media, it was apparent that international students were constructed in a range of fluid and changing social imaginaries. As has already been highlighted most commenters of my study, who are part of the host society, referred to international students in derogatory, racist and essentialist ways through terms such as "fee-paying customers", "rich foreigners", "cash cows", "mortgage helpers", "commodities" (such as a natural resource waiting to be tapped into) "cheaters", "non-English speakers," "non-contributors", "non-participants in society and community" and "non-taxpayers" amongst other derogatory terms. Several commenters from the host society (although these voices were numerically the minority) saw international students in a positive light, referring to them as "hardworking and delightful students". In general the objectification of students was starkly apparent in all comments collected in my data.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) states, that objectification is a process of dehumanization. The objectification of international students as commodities is realized in a myriad of representations and ideological constructions of the Other in the media, official news stories, policies and research. Cloaked under the politically neutral language of neoliberal free market discourse, the objectification of international students becomes naturalized and normal-

ized within what I refer to as the colonial social imaginaries of the host society and nation. This leads me to my last two research questions where I investigated the shared norms, perceptions and values about international students and how they construct the host society; and additionally, what they reveal about the complexities, constraints and possibilities of hosting large numbers of international students?

My study showed that the process of objectification of international students happens hand in hand with the subjectivization of the host society. Specifically, that the subjectivization of the host society is a response to the objectifying colonial gaze placed on international students. Through the objectifying gaze, some members of the host society ask questions similar to “what else can I sell? How do I sell more and faster?” The objectifying gaze is that of desire and complicity. Despite knowing that it is morally unethical to exploit international students for money, the lure of the dollar is too hard to resist, especially when there are needs to be filled. At the same time, doubt keeps coming up like an alarm in the background. Is the international student dollar really keeping schools and programs open and gives teachers and local businesses jobs? Does the international student dollar cover all costs of hosting them? Are there hidden costs from international students that are subsidized by taxpayers? The government and the media play an important role in impacting this objectifying gaze by utilizing imperial and Eurocentric social imaginaries of neoliberalist agendas.

My study also revealed that the subjectivization of the host society is influenced by a global force of imperial representation and domination through international standardized testing and benchmarking to affirm Eurocentric knowledge and values, which contribute to the reproduction of cultural and linguistic hegemony. The reproduction of cultural and lin-

guistic hegemony can be observed in the shared colonialist perceptions and values of international students from some members of the host society as represented in these online news commentaries. The pressure to conform to the global education guidelines, practices and rankings is closely linked to the business of bringing in international students. Fierce competition for the best and brightest as well as for the biggest piece of pie in the international education market are brought on by a neoliberal restructuring of global economy and policies, which is a trend that has been adopted in BC's policy directives. While globalization is a powerful force in these neoliberal mechanisms, government cuts in education funding are seen around the world and presented as without any alternative.

Colonialism and imperialism are masked by neoliberal policies and practices. As my research demonstrates, discourses of identity and difference intersect with discourses of imperialism and neoliberalism in this market-driven and postcolonial world in which international students seek to accumulate Western edu-currency. When they are profitable, they are wanted. When they seem to add value, they are wanted. When they are not, they become undesirable and deemed disposable. This renders them as colonized subjects, objectified and commodified. Furthermore, the majority of international students are from Asian countries; as such they are a visible majority who are racialized and essentialized and easily targeted as the scapegoats of the ills of society brought on by capitalism, imperialism and the continuing colonialism of powerful state regimes. In other words, "the relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power of domination, of varying degree of a complex hegemony.... The Orient is orientalised only because it was discovered to be "Oriental" in all those ways considered commonplace by an average nineteenth-century European, but also

because it could be - that is, submitted to being - made oriental” (Said, 1979, p. 12-13). The objectification of international students and subjectivization of the host society work synonymously with each other through neoliberal market ideologies that are closely linked to the colonial social imaginaries of hierarchies of knowledge, culture and language. In the following section, I will discuss implications for research on international education and international students.

