

WELCOME TO CANADA? EXPERIENCES AND VIEWS OF INTERNATIONAL
GRADUATE STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

by

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ABSTRACT

There is a significant body of research literature on problems of adaptation of international students, but there is a general scarcity of research on issues related to international students and internationalization of higher education. This qualitative study was designed to examine the experiences of international graduate students with respect to their academic and social life, finances and employment as well as experiences with the student services and perceptions of inclusion in campus community. Their views about internationalization at UBC were also examined. Ten students from nine different countries studying in one department at the Faculty of Education participated. Individual in-depth interviews and a focus group were conducted.

The study has revealed that experiences of international students are as diverse as their backgrounds. Three participants studying at a PhD level were consistently satisfied with all aspects of their experiences. They were active in class discussions; they attended and presented in seminars and conferences. They had scholarships or sufficient family savings or secure on-campus assistantships. They felt included in the campus community and found the community at the department very welcoming. In contrast, Masters students from non-English speaking countries have found it challenging to survive and progress at university. Few were active in classroom discussions, extra-curricular academic and social activities. None reported having developed more than one or two meaningful contacts with Canadian classmates and faculty throughout their studies. They did not feel included in the department community or felt neither excluded nor included. They talked about feeling strangers and outsiders. Few used student services. They reported significant challenges in finding on-campus jobs. However, they developed many connections with other

international students. Several of them volunteered to help other international students feel welcome. Although these students reported having struggled a lot, they also learned a lot from their experiences and became more independent, more outspoken and more proactive. Participants agreed that international students should be more active in sharing their backgrounds and participating in campus activities, but they needed the university to reach out for them as well and make them feel an important part of campus. The majority of them believed that international students were bringing a variety of benefits to teaching, learning and research. They listed Canadian students, faculty members, other international students and the university as a whole among the main beneficiaries.

Based on the findings above, the following areas were identified where the majority of participants felt their needs were not fully met and improvements would enable them to have better educational and social experiences. These areas included academic programming, social interaction, community sensitivity, support services, institutional and government policies, and the role of international students in internationalization. This study recommends enhanced efforts by a host university and its community to integrate international students in and outside the classroom. It also calls for greater attention to provision of language training, curriculum internationalization, and easing of institutional and government policies restricting financial aid and employment opportunities for international students. Successful interaction and collaboration between international students and host universities will advance the process of university internationalization.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	viii
ACRONYMS	ix
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	x
 CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION	 1
Problem Statement	1
Statement of Purpose and Research Questions	2
Significance of the Study	3
The Definition of "International Student"	4
Overview of the Thesis	5
 CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW	 7
A Portrait of International Students in Canada: 1980-2000	7
<i>Provincial Enrolments of International Students</i>	9
<i>Institutional Enrolments of International Students</i>	10
Rationales for Education of International Students	10
International Student Issues	14
<i>The Decision to Study Abroad</i>	15
<i>Academic Issues</i>	16
<i>Social and Personal Issues</i>	19
<i>Sources of Support and Coping Strategies</i>	21
<i>Financial Issues</i>	22
<i>Student Services</i>	23
<i>The Impact of Study Abroad Experience</i>	27
<i>Satisfaction with Experiences</i>	28
<i>Other Issues</i>	29
Policy Issues	29
<i>Differential Fees</i>	30
<i>Funding Restrictions</i>	31
<i>Employment Restrictions</i>	31

<i>International Students and Internationalization</i>	34
Summary	39
 CHAPTER III: INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND INTERNATIONALIZATION AT UBC	
Introduction	41
International Students at UBC.....	41
Internationalization at UBC	46
International Students as a Component of Internationalization at UBC	47
 CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH DESIGN.....	
Introduction	49
Research Setting.....	49
Sampling Procedure	50
Data Collection Instrument	51
Pilot Study.....	52
Interview Context.....	52
Interviewer Role.....	53
Focus Group	54
Anonymity.....	55
Transcription and Data Analysis	55
Trustworthiness	56
<i>Credibility</i>	56
<i>Transferability</i>	57
<i>Dependability</i>	57
<i>Confirmability</i>	58
Reciprocity of Research	58
Limitations	59
Subjective Involvement.....	59

<i>From Home to Home</i>	60
<i>Studying at UBC</i>	60
<i>Assumptions and Views</i>	62
<i>Subjectivity</i>	63
CHAPTER V: FINDINGS FROM THE INTERVIEW SESSIONS AND THE FOCUS GROUP	64
Introduction	64
Participants' Characteristics	64
Before Coming to UBC.....	66
<i>Educational Background</i>	66
<i>Previous Study Abroad</i>	67
<i>Employment Background and Travel</i>	69
UBC- the School of Your Choice	70
<i>Reasons for Current Study Abroad</i>	70
<i>International Students Choose Canada</i>	71
<i>International Students Choose UBC</i>	72
<i>Academic, Professional and Personal Goals</i>	73
Your Experiences as an International Student at UBC	75
<i>Academic Experiences</i>	75
<i>Social Life</i>	88
<i>Community</i>	94
<i>Services</i>	96
<i>Finances</i>	99
<i>Employment</i>	102
<i>Exploring the Concept of "International Student"</i>	104
<i>Satisfaction with UBC Experiences</i>	109
International Students' Views about Internationalization at UBC.....	110
<i>The Meaning of Internationalization</i>	110
<i>Internationalization and International Students</i>	112
<i>The Role of International Students in Internationalization of UBC</i>	113
<i>Benefits that International Students Bring to Campus</i>	115
<i>Prospects for the Future of UBC as an International University</i>	118
Findings from the Focus Group	126
CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	132
Discussion	134
Recommendations	141

<i>Recommendations for Departments and Faculties</i>	142
<i>Recommendations for Faculty Members</i>	143
<i>Recommendations for International Students</i>	143
<i>Recommendations for Canadian Students</i>	144
<i>Recommendations for Student Services</i>	145
<i>Recommendations for the University</i>	145
<i>Recommendations for Policy-Makers</i>	146
Suggestions for Further Research	147
Conclusion.....	147
APPENDIX A: INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ENROLMENTS IN CANADIAN UNIVERSITIES	157
APPENDIX B: STUDENT INITIAL CONTACT.....	160
APPENDIX C: STUDENT CONSENT FORM	161
APPENDIX D: DEPARTMENT LETTER OF CONTACT	163
APPENDIX E: DEPARTMENT CONSENT FORM.....	165
APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW GUIDE	166
APPENDIX G: FOCUS GROUP GUIDE	169

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Enrolment Trends of Students on Student Visas at UBC, 1992-93 to 2001-02..	43
Table 2: UBC International Student Enrolment as Percentage of Total Headcount, 1992-2001	44
Table 3: Places of Origin of International Students at UBC, September 2000	45
Table 4: Participants' Characteristics.....	65
Table 5: Participants' Characteristics by Level of Education	67
Table 6: Participants' Work and Travel Abroad History	69
Table 7: Participants' Main Sources of Financial Support at UBC	99

ACRONYMS

ACCC	Association of Canadian Community Colleges
AUCC	Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada
BCCIE	British Columbia Centre for International Education
CBIE	Canadian Bureau for International Education
CEC	Canadian Education Centre
CIC	Citizenship and Immigration Canada
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
DFAIT	Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade
HRDC	Human Resources Development Canada
ICCS	International Council for Canadian Studies
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
WUSC	World University Service of Canada

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

Over the past two and a half decades the flows of foreign students and their impact upon internationalization of universities have become issues in many countries. Participants at the seminar of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on Foreign Students and Internationalization of Higher Education (Ebuchi, 1989) suggested that the flow of foreign students would become a “leading edge” to reform universities. Contributors to this seminar claimed that institutions would transform their goals and philosophy, admission, curriculum, teaching, and administration (Seki, 1989). Universities should be prepared to work with foreign students as “partners in internationalization” (Ebuchi, 1989, p. 237) and respect them as partners.

Despite the increase in demand for international education across the world, Canada has not kept up with other major countries in terms of its ability to attract international students and invest in international education (Coalition, 1998). Canada’s post-secondary international enrolment increased by only 10% from 1993-1994 to 1999-2000. The share of international students to the total university population has decreased from 5.1% to 4.9% since 1981 (Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE), 2001). Canada is also the only country among the main competitors¹ for international students not to have adopted a national approach to international education.

There is a significant body of research literature on academic, social and psychological problems of adaptation of international students, but there is lack of

research on issues related to international students and internationalization of higher education. The benefits that they bring are not well documented; the contributions they make to the teaching, learning and research functions of institutions are often not recognized. The needs and aspirations of the students themselves are not well understood. Indeed, it would be fair to say that international students are “generally held in low esteem by host institutions” (Lulat, 1996, p. 6).

Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

As "international students" are increasingly becoming a public policy issue and a focus of internationalization in Canada, studies providing valuable background and insights on foreign student issues and experiences are needed. The purpose of this study is to gain deeper understanding of experiences of international graduate students at the University of British Columbia (UBC) with respect to their academic and social life, finances and employment as well as their experiences with the student services and perceptions of inclusion in campus community. International students' views about university internationalization will be also examined. Informants were drawn from international graduate students in UBC's Faculty of Education. Data were gathered through individual in-depth interviews and a focus group. The following research questions informed and guided the study:

- What do international students think about their academic and social experiences at UBC?
- What are international students' perceptions of their inclusion in campus community?

¹ In 1999-2000, the other main competitors for international students were United States, United Kingdom,

- What are their experiences with student services, financial aid and employment at UBC?
- What does internationalization mean for international students at UBC?

The experiences of my sample of international students are then compared to findings in the current literature.

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the body of research on experiences of international students in Canada and ultimately North America. International students have often been viewed as a convenient population for examining adaptation problems and attitudinal changes; however, the foreign student experience itself has often been peripheral to the concerns of researchers (Altbach, 1991). Lack of sensitivity on institutional and community levels to what international students are experiencing is considered to be one of the main barriers to their integration (Cunningham, 1991).

The present research provides insights into areas where international students are satisfied and areas where they recommend improvements. The satisfaction of international students is necessary to ensure national and international reputations of institutions and to meet goals of a higher enrolment of international students. A number of studies (Chiza-Muyengwa, 1995; Nebedum-Ezeh, 1997; Appiah-Padi, 1999) examined experiences of mono-ethnic groups of international students. In this study, I interviewed a multinational group of international students, including two from English-speaking countries. In contrast to the majority of studies describing problems of international

Germany, France, Australia, and Japan.

students, the present research also highlights the contributions that these students make to teaching, learning, research, and campus community.

Although many studies have focused on one or several aspects of international students' experiences such as academic or social adjustment at a host institution, this study takes a more complex approach, assessing a range of issues including academic, social, financial, employment, services, community and internationalization. It also goes further to initiate a discussion on what constitutes an international university and what it means to be an international student. By examining the experiences of international students, we can evaluate the extent of the internationalization effort at a particular school. No previous attempt has been made by researchers, administrators and policy makers to find out how international students understand their role in university internationalization. While few authors (Appiah-Padi, 1999; Darling, 1994) have attempted to study the impact of the paradigm of internationalization employed by an academic institution on international students, this study focuses on international students themselves as active participants in their education abroad and internationalizing university community.

The Definition of "International Student"

The CBIE National Reports on International students in Canada define international students (sometimes referred to as foreign students) as students who are neither Canadian citizens nor permanent residents of Canada. International students require student authorizations to study in Canada. A small number will have special ministerial or diplomatic permits. Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC, 2002) gives a more descriptive definition that is also useful. It describes foreign students as people

who require a study permit to study in Canada, unless their program lasts six months or less. Dependents of foreign nationals who are in Canada on diplomatic, consular, official or certain other duties for the United Nations or other intergovernmental bodies of which Canada is a member are exempt from this requirement. Foreign students must be accepted by the educational institution where they intend to study and demonstrate that they are able to pay the fees for the course or program of studies that they intend to pursue. They must be able to financially support themselves and any family members who are with them during their period of study and pass a CIC medical examination. In addition, they must satisfy authorities that they are not inadmissible to Canada; and they will leave Canada at the end of the period that they are allowed to stay.

Until a decade ago, the literature and government documents used the term "foreign students" almost exclusively in reference to the students coming to study to Canada from abroad. Although the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) employed the term "international student" in the end of the 1980s, it is still common to see the term "foreign student" used in the current literature. It is also common to encounter the terms such as "overseas student" (which does not apply to most USA, Mexican and Central American students) and "visa student." While I prefer the term "international student", both terms "international" and "foreign" student are used interchangeably throughout this thesis to preserve authenticity of the referenced documents and studies.

Overview of the Thesis

This first chapter discusses the context of the study, its purposes and significance. Chapter II gives an overview of international student enrolments in Canada and outlines

the rationales for hosting them. Further, it provides a review of international student issues as identified by the CBIE surveys of international students in Canada and individual researchers across North America. It also includes a review of policies concerning international students in Canada including the recent trend of internationalization as pictured in the CBIE and AUCC documents. Chapter III discusses the goals and strategies for internationalization at the University of British Columbia and provides a brief analysis of international student enrolment trends at UBC over the past decade. Chapter IV describes the sample, data collection and research design. Chapter V presents the findings from interview sessions and the focus group. The last chapter discusses findings, recommendations, suggestions for further research, and conclusions.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

A Portrait of International Students in Canada: 1980-2000

From the beginnings of the Middle Ages, universities across the world have attracted foreign students and scholars to their communities. Nowadays “the tradition of the wandering scholar remains very much alive” (Huxur, Mansfield, Nnazor, Schuetze & Segawa, 1996, p. 2). In the mid-1990s, an estimated 1.5 million students worldwide attended universities outside their home countries (CBIE, 1997).

Students from overseas began arriving in Canada in significant numbers only after World War II. Until Canadian higher education was well established, Canadians often had to study in the United States and Europe. Over the past 20 years, there have been wide fluctuations in international student enrolment at Canadian universities. The number of both undergraduate and graduate students increased steadily in the 1970s, peaking at 36,068 in 1983. The next four years, however, saw enrolment decrease by almost 8,000. Then, between 1988 and 1991, the number went up again to 37,034, before dropping steadily over the next four years. Although in 1996 and 1997, international student enrolment overall increased slightly, graduate student enrolment continued to decrease (AUCC Trends, 2000). Between 1997-98 and 1999-00, international undergraduate enrolment grew almost 34% and international graduate enrolment increased to almost 12% totalling to 42,371 for both groups. The number of international undergraduates was only 10% higher than in 1982-83 while the number of graduate students was almost 81% higher but below the 1991-92 level (Appendix A, Table 1).

The percentage of undergraduate international students compared with the total enrolment increased from 2.4% in 1995-96 to 3.7% in 1999-00 (the same as in 1984-85).

The highest percentage of undergraduate international students in the past twenty years was observed in 1982-83 at 4.3%. The proportion of international Masters students has also risen since 1995-96, from 8.3% to 12% in 1998-99. International Masters students were most prevalent in 1991-92 at 12.8% of all magisterial students. However, the numbers of international doctoral students have decreased since 1990-91 when they constituted 26.3% of total enrolment. Their proportion in 1998-99 was only 18.1% of enrolment, the lowest in the past two decades (CBIE, 2001). Overall, in 1999/00 international students' share of total university enrolment constituted 4.9%, still below the 5.2% benchmark recorded in 1982-83 (Appendix A, Table 2).

In 1998, Asia was the region of origin for the largest proportion of international students in Canadian universities (38%), followed by Europe (25%); North/Central America and the Caribbean totalled 17%. Eleven percent of the latter group came from the United States. China (including Hong Kong), France, Japan and the United States, the top five sender countries, accounted for over 38% of all international students in Canada in 1998-99 (Knight, 2000).

The concentration of international students in different fields of study compared to general student numbers in these fields varies significantly. In 1998-99 the highest concentrations of international students were observed in the Social Sciences (28%), Engineering/Applied Sciences (12.7%) and Mathematical/Physical Sciences (10.2%). Within these fields, international students were enrolled in commerce, economics, computer science, and electrical engineering. International students constituted the smallest share of Fine and Applied Arts (2%) and Education (3.1%). Education and Fine Arts were also fields where women constituted the highest proportion of international

students, at 61.4% and 62.5%, respectively. Engineering/Applied Sciences and Mathematical/Physical Sciences enrolled the lowest percentages of females: 19.7% and 28.9%, respectively. In the Social Sciences, the numbers of female and male international students were approximately equal.

Provincial Enrolments of International Students

In 1998-99, Quebec, British Columbia and Ontario together accounted for almost 80% of international students. These provinces have also had the most significant changes in enrolment over the last decade, with Quebec and British Columbia seeing an increase of 44% and 49% respectively since 1991 and Ontario experiencing a 27% decrease in the same period. In other provinces, international student enrolment has remained relatively stable (Knight, 2000). British Columbia had the highest proportion of international students in Canada, with 6.4%, followed by Quebec and Nova Scotia, with 6.3% and 5.7%, respectively (CBIE, 2001). In absolute numbers, British Columbia with its 4,993 international students was in third place, surpassed by Quebec (14,501) and Ontario (11,707). Despite large numbers of international students in Ontario, their percentage compared to the total university population was only 3.8% putting Ontario on the seventh place behind Saskatchewan. All provinces, except for Manitoba, observed small increases in international students' share of the total university population since 1996-97 (Appendix A, Table 3).

Enrolments of both graduate and undergraduate international students in BC universities stayed relatively constant from 1992 to 1996. In 1997, there was a 30% jump in undergraduate enrolment with increases continuing into 1998 and 1999. In contrast, graduate student enrolment decreased 28% from 1997 to 1999. It is interesting to note

that undergraduate international enrolment on both national and provincial levels went up in 1997 while graduate international enrolment either remained stable or dropped. Overall, undergraduate international student enrolment in BC universities more than doubled in the past decade while international graduate student enrolment increased only by 23%. Despite fluctuations at the graduate level, BC still did better than most other Canadian provinces, observing a steady increase in the total international university enrolment since 1989-90 (Appendix A, Table D).

Institutional Enrolments of International Students

The top twenty universities in international enrolment as percentage of all international students in Canadian universities, in rank order, are McGill, Montreal, Quebec, Toronto, British Columbia, Laval, York, Concordia, Alberta, Ottawa, Western Ontario, Simon Fraser, Calgary, UNB, Victoria, Saskatchewan, Queen's, Manitoba, Carleton, and Dalhousie (CBIE, 2001). The leading five universities, including the University of British Columbia, enrolled approximately 37% of these students in 1999-00. McGill had the largest share at 10.5%, followed by Montreal (8.3%), Quebec (6.6%), Toronto (6.1%) and the University of British Columbia (5.1%).

Rationales for Education of International Students

Policies toward international students should be based on the principles or rationales justifying foreign students' education (Okamoto, 1990). Rationales usually list benefits that international students bring to Canada. As mentioned in all the CBIE reports and studies, no common principles or rationales govern provincial, federal and institutional interests and priorities. Some rationales have also changed over time and

been subject to many discussions and arguments at all levels. There are also differences in rationales for different categories of international students, for example, graduates and undergraduates. Common rationales can be divided into three categories: educational, economic and political.

Canadian educational institutions and their communities are considered to be the main beneficiaries of educational benefits. The findings of the 1987 CBIE survey of Canadian institutions suggested that international students enriched campus life with a cultural diversity that might otherwise not be possible. International students, especially graduate students, contribute to the production and transmission of knowledge whether employed as research and teaching assistants or conducting research for their degrees (CBIE, 1991). Prime Minister Jean Chrétien remarked that "international students bring new ways of thinking to classroom discussions and help give our students a better understanding of the world" (Coalition, 1998, p. 6). The British Columbia Centre for International Education stated that the presence and participation of international students in Canadian classrooms helps to broaden and enhance the education experiences of all students (BCCIE, 2003). Among the most recent reasons mentioned by Canadian institutions for why they want international students are "internationalization" and "enriching diversity" (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), 2001, p. 1). Although historically the advocates of international education have listed educational benefits as a primary justification for education of international students, these benefits are difficult if not impossible to quantify. It presents a challenge for those who try to persuade the Canadian policy makers to take this argument into account when examining expenditures on foreign students.

In the 1990s, the economic benefits associated with hosting international students have attracted special attention and importance. "It is claimed that worldwide the market value is \$30 billion a year for study abroad and \$60 billion for all international education and training products and services. Every US \$7 billion of the international student market creates 100,000 jobs" (Farquhar, 2001, p. 12). A conservative estimate of the total economic impact of international students in Canada was \$1 billion; the multiplier effect brought it to well over \$2 billion (CBIE, 1995). In 1996, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAIT) estimated that international students contributed \$2.7 billion to the Canadian economy, or the equivalent of 21,000 jobs. In British Columbia alone, the economic benefit of international students in all education sectors was estimated as approximately \$443 million (AUCC, 2001).

Canada's reception of foreign students has an impact on its foreign relations. Canada invests in the future by forging economic, diplomatic and cultural links with the international community. In terms of Canada's longer-term interests, international students return to their home countries and become the "future trading partners and decision-makers with an affinity for Canada" (AUCC, 2001, p. 1). International graduates and their families become Canada's "most influential spokespersons" (CBIE, 2001, p. 6). The presence of international students can encourage public interest in the rest of the world. It contributes greatly toward world friendships.

One of the controversial rationales debated in the late seventies and eighties was whether the education of international students should be considered a part of Canada's contribution to foreign aid and development. Prior to the 1970s, reception of foreign students was seen as a "noblesse oblige adjunct of Canada's foreign aid policy"

(Jenkinson, 1996, p. 2). In the 1980s and 1990s, the view on education of international students as a vital part of Canada's development assistance received little attention. The shift to full-cost fee recovery represented a shift in how international students were viewed by Canadian institutions. Canadian universities are now "more likely to seek out a student from a rich Asian country who can pay with hard currency than someone from a poor African nation" (Jenkinson, 1996, p. 31). The language of the documents referring to international students published in the 1990s has also undergone significant changes. The rationales for "hosting", "education" or "acceptance" of international students became the rationales for "recruitment" of international students. Even international students themselves have been viewed as possible recruiters. Satisfied international students are believed to be an "excellent source of new students" (Woolston, 1995, p. 84).

In the 1999 AUCC survey of internationalization at Canadian universities, respondents² were asked to comment on the rationales for recruitment of international students. They hoped that Canadian students would benefit from international students in and out of the classroom. They anticipated opportunities to increase institutions' profile and contacts in target countries, increase enrolment in specific programs, and generate revenue for the institutions. The needs of international students for higher education opportunities ranked very low in importance (Knight, 2000, p. 53). In its brief on Recognizing the Importance of International Students to Canada in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (2001), the AUCC remarked that Canada needed clear goals and rationales for international student recruitment in order to become a competitive player in the international education market. According to Luk (1997), fundamental strategic questions regarding international students, or international student recruitment as it was

framed in the 1990s, remain unclear. How should efforts at educating international students be viewed? Is it to generate additional revenue from foreign sources? Is it to promote Canadian interests abroad? Is it to cultivate mutually rewarding economic, political, scientific and educational relations between Canada and other countries? Is it to provide development assistance to less advantaged regions of the world? Is it to foster academic and cultural exchanges across borders? What are the strengths and weaknesses of Canadian education with regard to each of these objectives? These questions need to be debated at the institutional, provincial and national levels so that priorities can be set and policies made.

International Student Issues

Until the late 1970s, little was known about international students in Canada. Since 1977, the CBIE has conducted three national surveys of international students. In 1977, 794 students from 25 post-secondary institutions participated. The 1988 survey focused solely on full-time international students attending universities and 1487 students participated. The 1999 survey included college as well as university students; 2455 students participated. The key topics included motivations behind the decision to study abroad, reasons for choosing Canada and a particular institution, financial, academic issues, social and personal issues, student services and satisfaction. The 1977 survey also explored the impact of the "study abroad" experience on international students. Both 1988 and 1999 surveys paid surprisingly little attention to academic experiences.

Most academic research done on the subject of international students in North America focuses on issues of socio-cultural and academic adjustment. A number of

² The 1999 AUCC survey was distributed to administrators in 89 member institutions, 72 responded.

studies have examined the relevancy of academic programs to the needs and goals of international students and their countries. Some examined the sources of support available for international students in host institutions and strategies students developed to cope with cross-cultural and academic adjustment. Below I will focus on the findings from national surveys³ conducted by the CBIE as well as the findings from academic studies conducted across North America by individual researchers related to the topics listed above.

The Decision to Study Abroad

In the literature no typical set of motivations characterizes international students. Students seek education not available at home in order to gain broader access to new knowledge, skills, research experience, and contacts (CBIE, 1991). Huxur et al. (1996) found that academic motivations were important. However, other inspirations include family, economic considerations and career-related objectives, often combined with interests in learning about another culture.

In both the 1988 and 1999 surveys, almost 70% of all students cited the quality of Canadian education as the most important reason for coming. The second reason was Canada's reputation as a safe country. Other reasons included Canada as a Commonwealth country, reputation of Canadians as friendly and helpful, natural beauty, and availability of Asian culture. Comparative costs with other countries were not among the top reasons. In 1999, about 60% of all students listed Canada as their first choice, in comparison with only 30% in the 1988 survey. The United States, the United Kingdom

³ The findings from the 1988 and 1999 surveys were very similar so they will be grouped in one category, unless differences have to be pointed out.

and France were cited next. The factors ranked in all the three surveys as most important in selecting an institution included the institution's reputation, the availability of a desired program, prestige of the degree, and educational costs. International students in the UBC Focus Group Project Internationalizing Student Success (PAIR, 2001) named the location of UBC, Vancouver's weather, and less expensive tuition than in the USA among the top reasons for choosing UBC.

Academic Issues

Many studies have found that the number one priority for international students is academic success (Farrokh, 1988; Abadi, 1999). Studies that explore academic aspects of international students' experiences usually focus on the following areas: factors that influence academic success, academic adjustment problems, perceptions of relevance of academic programs to individuals and to their home countries, and satisfaction with academic progress.

A study of academic experiences of six Asian MBA international students at the University of Minnesota's Carlson School of Management found that culture shock, language barriers, and education shock were among key factors affecting the academic experiences (Thornstenson, 2001). According to Mackeben's study (1999) the intensity of international students' experiences is directly influenced by the difference between the sojourners' backgrounds and mainstream host culture. While studying in North American academic institutions, international students encounter foreign values both in and outside of the classroom, transmitted through curricula, textbooks, assignments, grading systems and extracurricular activities. Part of this culture learning includes understanding classroom or seminar protocols in the new learning environment. Farrokh's study (1988)

of 13 international graduate students at UBC revealed that a range of social and personal needs had to be satisfied. To achieve academic success and greater integration, students had to go through the process of self-validation. Self-validation was defined as a manner in which the components of security, support, self-worth, self-acceptance, competence and autonomy, identity and belonging, love, fulfilment and meaning in life were restored, enhanced and reinforced. A number of studies (Ishii, 1997; Thornstenson, 2001) report that adjustment problems decrease with time. There is also some evidence that students from developed countries encounter fewer academic adjustment problems.

Many studies have pointed out that classroom interaction, methods of instruction and relationships between international students and local students in the classroom as well as relationships between international students and faculty members present challenges for these students. Studies on academic adjustment problems found that the largest academic problems foreign students faced were giving oral reports, participating in class discussions, understanding lectures and preparing written reports. Seeking help from professors, and asking questions in the classroom presented additional challenges (Sharma, 1972; Song, 1995). Many international students are more familiar with a highly organized, lecture style of instruction, and closely monitored systematic supervision of their graduate programs. The indirect nature of instruction in many North American graduate seminars can be problematic (Huxur et al., 1996). Asian students from the University of Minnesota in Thornstenson's study (2001) were shocked by the casual rapport between students and professors in the United States as compared to the hierarchy in their home countries. Students found it hard to approach their American professors. Formulating thoughts on the spot and finding the appropriate language to communicate

ideas and questions coherently presented significant challenges for classroom participation. Students also asserted their difficulty with the heavy workload. It was hard to contribute to conversations with Americans, whom they sometimes regarded “as pushy, overly talkative, and impatient” (p. 334). Another learning difficulty is the practice by host academics of grounding concepts with practical examples derived solely from the host environment or culture. International students may also find it difficult to know how to contribute when what they bring to the discussion seems culturally irrelevant. Consequently, the interactive class discussions may work against international students and limit the potential benefits they could bring to domestic students (Huxur et al., 1996).

Whether and to what degree the programs at host institutions should address the specific needs of international students and their countries has been a subject of debate. The 1977 CBIE survey stated that “it was unknown if foreign students were concerned with transferability of their education” (p. 153). Studies conducted in the subsequent years demonstrated that they were. Anifowoshe's assessment (1982) of 82 international graduate students in selected U.S. institutions revealed that nearly 87% rated their skills and competencies as acquired in adult education programs as appropriate while 93% perceived them as adequate. Cadieux 's investigation (1984) of selected Korean students at Michigan State University recommended adjustments to make academic programs in education more relevant to the needs of international students. International students in the UBC Focus Group Project (2001) were frustrated with classes “geared towards Canadian information instead of being cross-cultural” (p. 13).

Despite certain academic challenges, international students consistently report high levels of satisfaction with their programs of studies. The latest CBIE survey (1999) revealed that 88% of international students rated their academic programs as good or excellent, helping to make them become more educated persons, and 53% said their studies would enable them to contribute to the advancement of their countries.

Social and Personal Issues

Many investigators have found a strong positive correlation among the academic, personal, and social issues of international students. This correlation is particularly evident for students who speak English as a foreign language. A number of studies (CBIE, 1989; Garrod & Davis, 1999; PAIR, 2001) indicate that international students lack opportunities to know Canadians. In the 1977 survey, 23% of foreign students reported no close Canadian friends. In both 1988 and 1999 surveys, a total of 41% of international students reported no or very little success making friends with Canadians. Nebedum-Ezeh's (1997) study of ten African students at institutions of higher education in Western Massachusetts revealed that African students felt isolated and disconnected from domestic counterparts. Many essays in Crossing Customs by Garrod & Davis (1999) suggested that the easiest and strongest community for international students is that of international students themselves.

Many reports (de Vrie & Richer 1988; Cunningham, 1991) indicate loneliness and isolation. Ishii's study (1997) of five international graduate students at UBC found overwhelming feelings of nervousness, fear, loneliness, feelings of inadequacy, and invisibility. Such feelings were reinforced by comparison with Canadians. Canadians were used to expressing themselves in the classroom, acting dominant, sounding

competent and talking a lot in class and during the breaks. International students in Ishii's study (1997) talked about feeling small and losing self-confidence. Some even felt shame and depression. They also talked about financial pressure, stress and isolation from the rest of campus community. They mentioned the lack of meaningful relationships. Ishii (1997) observed that some of the participants shifted their priorities as a result: from academic success to survival and struggle to feel "normal" just as "Canadians." International students reported that loneliness and cultural displacement undercut self-confidence as they felt detachment from both their home and host countries (Garrod & Davis, 1999).

Administrators⁴ who responded to Cunningham's survey of 53 Canadian universities (1991) indicated two categories of barriers to integration: barriers related to international students themselves and barriers related to the institutional community. Most survey respondents depicted international students as "shunning integration." Because of language, many of them felt reluctant to approach Canadian students. Their lack of familiarity with the educational and social systems was listed as a barrier. They tended to stick to co-nationals. International students placed so much importance on academic achievement that many spent little time on social activities. Financial pressures hindered some international students from joining in social gatherings and parties. Lack of cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity among all university constituents and the local community was listed as a barrier. Canadian students were identified as an obstacle to integration. Respondents pointed to apathy and lack of interest by the majority of Canadian students. Another barrier was lack of institutional support. One respondent noted that unless international students demanded more, they would continue to be poorly

served. Other problems listed included community discrimination against international students: "they are here to take away our jobs", "they don't require any special consideration because they choose to come here" and "they cost the Canadian public dollars."

International students in the UBC Focus Group Project (PAIR, 2001) mentioned cultural differences with respect to social boundaries and intimacy. A number of studies (Gallagher, 1993; Mackeben, 1999) identified a lack of a host language proficiency as one of the obstacles for integration of international students. However, the CBIE (1999) blamed certain Canadian public policies for taking away the opportunity from international students to contribute to the local community. Restrictions on off-campus employment and volunteer opportunities undermined social integration of international students.

Sources of Support and Coping Strategies

A number of studies have identified key sources of academic and social support. These two kinds of support are often interrelated. Cadieux's investigation of six Korean students enrolled at Michigan State University (1984) highlighted the importance of the academic advisor for the international student. The AUCC study of eight Canadian universities (1998) also revealed that "faculty resources were a critical element in the capacity of a university to absorb and serve international students, in particular international graduate students where student supervision is key" (p. 6). However, faculty expressed frustration that they could not always afford extra time and attention. Ishii's study (1997) found that in addition to faculty attitudes, faculty support, encouragement

⁴ These administrators included the international student advisors and the heads of international offices.

and support from Canadian classmates and other international students were crucial. Although few studies have provided examples of meaningful relationships with host nationals, where such relationships emerge, they became “crucial to the international student's experience of a host culture” (Kauffmann, Martin & Weaver, 1992, p.109). Coping strategies students cited in Ishii's study (1997) included sharing more with others, focusing on positives, collecting information, networking and taking a pro-active approach. Nebedum-Ezeh's investigation (1997) of African students revealed that coping strategies included studying harder to overcome academic problems, risk taking and seeking help from faculty, fellow Africans and other foreign students and even strangers. Studies on international students consistently show that co-nationals and other international students present the main sources of support for international students.

Financial Issues

Despite common assumption that foreign students come from wealthy backgrounds, their sources of support and spending habits vary as much as their backgrounds. In 1999, only 1% of students reported coming from wealthy families. Sixty-two percent came from families of “average” wealth compared to 64% in 1988, about 8% rated their families as less wealthy than the average family in their country, and 1% said their families were among the poorest in the country.

In all the three CBIE surveys of international students in Canada (1977, 1988, 1999) about 60% of all foreign students cited their families as the most important source of support. In 1977, personal savings were the second most important source for 17% of the foreign students. In 1988, 22% of students identified personal savings as a second most important source and 38% cited it in 1999. By comparison, the top sources of

funding for international students in the U.S. are also personal and family savings. However, while at the undergraduate level, personal and family savings constitute about 80%, on the graduate level, they are only 52%. U.S. colleges and universities were named the second largest source of funding for international students with 38% on the graduate level and 9% on the undergraduate level (Garrod & Davis, 1999). The level of financial support offered by the university was a very important factor for 20% in the 1988 CBIE survey and for 24% in 1999. The availability of financial support was rated as very important by 48% of graduate students compared to 22% of undergraduates.

Financial problems were the most frequently reported problems in 1988 and 1999 surveys. Nearly 52% of all students reported problems with obtaining money for living expenses and 48% reported problems obtaining money for tuition. Students from Europe reported the lowest rates of problems obtaining money for tuition while students from Asia and South America/Oceania reported the highest rates.

Student Services

Prior to 1950, international students in Canada did not encounter any special services or staff on campus dedicated to their needs. The first efforts to assist them were initiated by student clubs and community associations⁵ on a voluntary basis. References and recommendations regarding improvement of services occur in the documents published by the CBIE over the past two and a half decades. But the questions of how to respond to specific academic interests and social/cultural adjustment needs of foreign

⁵ Among these early organizations advocating for recognition of the needs of overseas students were UFT Student Christian Movement (1949), Friendly Relations with Overseas Students (1950) and the Canadian Service for Overseas Students and Trainees (1966). In 1970, this last organization changed its name to the Canadian Bureau for International Education (Cunningham, 1991).

students started to receive special attention only in the 1990s when the emphasis was placed on increased recruitment.

The issue of service provision to international students is a complicated one. The international student population is not monolithic and varies in terms of its expectations, goals and needs. The literature review shows no agreement on whether the needs of international students can be better served within general or specialized student services. There is no agreement on what kind of services should be provided. There is no clarity on whether international student services should be centralized or decentralized. Fifty percent of respondents to the 1999 AUCC internationalization survey of Canadian universities indicated that international student services were integrated in the unit responsible for domestic students; 32% said these services were separate and another 18% reported some services were separate and some integrated. It is also unknown whether services are most important at first registration or throughout programmes. The range and quality of services varies from excellent for students in certain programs to far from adequate for others (AUCC, 1998). The degree of attention to service provision to international students varies across institutions. Only 21% of campuses surveyed by Cunningham (1991) indicated they had an on-campus housing policy for international students. Most campuses allocated housing to international on the same basis as Canadian students. Fifty-nine percent of administrators (international student advisors and the heads of international offices) who responded to Cunningham's survey (1991) indicated that unless there was a problem, their institution did not care about international students.

The provision of quality services to international students is important. The AUCC study (1998) concluded that money spent on ensuring the quality of services to

international students “may be the best possible investment as a recruitment strategy” (p. 5). Many studies confirm that more and improved services enhance experiences and performance. According to Cunningham (1991), appropriate services can also speed up the integration of international students critical to their academic success.

Much work remains to be done in the area of service provision for international students. The 1990-91 CBIE Report pointed out the significance of higher fees:

Students paying high differential fees have a right to expect appropriate services, and we have a responsibility to ensure that they receive the help they need to integrate into the academic and social life of the campus. (p. 2)

But awareness has translated into only a marginal increase in the resources.

All but two respondents to the 1987 CBIE survey agreed that international students required different support services than other students. Woolston (1995), however, argues that the best way to give students a quality experience is to mainstream them into regular programs and services. She stated that “students from abroad do not come to our institutions to be ‘international students’ - they come to get U.S. education, to be professionally trained, to get a fully rounded social experience” (p. 82), which can be best provided by mainstreaming. According to Woolston (1995), unique services should be limited to the following areas: international admissions and student offices (orientation), immigration counselling, and English language institutes. International student needs should be considered within all academic, student, and administrative units. According to Cunningham (1991), international student services should be broader than admission, orientation, counselling and language support. Student services have to facilitate meaningful relationships between international students and Canadian students and among various groups of international students, encourage the development of

meaningful relationships between international students and the community, as well as encourage international students to express their needs and concerns to appropriate authorities on campus. Part of the service provision to international students also relates to sensitizing and educating the campus community (CBIE, 1991).

Studies on international students suggest that the network of general and specialized student services is either unknown or under-utilized (Cunningham, 1991; Nebedum-Ezeh, 1997; Walker, 1999). In all the three CBIE surveys (1977, 1988, 1999) about 25% took advantage of the various counselling services but only 6% used the student financial aid services and only 16% reported using career services. The 1988 survey revealed that 35% of participating students had never heard of the services offered by international student centres, another 40% found them inadequate and 54% of those who knew about them had not used them in the previous year.

Researchers have identified factors affecting the use of student services by international students. These include students' cultural and economic backgrounds, availability of information about services, and students' level of study. Two thirds of administrators who responded to Cunningham's survey (1991) agreed that integration is more difficult for students from the least-developed countries. These students are more likely than students from developed countries to use support services. Flum (1998) found that in particular, Asian international college students believed their parents would react negatively to news that they had sought out psychological services (as cited in Walker, 1999). Ishii's study (1997) revealed that participants were either uninformed about support services or generally not used to seeking help.

Language proficiency is one of the most significant determinants of social and academic satisfaction among international students (Huxur et al., 1996). If students lack English proficiency, the benefits of diversity and breadth of knowledge will be lost, and they will find integration difficult (Woolston, 1995). Language competence takes on increased significance at the graduate level. However, different institutions see their responsibility for language support services differently. There is no agreement on whether international students who are academically qualified but lack language skills should be provided with additional language training upon acceptance or should be rejected. There is a debate around who should bear the costs of providing extra language support: the student or the institution. According to Woolston (1995), for international students whose English is weak on arrival, further training in English is necessary at the start of their academic programs. If an institution does not have a full-service English acquisition program, applicants not fully proficient in English must be rejected. The AUCC study (1998) found that some institutions placed the responsibility for language competence solely on students; others provided access to appropriate language training if required. The AUCC study also highlighted an increasing debate on the validity of using TOEFL scores as admission requirements. Several institutions have started reconsidering their measure of competence.

The Impact of Study Abroad Experience

The experience of studying in a foreign country has a differential effect on students. For some who perceive each new challenge not as a chance for growth but rather as proof of failure, education abroad can be difficult and disappointing. For others, it presents opportunities for new growth. Kauffmann et al. (1992) wrote that personal

development stimulated as a result of study abroad makes a direct impact on students' academic achievements. New horizons open up. Study abroad allows students a new system of education, a new approach to learning, a new set of values and lifestyles, new stimuli for intellectual achievement and personal development, and new criteria for success. It may also result in a changed perception of one's home country, leading to more critical attitudes, more positive attitudes, or both. Moreover "when students grow intellectually and gain a new understanding of the world, they discover that they are changed people" (p. 92). Among the perceived changes, students list independence, maturity, increased social ease and enhanced self-esteem. They begin to relate differently to others and think about themselves and their futures in new ways. Kauffmann et al. (1992) explain that because study abroad experience releases the students from their present peer group and frees them to recompose their criteria for their friendships, it can free them to ask new questions, try new interests, and form new conceptions of life. Garrod & Davis (1999) suggest that the "struggle of identity" (p. 250) may emerge as a by-product of their educational and cultural experience. Constant negotiation among cultures, languages, belief systems and external expectations offers the greatest growth potential for international students.

Satisfaction with Experiences

In all the three CBIE surveys (1977, 1988, 1999), about 90% of students felt they had made either an excellent or a good decision to come to Canada. They listed valuable education, learning about a foreign country, new opportunities and personal development as key. Song's study (1995) of female international students enrolled at the University of New Brunswick found that 90% of these women enjoyed their lives and studies in spite

of their difficulties related to lack of English proficiency, participation in class discussions, and developing relationships.