7.2. Implications for Further Research on International Education & International Students

Vasilopoulos (2016) states that there are two main streams of research on international students: The first stream of research refers to the problem-solving approach largely guided by positivist epistemologies and quantitative methodologies. This approach to research demonstrates that international students encounter challenges with social interaction, English language communication and cultural integration and positions international students from a pathologizing deficit perspective. For example, they are presented as individuals who are unable or unwilling to interact with locals preferring rather to ghettoize among their own ethnic group; or, they are said to be incapable of thinking critically, or speaking up in class or speaking for themselves; or, they are presented as lacking the proficiency and competency in English language skills (Minichiello, 2001; Zeegers & Barron, 2008). Vasilopoulos (2016) explains that there is a fixed and oversimplified conceptualization of language development in the field in terms of the understanding of adjustment and social interaction over time. Further Vasilopoulos (2016) states that social context, which

plays a crucial role in contributing to a sense of belonging and fostering confidence for social interaction with locals, is often overlooked in this body of research.

The second stream of research on international students identified by Vasilopoulos (2016) refers to the language and identity exploration approach guided by poststructuralist epistemologies and qualitative methodologies. A key focus in poststructuralist studies is the important role that social context plays in the language socialization and identity of international students. As Vasilopoulos (2016) explains, the process of language development and identity negotiation is dynamic. The process of this change is integral to international students' academic success and life experiences within the host community. This approach to research takes social context into consideration and moves away from essentialized notions of the identity and social and academic development of international students.

In addition to the two streams of research on international students identified by Vasilopoulos, Koh (2015) offers yet another research stream: the global migration perspective guided by postcolonial epistemologies and qualitative methodologies. Koh (2015) observes that, "A key concern in postcolonial studies is the critique of Eurocentrism and its continued oppression of the non-Anglo-Western worlds" (p. 2). Koh explicates that postcolonial approaches are under-utilized in providing an analytical lens to show how colonial legacies continue to influence migration, beyond pointing to the dichotomy of "center" and "periphery" border boundaries or migration flows from former colonies to former empires.

This stream of research attempts to contribute to studies on international students and international education by bringing anticolonial thought and decolonizing methodologies into what has otherwise been an ahistorical body of research. In my own research this is the ap-

proach I adopted since I felt that the significance of colonial histories could not be left out of research endeavours on international students or international education. Additionally in my work I brought in Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999)'s seminal work on Decolonizing Methodologies to help understanding how imperialism and colonialism have transformed and prospered in present day society. Although Smith's work is written for indigenous peoples and researchers working in indigenous contexts, I felt that it was also very relevant in the research on international students and international education, because as Jo-Ann Archibald (1999) states, "Our contextual histories, politics and cultural considerations are respectfully interwoven together. Our distinctiveness remains distinct, but there are important places where our issues and methodologies intersect" (as cited in Smith, 1999, np).

Building on decolonizing methodologies, anticolonial thought is crucial in theorizing "the nature and extent of social domination and particularly the multiple places that power, and the relations of power, work to establish dominant-subordinate connections" (Dei, 2006, p. 1). More importantly, anticolonial frameworks aim to scrutinize and deconstruct dominant discourses and explore alternatives to colonial relations. Further research on international students from anti-colonial and decolonizing perspectives is needed given the limited research in this area and given that most research mainly focuses on higher education (Shahjahan, 2011; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). It is also imperative to point out that more research on the International Education phenomenon within the BC context is needed, because the culture, politics and history of BC are specific to the region. Lastly, research from the perspectives and experiences of teachers and administrators who are involved in BC's International

Education Phenomenon is crucial to bring in a more comprehensive understanding of such a complex and expanding system.

7.3. Implications for Further Research in Policy and Practice on the BC IEP

In Chapter 5, the findings presented show that many members of the host society are questioning the validity of the numbers given by the government on the costs and benefits of hosting international students. An important area for future research in the area of policy might be to investigate clear, transparent and comprehensive cost and benefit analysis of international students in the BC public school system. The impact of international student tuition also varies from school to school depending on three main areas: (1) the amount of international student fee charged; (2) the number of international students enrolled; (3) the actual operating cost of international students, including marketing, overseas agent, additional and external educational support and so on. As explained previously, bigger urban schools have more resources, therefore some costs (such as recruitment) are much lower than what smaller and more rural schools pay. Furthermore, school district statements of financial information do not clearly show how international student revenue is spent.

As shown in previous chapters, when school districts are faced with inadequate government funding, revenue from international student fees would seem like a significant amount, particularly when the operating expenditures of these international students are left out of the dollar amount as shown on news media and government reports. For example, for the school year 2010/2011, Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows school district received a total of \$8,859,462 in international student fees, after deducting international student operating ex-

penditures in the amount of \$7,661,062⁴⁴, the net international student revenue was just under \$1.2 million. Having said this, it is critical to point out the growing dependence on international student revenues is detrimental to the overall funding of the public school system. By emphasizing the lucrative side of the international student businesses, particularly for certain high-in-demand school districts, it allows the BC government to further step back from providing adequate educational funding.

By taking out international student fees from the total operating revenue and operating costs of international students from the total operating expenditures, Coquitlam school district would be running a deficit of \$4,606,871⁴⁵ for the school year 2010/2011. By 2016/2017, the number of international students had grown to FTE 1916.5, 5.9% of total FTE 32,670.9. The international student revenue almost doubled (from \$15,370,648 to \$30,558,720), while the operating expenditures of international students had more than doubled between 2010/2011 and 2016/2017 (from \$9,467,827 to \$20,387,942). Without international student revenue and associated operating expenditures, Coquitlam school district would be looking at a deficit in the amount of \$8,014,528 in 2016/2017.

If the impact of international student revenues across different school districts is more complex than what the government and the news media have represented, what is the real picture of BC's public education system? This research recommends a practice of more transparency in the spending of international student fees to support statements about these fees generating jobs and keeping special programs open. To operate a pseudo-private busi-

⁴⁴ Data taken from Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows School District's 2010/2011 SOFI.

⁴⁵ Data taken from Coquitlam School District's SOFI for 2011.

ness inside a public school seems to be eroding school districts' overall governance and accountability. As a part of the public education system, one has to ask have school districts become for-profit entities like their offshore counterparts? Or are they running international student programs on cost-recovery basis? Or perhaps is it a mix of both these approaches?

Additionally, the findings of this research point to the need for more accountability measures in the area of health and safety and school drop-out rates for young international students. Even though there is comprehensive research done on BC international students' transition after high school graduation, more followup research is recommended for the following:

(1) The STP report states that more than one-third of international high school graduates subsequently enrolled in the BC public post-secondary system and that a further 10% enrolled over the subsequent decade.

(2) The STP report shows that BC public post-secondary international students who previously graduated from BC's K-12 system achieved high credential completion rate (54% versus 41% and 42%) and earned proportionately more bachelor degrees (56% versus 33% and 32%) and fewer developmental credentials (7% versus 15% and 26%) than international students with some or no previous education in BC's K-12 system. It would be worthwhile to track these international post-secondary graduates in their career path and immigration status. This data would answer questions such as do international students stay behind and join the labour force in BC? What kind of career paths do they choose?

As a decolonizing and anticolonial scholar, I feel that collective agency in the area of international education and international students will be important in countering the social

imaginaries that have been highlighted in the findings of this study. Through the collective agency that I am referring to, I envision school boards, policy makers and the news media to take greater responsibility and accountability in presenting all sides of BC's International Education Phenomenon. Taking on more international students should not be the only option as the most viable source of revenue for school districts, which is a discourse that stems from neoliberalism and globalization. This collective agency would raise awareness through education and advocacy to inform the public of the problematic views of international students rather than feeding the societal needs of news consumption. News media would take on a more proactive role in analyzing the statistics provided by the government and connecting these statistics to facts to provide a more comprehensive perspective of issues being debated. In this sense, this collective agency is crucial in the transformation of imperial and colonial social imaginaries of BC's International Education Phenomenon.

7.4. Implications for Further Research Using Social Media and Virtual Platforms

Research using social media and virtual platforms is not without controversy given issues of access, participation, and appropriate moderation, to name a few. As discussed in previous chapters, the evolution of the internet has made access to news stories faster and perhaps easier for people who have the knowledge and the financial means to own and operate computing devices (computers, tablets, smartphones and so on) with internet function. However, people who do not have access to a computing device and the internet or people who are not aware of the existence of web-based newspaper platforms or people who do not have certain newspaper memberships are excluded from these virtual communities. For ex-

ample, as discussed in Chapter 4, the core reader demographic from both the *Vancouver Sun* and the *Tyee* does not reflect the majority of international students and international parents.