Other Issues

Few studies have touched upon the impact of international students on a host institution and the relevance of international student experiences to international education policies. Shabahang (1993) surveyed perceptions of American students, faculty, and administrators on the educational and cultural impact of international students on three community colleges in Washington metropolitan area. The three respondent groups agreed that international students enrich the curriculum, stimulate the learning environment, and positively affect the teaching style of the faculty members. The groups further agreed that international students increase understanding of cultural differences and similarities, provide cultural diversity and international experience for the academic community, and heighten knowledge and respect for foreign cultures.

In contrast, the findings from Appiah-Padi's study (1999) of ten international graduate students from sub-Saharan Africa enrolled at the University of Alberta showed the paradigm of internationalization employed by the university did not influence the curriculum at that institution or attitudes toward international students. Class discussions focused on Canadian models of education. The students felt lost in the discussions and nobody noticed their presence.

Policy Issues

For the past two and a half decades, the advocates for international education, mainly the CBIE and AUCC, have made numerous attempts to draw government's

attention to the establishment of a foreign student policy in Canada. These attempts have been unsuccessful. Policy decisions in relation to foreign students in Canada at the national level have been limited to regulations concerning admission quotas, fees, funding and employment restrictions.

Differential Fees

As the number of international students, especially from Asia increased, Canadian public and governments became concerned, assuming the displacement of Canadians as well as a significant public burden. From 1976 to 1979, Ontario, Alberta, Quebec and the Maritime provinces (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island) introduced differential fees to control their foreign student population. Governments justified increases by saying that they felt foreign students should be making a larger contribution to the cost of their own education, since neither they nor their parents made a substantial contribution to the provincial treasury through taxes. By the end of the 1970s, only British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Newfoundland had not imposed differential tuition fees. Effective in 1984, however, the administrations of the University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University and the University of Victoria introduced differential fees. In 1990-91, only Memorial University of Newfoundland, the University of Manitoba and the University of Saskatchewan did not charge differential fees. At present, many universities charge international students full-cost tuition for all or some programs. The fees range from \$30,000 in Medicine and Dentistry to \$5,500- \$15,000 in Arts and Education (CBIE, 2001).

Funding Restrictions

In 1988-89, less than 16% of international students in Canada, the majority coming from developing countries, were estimated to have received some form of Canadian government assistance (CBIE, 1989). Less than 1% received substantial assistance to cover both tuition and living costs. The federal investment in this area declined considerably through the 1990s. In 1992-93, the federal investment by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) and Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) was \$26.1 million. In 1997-98, it was only \$20.3 million. At the provincial government level, six of the 10 provinces offered no international scholarship funding (CBIE, 1997). The AUCC case study of eight Canadian universities (1998) determined that approaches to fees and funding available for international graduate students varied depending on the flexibility of provincial regulations and the strategy of individual institutions. Strategies ranged from full cost recovery, through reduced fee structures and major efforts to fund international graduate students, to strategic decisions to reduce support. Government and institutional scholarship support was deemed inadequate by all case-study institutions. Institutions were concerned that key federal departments, in particular CIDA and the DFAIT, reduced support to scholarship programs. The CBIE (2001) remarked that only about 1.7% of all international university students were supported to some extent with CIDA funds in 1999-2000.

Employment Restrictions

The Immigration Act of 1978 restricted the ability of foreign students to work. Neither full-time nor summer nor part-time employment during the academic year, nor

even casual work such as baby-sitting was allowed unless students had work permits⁶. Restrictions also applied to dependants. An exception was made for foreign students for whom employment was an integral part of their studies and graduate students who held assistantships. The number of students affected was not large because many foreign students, particularly from Europe and the United States, returned home or took courses during the summer (Max von Zur-Muehlen, 1977, p. 76). However, students from Africa, Asia, and parts of Europe could not easily return home. The new 1988 policy allowed international students to work on campus during the period of their studies and off-campus in the field of their study for up to one year after graduation. With very few exceptions, jobs on campus available to international students were limited in number and in scope (CBIE, 1989). The majority was in service areas. Only a small number would offer students valuable practical experience in the area of study. Besides, the students still needed employment authorizations for each part-time job on campus. A positive factor was that spouses were allowed to work. In later years, the requirement for employment authorizations for on-campus jobs was abolished.

In June 2000, the AUCC jointly with the Canadian Education Centre Network (CECN) published a report examining foreign student authorization policies and practices of Canada, the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and France - key countries active in international education market. Except for Canada, these countries⁷ have allowed students to work up to 20 hours per week on or off-campus during the term and without restriction during holidays. The AUCC/CECN Report stated that Canada was the only country that did not provide any part-time off-campus employment opportunities

⁶ Work permits are issued only when no qualified Canadians are available for the job.

during the term or holidays for international students. However, Canada and the United States are the only countries to provide post-graduation practical training provisions for international students (AUCC, 2000). In March 2001, the AUCC submitted a brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) with recommendations to allow international students to work part-time off-campus. However, the final version of the Bill (June 28, 2002) does not change the conditions of employment for international students.

Restrictions on international students started to take effect in Canada in the end of the 1970s. The CBIE pointed out that only public ignorance explained the assumption that foreigners were displacing Canadian students:

Across the country, it is fair to say that they are simply picking up the slack in the Canadian system, and there is no evidence that their presence generally puts pressure on it. In fact, with the numbers of Canadian students decreasing because of demographic changes, one could argue that foreign students are needed to fill empty places and to maintain employment at the post-secondary level. (CBIE, 1977, p. 7)

The CBIE's statement "A Question of Self-interest" (1977) emphasized that foreign student policies should first reflect Canada's self-interest, since the primary responsibility of Canadian governments is to Canadians. It was critical that governments act in ways consistent with intelligent, long-term self-interest rather than short-term political gain.

The CBIE Report "Right Mix" (1981) argued that the moves undertaken by governments and institutions regarding foreign students were short sighted and not in the best interests of Canadians. The governments and the Canadian public either did not recognize the advantages of foreign students, or felt they were paying too much to support them. The CBIE reports for the past two and a half decades demonstrate that restrictive policies had

⁷ New Zealand has allowed international students to work 15 hours per week off campus during school

a detrimental impact on international student enrolments. While Canada's post-secondary international enrolments increased only by 10% from 1993-94 to 1999-2000, their numbers for the same period of time increased 14% in the United States, 119% in the UK and 150% in Australia (CBIE, 2001). According to the CBIE reports, the policies also affected the composition of international students body, which became "increasingly limited to upper or middle class students coming from countries with strong economies" (CBIE, 2001, p. 5-6). Thirty-eight percent of international university students in Canada came from Asia and 10% came from the United States (CBIE, 2001).

International Students and Internationalization

The needs of international students and the quality of their experiences received very little attention in the policy decisions of the 1970s and 1980s. The end of 1980s and the beginning of 1990s symbolized the beginning of new era for international education. "Internationalization" became a topic of debate in many countries including Canada. The federal government started to give particular emphasis to education and innovation as engines of prosperity, on improving the employment prospects of young people, on trade promotions and projecting Canadian culture and values overseas. Educational internationalization was believed to advance these goals. Universities began to include strategies for internationalization in their mission statements. Internationalization of Canadian universities has been the focus of three surveys⁸ undertaken by the AUCC over the past 10 years (1991, 1993 and 1999). The report of the latest survey remarked that

term.

⁸ The three AUCC surveys were distributed to senior administrators in 89 member institutions. Seventy-one responded in 1991; 65 in 1993 and 82 responded in 1999.

movement from an ad hoc to a strategic approach to internationalization was evident⁹ in Canadian institutions (Knight, 2000).

Educational internationalization is often interchangeably used with other terms in the field such as international education¹⁰ and globalization.¹¹ At the OECD Seminar in Hiroshima, Japan, internationalization was defined as a process of bringing international dimensions to institutional programs to offer graduates skills for better employment in a competitive world (Ebuchi, 1989). Emphasis is placed on the development of internationally compatible programs broadly applicable to students from all backgrounds and countries. The AUCC (1995) further suggested a substantially broader definition. It defined internationalization as a process that transforms teaching, learning, research and service aspects of the university and encourages recognition of contributions made by all members of university community into this process.

In respect to international students, the principal focus of internationalization in many countries including Canada has been recruitment. BC has been the pioneer province in marketing Canadian education abroad¹². Active recruitment of high fee-paying international students, particularly from Pacific Rim countries, has been among the most important activities of BC organizations promoting international education.

Nelles (2000) argued that as a result of such initiatives many Canadian and especially BC

⁹ In 1991, sixty-three percent of respondents reported references to an international role in their mission statements. In 1999, 84% of the institutions reported internationalization as part of their university-wide strategy or long-term planning document, an increase of 17% from 1993. Thirty-six percent had an institution-wide internationalization plan and another 43% indicated it was being developed (Knight, 2000).

¹⁰ International education concepts date to at least seventeenth-century Europe, largely implying "peace education" as a means to prevent conflict, facilitate international understanding and promote international co-operation (Nelles, 2000).

¹¹ "Globalization" refers to an increased process of global economic integration reflected through new trade agreements, stronger power and concentration of multinational corporations, closer media linkages; easier global movement of labour, and freer-flow of capital and ideas across borders (Nelles, 2000).

post-secondary institutions have been driven more by "Asianization" than "internationalization" (p. 8).

The respondents to the 1999 AUCC survey of internationalization at Canadian universities listed outcomes related to international students among the top three areas of most tangible results of internationalization. Expanded recruitment initiatives, growing enrolment numbers, and increased revenue were mentioned most frequently. No international student outcomes mentioned by the respondents focused on the contribution they could make to the internationalization of the teaching/learning process or to scholarly activities.

The "recruitment" approach evident in the Canadian international education initiatives for the past decade represents a large shift. Prior to introduction of differential fees, international students came in large numbers and represented little financial incentive for Canadian institutions:

Canada... is not obliged to seek students.... our "problem" is often perceived as one of keeping students out.... Special incentives for foreign students and "selling" ourselves abroad are not ideas common to the Canadian educational establishment. (CBIE, 1977, p. 5)

When "selling" Canadian education abroad did not present a profit for Canada, there was little interest in internationalization as well. Despite the evident commercial drive for internationalization, another paradigm of internationalization cannot be ignored. This view of internationalization includes internationalization of the curriculum, on-line programs, staff and student mobility, and the formation of co-operative links among institutions. This particular view of "internationalization" called for a new perspective on

¹² In 1987, the BC Ministry of Education established an International Education Branch. In 1990, the BC Centre for International Education (BCCIE) was established in Victoria. In 1995, the Canadian Education Centres (CECs) Network was founded in Vancouver.

international students. The Canadian report in the OECD Seminar noted that foreign students were not new markets to fill up excess capacity. Rather, they should be viewed as "full partners in internationalization" and institutions should seek their satisfaction, not their gratitude (Windham, 1989). This approach promised a more creative institutional response to the needs and interests of international students. The report stressed that increased efforts were necessary to foster a receptive community, both on- and off-campus. Following this seminar, the CBIE (1989) recognized that the contributions that foreign students make to the quality of education for all students should be more pronounced.

The CBIE Report (1989) concluded that Canadian institutions had done very little to encourage international students "to contribute to our understanding of what is going on in the world" (p. 14). They should be viewed as resources in the classroom. If they are engaged in a proactive way, they can contribute "the simplest form of internationalization" (CBIE, 2001, p. 1) into education of Canadians. Because international students bring different experiences and perspectives to classrooms, they may force the instructors to reflect more on their teaching (OECD Secretariat, 1989). Institutions should be "making full use of the expertise of international students in teaching and research" (AUCC, 1995, p. 4).

Strengthening the international dimension in curricula should be an important part of academic policy of institutions committed to internationalization (AUCC, 1995). Internationalized course offerings can stimulate students and faculty to become more involved in international activities, challenge conventional views of knowledge, and create a campus environment that accepts and respects a broad range of viewpoints and

experiences. Providing services for international students including assistance with housing, academic and social counselling is another way for institutions to demonstrate their commitment to internationalization (AUCC, 1995). The 1999 AUCC survey has found that one unexpected outcome of internationalization in Canadian institutions was awareness of inadequacy of services (Knight, 2000). Recognition of the inadequacy of financial support for international students was another outcome of internationalization.

The questions of integration of international students are also becoming more acute in the world of competitive and “internationalized” education (Cunningham, 1991). Seventy-eight percent of respondents in Cunningham’s survey agreed that their institution should do more to involve international students in contributing to the life of the campus. The CBIE has called upon educational institutions to build capacity to welcome international students, make them active members on Canadian campuses and provide them with educational experiences that fulfil their needs. Accessibility of higher educational institutions to foreign students should not be measured just in numbers recruited but what happens after students arrive.

Despite the promotion of academic value of internationalization for teaching, learning, research and service aspects of higher educational institutions, the economic dimension with its emphasis on marketing Canadian education abroad and the short-term benefits of income generation raises significant pedagogical, ethical and policy issues. It is too easy to regard international fee income as a tap that can be opened wider whenever a shortfall elsewhere is expected (Humfrey, 1999). Respondents to the 1999 AUCC survey of internationalization at Canadian universities flagged the need to clarify and balance academic and commercial motivations for internationalization. The prevalent

opinion of respondents was that a “national level framework was essential to further the international dimension of teaching and research in universities and enhance the profile of Canada’s higher education sector around the world” (Knight, 2000, p. 89).

Summary

As the review of the policies affecting international students in Canada shows, many regulations have been directed at restricting their access to employment, limiting financial aid, and increasing fees. For the decision-makers, the educational experiences of international students, quality of service provision, language preparation, curriculum internationalization and raising community sensitivity to their issues have been secondary to cost-benefit considerations.

Although international students report high levels of satisfaction with their overall experiences of studying in a foreign country, on this path, many encounter academic, social and financial difficulties. While domestic students also face problems when entering a new academic setting, international students encounter these "normal" problems compounded by new academic challenges, new customs, different living arrangements and styles, new forms and codes of social life and behaviour, unfamiliar food and a foreign language and in many cases, the absence of home and friends (Perrucci & Hu, 1995). International students are in serious need of supportive academic and social relationships in the university and local community. Unfortunately, studies consistently show poor use of student services by this group. Cultural sensitivity training for local students, faculty and staff is not listed as a part of support services on campus. No specific attention is paid to sources of academic support that international students may need. Although several studies highlight the benefits that international students bring

to host campuses, striking evidence in many studies demonstrates a lack of effort by institutions to meet the needs of international students. Few studies connect the experiences of international students with international education policies. No research studies were identified that would examine the views of international students about internationalization.

CHAPTER III: INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND INTERNATIONALIZATION AT UBC

Introduction

The University of British Columbia is Canada's third largest university, with a total enrolment of 39,184 students (for the 2002/2003-winter session) and 2,595 faculty members.¹³ Currently, more than 3,100 international students from 127 countries study there (UBC, 2003). According to the Student Services web page, international undergraduate students make 4% of the total undergraduate population¹⁴ and international graduate students constitute 17% of the graduate population (UBC, 2002). According to the UBC graduate student survey (PAIR, 2002), 57% of international graduate students at UBC are male. In total, 52% of international graduate students study at the doctoral level. UBC has a long tradition of commitment to international co-operation, with partnership agreements with more than 200 institutions and universities in 48 different countries. Its 147,000 alumni live in 120 different countries, and its Alumni Office has branches in 24 countries including Germany, Hong Kong, India, Norway, Mexico, Singapore, South Korea, United Arab Emirates, UK and the USA.

International Students at UBC

Different offices at UBC have different definitions of international students. All offices agree, however, that an international student is a person who studies in Canada and who is neither Canadian citizen nor permanent resident. The variations in definitions arise with respect to the types of visas. According to the UBC Office of Planning and

¹³ This number includes both full-time and part-time faculty members.

¹⁴ This number includes exchange, visiting, qualifying and unclassified international students.

Institutional Research (PAIR), International House, and the Faculty of Graduate Studies (FOGs) all visa students are considered international regardless of the visa type.

However, the Registrar's office defines an international student as anybody who is on a student authorization (student visa).

Another complexity occurs with the different categories of international students at UBC. There are undergraduate and graduate students doing their entire degrees. There are also exchange, visiting, unclassified, qualifying international students and auditors. Although all categories fall under the PAIR definition of an "international student", not all are referred to as "international students" in UBC documents and websites. The Student Services web pages (2003) make references to "exchange and international students" and "international students and students from the United States" implying that exchange students and students from the USA might not be considered to be international by UBC standards.

International undergraduate enrolment at the University of British Columbia has been on the rise for the past decade while international graduate enrolment has declined. The analysis of the databases on students with student visas compiled by the UBC Office of Planning and Institutional Research (PAIR) shows that international undergraduate student numbers at UBC have risen since 1992, with a slight decrease in 1996. After that, there has been an increase every year: 9% in 1997 compared to 1996; another 14% in 1998; 7% in 1999 and 13% in 2000. The numbers remained unchanged in 2001. Overall, there was a 49% increase in undergraduate student enrolment at UBC from 1996 to 2001/2002 (Table 1).

The numbers of international graduate students have also been on the rise since 1992. However, 1997 seemed to mark the beginning of a decline¹⁵. Numbers of international graduate students dropped 15% in 1997. The trend continued in 1998 with another 9 % decrease and a 2% decrease in 1999. International graduate student enrolments recovered slightly in 2000, growing by 8% in 2001 but still remain significantly lower than a decade ago. There was a 17% decrease in international graduate student numbers at UBC from 1996/97 to 2001/02.

Table 1: Enrolment Trends of Students on Student Visas at UBC, 1992-93 to 2001-02

Year	Undergraduate	Graduate	Total
1992-93	774	1,138 ¹⁶	1,912
1993-94	834	1,166	2,000
1994-95	893	1,196	2,089
1995-96	937	1,173	2,110
1996-97	899	1,213	2,112
1997-98	981	1,030	2,011
1998-99	1,108	933	2,041
1999-00	1,188	913	2,101
2000-01	1,342	988	2,330
2001-02	1,342	1010	2,352

Table 2 shows that the percentages of international undergraduate students at UBC for the past ten years have fluctuated between 3.1% and 4.4%. The percentage of international graduate students dropped from 20.8% of total graduate enrolment in 1992/93 to 15.3% in 2001/02.

¹⁵ In September 1997, differential fees were introduced for international graduate students at UBC.

¹⁶ From 1981 to 1991, the number of international graduate students at UBC more than doubled (Quinn, 1991, p.83).

Table 2: UBC International Student Enrolment as Percentage of Total Headcount, 1992-2001

Year	International Undergraduates: % of Headcount	International Graduates: % of Headcount
1992/93 ¹⁷	3.1	20.8
1993/94	3.3	19.9
1994/95	3.6	20.1
1995/96	3.8	20.5
1996/97	3.4	21.3
1997/98	3.6	18.3
1998/99	3.9	16.4
1999/00 ¹⁸	4.3	16.0
2000/01 ¹⁹	4.4	15.9
2001/02 ²⁰	4.3	15.3

International House data for the past 8 years show that the majority of international students at UBC come from the USA, China, Japan, Hong Kong, UK, Australia, India, Singapore, Germany, Malaysia and Taiwan. PAIR data show that 73% of all international graduate students and 77% of all international undergraduate students at UBC in 1999-2000 came from Asia, USA, Australia and developed European countries. International House data from September 2000 showed the following distribution for UBC international students:

¹⁷ The percentages for 1992-1998 and for 2001 were calculated from student visa numbers and headcount numbers found in PAIR "visa type" database.

¹⁸ The data to calculate the percentage of headcount for 1999 were taken from UBC Facts and Figures 2000. The data included the numbers of degree registrants.

¹⁹ The 2000 data were calculated from UBC Facts and Figures 2001. The data included the numbers of degree registrants.

²⁰ The 2001 data were calculated from the 2001 PAIR student visa database. Headcount of degree registrants was taken from the 2001 PAIR enrolment databases.

Table 3: Places of Origin of International Students at UBC, September 2000

Place of Origin	Percentage of Students %
Asia	51
Africa	3
Central & South America	3
Europe	22
North America	15
Oceania	6

International undergraduate tuition at UBC and tuition for graduate students in professional programs are among the highest in Canada. International students in research-based programs are eligible to receive an International Partial Tuition Scholarship²¹ as long as they are not recipients of external funding.

Until September 2002, International Student Services working under the Office of Vice President Students was the key campus unit responsible for (1) the provision of support services to international students, (2) the management of the social/cultural centre at International House, and (3) the coordination of university-wide student exchange programs. Since that date, International Student Services were decentralized and integrated with other units on campus. However, most essential services for international students are still provided out of International House. Services include pre-departure information, airport reception, orientation, language support services, wellness programs, programs for spouses and family members, re-entry workshops and cultural events. Advising/counselling and peer program services formerly functioning under International

²¹ International students at UBC are eligible for an International Partial Tuition Scholarship of up to \$3,600 applied to assist with their tuition fees if they are registered full-time in masters programs or in fifth or later years of doctoral programs that assess tuition fees of \$7,200 per year. Students are eligible as long as they are not recipients of external scholarships or external funding that pays their tuition (FOGs, 2003).