Furthermore, even though virtual togetherness comes in different forms and may not live up to the value-laden definition of *community*, it does not undermine the idea of collective life in cyberspace (Bakardjieva, 2003). Some argue that virtual communities are not to be considered inferior to real-life communities based on the lack of face-to-face materiality.

Anderson's (1991) salient work on imagined communities has demonstrated that "the majority of the so-called 'real-life' communities are in fact virtual in the sense that they are mediated and imagined" (Bakardjieva, 2003, p. 293). It is significant to note that some of Bakardjieva's research participants saw the newsgroups that they belonged to as more than an information resource, but also as a space for political debate or a 'public forum' where members could "expose [themselves] to others' perspectives and argue for [their] own, to build alliances with like-minded people and enjoy intellectually stimulating encounters" (p. 298). In other words, there is a high level of intentionality from the members of a virtual community to participate, interact and belong.

It is also important to point out that this high level of intentionality does not only exist between commenters, but can also exist between commenters and news writers/bloggers. Online readers themselves can be contributors to the news story through online comment sections (Toepfl & Piwoni, 2015). In some cases, some comments lead to additional news stories being written. For instance, a commenter, Aron Martens, asked some questions about offshore schools in response to Janet Steffenhagen's November 23, 2012 article titled, "Teacher distress at a BC certified school" in the *Vancouver Sun*. Janet responded to Aron's

comment and said that she would write more on this issue. She did write another followup story titled “Selling the BC curriculum in offshore schools” on November 25, 2012.

At the same time, other studies show that exposure to biased online comments can easily influence members of a virtual community in negative ways. For example, one study showed that one’s own prejudicial attitudes and behaviours can result in members positing more prejudiced comments themselves as well as showing prejudicial attitudes toward a specific ethnic group or the entire online discussion group. Hsueh, Yogeeswaran and Malinen (2012) point out that the process of reading a comment, thinking of a response, formulating a response and then posting the response indicates that comments are not simply a slip of the tongue but suggest intentionality. Social norms of a virtual community are established as members “look to others in their group for a socially acceptable response and then mimic the behaviour and attitudes of the group’s salient norm” (Hsueh, Yogeeswaran and Malinen, 2012, p. 559).

Additionally, research shows that online comments are inconsistently moderated when compared to the traditional letter to the editor, which is reviewed by newsroom staff (Borton, 2009). Particularly, in the absence of a dominant moderator, Borton (2009) points out that “a disregard for accepted social norms and standards can lead to uninhibited behavior” and can result “in the circulation of unfounded or false information and polarizing opinions that can widen the gaps between those on opposite sides of public issues” (p. 41-42). At the same time, online comments can be a valuable research space on controversial issues or difficult topics that often get filtered and modified. Finally, research supports that moderation

of online comments matters, but does not address racism or other forms of discrimination (Hughey & Daniels, 2013). Hughey and Daniels (2013) illuminate,

moderation is itself a reactionary tactic predicated on dominant understandings of racism. Rather than engendering a focus on interfacing with racist discourse in a meaningful way, these news sites simply attempt to ban the problem, frame the offenders as rogue commenters, and then bury their head in the sand — hoping not to encounter more racism. Such a strategy is indicative of our neoliberal moment in which societal issues are boiled down to one's supposed individual right to avoid them and the claim that one is unaffected by them (p. 343-344).

Despite these important issues and considerations, the use of social media and virtual platforms was very valuable for my research topic. These virtual spaces due partly to anonymity allowed me to access comments that would in general be impossible to collect within a more traditional researcher-researched relationship. Although the comments were limiting in that I could not probe deeper into various places or comments and because they represented mainly individuals most interested and most emotionally engaged in the topic of international education, they provide an important starting point into research in controversial areas. From this first experience with this type of media research, I feel that it has the potential to allow researchers to delve into areas that are contentious or difficult to discuss. After an initial exploration of research from these media platforms, researchers could engage in qualitative interviews or other forms of inquiry by using the initial findings and difficult conversations to further unearth perspectives that often remain silent/silenced due to social norms, social expectations, resistance and ignorance.