Student Services have been integrated into a new organizational unit called Student Development.

The comments of international graduate students who responded to the UBC graduate student survey (PAIR, 2002) testify that many are concerned about the higher tuition fees compared to domestic students. They asserted the difficulties finding employment. Twenty percent of international students compared to 15% of domestic students reported loneliness and isolation in their transition to UBC. Sixty-two percent of international graduate students reported satisfaction with their overall UBC experiences compared to 70% of domestic students.

Internationalization at UBC

Trek 2000, UBC's vision statement, sets internationalization as one of its five pillars - a core university value and commitment linking all its varied local, national and global stakeholders. The key rationales behind internationalization at UBC are to ensure international competitiveness of the province and its people and to respond to the changes that have occurred in the research agenda, curriculum, and composition of professional staff and students (UBC, 1996). UBC is uniquely positioned to respond to internationalization, mainly because of its location, performance and international connections. The UBC Internationalization Strategy (2003) called internationalization a key component in "reaching our goal of being Canada's best university" (p. 1). In 1996, the basis of UBC's international strategic plan was to develop more advanced international co-operation focussed on sustainable partnerships. Another priority in terms of commitment to internationalization was to provide opportunities, support and services for exchange students. International students coming to UBC for a degree were not listed

among the 1996 priorities. The three key issues for internationalization at UBC were recruitment, research and resources. UBC will be also "successfully grappling with internationalization" (UBC, 1996, p. 4) by the way in which it welcomes students and faculty from around the world, by the manner in which its curriculum reflects international knowledge and by raising international sensitivity among its community.

International Students as a Component of Internationalization at UBC

The 1989 UBC Task Force on Liaison, Recruitment and Admission of International Undergraduate Students noted that participation of international students was important in enhancing the quality of undergraduate classroom interaction, hence enriching the outcomes of university teaching. The Bridge to the 21st Century: Internationalization at UBC (1996) stated that recruitment of outstanding international graduate students was fundamental for UBC graduate programs. Any significant decline in international graduate student admissions coupled with declines in available research funding could negatively impact UBC's international reputation for research excellence. Trek 2000, UBC's most recent vision statement, lists "increasing the numbers of international students from around the world" (p. 8) as the top and the only strategy of "internationalizing" campus related to international students. The latest UBC Internationalization Strategy (2003) goes further, adding strategies related directly or indirectly to international students. These concern curriculum internationalization, strengthening support services, increasing financial support and developing respect and appreciation of international students. Both Bridge to the 21st Century: Internationalization at UBC (1996) and the UBC Internationalization Strategy (2003)

recommended strengthening the recognition of international alumni and their involvement in recruitment activities and off shore fundraising to support international projects carried out by UBC.

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH DESIGN

Introduction

This chapter outlines the design of the study. It describes the research setting, sampling procedures, data collection instrument used, pilot study, interviewer role, focus group, and issues of participants' anonymity. A description of transcription and data analysis plus a discussion on trustworthiness, reciprocity of research, limitations and my subjective involvement in the study are also included in this chapter.

Research Setting

The site for this study was one department in the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia. In the fall of 2001, the Faculty of Education enrolled 1361 graduate students, 7% were international (PAIR, 2002). International students constituted 16% of doctoral enrolments and 4% of enrolments on the Masters level. Seventy-one percent of all international students enrolled in the Faculty of Education were female. Female students constituted a similar proportion, 72%, to the overall domestic population in the Faculty.

The department where participants studied had a headcount of 395 students in winter term 1, 2001. According to the department records, 9% were international: 57% studied at the Masters level and 66% were female. The department is deeply concerned with issues of social justice and its applications in education. Programs address education both within and outside schools and throughout the life course. The goals guiding the department's decision-making process include diversifying the faculty and students, internationalizing curriculum, incorporating examples and information from a variety of

contexts in instruction, fostering leadership capacity in all students and demonstrating respect and sensitivity to difference in the department's community. Another important goal is providing research opportunities and academic support for students (Departmental Academic Plan, 2002-2007).

Sampling Procedure

I used a purposeful sampling strategy to recruit participants. The participants had to meet the following criteria: they had to hold the status of international students at the time of the study, have spent at least one term in one department at the Faculty of Education at UBC and be physically present in Vancouver at the time of the study. I was an international student in the same department.

A request to conduct the study was submitted to the Ethical Review Committee. Posters were placed on department bulletin boards with invitations for international students to participate. The graduate secretary placed student contact letters in the mailboxes of all international students in the department. The letters explained the purposes of the study, guaranteed anonymity and the right to refuse to participate or withdraw at any time. The letter also noted that participants would be invited to participate in a focus group upon completion of the interview sessions. Consent forms were placed in the mailboxes of all students who agreed to participate. The students were asked to sign consent forms and return them to my department mailbox.

Thirty-five students were identified as international on the department list. Nine students informed me they had changed their status to permanent residents since their admission to UBC, eight replied they were doing research in their home-countries, and three students were new. There were 15 international students physically present in

Vancouver at the time of my study who fit my criteria. Three emailed me that they were too busy preparing theses and one US student said she did not think she was considered an international student by UBC. Ten students agreed to participate. This number and their characteristics reflected the range of international students in this department.

Because I studied in the same department, I knew all my participants prior to the study. I had classes with three and occasionally interacted with the rest during their visits to the department computer lab where I worked as a graduate assistant. Six participants knew each other previously. Another two students were familiar with only one other student but never talked to her in person. However, they were not familiar with each other and nobody except for that one student had seen them before. None of us had socialized as a group.

Data Collection Instrument

This qualitative study utilized a face-to-face in-depth interview technique and a focus group to collect the data. The interviews took a semi-structured and open-ended format. All interviews were conducted in November 2001. The focus group was held in the first week of December 2001. The length of the interviews was approximately 1.5 hour to two hours. The focus group lasted two hours. The interview questions were developed based on the research questions that came out of the literature review and my own experiences at UBC. The interviews were divided into five sections: students' educational and professional backgrounds prior to coming to UBC, motivations behind their decisions to study abroad, experiences at the university, views about internationalization at UBC and student assessments of the future of UBC as an international university. Focus group questions addressed the themes that emerged from

the interview data. Eight out of 10 participants participated in the focus group. Two students were unavailable because of other commitments.

Pilot Study

To test the interview questions, four pilot interviews were conducted with volunteers from three other departments in the Faculty of Education. I sent an email to all graduate students in the Faculty of Education asking for volunteers and four students responded. The pilot interviews took place in October 2001. The students who volunteered for pilot interviews turned out to be as curious about my experiences at UBC as I was curious about theirs. As a result I had to share my experiences on many occasions during the pilot interviews. It also helped us to establish a sense of rapport. The pilot interviews revealed that I needed to clarify the wording used in my interview guide. For example, the students were not clear what I meant by such phrases as “sources of academic support,” “sources of social support,” and “opportunities for student development.” As a result of pilot interviews these phrases were changed into: “people who help with academic questions”, “people you can talk to about personal issues” and “opportunities important to you as an international student at UBC.” Upon completion, the pilot interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed and analyzed for categories and themes.

Interview Context

Participants were interviewed at times and locations convenient for them. Nine interviews took place in the student offices or department meeting rooms. One participant chose to be interviewed at her home while her son was still at school. The focus group

took place at a faculty meeting room. This room was relatively small which helped to bring the participants closer together than in an average classroom. I provided snacks and drinks for the focus group to create a relaxed atmosphere.

Interviewer Role

My primary roles in this study were of an interviewer and a facilitator. An extensive interview guide was a helpful instrument in my interviews, particularly with the students who spoke English as a foreign language. These participants required more prompting than the others to go forward in the reconstruction of their experiences.

Because I was familiar with my participants prior to the study, I recognized that it affected the interviewing relationship in more or less subtle ways. When interviewers and the participants are friends, they may assume that they understand each other. There is a potential danger that "instead of exploring assumptions and seeking clarity about events and experiences, they tend to assume that they know what is being said" (Seidman, 1998, p. 36). I tried to avoid this danger in a number of ways. In cases when I did not understand what an interviewee meant, I asked for clarifications. For example, one interviewee used the word "open" several times when characterizing Canada, Canadians and UBC. It was not clear for me what he meant by the word "open" in each of these cases, so I asked him: "What is *open*?" In responding to my request for clarification, the participant went more deeply into the nature of social and academic environment he encountered and how it was different from his home country. When the participants used generalities, I asked them to give examples of what they meant. For example, one student mentioned that she found it difficult to make friends with Canadian students because they were different. I asked her to give examples of what kind of differences she encountered.

As a result the participant told several insightful stories revealing that people made friends differently in different cultures. Sometimes the interviewees made contradicting statements that I wanted to explore more in depth. In such cases, I jotted my questions down without interrupting the participant's speech and asked my question later when there was a pause in responses. For example, on one occasion, a participant said she did not think of herself as an international student because she did not need any special support. But in response to another question, she described the Latin American seminars she attended as very supportive of her identity of a Latin American student. I pointed out these two phrases to the interviewee later in the interview and asked her to explore why this conflict in her perception of herself as an international student existed. It led the participant to re-examine whether this concept really applied to her.

Sometimes the experiences of the participants connected very much with my own. In one case, both the interviewee and I got too emotional to carry on with the interview and I had to stop the tape for several minutes. When all the 10 interview sessions were completed, I realized that I had learned a great deal more about my participants and their cultures through those interviews than during one to two years of studying with them in the same department.

Focus Group

The focus group method assumes that "an individual's attitudes and beliefs do not form in a vacuum: People often need to listen to others' opinions and understandings in order to form their own" (Marshall, 1999, p. 114). In this study the focus group was used in combination with in-person interviews to enable the participants not only to form their opinions, but also to connect them and contrast them to those of other interviewees.

Focus group questions were directed at encouraging discussion and expression of differing opinions and points of view. This method allowed me to study the participants in an atmosphere more natural and more relaxed than the exposure of a one-to-one interview. Furthermore, as my interviews were largely based on the interview guide, the focus group allowed me to explore any unanticipated issues arising in the discussion that might not have come out in the interview sessions.

Anonymity

To protect the anonymity of participants, their names, age, marital status, name of the program studied and other demographical information were kept on a list separate from interview transcripts. The transcripts included no participant identifiers except for the students' countries of origin. One student requested the name of her home country to be removed. Others considered it to be a valuable piece of information to help the readers understand their experiences. All pieces of data identified by ID numbers were stored and placed in a locked cabinet in my office. Computer data were secured by a password. Only my supervisor and I had access to the data. Pseudonyms were used to refer to the participants throughout the study. All participants chose their own pseudonyms at the end of the interview sessions.

Transcription and Data Analysis

The transcribing process took approximately three months. The fact that participants spoke in nine different accents presented a challenge to the transcription process. Participants also spoke at very different speeds. For example, a two-hour interview with a non-native English speaker resulted in fifteen pages of transcript while

the same length of the interview with a native English speaker resulted in thirty pages. Two hundred pages resulted from all interviews and the focus group session. After the transcription process was completed, the data were sorted and analyzed to establish the emerging themes. A helpful step in this analysis was creating tables with participants' quotes for each of the themes identified. This allowed me to look for consensus and contradiction among responses. It also allowed me to collapse a number of categories in cases where two or more categories had overlapped responses. The transcribed interviews were given to the participants for validation.

Trustworthiness

All research must respond to canons of quality - criteria against which the soundness, or trustworthiness of the project can be evaluated. According to Marshall and Rossman (1999), there are four criteria for determining the trustworthiness of qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

How credible are the findings of the study? By which criteria can we judge them? According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) the goal of credibility is to demonstrate that the inquiry was conducted in such a manner as to ensure that the subject was accurately identified and described. In this study, credibility was established by four means. First, a pilot study was conducted to test and refine the interview questions. Second, the findings include numerous direct observations from the participants. Third, upon completion of transcribing process, all transcripts were mailed to the participants for verification.

Fourth, the findings from the focus group proved consistent with the ones in the interview sessions.

Transferability

How transferable and applicable are the findings to another setting or group of people? Will the findings be useful to others in similar situations and with similar research questions? According to Marshall and Rossman (1999) the burden of demonstrating the applicability of one set of findings to another context rests more with the researcher who would make the transfer than with the original researcher. The findings of this study might be transferable to international graduate students enrolled in other departments at the Faculty of Education or other faculties. They may be particularly relevant to those faculties that serve predominantly part-time domestic students as well as faculties that focus on provincial and national rather than international issues.

Dependability

Can changing conditions in the phenomenon chosen for study affect the findings of the study? "Positivist notions of reliability assume an unchanging universe where inquiry could, quite logically, be replicated" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 194). Contrary to this, the construct of dependability rests on the assumption that the rules governing human life and social interaction are always changing. "There is no solid, unmovable platform upon which to base our understanding of human affairs. They are in constant flux" (Seidman, 1998, p. 19). Under different conditions the design of my study and its findings might well change.

Confirmability

Can another researcher confirm the findings? In other words, confirmability captures whether “the data help confirm the general findings and lead to the implications” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 194). In this study, confirmability is enhanced by two means: using both in-depth interviews and a focus group and by the provision of ample, lengthy quotes from the participants in the description of the findings. I have also kept my memos and personal notes in case another researcher would like to confirm the findings. I have stated clearly my own assumptions and biases in the end of this chapter. I have described my own experience of an international student to uncover my personal subjectivities.

Reciprocity of Research

Qualitative research depends on the generosity and volunteerism of the participants. To prevent the exploitative nature of research, researchers must do their best to make their studies as reciprocally beneficial as possible. The present study achieved a certain level of reciprocity with the participants. Many participants told me that the interview process helped them to better understand their experiences. They started asking themselves questions they have not thought about before. Many participants said that interviews were the greatest opportunity for them to speak up at UBC. One student said that she felt relieved and empowered after the interview. She said that she gained her own voice through that interview. As a researcher, the reciprocity I offered to my participants came through my interest in their experiences, my attending to what they said, and my honouring of their words when presented to larger public in this thesis.

Limitations

The transferability of the findings can be limited by the size and the type of higher education institution where the research has been carried, the particular academic profile of individual departments or faculties, proportion of international students to the general student body, and particular higher education policies.

This study was limited to ten full-time international graduate students in one department at UBC. Consequently, findings may differ from those involving participants in another department, or university or province or country. As all participants belonged to one department, findings might be affected by its environment and procedures. As the majority of participants were familiar to one other, certain homogeneity of views may have incurred. Undergraduate international students, exchange students, students visiting from universities in other countries, unclassified and qualifying students were not participants. Other important constituency groups such as Canadian students, faculty members, staff and university administrators were not polled for their views about internationalization. Also, because I was mainly concerned with the university experiences of international students, I did not probe deeper into other effects of study abroad for them.

Subjective Involvement

This section focuses on the examination of my subjective involvement in the present study. For this purpose, I present some autobiographical facts and describe my study abroad experiences.

From Home to Home

I was born in Russia, grew up and received my first higher education degree in Ukraine, spent a year in the USA as a visiting scholar and 3 years in Canada as an international graduate student at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. I relate to all four countries: Russia, Ukraine, USA and Canada. I relate to them in different ways, at different times and at different places. I continuously question and re-examine my connections with each in search of true belonging, if that is ever possible to achieve. Last summer when I came back to Canada after a visit to Ukraine, a customs officer asked me: "Where will you stay in Vancouver?" I said: "At home." Then she asked me: "And where are you coming from?" I said: "From home." She did not say a word and let me through. I was probably not the first person she met who had more than one home.

Studying at UBC

Because I came to study to Canada without funding, my stay at UBC depended solely on my ability to get another assistantship after the current one was over. For the past three years I have had about 15 different assistantships, combining one or two or three of them at the same time, the longest lasting for seven months. My graduate assistantships provided me with rich learning experiences and opportunities to connect with many faculty members, staff, Canadian and international students. Providing research and administrative support to a number of faculty members and helping students in the computer labs of the Faculty of Education gave me a sense of belonging and usefulness that I lacked in my classes especially in my first term. As the only international student in the classroom of middle class Canadians with full-time jobs as teachers and administrators in the schools of Vancouver's Lower Mainland, it was hard

not to feel marginal. Time went on and my feelings changed. These changes occurred mainly because of the shifts in my understanding of what it meant to be an international among local students and what kind of role I had to play in their classrooms. Without a clear understanding of this, I did not feel comfortable interrupting their seemingly endless enthusiastic discussions in perfect English about their teaching experiences in Canada. I did not see my place in those discussions until I started to view my experiences of an international student as a separate program in itself, a program that I had to study on my own and share with other people around me, both Canadian and international.

One particular event marked a turning point for me at UBC and the beginning of gaining my own voice. I attended a presentation by a department faculty member in Higher Education, Dr. Hans Schuetze, at the seminar of the Centre for Intercultural Language Studies (CILS). He described his study of a group of international graduate students, the challenges they encountered in their studies abroad and the process of integration they went through. It was the first time that I heard about experiences of other international students presented in public and in an academic paper. After the presentation was over, seminar organizers said they did not have time to hear responses from the audience, mainly comprised of international students, but we were all welcome to stay and have snacks and talk to each other. This broke my six months of silence at UBC. I stood up and started telling them how I felt in my classes and why. Many international students came up to me after that speech and said they had the same feelings. After that seminar I never stopped speaking for and about international students. For the past three years I talked about international students at different conferences and seminars, in and after my classes, during department and campus events, and in my latest

role as the Founder and President of International Students' Association of UBC. My interest in this study comes out of my own assumptions and views gained during these years and I outline them below.

Assumptions and Views

I believe international students have at least two key aspects to their experiences at host universities. Both should be attended to and explored in detail. On the one hand they are graduate or undergraduate students and on the other hand they are international students. While the first aspect is well understood, the second remains largely ignored. There is no clear understanding in the university community what it means to be “international students”, and what kind of role they are supposed to play on host campuses. International students are expected to contribute to classes but how can they do it if discussions do not relate to their experiences? They are expected to feel themselves a part of the university community, but how can they do so if they do not know what this community is about and the community itself does not know much about them? How do they gain access to this community? Should they seek it out or should the community reach out for them? Or should it work both ways? A person has to grow into becoming an international student by establishing comparisons and connections between home experiences and what is learnt at a host university, through sharing knowledge with local people, and through socializing with other international and domestic students, faculty, staff and local community members. The success of this experience depends on both the international students themselves and on the support structures and opportunities that host universities put in place to enhance the experiences of international students. For universities, the key concept should be *enhancing* experiences of international students

rather than homogenizing them, marginalizing them, or disregarding altogether. If host universities develop clear visions and strategies how to attend to international students' needs and how to build on their strengths, if they take not just business but human approach to dealing with international student issues, the process of internationalization of universities will be enhanced.

Subjectivity

A researcher's subjectivity is a clear reflection of her or his own complex values, attitudes, beliefs, interests and needs (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). In order to conduct an ethical study, researchers must re-examine who they are and what they bring to research. I have attempted to do so in the story above. The present study is closely related to myself. As I analyzed the stories of my participants, I continuously examined my own experiences and which aspects of their experiences were similar or different. Given the researcher's subjective involvement in constructing social knowledge, it is productive to capitalize on researcher's subjectivity (Glesne & Pershkin, 1992). Taking this approach I view my awareness of my own subjectivity as a strength I bring to the whole research process.

CHAPTER V: FINDINGS FROM THE INTERVIEW SESSIONS AND THE FOCUS GROUP

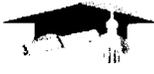
Introduction

The findings are organized in six sections. The first five describe students' educational and employment backgrounds prior to coming to Canada, motivations behind their decisions to study abroad, experiences at the university, views about internationalization at UBC and student assessments of the future of UBC as an international university. When the focus group findings fitted in the interview data, they were presented together. The final section describes additional findings from the focus group.

Participants' Characteristics

The participants in this study were ten international graduate students in one department at the Faculty of Education (See Table 4 for the summary of participants' characteristics). They were enrolled in five different programs. Eight participants were 28 to 35 years of age; two were 35 to 40 years old. They came from nine different countries. Four came from three countries in South-East Asia. Two were from Latin American countries. One was from the Middle East. Another student was from a country in Africa and two students were from English-speaking countries. Eight students had spent three to four terms at UBC. One student had spent one term at UBC and another student two years. Eight students were in the end of their programs and were working on either graduating papers or theses.

Table 4: Participants' Characteristics

Number	Name	Gender	Country	Degree program ²²	Residence	Marital ²³ status
1.	Chien		 China			
2.	Meng		 China			
3.	Kenichi		 Japan			
4.	In-su		 South Korea			
5.	Paola		 Brazil			
6.	Sofia		 Mexico			
7.	Tshepo		 Swaziland			
8.	Sarah		 United Arab Emirates			
9.	Rikki		English-speaking country ²⁴			
10.	Steve		 USA			

²² The picture of a "small cap" is used for Masters students; "large cap" is used for PhD students.

²³ The picture of "wedding rings" means the person is married. Spouses of Meng and Tshepo stayed in their home countries. Meng lived with her son and expected another baby.

²⁴ This student asked me not to identify her country of origin.

Before Coming to UBC

In this part, I explore educational and employment backgrounds of participants. When participants indicated that they had studied abroad before, additional questions were asked to find out the reasons for their decisions to study abroad and impressions they had from these first experiences.

Educational Background

Six participants had either completed Masters degrees before coming to UBC or experienced studying in graduate level programs. Five participants had earned certificates or degrees from abroad. All had studied in English-speaking countries. Two participants who were born in English-speaking countries indicated that English was their only proficient language. Others knew from one to four foreign languages, including English (See Table 5).

Table 5: Participants' Characteristics by Level of Education

Name	Diplomas, certificates, degrees from home country	Diplomas, certificates, degrees from abroad	Languages
Sofia	Bachelors (Mexico)	English Language Institute (Vancouver, Canada)	Spanish, (Italian, some French, English)
Tshepo	College (Swaziland)	Bachelors (Botswana), MA (UK)	Siswati, (Zulu, Xhosa, Ndebele, English)
Paola	Bachelors (Brazil), some post-graduate work (Brazil)	High school (USA)	Portuguese, (Spanish, some French, English)
Kenichi	Bachelors (Tokyo)	No	Japanese, (German, English)
Sarah	Bachelors (United Arab Emirates-USA)	High school (Canada), College (Canada), Bachelors (United Arab Emirates-USA)	Arabic, (English)
Chien	Bachelors (China)	No	Mandarin, (German, English)
Rikki	High school (English-speaking country)	Bachelors (USA), MSc (USA), some PhD work (USA)	English
Steve	Bachelors (USA), some post-graduate work (USA)	No	English
In-su	Bachelors (Korea), MA (Korea)	No	Korean, (English)
Meng	Bachelors (China), MA (China)	No	Mandarin (English)

Previous Study Abroad

The participants who had studied abroad before were asked why they wanted to have that experience. The students cited the following four reasons: fascination with English as a language and as a tool to gain access to good jobs, opportunity to live independently from their families, prestige of North American degrees in other countries and scholarships from an institution or government of the host country.

Sofia: I always liked English, English pop music. You have to know English if you want to get a good job in Mexico.

Sarah: I wanted to learn English. When you go to a job interview at home, the first question is: "How is your English?"

Another interesting factor was involvement of some participants in American schools and universities functioning in their home countries.

Paola: When I went to an American school, I was sixteen and fascinated with the idea of mastering another language, "English" of course, because it seemed to be the most valuable language for a professional future. The other reason that drove me to that school was the opportunity to study in the States as an exchange student for one year. It excited me because many young people in Brazil stay home with their parents until they get married.

Sarah: Quite a few American universities have campuses in UAE²⁵. If you get a degree from the USA or Canada, people look at it better. It's very prestigious.

Rikki went to the States because she had won a basketball scholarship and Tshepo won a scholarship from the Commonwealth Secretariat in London as a citizen of a developing country. All participants had very positive impressions of previous study abroad experiences. The things they remembered most were connections with people, nice climate conditions, beautiful landscape, comfortable accommodation and good resources at the universities where they had studied.

Sofia: I loved that experience and wanted to come back. I really like Vancouver: the mountains, the ocean...

Paola: I still have very strong relationships with my host family in the US. They came to my wedding in Brazil.

Tshepo: I enjoyed it very much. The weather was good in the part of the UK where I was. I had a nice room to myself.

Interestingly, only one student mentioned strong academic programs in explaining why she liked to study in the States. The classes were relevant to her interests and she learned a lot.

²⁵ UAE stands for the United Arab Emirates.

Employment Background and Travel

All participants had extensive experiences working in a variety of educational settings from the school to the state level. Eight participants had travelled abroad before and two of them had worked in the United States for several years (See Table 6).

Table 6: Participants' Work and Travel Abroad History

Name	Work in home country	Work abroad	Travel abroad ²⁶
Sofia	Administrator at a research centre (Mexico)	No	Yes
Tshepo	Teacher, school principal, Ministry of Education employee (Swaziland)	No	Two other countries
Paola	School principal (Brazil)	Business company (Brazil-USA)	Two other countries
Kenichi	Ministry of Education employee (Japan)	No	Yes
Sarah	Ministry of Education employee (United Arab Emirates)	No	Yes
Chien	Faculty member at a university in China	No	No
Rikki	Development officer at a school district, college instructor (USA)	College (USA)	Yes
Steve	School teacher (USA)	No	No
In-su	School teacher (Korea)	No	Yes
Meng	College instructor (China)	No	One other country

In sum, all participants had strong educational and employment backgrounds to prepare them for academic success at UBC. Many thought they had good English skills upon arrival. Steve and Rikki were native speakers of English. Sarah, Paola, Sofia, Rikki and Tshepo had studied in English-speaking countries. Meng was an English teacher in her home country. However, Chien, In-su and Kenichi had never lived in an English

language environment. Also, both Chien and Steve had no experience of living outside their home countries.

UBC- the School of Your Choice

This section explores various paths that led the international students to the University of British Columbia. I asked them why they had decided to study abroad for their current degree, what made them choose Canada, how they learned about UBC, and why they chose the Faculty of Education.

Reasons for Current Study Abroad

Three students who had previously studied in English-speaking countries indicated similar reasons for choosing another program abroad. Both Sofia and Sarah wanted to get better jobs or get a promotion. Tshepo won a Commonwealth scholarship from the Canadian government. He also mentioned that no PhD programs existed in his field at home so he had to go abroad. However, Rikki's decision to do another program abroad was motivated by her interest in developing research skills. Paola's decision this time was motivated by mere family circumstances and legal formalities:

Paola: My husband works for a Canadian company in Brazil and was transferred to Canada for two years. I could not get a work permit as a spouse so the next best thing was to become a student.

Students who came to study independently were guided by complex reasons. They included the desire to learn about the West and its people, the wish to acquire new knowledge in their subjects and concern about the growing North American influence on educational systems in their home countries.

²⁶ I put "yes" in the category of "travel abroad" in cases when students visited more than two countries.

Meng: If I get a foreign degree I will know something different, something more than my colleagues in China. I will broaden my perspective on the world and knowledge of the subject.

In-su: I see that people from Korea who study in North America impact our educational system a lot and force us to adopt certain strategies, philosophies. They become university professors or senior administrators when they come back. I wanted to understand more what these strategies are about and how they are going to change the lives of teachers and students at home.

The fact that many people from their home countries go to North America to study also influenced their decisions.

Chien: My friends in China go to the US and Canada to study. The world becomes more globalized. So it's good for me to learn other cultures, meet people from other countries.

The student from the USA had unique reasons for studying outside of the States:

Steve: In the US there is only one perspective - the US perspective. I wanted to get something different than all Americans get.

International Students Choose Canada

The majority of participants had a choice to study in a number of different countries, but they chose Canada for a variety of reasons. The most commonly cited reason was the image of Canada as a safe country with well-developed economy, good education, free health care, social services and friendly people.

Chien: Chinese media shows a lot of violence happening in the US. Canada is safer than the US. It's one of the major industrial countries in the world.

Sarah: I spent more time in Canada than anywhere else in the world. I think it's a good country and people are great, they made me feel like I was at home.

Another reason provided by the respondents was Canada becoming a more popular destination for foreign students:

In-su: Before many Korean students would just go to the US. I wanted to be different from those who studied in the US.

Kenichi: Many Japanese want to go to the United States or England but I choose Canada.

A few students mentioned that it was not Canada's popularity, but the opposite. Lack of knowledge about Canada in their home countries made them choose it over other countries:

Chien: Canada is sort of a mystery for me.

Kenichi: Japanese people don't know much about Canadian education so I was interested what it is about.

Some students found it more convenient to study in Canada because of particular international agreements. Sofia went to Canada because Mexico was a part of NAFTA²⁷. She hoped that there would be more jobs for the people with knowledge of both countries. Tshepo liked Canada because it was a part of Commonwealth and he had a Commonwealth scholarship. One student in the sample had no interest whatsoever in studying in Canada. It just happened that she got accepted and the program matched her interests.

International Students Choose UBC

The question of how interviewees learned about UBC generated a large variety of answers. However, all of them indicated that UBC is very famous in many countries. Kenichi and Tshepo picked up a prospectus of UBC in their home university libraries,

²⁷ The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was signed in 1992 and governs trade between the U.S., Canada and Mexico. It instituted a schedule for the phasing out of tariffs and eliminated a variety of fees and other hindrances to encourage free trade between the three North American countries.

one located in Japan and the other one- in Swaziland. Sarah met UBC representatives at an educational fair in the United Arab Emirates:

Sarah: Universities from 150 countries come to this fair and UBC is one of them. I went to look at UBC stand and they had this beautiful picture of the Grouse Mountain near the water and I fell in love with that. I looked UBC up on the web later and thought it would be a good place to go.

Steve presented at a conference in Vancouver where he met students and faculty from UBC. And In-su, while a student in Korea, was introduced to a professor who used to be a visiting scholar in Canada and said: "UBC is good." Several students mentioned that they had known about UBC from before because a lot of people from their home countries had immigrated to Canada and lived in Vancouver. They also mentioned geographic proximity of Vancouver to Asia.

In-su: UBC is very famous in Asia. I think it's because there are a lot of Korean people here, they go back to Korea and sometimes they wear UBC T-shirts in the streets and I saw that: UBC in the streets in Korea. So it became familiar to me.

Meng: I have known about Vancouver for a long time because many Chinese people live here. I heard Vancouver has a good climate for Chinese people. It's close to Asia. I was told: "You can just fly directly to Vancouver, don't need to transfer on your way there."

One student came across UBC website, looked at the profile of the Faculty of Education and said: "Ok, I can go there." All participants chose to study at the Faculty of Education because they wanted to learn more. They wished to improve backgrounds in their fields of study, to broaden perspectives on Education, to gain leadership skills and as a result challenge old ways of thinking in their work places upon return to their home countries.

Academic, Professional and Personal Goals

Most students mentioned one major goal they set for themselves at UBC: to get a degree. Masters students were interested in pursuing PhD degrees afterwards. The

students mentioned among other goals learning about Canadian culture, making connections with Canadian educators and exchanging opinions about educational systems in their home countries. Steve added that he wanted to understand himself better and where he was going, get to know people from other cultures and bring home new ideas and issues that he would not have picked up in the USA. One student had no particular goals at the beginning of her program:

Paola: I don't think I ever had a very strong goal about being in a graduate program. I already had a good job in Brazil.

Six students mentioned their goals remained unchanged throughout their studies or changed only slightly. The other students indicated major changes in their plans. For some students changes were disappointing:

In-su: Before coming here I did not know exactly what my program was about. I thought I could become a senior administrator in Korea. But I don't feel my learning here can be useful in Korea. I want more diversified courses but the majority of my classmates want to become administrators in British Columbia. So the department has to serve the majority, not the minority students like me.

Sofia: I am not going to do PhD after finishing my Masters.

However, several students said their programs at UBC opened new horizons for them:

Meng: In the beginning my goal was simple: get a degree. After the first year or sometime later I started thinking: Oh, I like to study. I want to continue to learn more.

Paola: I never planned to do a PhD program. But I developed a wonderful relationship with a professor from one of my classes. So I became really passionate about the subject. Two years ago in Brazil working ten hours a day, six days a week at a school system, I could have never dreamed that I would have an opportunity to do what I am doing now.

In sum, all participants in the study came to UBC through various paths from nine different countries. They came to Canada because they heard it was a good country with

friendly people. They came to UBC for its strong academic reputation. They chose the Faculty of Education because they wanted to learn from Canadian educators, they wanted to share their backgrounds and they hoped to bring positive changes to the educational settings in their home countries upon return.

Your Experiences as an International Student at UBC

In this section, I explore the various aspects of international students' experiences at UBC, including academic experiences, social life, community, student services, finances and employment. In the end of the section the students were asked to define what it meant for them to be international students. The last question asked the participants about their satisfaction.

Academic Experiences

Most students described the academic climate at UBC as very different from their home universities. For the majority, these differences were positive. Students from non-English speaking countries were fascinated with informal relationships between students and professors, freedom to discuss ideas in class, and opportunities to learn from doing research:

Chien: There is more academic freedom here than in a Chinese higher education institution. You don't have to stick to one idea or ideology. It's now changing in China but still not that much as in North America.

Sarah: I like the academic climate here because you get to discuss your ideas in class. At home you just sit in your chair and the teacher will lecture you. There is no interaction between a student and a teacher.

In-su: In my country we don't criticize professors' ideas. Here they respect the professor but they are more equal to the professor, they share the space, share the ideas. I think it's better.

Meng: Here you have to do research for every course so you have to spend a lot of time reading and writing. I think you learn a lot by doing that.

These students appreciated the various opportunities such as workshops and conferences that UBC offered for student professional development. All said that their home universities offered fewer extra-curricular academic activities. They also mentioned the richness of material resources they had discovered at UBC:

Paola: I think the academic climate here is very nurturing, very supportive. What amazes me most is the realm of material resources. When I go to the library, the amount of books I am able to access about Brazil written in English and Portuguese just blows my mind.

Meng: There are more opportunities here than in my university. You can go to different conferences. If you want to go to a lecture or seminar or workshop, it's like everywhere any time. You have to go through a very complicated process to go to a conference from China.

In-su: They have more seminars here than in Korea. They are different from classes and a lot of visiting speakers present so I can compare them with UBC speakers. Korean seminars are big and more formal.

Some students who did their Masters degrees in English-speaking countries thought academic climate at UBC was quite similar to these universities. However, one student was very disappointed by the negative differences she had encountered:

Rikki: There were ten of us in my masters program in the US. We struggled with different theories, figured them out: we worked together. It's more challenging to create an environment here. You have to make yourself involved; otherwise it is very easy to get lost. Nobody is going to track you down, that's for sure.

When describing academic climate, participants talked about relationships between students and faculty in and outside the classes, extra-curricular academic activities and material resources available at the university. However, only a few described their personal experiences with any of these aspects or talked about their own academic work. Therefore, a separate set of questions was asked to encourage participants to talk

personally about their academic activities at UBC. In particular, I asked them about their connections with faculty members. The students who had studied for graduate degrees in English-speaking countries before managed to establish good connections with several faculty members and even worked with them on research projects:

Tshepo: Professors here are quite sociable and approachable. I have had good relationships everywhere.

Rikki: My supervisor and me started to do some really neat things together. I am assisting her with some research and we are writing a paper together.

For others these contacts were rare but very memorable:

In-su: During the first reading break my supervisor invited me to go to her home. She asked me what I needed, if I had any difficulties and she showed me an elementary school. I was really curious what Canadian schools looked like so I was very happy to go there. I think I can never forget that.

Some students explained their difficulties to establish more connections with faculty members by referring to certain language and cultural barriers:

In-su: I watch some Canadian students: they visit professors' offices, they talk with them very easily and they have common things, they joke with each other and they understand each other easily. But as for me I don't know how to make a joke with a professor...what kind of things I can say.

Meng: In China you are not supposed to be chatting with your teachers, administrators and staff, all of them are so high above, you have to respect that because you are a student and they are the people who work in the office. You never call teachers by their first name.

Most students in the study were also unsuccessful in establishing meaningful relationships with their Canadian classmates. First of all, they reported significant differences between Canadian classmates and themselves. All international students studied full-time while most Canadians worked full-time during the day and took one or two classes a term part-time. Five students in the study lived in student residences while their Canadian classmates lived off-campus. In addition, differences in language ability,

cultural behaviour and work experiences in different national contexts, made establishing connections with classmates a challenging and disappointing task for most students

interviewed. However, they had good relationships with other international students:

Sofia: I expected to talk to my classmates after class but they had their own stuff and they left immediately. In one class there were a lot of international students and everybody talked to each other.

In-su: Most classmates I talk to have either some teaching experience in Korea or they have Korean students. But other classmates talk in their group, not with me. I say hello and smile, but they say hello and turn their faces away. In Korea I would not mind, I can talk with other people, I have lots of friends, I am really easy-going, but here I think "ok", but suddenly I feel isolated. I have to find another person. Who? Who?

Meng: I have a few Canadian friends but I cannot meet them. When you meet them, they are always busy. They will say: "Ok, if you need my help, call me or email." But I just feel it's not good to disturb them.

Even the student from the USA found it challenging to have relationships with Canadian classmates but he took pro-active steps to change that:

Steve: In my first two or three classes I did not know anyone and nobody was rushing up to meet me so I had to take the initiative. I would just go up and stick myself in their conversation.

Several students did not mention any differences in their relationships with classmates at UBC and at home. They referred to their classmates as friendly and outgoing. One particular student called her relationships with classmates absolutely wonderful:

Paola: I am developing wonderful relationships with people here. Now I am more devoted to school than in my undergraduate years. I have a chance to establish much more meaningful connections with people and not just on a personal level but in terms of scholarship exchange.

Although all participants were amazed by the amount of extra-curricular academic activities the university offered, few took advantage of them. Some were unclear what was expected of them in terms of participation in seminars, others were uncomfortable to

attend alone and many reported conflicts in their schedules. Another important detail is that none of them shared their concerns with anybody or were asked to do so.

Kenichi: I just attend: just I am there and listen to what other people are talking about. I don't know how I can participate positively.

In-su: I don't want to go alone. I need company because I will feel much better if I go with someone.

However, PhD students took full advantage of the opportunities to attend and even present at seminars and colloquia. These students presented on topics related to their home countries when asked to do so by their professors:

Paola: I presented at a trans-culturalism seminar. There are more Latin American students in trans-culturalism seminars than I have seen anywhere else at the university. We speak of issues that relate directly to Latin America.

Tshepo: The seminars extend discussions that we initiate in classes but have a higher level of interaction because of many faculty members attending. I presented once about the indigenous education in Africa at a department colloquium.

Since a couple of students mentioned learning about opportunities to go to conferences as one of the benefits of academic climate at UBC, a special question was asked whether they were able to participate in any during their studies. One doctoral student from an English-speaking country presented in several conferences and one Masters student had a chance to attend a conference when she was invited to join a group of her classmates. Others did not. Masters students from non-English speaking countries said they needed help in developing their conference proposals and explaining what was involved in the process but they did not ask anybody for help or advice and nobody talked to them.

Meng: I would really like to go to a conference but I need somebody to help me write something for this conference or do like a joint writing. I have ideas but I don't know very well how to develop them. I don't know who can help. I never talked about that with my supervisor.

In-su: I never participated in conferences abroad. I don't know what will happen. I went to a conference in my country but I went with my professor and other classmates. I knew what to expect.

Some students did not go because of time constraints, owing to specific family circumstances and heavy workloads.

Academic Work

The majority of participants described their academic work as challenging and demanding. Non-native English speakers reported difficulties in all aspects of academic work. Improving English was the major challenge these students faced:

Kenichi: I have difficulties reading, writing, speaking- everything.

Chien: English is a barrier for my studies. I spend a lot of time to improve my English. I read more carefully and listen more than talk.

Many of them were also out of school for a number of years so they had to get used to being students again. They also had to get used to the vocabulary specific to the field of Education but previously unfamiliar.

Paola: It's been extremely demanding. It's been a new field for me. I feel like my whole life is on hold. It takes me a long time to come up with a level of work that I want to come up with. Sometimes my classmates say: "Oh, it took me three hours to read the article last night." And I am thinking: "Oh, my god, it took me three days."

Learning academic writing was a priority for these students:

In-su: In the beginning I did not know how to write an essay in English. I could not make a good analysis or critique. I was really a beginner.

Interestingly, the student from the USA discovered that he had also a lot to learn in terms of writing in English:

Steve: I thought I spoke English before I took that class... The professor sent me to get "English fluency" textbook... No matter how hard I tried to improve my writing, it was still not good enough for him.

Several students had no problems with any aspects of their work; if anything it was a challenge that helped them grow. However, all students needed some help with academic questions at one point or another. Masters students listed their advisors among the people who provided them help most often and PhD students named their thesis committees. A few talked to professors from their classes in case they had problems, some received very positive responses but others were not always happy with the feedback provided. They felt the professors were concerned about not treating them differently from other students in class. A few tried to get help from Canadian classmates and were quite happy with their experiences. Other students in the study hesitated to disturb Canadian students but received excellent support from other international students:

Paola: I am thinking of three or four people, Canadian and international students, that I exchange papers all the time, I read their drafts- they read my drafts.

Chien: I could not ask a Canadian classmate: "I need your help. Could you please proof-read my essay?" I did not want to do that because they have no time and most of them work. I asked another international student once. She was a very nice person and talked to me a lot so I felt comfortable asking her for help.