7.5. Conclusion

In conclusion, my study attempts to develop two interconnected concepts for thinking differently about BC's International Education Phenomenon. First, I argue for the need to

develop an anticolonial and decolonizing stance in the theorizations of colonialism and imperialism as the continuing logic of racism, hegemony and dominance in the study of international education. This anticolonial perspective argues for integrating the concept of colonial social imaginaries into the scholarship of international education. Western education remains a desirable product in the global education market and the English language continues to be the dominating global language. Both international students and the host society are profoundly affected by this master narrative of the West being superior and a Western education as supreme above all others. This master narrative is mass-mediated and permeates every level of social, national and global life. It objectifies international students as cash cows to be traded and disposed of at the host society's discretion. Concurrently, the host society unknowingly undergoes the process of subjectivization and becomes subjugated by the same Western subjectivities.

Furthermore, I contend that the findings of this research show that the constructed social imaginaries of the host society and international students mask a continuing story of settler colonialism, serving the needs of the West as an ongoing mode of empire building. Canada has a reputation for its natural beauty, national security, and multicultural inclusiveness. The constructed social imaginaries of the host society seem to depict a narrative about a benevolent imaginary host assisting international students by providing foreign aid, promoting cultural exchange while meeting domestic economic needs. The imaginary host plays different roles in relation to international students, such as a policy maker, service provider, educator, guardian, family host, peer or friend.

The Canadian brand is much desired by many countries. When education is packaged with lifestyle and branded with the Canadian maple leaf symbol, not only does the value of the package go up, but the demand also goes up. The constructed social imaginaries of host society seem to aggrandize the host society's status in education as well as way of life. The host society becomes subjugated to the colonial social imaginary of having world-class citizenship, life opportunities and quality of education. The host society is subjectivized partly by being subjects of desire and partly through a collective memory of domination and resistance. The subjectivization of the host society becomes a critical part of the collective imagination in everyday life, in policy and in practice of the host society. Some of these constructed social imaginaries of international students as inferior, uncivil, exotic and deficient become part of this collective imagination in Canada. The belief that international students take advantage of the Canadian welfare system, social security, education and job opportunities, natural reserves, and quality of life and do not contribute to anything is also part of the collective imagination. Although much more dynamic and fluid, broadly the collective narrative is internalized and imagined through online exchanges and has symbolic and material impact on international students in forms of racism, exploitation, inferiorization and abuse.

In short, the project of this research is an anticolonial and decolonizing undertaking which deviates away from the often Eurocentric and deficit-based perspectives on international students. It uncovers the often covert objectification of international students and the masked subjectivization of the host society in BC's International Education phenomenon. The government promoting its neoliberal agenda through policy, pushing its policy directives onto school districts, forcing school districts to operate more and more like private entities,

and thereby changing the society's attitudes, values and norms are a part of the reproduction of cultural hegemony through colonial and imperial social imaginaries. An anticolonial and decolonizing project works with difference and identity at the same time. In this study, the research gaze is not placed on international students but is rather turned on the host society, which includes the governments, members from schools, communities, local business and families. It challenges the host society to see difference and identity between itself and others. It exposes colonial and imperial moments as they occur on the virtual spaces of news websites. It aims to raise awareness and urge the host society, the subject, to see itself as a colonizing force and the colonized at the same time. The process of decolonization can only occur if the host society is willing to look within itself in relation to others. The difference does not separate the host society from international students, but brings a complex reading to the messiness of co-existing with sameness.

Epilogue

At my oral examination on January 30th, 2019, I ended my presentation with a slide showing my official name - a name that I have never shared publicly until that moment. My official name is Yu-ting Lin. The first character of my name, Yu, means to nurture, to cultivate or to educate. The second character of my name, Ting, means the courthouse, which shows my family's great expectation for me to have a role in contributing the work of justice. This journey has allowed me the space to reclaim my name. It has opened up a path for me to finally speak back and begin to shake off the many layers of colonization that I have lived under for decades. One of the unacknowledged outcomes of this dissertation is my own healing and decolonizing journey which I hope to engage with further in the years to come.

A large, bold, black calligraphic character representing the Chinese character '育' (Yu). The character is written in a dynamic, expressive style with thick, fluid strokes. It features a curved top stroke, a horizontal middle stroke, and a vertical base stroke that curves slightly to the right at the bottom.

Yu

A large, bold, black calligraphic character representing the Chinese character '庭' (Ting). The character is written in a dynamic, expressive style with thick, fluid strokes. It features a curved top stroke, a horizontal middle stroke, and a large, sweeping bottom stroke that curves to the left and then back to the right.

Ting

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