Four students were satisfied with the academic support they had received. Others needed extra help that was unavailable for them. They needed help with academic writing, structuring their essays, shaping their styles, formatting papers in APA style and proof-reading papers:

Meng: We need help with academic writing. Some instructors corrected my mistakes but I don't feel they helped me to improve my writing. When I asked for help, they told me: "Oh, you should hire someone," but I don't think I can afford it.

In-su: I needed something like a practical guide on how to write a paper in the beginning.

Class Participation

Most students were satisfied with the majority of their classes and found them interesting and useful.

Kenichi: The context of the classes was useful to me. I did not know about Canadian education before coming here.

Sarah²⁸: I think it's good for us too to learn about Canadian education system as international students. We are in Canada.

However, several students said they could not benefit much from the courses focused predominantly on Canada or British Columbia. Canadian students and faculty in these courses used a lot of abbreviations and often spoke about cultural phenomena specific to Canadian or British Columbia context that was unfamiliar to international students. Most often these students assumed the roles of listeners and rarely had chances to contribute. In addition, the professors did not try to engage international students in some of these classes:

Sarah: The majority of classes were great but in some classes where the instructors focused on the Canadian context and did not involve international students, I did not learn anything.

Sofia²⁹: They often use examples from the Canadian context, abbreviations. I don't get them so I feel bored. They also take for granted that you know what the Ministry does, what the Minister of Higher Education does. You don't know. I am the kind of person who likes to participate, to debate, but here I can't do that so often.

Meng: In my first term when I joined group discussions I felt like I had nothing to say. Some classmates would say: "Ok, what's the case in your country?" Then I would get a chance to talk. You need time to learn what is going on here and then tell your opinion. You don't know anything about education here in the beginning, so how can you talk about it?

²⁸ From the focus group

²⁹ From the focus group

The other problem that students from non-English speaking countries encountered was the spontaneous nature of these discussions. They had difficulties catching up with the fast changing topics and needed more time to shape their thoughts and phrases in English before speaking up:

Kenichi: Free discussion style is problematic for me. It's very difficult for me as a non-English speaker to break in a fast paced conversation based on the knowledge that only Canadian students have. Sometimes I can't follow the discussion.

In-su: Sometimes I try to find the main idea, some principles at the basis of their discussions, if I find it, I participate, but they change a lot, the topics are here and there, many topics, some topics I have never heard of.

Sarah: Sometimes I am too late to say anything because by the time I decide it is worth saying, everybody is talking about another topic. Perhaps I am afraid to speak because of my language.

They were also hesitant to speak up unless they felt they had something really important to say:

Sarah: If I don't think I can say something valuable in my area, I keep quiet.

Most of them did not take any steps to let the faculty or other students in class know they had problems with language, or understanding cultural context or needed explanations of specific terms. These international students were afraid to look "stupid" and they did not want to disturb other people with their questions:

In-su: In my first term I could not raise my hand and ask: "Hey, what is collective agreement or what is CAPP³⁰?" At first I thought: "CAPP cannot be a "hat." Can it?" But I did not ask and nobody explained. So I kept quiet and thought: "Ok, may be CAPP is a "cap." If I asked, they would say: "Oh, my god, don't you know what is CAPP???" That would really break their conversation. I did not want to make myself look stupid.

³⁰The British Columbia Career and Personal Planning Program (CAPP) was established in 1995. CAPP is unique in Canada in its legislated requirement for work experience and its span across all years from K-12 (BC Ministry of Education, 1998).

However, few others tried to get help from classmates sitting next to them in case they had questions:

Tshepo: I think I have a duty to interrupt and say: "Hang on, what do you mean by this?" I believe it should not be the other people who think for me.

Two PhD students did not have any problems participating in their classes; they had problems keeping quieter. The student from Brazil noted that it was a part of Brazilian culture to be very outspoken.

Paola: Sometimes I monopolize the discussion almost by myself. I have to tell myself: "Wait a minute, you know, other people need some room here."

All students in the study said that their level of comfort in classes depended solely on whether the professors showed any interest in them:

Sarah: If the professor shows interest in what you have to say, you will say it, you will be more than happy to say it.

Several students mentioned they felt more comfortable in the classes where professors invited their opinions and asked them questions about their background:

Sarah: When the professors don't ask international students' opinions, you get an impression that nobody really cares what you think.

Meng: When the instructor asks you to talk about your background, you feel good, you feel: "Ok, I am different. I have something to tell them. They never knew this before. That's my expertise." And when you talk about something that you know- you cannot stop.

A number of students felt more at ease speaking up in the classes that enrolled many international students:

Kenichi: Classes with more international students where professors invited our opinions were more comfortable for me: nobody was dominant.

Sarah³¹: We had a lot of international people in one class. We all talked and discussed our countries' educational systems. And the instructor created a very supportive environment.

One student mentioned that the more she learned about her subject the more comfortable she became. Other students pointed out they would be more comfortable if they heard the professors bring in examples and articles from different cultural contexts, not just English-speaking countries. They would have appreciated more opportunities to compare different educational systems:

Sarah: It will be better if there were some sort of comparisons: "So what are the differences between Canada and international students' countries in terms of their educational systems?"

They wished the instructors maintained more control over class discussions to ensure that they had space to contribute:

Kenichi: In some classes the instructor takes a bigger role and all students take turns so it's easier for me to speak up.

One student suggested that professors needed to include the names of international students' countries when introducing topics to be discussed in class. She also said that eye contact with the professor would make her feel more willing to speak up:

In-su: If a professor tells the class that we will talk about education in BC and in Korea, it means he gives me some room to participate; so I feel like a member of that class. Also, some professors just focus on the speaker or talk to a few persons, but I am like: "Ok, I am an outsider. I don't know why I am staying here."

All participants benefited from the courses that involved international issues:

Kenichi: In one course someone talked about Japanese higher education and all of us asked this person questions or expressed our opinions about it. I liked that course very much.

³¹ From the focus group

Because many students pointed out that they appreciated when the professors invited them to share their backgrounds, a separate question was asked if they actually had opportunities to share. The majority of the students said that their ability to contribute depended on the classes they took:

Chien: In some courses we compare higher education in Canada with other countries but in other courses there are not so many opportunities to compare. I can try to compare after class by myself; it's ok.

Few students said they had enough chances to share but they took pro-active steps to do it: they made space for themselves. One student described herself being ignored in most classes. Nobody expressed interest in her country and it was very hard for her to tell things and explain what she was saying at the same time:

In-su: Many times I am quiet and listen and I am just ignored.... When professors here start talking about Canada, it means they give the power to Canadian students to continue that conversation. But in my case I have to make my own space to say what I need to say and then I have to explain what I said because many people here are not familiar with Korean education and then I have to participate in other discussions.

The majority of students said they wished they had more opportunities to share their experiences in classes. As one summed it up, there was at least one good reason for why they should have done it:

In-su: North American education is not perfect - nothing is perfect in the world. We have to connect with each other and complement each other. Also, they have students from different countries in their classrooms; they would know their students better by hearing from us.

One student said that there were opportunities in the classrooms for people to specify who they were and talk about their backgrounds. But there was never any expansion on what ideas were brought forward:

Steve: When there is a student from Korea in class for example talking about things that are going on in her country and how her ideas have changed because

of the things she came across here, you get exposed to an overwhelming number of ideas from just that one person. Instead of moving on to the next topic, why not take an opportunity to talk more about it as a class, about Korea?

Both Paola and Rikki who had no concerns about their classroom participation were satisfied with the way they contributed to classes and did not feel the need to share more or did not feel like sharing any personal experiences at all:

Rikki: It's funny they make an assumption that you want to share. What if you are uncomfortable doing that?

One student said he had no reason to do any sharing unless he was specifically asked to do so: "Why should I?" Half of the students in the sample said they were encouraged to share their cultural experiences in class by their professors and some of them did not hesitate to step in the discussions themselves:

Paola: I think there is a lot of space to draw from your own background. And what I have found is that people are actually interested in what I am telling about Brazil. Some professors asked me to draw one comparison or another. But I don't sit back and wait for someone to ask me. I step in. I take a very pro-active role in sharing what interests me.

Few students said their classmates were sometimes encouraging and asking them about their countries during small group discussions and one student said she had not been asked specifically to talk about her country but she never really wanted to:

Rikki: I don't think I have ever been asked about my experience from home. But then to me it's not much of a big deal.

A couple of students said their professors or classmates did not encourage them to talk about their cultural experiences but they tried to encourage themselves or found encouragement when other international students spoke up:

In-su: Sometimes I encourage myself. I speak up when I feel unfair or I am interested in something. If there is another international student in class and he or she starts telling her or his experience outside of Canada, I add my experience.

Social Life

Most students spoke negatively about social climate at UBC. They described UBC as a lonely place compared to their home universities. However, some of the negative responses can be explained by the fact that they used their undergraduate experiences as the basis for comparison:

Sofia: When I was an undergraduate student in Mexico, I would take a class and then open the door and take another class. There would be lots of people in the halls who are also changing rooms and they just say: Hi, hi, hello, my name is Galas, my name is...It's meeting people every day, all the day, all the time. Here when you talk to people, they are very friendly and very open, but not until you make the first move.

Other students did not have a formed opinion about social climate at UBC and they preferred to go outside of campus for social activities:

Sarah: I have made some friends from Arab countries. I have few friends from my class. This is my little social community.

One student found social climate conducive for one to learn and live happily. But he still could not compare it to home where he belonged:

Tshepo: At home I am a different person because I am not a foreigner. I have more control over culture, language, and general atmosphere. I am familiar with places. I have more contacts to fall back on. At home I don't have to rely on other people whereas here if I fall sick at midnight, I might have to rely on somebody to find me a doctor. I may not act as quickly as I would at home; my options are limited. They are there but it takes time to explore them.

Participation in Campus Events

In spite of the number of events on campus, many students found it lonely at UBC. I asked them about their participation in the events at the department or on campus, and what they thought about them. The students mentioned they did not have many opportunities to socialize with people at the department. Most students participated in no more than one or two social gatherings. They either did not have time or felt

uncomfortable to leave their family members at home. Others mentioned they tried to participate whenever they could and enjoyed the events very much:

Tshepo: I participated in some department gatherings. They are good ways of meeting people.

Kenichi: I participated once in a Christmas Sharing Program run by some international students at the department. I was invited to a home of one PhD student for Christmas dinner. It was a good chance to get acquainted with Canadian people and see how they lived.

One student discovered that department orientation was a really great way for her to meet and get to know people. However, she questioned its timeliness:

In-su: I really liked September orientation but I came in last January. Why did I have to wait for my orientation for nine months? Why did I have to wonder in confusion for nine months?

Most participants agreed that International House was the only unit on campus that organized social events for international students. However, they managed to participate in just a few trips or welcoming parties throughout their studies. Some thought these events were mostly for undergraduate students, others hesitated to go alone. Only two students said they were active participants in International House events:

Sarah: I went to several trips with International House. That was exciting.

Meng: International House has lots of activities. I went hiking with them. I also went to Christmas and Thanksgiving camps with Intervarsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF). It is a Christian organization that helps international students on campus.

They also heard about events organized by the UBC Graduate Student Society (GSS) but rarely took an opportunity to attend:

In-su: I went to GSS parties because of my friend. If she did not suggest me to go, I think I would never do that. I don't want to go to party alone. And also, party culture is not my culture. So I did not know what I can do at the party, what kind of things happen.

Some never heard of events at GSS or even GSS itself until they were already close to the end of their programs. Two students did not find the time to participate in events either inside or outside the department.

Although few participants enjoyed active social life according to their accounts, all of them appreciated the opportunities they had. They mentioned many reasons why these events were so important for them as international students. They said that these events allowed them to learn more about different cultures on campus and made their lives more enjoyable, but most importantly provided opportunities to build connections with other people and particularly other international students.

Meng: I think it makes your life more colourful. You will not just be a student studying all the time. You will enjoy life in Vancouver. It was really useful for me as an international student to be part of these events because I learned something new and I could meet people.

In-su: I liked meeting other graduate students. It's fun. International students are all separated; they need some connection with each other.

They appreciated group events as it saved them stress of discovering directions on their own:

Meng: I liked to go with International House because if you go by yourself, you don't know how to get there. If you go with a group, you just follow.

And the student from the USA had his unique reason to be willing to be part of social events:

Steve: I wanted to see how international students reacted to me realizing that I am from the US. I wanted to see if the reaction was the same as that of Canadian students in my classes.

Because many students mentioned they lacked company to participate in more social events, a question was asked how they got information about these events. The

majority received information from email messages, bulletin boards and sometimes campus newspapers. These students participated in few or none of the events. One student said she was not receiving any information at all but just got too carried away with her academic work to find out why. The students who reported the highest participation in social events said that much of their information came from friends who either invited them personally or forwarded them emails.

When asked about the barriers the students faced to participation in more social events, several participants mentioned their main problem was lack of time and necessity to move fast through their programs. Others said they would be happy to participate in more events if other students and particularly international students contacted them personally and invited them to attend:

Steve: I wish I could do more things with international students. I wish that someone did some personal contacting, you know, not just email. I get fifty emails a day and I hate going through each one of them. So I just go: click, click, delete.

Chien: If I had more friends who I know very well, I would have probably participated in more social events. They would say: "Oh, you want to go there?" I would say: "Ok, let's go together."

Another student said his problem was lack of information. He was unaware of the events at International House for a whole year as nobody ever mentioned these to him. But even when he finally learned about them, he hesitated to attend because his other problem was expressing himself in English:

Chien: I learned about I House email list only in my second year. Now I get updates on the events there. But I missed a lot of opportunity... One other thing that holds me from participating in social events and affects my academic performance is language. I cannot make myself clear and behave openly because of it.

Making Friends

All participants in the study came to UBC not knowing any people:

Steve: Many international students that I know did not come here with a group of friends, you know, they came here by themselves. You just don't sit around and say: "Hey, let's all go to UBC."

Unfortunately, none reported having made many friends during their studies. The students from non-English speaking countries said that most of their friends were other international students. They also made few friends among Canadians, including immigrants from their home countries:

Kenichi: My friends here are Japanese and Chinese, some Japanese Canadian and one Indian.

Meng: I have two or three Canadian friends, just one of them is a close one; my other friends are international students.

They liked having friends among other international students, most of them never had friends beyond their home countries. It was exciting to meet people from different countries, but they also wished they had more friends among Canadians:

Kenichi³²: I did not have friends other than Japanese before. There are not many foreign people in Japan.

Meng³³: Most of my friends are international students, you need also some Canadian students, yeah, you make friends with them but you don't meet them very often, just in the classroom.

One student said she had little in common with Canadian students unless they lived in Asia for a while. Their interests were different, and above all, their friendship patterns were different. She felt closer to other international students:

In-su: I feel Canadian friends cannot understand me because they don't know what kind of difficulties international students have or their situations. The other thing: we make friends differently. I can show my weaknesses to Korean friends,

³² From the focus group

³³ From the focus group

they show me their weaknesses and then we become friends. But Canadians just share good things. I don't want to share my weaknesses with them so we share very little of our lives. They will say: "Oh, I am sorry, poor you." But when I go with my international friends, they will just say: "Oh, don't worry, I have the same feeling." And when they need help, they ask me for help. And I help.

Other students mentioned that it was easier for them to socialize with people from their home countries because they shared a common language:

Kenichi: I can't explain well my problems in English so I will talk to Japanese people.

Interestingly, the students from English-speaking countries in the study did not attempt or even failed to make friends with other international students. Their friends were Canadian students that they met on campus or off campus. They reported having little in common with students from non-English speaking countries or having been misunderstood in their attempts to establish some sort of connections:

Rikki: Most of my friends are Canadians. I saw one international student from Korea in my department but we don't have any relationship.

Steve: I met a couple of people from Africa and from Asia in some seminars. I tried to invite them to dinner or go for coffee and chat. They just said: I don't have time or may be... May be they did not understand. Whenever I see international students here, they are always by themselves, especially the older ones. I often wonder how lonely these people must be.

However, Steve also mentioned being careful in communication with some Canadians:

Steve: When I was out in the restaurants, people could tell I am from the south of the US just by my accent. And they'll be making jokes about Americans. I never knew that existed! When I went to school, I always heard that Canada was just like the US, I thought people thought the same way and we were all friends and everybody loved each other and everybody loved the United States. But it was just such a naïve concept that I had.

After this situation he became much more careful about "what to say and how to say it."

Community

Many students could not describe the environment for international students at UBC as they rarely spent time outside their department. One student said he did not feel anything special about UBC. Another student said he witnessed only one occasion recognizing the international community on campus. Unfortunately, this was a tragic occasion:

Steve: After September 11th, I saw an email that went to all international students at UBC saying they have services to support us. And I thought how sad that it takes a tragedy like that for the university to step out and say: "Hey, international community, we are here for you."

However, all students could describe the environment for international students at the department:

Sarah: I have not felt anything special except for that one seminar for international students at the department. I felt special because I am an international student and I was there as a member of a special group who had special experiences to share.

Meng³⁴: My first term here was so lonely: I was walking in the building like a stranger. I didn't know anybody. I met the professors: the professors said: "Hi." But I didn't know their names. The longer I stayed the more people I knew and I feel better now.

Others said they did not feel there was any continuing effort on behalf of the department to make them feel welcome:

Steve: I feel that I am treated just like any Canadian student.

Rikki: I don't see any environment: I see people walking through the halls. You have to look out for a club or a church to create a community for yourself.

These students would have really appreciated more opportunities to get connected with each other and department community in general:

³⁴ From the focus group

Steve: I just get this feeling that once you go to graduate school, you are a grown-up now and you should be able to take care of yourself. I don't think that's right. I would have really liked to have somebody call me and say: "You know, we would like to get all international students together, set up some support groups."

Two students described the environment at the department as very welcoming.

Half of the participants said they did not feel included in the department community or felt neither included nor excluded for a number of reasons. The students from non-English speaking countries felt excluded because the curriculum focused mainly on the developed countries, because of their limited ability to communicate in English and because they could not freely socialize with Canadian students and faculty:

Sofia: You are not included in the courses and even most of the literature makes references to the developed countries such as the US, the UK or Sweden.

In-su: The department is a really lonely place, isolated place. Everybody seems so busy: professors, classmates. My advisor and secretaries are very supportive but I still feel a huge gap between the faculty, the community here and me. They go home, I go to residence.

Kenichi: I feel neither included nor excluded. My English has improved so I feel better this year.

The student from the States said he felt included because of the coursework he had done but not because somebody made an effort to make him included. He pointed out that there was not enough understanding of the changes international students like him had to make to their lives in order to come to UBC or why they had to come in the first place:

Steve: I left the place where I had worked for ten years: I sold my house, sold everything in my house, traveled three thousand miles not knowing a soul here. You would hope that somebody would be happy you made the decision to join this campus... I got asked hundreds of times: "Why are you here instead of the US?" It made me feel like I was not supposed to be here.

Other students said they felt very much included in the department community. One student explained she felt included because she was a white English-speaking woman with a job, a car and friends across the border:

Rikki: I have made my space. I work in different positions. I feel as a member of different communities. It's good. People say "hi" when I walk into rooms. I can fit in ok.

Two students felt included because they were active in department seminars and social activities.

Services

In this section the students were asked to name some of the student services they knew on campus and describe their experiences with them. A couple of students did not understand what "student services" meant. And once they received an explanation, they would name a few. The students used very few services available for UBC students. Two students reported having negative experiences with Financial Services and finding on-campus housing. These problems resulted because the students were unfamiliar with certain Canadian practices, for example, what kind of information needs to be entered into the application for residence in graduate student colleges, and because nobody took the time to familiarize them with those practices:

Sarah: I applied to Green College and St John's College but was rejected. They said I did not have any volunteer experience. I had tons of it. But it did not say on the application that they were looking for volunteer work. I wish these kinds of things were made clear for international students so that they don't waste their time and money.

The problems with Financial Services resulted because of the inability of its staff to deal with particular financial situations:

Steve: I was supposed to receive US student loans. And UBC forgot to send my documentation to the distribution office in the US. I did not get my first pay check until December.

Other students appreciated the help received from the services they used. In particular, they benefited from the free tutoring service run by the Writing Centre:

In-su: I go to the tutoring service and they correct my grammar mistakes. I can talk to somebody about my paper; make my ideas more clear.

And none of them reported using counselling services or any other services at any point of time. Students from non-English speaking countries said that although they needed advice on social matters on a number of occasions, they would have never used the help of a counsellor because they were not accustomed to talking to strangers about personal matters:

Chien: I am not used to seeking social help or talking about my personal life with other people. I will deal with them on my own or talk to my wife. I will not talk to people whose work is to do this.

Sarah: I don't know anybody at UBC well enough to discuss personal problems. Whatever happens I have to deal with it on my own or try to get help from people who I trust.

Although the students agreed that they could use all services on campus, many of them felt they also needed specific services to address their needs as international students:

Kenichi: If there are courses or workshops specifically for international students, it is easier for me to attend them. I don't have any doubts about going there.

All students in the study named International House as the key service available for international students on campus. They spoke of International House not just as service, but a community to which they could belong:

In-su: I think I House is very useful for international students. They are not just another service on campus. They are always welcoming, they smile at me and I feel more supported. When I go there, I meet lots of people like me, who do not speak English well; it makes me feel much better. I think: "Oh, another one here!"

However, several students, including the ones from English-speaking countries, had a very vague idea of the role and functions of International House, sometimes not even knowing the correct name for it:

Rikki: I only went to one of those seminars on doing your taxes; it was over at the International Centre, whatever they say, House?

Two students did not step into International House even once. One student found out about International House long after his program began and completely accidentally:

Steve: I did not realize that there was an International House until this summer when I was taking courses and there was a young lady from Korea, and she said something about International House and I said: "What's that?"

Paola: I have not even visited I House, ever. It just seems to me their services are more directed at the students who are being introduced to living abroad. I did not need that.

Several students tried to participate in classes offered by International House in the beginning of their stay but found them more suitable for undergraduates rather than graduate students. Other students said they benefited from ESL classes and other services offered by International House a great deal. In particular, one student appreciated having met other international students through these classes who became her friends:

In-su: I took ESL classes at I House. Some people who I met in that class are still my very good friends. They support me like a family. Sometimes we made our own food; sometimes we went to visit places. If I said something: I have a problem, they say: yeah, me too, me too. Although the people came from all over the world, I still felt they were the same like me.

The students who were least familiar with the services available at UBC were the ones who got their information mostly from emails, postings and brochures around campus. However, the students who used most of the services said that their advisors or other international students recommended them to use those.

Finances

Four participants received full or partial funding from their home governments or the Canadian government. Six other students were self-supported³⁵ and relied on family savings for their funding; five occasionally worked on campus(See Table 7). All independent students received International Partial Tuition Scholarship (IPTS) from UBC. One student had a full-time job in the USA where he commuted on a daily basis and received US student loans in addition to receiving IPTS from UBC.

Table 7: Participants' Main Sources of Financial Support at UBC

Name	UBC	Canadian government	Home government	Other
Tshepo		Full scholarship		
Kenichi			Full scholarship	
Sarah			Full scholarship	Monthly salaries from work at home
In-su	IPTS, on-campus jobs		Partial scholarship	Family savings
Chien	IPTS, work study, on-campus jobs			Family savings
Sofia	IPTS, on-campus jobs			Family savings
Rikki	IPTS, on-campus jobs			Family savings
Meng	IPTS, bursaries, on-campus jobs			Family savings
Steve	IPTS, off-campus job		US loans	Family savings
Paola	IPTS			Family savings

³⁵ They will be referred to as "independent" students further in the study.

All participants who did not have full scholarships to cover their expenses said that funding for international graduate students at UBC was limited. The students who were funded from outside sources did not have a clear idea at all of what funding was available. All independent students received International Partial Tuition Scholarship from UBC. However, two students received permission to participate in a work-study program and one received several bursaries from UBC, although both forms of support are granted to international students in very rare cases. They reported having difficult family circumstances that made them eligible for these forms of funding:

Chien: At first I was refused from work-study program. So I went to talk with the financial services advisor. I said: "My money is almost used up. My wife is here. She cannot find a job: she has no work experience in Canada; she does not speak English well. Please give me a chance." So the person was persuaded.

Meng: They gave me bursary support because I am considered to be a single mum.

Most participants who came to UBC independently said they would not be able to afford studying without International Partial Tuition Scholarship. They could not find good stable jobs on campus; they did not have enough savings and some needed to support their spouses and children. However, two other students said they had the financial ability to cover their expenses during studies and did not count on this scholarship when applying to UBC:

Steve: When the department told me to come and sign for the international scholarship, I said: "Oh, I get that?" And they said: "Yeah, you are not Canadian, right?"

Paola: When I applied to UBC from Brazil, my husband and me were counting that I would pay the full amount of tuition.

The students studying independently considered the amount of tuition they paid high.

They also disagreed with the fact that they had to pay more than domestic students sitting with them in the same classrooms:

Rikki: I don't know why we pay extra money, why do we cost more, what do I get that is extra than makes me cost more? I don't take any courses now. I feel like I am paying for being able to do my graduate assistantship and gain research experience. They pay me - I pay them back.

Sofia: I am tired of doing these small stupid jobs just to pay my tuition. I don't learn anything in these jobs and I am wasting my time and energy. Sometimes I feel like quitting school.

The student from the USA said that although he would have paid twice as much in tuition for a year in the States, he would be paying there only per credit hour while at UBC he had to pay every term whether he was taking classes or not. Participants with sufficient financial support had no arguments against international students paying more than domestic students. On the contrary, they were giving arguments why this was the way it should be:

Tshepo: International students pay the unsubsidized tuition rate in many universities across the world. A Canadian student pays half of what I pay but they will continue to support the university indirectly as taxpayers when you and I are gone.

Only one student with a scholarship said he felt sympathy with other international students who did not have enough funds to cover their costs. A student from an English-speaking country questioned the morality of the fact that international students should pay more than domestic students:

Rikki: To me it's not much money. I don't mind paying extra as long as I can get good stuff. To me it's more of a moral thing: can you say that international students should be supporting your home university?

Employment

Half of the participants did not have to work on campus. Only one said he tried to look for on-campus jobs and others said they did not need to work as they had enough money coming in and had to use their time effectively:

Paola: My husband is financing me. Our time here is limited and my objective is to do as much coursework as possible so that I could finish earlier, get a job and finance myself again.

Five other students had experiences of working from two to five different on-campus jobs during their studies. However, the types of jobs they had and the kinds of remuneration they received were very different. Non-native speakers of English reported difficulties in finding graduate assistantships and ended up working in low paid jobs. All worked because they needed to earn the money to live on:

Chien: I needed money. I tried to tap every source available for students on campus and I was lucky to get three jobs in one term. I worked about 25 hours a week during that term.

Meng: I just earn enough money for food, around \$300-\$400 a month. I tried some better paying jobs like TAs or RAs. I really wanted to have that experience but it was hard to find any. The professors said: "No, we don't have work, not this term, probably next term."

Only one student from a non-English speaking country said her job also provided her with a good learning experience. She liked that she could help other international students at her job:

In-su: I like the library job although I cannot make much money, just five hours per week. But it helps to build my self-esteem a lot. I am the host, I have to participate in staff meetings, talk about my job. I feel like I have become a member of the community. Also, a lot of international students come to the library. It's a wonderful experience to help them. Because lots of international students helped me, it means there will be another international student who I can help.

A student from an English-speaking country was extremely satisfied with her employment experiences at UBC. She had one or two graduate assistantships every term and could cover both her tuition and living expenses from her income. On top of that, she was getting great academic experiences at her jobs:

Rikki: I am a member of research team in one department. We are in the process of collecting data, analyzing it and then hopefully presenting it at a conference and trying to get a paper out of it. I did a book review for my other job and wrote a paper with my advisor. So this is kind of fun.

Several participants who had on-campus jobs found out about them either from the department email list or their pro-tem advisor or postings on bulletin boards or UBC websites. The students who talked to their supervisors or who supervisors talked to found their job seeking experience more productive:

Sofia: It was easy for me because I was direct with my supervisor. I told him: "I did not get any scholarship, so I was wondering if you have any job for me."

In-su: My advisor asked me if I had any financial problems, I said: "Yes," so she told me the department was looking for another TA. I applied and I got it.

Other students who searched for jobs on their own found it very difficult. They felt the employers would not hire them because of their lack of English proficiency and absence of work experience in Canada. If they got any jobs, they described getting them by accident:

Chien: In my first term I sent more than fifty applications to different jobs that I found on UBC job-link website. But I got no positive responses. It really discouraged me. All these jobs required work experience in Canada. I got all my jobs at UBC by accident: because somebody had to go home or got sick and could not teach.

Meng: I tried good jobs but they said: "you have to wait, there is so much competition for this job or this job is cancelled" or my schedule is not good. I was so frustrated. So I just got a job at a day-care for \$10 an hour.

However, one student from an English-speaking country who was most successful in finding jobs received her information directly from professors or administrators willing to hire her:

Rikki: I met the people from the other department at a conference. We just kind of started talking about their research and what they are going to do. They just kind of asked me if I wanted to do it. I was a student representative in several committees so they knew me from before.

Interestingly, the students from non-English speaking countries, although most of them worked part-time in addition to struggling with academic work and improving their English, took the time to volunteer. Some helped at the department library and others helped during orientation at International House. They wanted to make new international students feel welcome and spare them of some troubles they encountered themselves in the beginning of their stay:

Sofia: I volunteered in International House because I wanted to be contacted by Mexican students who were coming here for graduate studies. I felt isolated when I came here, so I thought it would be good for them if they meet somebody who welcomes them.

Sarah: I volunteered twice at orientation in International House to welcome new students and their parents. When I came in last summer, nobody told me anything about UBC. I had to find things out by myself and it took me forever.

In contrast, English-speaking students and all but one student who relied on external funding did not do any volunteer work throughout their stay at UBC.

Exploring the Concept of "International Student"

The following criteria were the only ones common across the students' definitions: an international student in Canada is somebody who is not Canadian or permanent resident or First Nations, and who studies in Canada on a temporary basis.

Any attempts to go beyond that definition produced results that were applicable to one particular student or a group of students who might share other selected criteria. For example, a few students said that an international student is the one who is new to Canada, who was not educated in Canada, has little knowledge about Canada, whose cultural background is not Canadian and who has to adapt to new environment:

Rikki: Because you are not from here and you had to move, it's going to be a new environment for you so you will have to learn how to adapt to a different academic and social environment.

However, most of these characteristics would not be applicable to international students who had studied or worked in Canada before entering the university. The only characteristic that might be shared by the majority of international students is the fact that they would have different cultural backgrounds than Canadians. But some questioned what was meant by Canadian culture:

Tshepo: One who comes from another country, and may but does not have to speak a different language or have cultural differences. The question of culture is a complicated one. What is Canadian culture?

Non-native speakers of English added that an international student in Canada would be insecure about English, be generally insecure about behaviour and look different:

Paola: I am insecure about my English and writing. I think that if people know I am an international student, they will excuse some of the mistakes that I make. Sometimes I am insecure about the way I think or the way I move. I am a visible minority in Canada: I look that way.

Interestingly, native speakers of English said that although they looked like white Canadian students they were also easily identifiable as international students because they spoke English with an accent different from Canadian and had different cultural backgrounds:

Rikki: I have an accent similar to Americans. I guess I see certain things differently than Canadians because I've lived in three different countries.

Steve³⁶: When I would start speaking in class and my accent would come out, you would automatically know that I am from the US. I am from the South, South-eastern part of the United States. That is a different culture in itself.

According to these students' accounts, being an international student does not necessarily mean that you talk or look differently; their cultural and work experiences were different:

Steve: Just because I don't have a different skin colour or hair colour or speak a different language does not mean that I am not an international student. I am not Canadian; I have never lived in Canada. I don't know what Canada is all about. My experiences are completely different from Canadian teachers' experiences.

Rikki: You can look differently but what if you are actually a citizen and speak with an accent?

One student said that an international student is the one who is in Canada on a student visa. However, a particular type of visa and even possession of a visa in itself is not a necessary determinant of an international student status (CIC, 2002).

Another student said that an international student is somebody who needs help, who is dependent and did not have experience of living abroad:

Paola: I think a traditional international student is somebody who would need support. These students may be younger than I and more dependent on having a contact with someone who is going to welcome them.

However, she later pointed out that she did not need any help. Therefore, this definition was not applicable in her case. Two students said that an international student is somebody who pays differential tuition. However, exchange students pay tuition to their home universities (UBC Calendar, 2003/04).

³⁶ From the focus group

In sum, participants suggested no common descriptive definition of an international student. The definitions that students proposed were based on different criteria applicable to unique situations. However, all these criteria contribute to better understanding of the concept of "international student".

What It Means to be an "International Student"

Most participants said they had not really thought of what it meant to be an international student. To help the students reflect on this question, I told them a story about an imaginary student from Mars:

Regina: Imagine you work at International House and an international student from Mars comes to see you. It's his first visit to earth, to Canada and to UBC. He does not know what it means to be an international student, what kind of things will happen to him that will be different from local students. Could you help him to understand what is going to be different?

After preliminary discussion related to a student from Mars, participants were asked to tell what was different for them. Many said they spoke English differently and with an accent; their cultural backgrounds were different, their work experiences were different and they were supposed to go back upon graduation. A few mentioned that these differences made them feel as foreigners and outsiders especially in the beginning of their stay:

In-su: I am a foreigner. I think I can never become a UBC student: I am just international. International student is the one who struggles a lot, who wants to become a UBC student but cannot.

Sofia³⁷: I have always felt like the other, like the outsider.

³⁷ From the focus group

Kenichi: I have become more accustomed to life here, learned more about campus but I still feel a stranger because I have to go back to my country.

Steve³⁸: I never knew what it meant to be a foreigner. But when the professors would introduce students to guest speakers, they would get to me and say: "This is our US student." That's the first time I started understanding what a "foreigner" means.

One student said she wished these differences were used for the benefit of both international students and local people:

Sarah: I come from a different culture, from a different world so I bring something good with me- something to share with people here. I wish people here would try to learn about my culture and give me an opportunity to learn about Canadian culture. It's a two-way thing: we are here to learn but also to teach.

Two students said they did not feel like international students and did not associate themselves with other international students especially those who struggled with English.

Paola: I don't feel like I am an international student. It has a lot to do with my ability to speak English and to engage comfortably in English conversations.

Rikki: I do not really consider myself to be an international student. I just kind of blend in as a regular North American student because I am white and English is my native language. I do not associate myself with other international students, those who are not from English-speaking countries. So far I had nothing in common with these people.

One student said he was confused on what it meant to be an international student in his case:

Steve: I thought I was an international student when I came. But nobody ever asked me like do you need help or something. I don't think I am considered to be an international student by the university.

However, he added that he gained a new meaning of what it meant for him to be an international student following the events of September 11th in the United States.

Whether he wanted it or not, he became a representative of his country:

³⁸ From the focus group

Steve: After September 11th, there were several people very supportive to me and there were also people who said some nasty things, but I just shrugged them off. They don't know who I am, yeah, I am from the US, but what does that mean? It's very hard when you are an individual and you have to defend the entire country. After living in Canada, I have found just how easy it is to stereotype people.

In sum, as one student concluded, there is no definite answer to what it means to be an international student that would fit all categories of students:

Paola: International student is a status that is imposed and temporary. At different times and different locations the answer to what it means will be different.

Satisfaction with UBC Experiences

Despite some negative aspects reported in their experiences, all expressed overall satisfaction with how things turned out for them at UBC. However, much of their positive attitudes could be attributed to their personalities:

Meng: I am an easy-going person so it's ok for me.

Tshepo: I can't complain. If I had difficult times in fulfilling certain tasks at UBC, I would not attribute it to UBC but rather to my personal approach.

Sarah: If I miss something, I will go search for it and find the information I need. UBC is a great place and I think it's up to the students what they make of it.

They appreciated having learned a lot through their experiences. They became more critical and receptive to criticism, more interested in different cultures, and non-native English speakers spoke of becoming more comfortable in expressing their thoughts in English:

Paola: I became more critical about Brazilian society. My graduate studies here gave me the language and framework to speak about such issues as inequality, child poverty and injustice and racism and sexism and classism- all these -isms that take place everywhere but especially in Brazil.

Chien: I learned to be more adaptive, more tolerant, more interested in different things. I try to break out from my "old me."

In-su: I think it's a really worthwhile experience. My attitude has changed. I want to try new things. I could not do it in the beginning. My self-confidence was really low. I lost my identity. These days I try to find meaningful things to do with my life at UBC. I struggled but I learned a lot.

Many participants talked about having learned a lot of survival skills, becoming more independent and pro-active than before:

Sarah: It was my first time living on my own so I had to learn how to do everything by myself. It was great.

In-su: At home I can speak my own language, I have lots of people who can help me but here I have to handle every problem by myself. Everything for me is like "baby level." In my culture we do not speak out a lot in class. We are quite good listeners but here everybody speaks, speaks, speaks ... I should speak up. I was really scared to do that, what will other people think of me? I started speaking up here.

Those students whose goal in the beginning was getting a better job believed they were closer to that goal than ever.

International Students' Views about Internationalization at UBC

The Meaning of Internationalization

The last part of the interview was devoted to examining participants' views about internationalization. The participants were told: "UBC stated that it is committed to internationalization. Have you heard about it before this interview?" Three participants had not heard about it. Others heard the word "internationalization" mentioned in their classes but none had a chance to explore what it meant in-depth. Then the students were asked: "When you heard/are hearing about internationalization of UBC campus, what does it mean to you?" The students' answers to this question testify that hearing about "internationalization" generates certain expectations about what is going to happen on campus. Specifically, according to the participants' expectations the following four areas

will be affected by internationalization policy: people, curriculum, campus community, and university's external initiatives. Most participants said that internationalization is first and foremost about people and recognition of their diverse backgrounds:

Steve: It's about people regardless where they came from instead of everything being Canadian or British Colombian or any other. It's a recognition of who we are, what is our significance and what contributions we can make to campus whether through academics or personal engagements.

They expected to see more services available for international students and increased awareness of international student issues among faculty members, staff and Canadian students. Several students said that internationalization is also about curricula. Curricula will not be targeted to serve a particular group of people and include examples from different cultures:

Sofia: The courses that I took did not include enough examples from other cultures. And it's very bad because Canada has lots of examples, lots of potential.

Others added that internationalization will result in increased enrolment of international students but they questioned whether it would result in changes in the classroom and particularly how professors view their classrooms:

Meng: Not all professors realize "Ok, this is my class; I have international students in my class. I have to ask them about their ideas. I may need to change my way of teaching, may be speak slower."

Two students said the only reason they thought why UBC introduced this policy was to continue increasing tuition fees for international students and make money from partnerships with other universities. However, one felt it also encouraged international students to get more active in campus life and claim their space at the university:

In-su: To me it means they want to make more money from international students because they pay more. But it also means that I have to do something. I have to do something.

Internationalization and International Students

Many participants said that internationalization is directly related to international students. However, they gave different reasons for this. On the one hand they talked about international students as contributors to university knowledge and on the other hand they talked about them as contributors to the university budget:

Steve: How can you have internationalization without international students? You can actually interact with people who lived what they are talking about.

Chien: Canadian people can hear from international students and understand more about other cultures, other countries and other languages.

Paola: It involves international students through the dollar amounts they pay.

One student said that internationalization had nothing to do with international students:

Rikki: It's not about international students: it's about making money.

The majority of participants agreed that internationalization relates to them personally directly or indirectly. However, their answers reflected that each of them understood differently what internationalization was about:

Chien: I think they can learn from me in the classes. I talk to them about my experience at home that is different from theirs. They don't know much about higher education system in China, why it differs from their system.

Paola: Does internationalization have anything to do with my particular presence? Not directly, but I look at it as an opportunity for me to go in a PhD program. This is the opportunity I would not have had in my country. There are few universities that offer PhD programs in Brazil and it's extremely hard to get in. So I feel very lucky to have been able to enter a PhD program anywhere.

One student thought there was absolutely no connection between internationalization at UBC and her experience at the university.

The Role of International Students in Internationalization of UBC

Several students thought there was no role for international students in internationalization or they have not thought about it. Three students thought there was a role but they were not sure what kind of role it was:

Sofia: I don't know if they are doing anything but I think they should do something about it.

Rikki: I am sure there is a role but that is not their [administration's] philosophy. If we have a role, why don't they do stuff locally within international students, for example: create connections between international students in different faculties?

Sarah: I am sure we play a role. But what is the role?

And other students said international students played essential role or even roles in internationalization:

Steve: International students have two roles: they bring their ideas into Canadian classroom; they learn the Canadian ideas and take them back to integrate in their context at home.

In-su: Most people who helped me at UBC were international students, not Canadian students. It means they already play some role in internationalization.

Participants said that international students should be more pro-active in sharing their cultural backgrounds and educational experiences at UBC. They need to play a visible role in organizing events on campus and serving on committees. But to be able to do all this, they need to be encouraged to think about what it is they expect to get from campus and what it is they can give:

Steve: If I thought more about giving and I recognized that I was giving, I could have given more. Subconsciously I gave something, but I gave without thinking and I gave without other people thinking.

Sarah: International students are at the foundation of internationalization. So I think they should be involved in the process. International students should make presentations about their own countries, their own experiences.

In-su: As international students we need a place to practice our leadership skills, the skills we learn in the classroom. Most Canadian students in my program have jobs where they can practice, but we do not. I learn how to play soccer for example, but there is no playground to play soccer for me as an international student. I learn leadership in the classroom, but where is the place to practice my leadership?

However, these international students were also concerned that not all international students who come to UBC might be interested in being involved. Their primary goal may be just to get their degrees and go back to their home countries.³⁹

The students were sceptical about the role they thought UBC allocated to in the process of internationalization. Some students thought that the university just used its international students to attract more students to its programs:

Rikki: It's just another marketing line for the university: "We have attracted all these wonderful people from different countries and you are going to have such a great experience because you will hear all these different ways of thinking." It does not mean they care about international students. Many international students I have met find it lonely here.

Others thought that the university was interested in enrolling more international students just because they wanted to generate additional revenue:

Meng: The university says it's working towards internationalization because it's interested in enrolling more international students. But at the same time they increased tuition for undergraduate international students last summer. When the tuition is so high as it is going to be now for international undergraduates, I don't think many students and their families can afford it. I think higher tuition affects internationalization negatively.

Some thought there could be different roles for different categories of international students that they were not aware of.

Many students said that there were few, if any, signs telling them about UBC's involvement in the process of internationalization:

³⁹ From the focus group

Kenichi: I don't see any changes happening. I don't know of any initiatives by UBC administration to explain this policy to students and get their feedback.

Steve: I don't see any special recognition for international students here.

Meng: I heard they opened an International Office at the Faculty of Education. I think that's because of this policy. It seems like the university is doing something for international students this year.

Several students said that internationalization at UBC was at the first stage: attracting international students. However, they questioned that once the students are here, what is the university going to do with them?

Sofia: There seems to be an outburst of activities directed at international students since the beginning of this term. It's good but I just hope it's a genuine effort and it's going to bring some change. I think internationalization should be taken more seriously, it's not like a fashion, you know, they are dealing with people.

Rikki: You have to recognize that when you bring different people in, you will need to address their concerns to help these people get more positive experiences.

Another student had no doubts that UBC was actively involved in the process of internationalization and was very accustomed to having international students.

Benefits that International Students Bring to Campus

The majority of participants were confident that international students were bringing a variety of benefits to teaching, learning and research at UBC. They listed Canadian students, faculty members, other international students and the university as a whole among the main beneficiaries. Several students mentioned that whenever they could, they tried to challenge the ideas they heard in classes and express their own perspectives thus contributing into the learning of all students:

Paola: People from different backgrounds including myself voice their opinions in the classroom. I raise my hand and I say: "Wait a minute. My experience is different. This is not the way things happen where I come from." In that way I think I have some sort of pedagogical role as a student from Brazil.

Steve: I am thinking of all the issues raised in the classroom as a result of something that I presented from my experience in the US. They must have started thinking about the issues they would not be thinking if it were not for me as I was the only student from the US in that class.

Others said that even if they were not able to contribute a lot in class, they expressed their views in papers and journals that faculty members and other students could learn from. It could also generate interest in faculty to undertake research related to international students' countries of origin:

In-su: I am doing research about Korea for my major paper so another student interested in this research may use it after I leave UBC.

Kenichi: Professors in my classes benefit from talking to me and reading my papers. I often compare Japanese educational system with Canadian in my papers.

Tshepo: It's a good experience for faculty to teach international students to get to know different backgrounds where students come from. The faculty may get interested to undertake research about these countries at some point.

They were contributing their knowledge and experience through participation in extra-curricular social and academic activities:

Kenichi: Other students I meet outside the classes can benefit from me. I always talk about Japanese culture and society so they can understand more about Japan talking to me.

Sofia: I am going to speak about Mexican higher education system at a seminar next week.

Some students said that UBC would be able to benefit from them in many indirect ways upon their return to home countries. They might initiate projects involving UBC faculty and students, they will continue to share their experiences and make UBC known in their home communities through alumni clubs or other networks. These students mentioned

that they were already spreading the good name of UBC in their home countries and in a way attracting other international students to come to UBC:

Sarah: I talk about UBC in my home country. I know at least three students who want to come to UBC just because I told them about it.

Study participants were raising awareness among the faculty about the issues facing international students and thus contributing to the welfare of future international students:

Meng: I wrote a paper about international students' issues at UBC. The instructor was never aware of the situation and she said it was very helpful for her to know. Perhaps if she has international students in her classes in future, she will do something for them.

Some students were providing support to other international students in every way they could:

Sarah: I personally helped a few people here since I came to UBC. I found them in the Student Union building; they were lost. So I took them to the place they were looking for and we became friends after that.

And most said that the university benefited from the fees they paid. Several students were not sure if their presence benefited UBC in any way. These same students did not recognize their involvement in the classroom, extra-curricular activities or on-campus jobs as benefits to campus community or did not see it recognized:

Tshepo: I only pursue my own agenda: to complete my PhD program here. I don't know about UBC. Perhaps there is some indirect benefit. Some people had not even heard the name of my country before they met me. They only knew there is Africa.

Sarah: I have not really contributed a great deal in any specific way besides just being in class or going on trips and sharing my experiences with other students.

Rikki: I do jobs and stuff but I get paid for those. I don't really see my jobs as contributions.

Meng said she viewed her jobs as contributions but she was not sure if they (university) took it as anything special or different from what Canadian students did.

Prospects for the Future of UBC as an International University

The views of students on whether UBC is an international university varied considerably. All had different understanding of what constituted an “international university.” Some agreed that an international university is the one that offers programs in a variety of international fields and has a lot of students, faculty and visiting scholars coming from different countries. According to this definition, UBC was an international university. One student considered the university to be international if it was known in other countries. And, of course, according to his definition, UBC was an international university. Several students also acknowledged the fact that UBC had many international people and a good reputation but added that these people were not used enough as resources to the extent of actually challenging other people’s way of thinking:

Kenichi: Students and researchers come from all over the world but they are not used as resources. Just the fact that there are students here from foreign countries does not mean internationalization. We have to be involved.

Steve: Canada is international. The people who come here from all over the world make it international. But there is a difference in *saying* that you are an international university and *being* an international university. Right now UBC is still *saying* it’s an international university.

Several students did not feel that UBC was anything else than just a provincial university:

Meng: The University has not changed for the past two years since I came. I have changed. The services are the same. I see some changes but I don’t feel them. Maybe it’s just the beginning.

Expectations about Treatment at an “International” University

Most participants said they wanted to see changes in certain ways they were treated. One student thought international students should receive special attention because they paid more:

Rikki⁴⁰: I am trying to understand why they don't care that we are paying more, why they don't treat us as important customers?

Others said they did not want to be treated differently, but they wanted to be treated fairly. However, fair treatment according to these students should include attention to their individual needs and cultural backgrounds:

Steve: I don't expect anybody to come up to me and pat me on the back and say: "Oh, you are special. We are glad that you are here from the US." But there should be some special things done for people like us to help to adjust to this campus.

In-su: Professors think they should treat Canadian and international students equally. But our backgrounds are very different from Canadian students; we need some more explanation on what the terms mean, what the situation in British Columbia is like.

Chien: International students receive the same quality treatment as Canadian students in all places on campus. But there seems to be no other services specifically for international students except for International House.

Sarah: Everybody is treated the same the way I see it. If I saw more programs or gatherings for international students, it would have appeared more like an international campus to me.

One student pointed out that because everyone is treated equally, students who lack English proficiency do not get help with English and as a result cannot benefit fully from their studies as well as are unable to contribute effectively to UBC:

Sofia: I was in one class and a student had to make a presentation in English. He could not pronounce most of the words, poor guy. How did he make it to this class where we are supposed to do everything in English? It was not his fault, UBC accepted him. People like him need help and if there were help available, the guy would get more from UBC and would give more.

Several students provided descriptions of what a community where international students are treated fairly rather than equally would look like:

⁴⁰ From the focus group

Rikki: The community will reach out for you rather than it's just you seeking out by yourself.

Steve: There will be individual recognition of how your experiences relate to the curriculum that is taught.

Chien: The issues from other countries and cultures will be integrated in the curriculum, professors will encourage more comparative studies, UBC will promote participation of international students in student government organizations such as AMS and GSS, international students will be encouraged to serve on different university committees.

Sarah: If there were more people helping international students that would be great.

Two students were quite happy with the way they were treated. They did not know what treatment to expect rather than the one they were getting.

Contributing to Internationalization of UBC Campus

The students in the study already contributed to internationalization at UBC in many ways. The section describing the benefits international students bring to the university testifies to this fact. They also provided a number of suggestions on how international students could continue to contribute even more. They urged them to be more outspoken, more involved and not be afraid of taking initiatives. The participants advised other international students not to be afraid to ask for help, to be pro-active in finding things they did not know, to be brave in speaking their minds and to get involved in campus academic and social activities. They advised new international students to talk to other international students who have more knowledge about UBC in case they hesitated to get help from Canadians. They also listed "helping other international students" and building connections with more international students among important contributions they could continue to make. However, they listed a number of barriers

preventing them from contributing more. They needed to be asked, they needed company, they needed to be encouraged to think more of their role as international students. Other reasons were lack of time, hesitation to ask for help, and lack of personal contacts between local community and them:

Kenichi: I was asked to speak about a Japanese educational system at a department seminar. It is easy to contribute in some way if you are asked. But it is very difficult for us to come forward and say: "I want to do something."

Chien: I don't think I can do anything alone.

Chien: Nobody will say "No" if you want to be involved in something but there is not enough "encouragement" for you to do that.

Eight students said they would like to continue to contribute to internationalization of UBC campus in a number of different ways. Some said they were interested in developing connections with faculty members doing research related to their home countries. However, they wished the professors expressed interest in working with them as well:

Paola: If I had more time I would establish contacts with the people at UBC whose research is focused on Latin America. We would get to know each other. Perhaps I could do some work for them. Perhaps I could invite them to present at colloquia in my department or even conferences in my home country.

Steve: I would have liked to work for somebody who is interested in me as an assistant or as a volunteer. But I have a lot of apprehension about knocking on anybody's door and saying: "Look, I would really like to have an opportunity to do this."

Several students wished they could develop more connections with other international students, have a support group at the department and even establish an organization through which they could express their opinions to administration at UBC:

Kenichi: International House is the only place where you can meet international students. I'd like to meet more international students from my department, faculty and other faculties. I'd like to meet students from my country.

Rikki⁴¹: We could have a contact list for international students at the department, match new international students with continuing international and Canadian students.

In-su: The more international students come, the more chances we will have to do something by ourselves and make suggestions to policy makers at UBC. We can make an organization and have a collective voice.

One student said that she would like to meet students from her country studying in Vancouver schools. Perhaps she could help them in some way:

In-su: I'd like to meet Korean students studying in Canadian schools. I want to talk to them; they might be international students like me, just different level. They are much younger than me, may be they have problems.

Several participants said that they would really like to share their cultural and educational experiences with more people and saw this study as an opportunity to contribute in this way:

Meng: I would like to have more opportunities to share my experiences, and be asked my opinion about the services.

In-su: I am the person who likes to share. I was a teacher in my home country. I always shared with other people.

Other students mentioned they would like to be more involved in campus life and academic activities, serve as student representatives, volunteer at local conferences and produce educational materials to help other international students avoid some of the difficulties they encountered themselves:

Chien: I wish I had more courage to participate in academic and extra-curricular activities on campus.

⁴¹ From the focus group

In-su: I would like to make a brochure for other international students in my program and explain terms and abbreviations in it. Perhaps I can make it together with a Canadian student experienced in educational system here. I don't want future international students in my program feel miserable in class.

The other two students expressed no wish to contribute to internationalization at UBC during their studies. One student said she did not feel the institution cared enough about the students to make her willing to contribute in any way and the other student did not consider it necessary to initiate any change around him, as he was quite happy with his experiences:

Rikki: They need to serve the people that are here first and then try to internationalize. I am going to do my best to survive and get the most of my academic experiences but this is just to help me. I am not doing anything to help this university.

Tshepo: I don't see myself mandated to go around making the name of my country or its culture known to anyone else unless I am called upon to do so.

In sum, most participants were willing to contribute and according to their accounts already contributed to internationalization at UBC. However, they needed the university to reach out for them as well:

Sarah: We cannot expect everything from UBC without giving something back. And UBC cannot expect us to give anything unless they give us what we need. It's a two-way thing.

Involving International Students in the Process of Internationalization

Most students agreed that just putting the words "international students are important" in the mission statement does not actually mean that the university is truly committed to internationalization. They said the university should be reaching out to international students to make them feel an important part of campus for this commitment to be demonstrated in practice. Several students said that UBC should encourage

international students to be involved in the governance of the university. They spoke bitterly about the lack of voice for international students on campus:

Chien: I looked on line and it seems like most of the students on both GSS and AMS Councils are Canadian. Nobody cares to try and have international students on the Councils and committees.

Rikki⁴²: UBC needs to do a better job in articulating to international students the different things they could do: "We want you to be involved in this." Nobody cares about your voice, but we want you here!

Several students said the university should have more opportunities for international students to be leaders and get involved in organizing activities for other international students:

In-su: I would like to see workshops or seminars for international students to share their experiences. But the hosts should not be just Canadian professors or students but also international students. Canadian people alone cannot know our struggles because they might have never experienced them. If some international students are in the positions where they can play leadership roles, other international students will feel: "We can actually do something."

Chien⁴³: Only international students know what it really means to be international students at UBC. They need to involve more international students in servicing other international students.

One student said that the university should open more opportunities for international students to be involved in research. Another student felt the need of having an official person at the department who would serve as an advisor to international students and contact them personally from time to time:

Sarah: Right now if I have a problem, honestly I don't know where to go. My supervisor is always busy and I have to deal with everything on my own. Perhaps the department could have a person who will at least listen to you.

⁴² From the focus group

⁴³ From the focus group

Steve⁴⁴: I would have really liked if somebody contacted me and asked like do you need help or something. There needs to be a personal touch. When I came here, I felt very lost, I tried to find whatever it was I needed to find and then I felt really stupid because I did not know how.

Another student said there was a clear conflict between UBC saying they wanted to attract more international students and at the same time increasing international students' tuition:

Kenichi: If UBC wants to be internationalized, why do they charge so much money to international students? It means that UBC does not actually welcome them. If UBC wants more international students, they have to stop that.

Several students said the least the university could do is ask international students what they would like to see happening at the university:

Kenichi: I expect them to ask us what they can do for international students; they have not done so.

Sharing Experiences

The majority of participants reported no more than one or two occasions where they had chances to share their experiences as international students at UBC with people other than their close friends. Two students said that nobody took interest in them and they have never talked about it. Most participants agreed that it was very important for them to share what they were experiencing as international students especially in the beginning of their stay:

Meng: It's good for new students in the first term: you want to meet people, you want to tell them your situation here and you need help.

Steve: I needed in the beginning because I really felt like I did not know many things. I would have liked to talk to other international students at the time: "Well, how are you fitting in? Do you feel like an outsider? Do they look at you strange when you tell them how things are done in your school?"

⁴⁴ From the focus group

Some said they still needed a space to share even though they had been at UBC for a while. One student said she had been at UBC for two years but still had problems. Others said they have not thought about sharing their experiences with other people or would not initiate doing it themselves.

Findings from the Focus Group

The focus group questions continued to explore the following key topics from the interview sessions: students' experiences at UBC, students' views about internationalization, the concept of an international student and satisfaction with experiences.

In the beginning of the session, I asked the participants to share their impressions of participating in the interview sessions. Some did not have any comments to make but others said that it was the greatest opportunity for them to speak up since they came to UBC. They thought they talked too much. One student was particularly affected by her experiences of participating in this study:

In-su: I think I saved a lot of voice inside. Suddenly I got my own voice. I gained some confidence... I did not sleep at all that night. I could not stop thinking. I still talked to myself in my room.

Many students were critical in their interviews about some aspects of academic experiences, social life, community, student services, financial assistance and graduate student employment at UBC. Therefore, I asked them what expectations they had prior to coming to UBC and if any of these expectations were based on how international students were treated in their home countries. Most focus group participants did not know how international students were treated in their home countries. Native English speakers said

they did not socialize with international students from non-English speaking countries before:

Steve: I went to two large universities in the States. They had a lot of international students. But I very rarely heard any issues from other parts of the world and what they meant for the US, what each side was giving to each other.

Non-native English speakers said they did not have international students in their home universities or had very few. Consequently, two students reported having had no expectations about UBC as they had no basis for comparison. However, others had a number of expectations:

Steve: I was told that I would hear so much about what's going on in different parts of the world and I could pick up ideas. I heard a lot about what's going on in Canada and very little about anything else.

Kenichi: I knew I would be studying about Canadian education. I wanted to know what it is about.

Some of these expectations got sparked from what they read in UBC promotional materials. Others were raised from their conversations with the people at home who studied in North America before.

Steve: I had some expectations but I was also told lots of other expectations. I was told that UBC had such a large international population and I find, you know, when I get to my department there are only 2-3-8 people. So I don't know what they were talking about.

In-su: I expected to have many opportunities to do research assistantships because people educated in North America told me there would be many available, but it is not the case.

Kenichi: I thought I would be more involved in the university community. I thought I would have more Canadian and international friends.

Sofia added that she considered herself a client: "I am paying so I expect good services." She explained that "when international students come, they leave a lot behind. They leave their families, friends, they leave a part of their lives behind. They leave a lot so they

expect a lot." No participants expected to find financial assistance at UBC or in Canada. They planned to rely on jobs to substitute their lack of funds.

I asked the participants if there were any questions in the interview that they thought about later. The interviewees started sharing their answers to questions related to all aspects of their experiences as well as discussed further the concept of internationalization. Most of their comments related to internationalization have already been included here. However, a couple of interesting things happened while students were sharing their experiences: the students from non-English speaking countries tried to connect with native English speakers and vice versa. To their mutual surprise, they discovered similarities in classroom experiences:

Rikki: I agree that we are in the Canadian context and I would expect most of the context to be Canadian but at least help us a little bit: "Ok, this is how the system is set up" and it will take fifteen minutes.

Steve: Even though Canada and US do not seem that far apart, this has been quite a different experience for me.

Chien: I am very surprised to hear Steve and Rikki encountering so much difference in the classroom. You come from culture quite similar to Canadian, not as different as China. Then it's probably not a cultural difference.

Kenichi: I have not told the instructor that I felt uncomfortable because I thought my problem was English. But now after listening to native speakers I know there is another problem...the atmosphere or something.

They had similar experiences with finding community for themselves:

Kenichi: I felt like a stranger when I came here. I still feel that way. Did you?

Steve: Yes, if it were not for my roommate who introduced me to people off campus, I would not know anybody.

Rikki: I have been here for three years and I still feel like I have never been at home, can't go home, don't feel at home.

Steve: I sort of can't wait to go home.

They also shared some of the challenges in finding on-campus employment:

Rikki: You have to hassle for money like you are in the streets: Got a dollar? Got a dollar?

Sarah: You have to go and ask every term. You come here because you want to learn, so there should be more opportunities to learn.

Another important factor was that native English speakers started using the word "us" referring to "international students" in their discussions during the focus group. They referred to other international students as "them" or "these people" throughout interview sessions. During the focus group the students also engaged in several debates. One debate concerned the content of classes they wished to find at UBC:

Chien: I come from China, so who would care about education in China if the curriculum is Canadianized? They have to make the curriculum *internationalized* in order to invite all students to jump in and say something.

Sarah: We cannot expect them to make the system just to suit us. They have these Canadian students in classes who need to improve their teaching, so they have to talk about Canadian system as long as they also talk about international issues, and we have to respect that.

In-su: But they should know our perspective because they influence their students. I heard one classmate say: "I don't understand why Asian students in my class keep quiet. They talk a lot by themselves or just in Asian groups." And I said: "Oh, no, but in my class they are never ever quiet. I struggle with calming them." And I thought: "Oh, my god, there is another person in their class like me."

They also took the opportunity to compliment each other on the contributions each of them made in the classes they took together:

Steve: I enjoyed very much that class when you talked about your experiences.

In-su: I still remember how you said: "I am interested in your country." Your statement encouraged me to speak up.

Overall, the participants seemed to be startled by the connections they had discovered among themselves during focus group conversations. They realized there was a lot in common among international students regardless of their countries of origin:

Chien: For some reason I feel very close to other international students. I don't know why. Maybe because we share similar experiences in Canada, some feelings.

Sarah: We can relate to each other better actually. I can share a lot of things with another international student but it is more difficult to talk to a Canadian. I probably can communicate with a Canadian but I don't think I will say the same things.

One student remembered that in his undergraduate years international students were called "foreign" students. I asked the students to comment on the difference between the two terms. In general, most of them preferred to be called "international" students rather than "foreign."

Sofia: When you are called a "foreign" student, you feel like you don't belong.

In-su: I prefer to be called "international" even if it's just a politically correct term, but give us some room.

Others said that it did not matter what they were called, it was a matter of how they were treated. One student mentioned there were two types of international students in her opinion: "traditional" and "non-traditional". "Traditional" international students would be in their late teens- early twenties, new to Canada and living abroad, single, and need help to adjust to a foreign country. I asked the students to comment on their views of a "traditional" and "non-traditional" international student. One student said that a "traditional" international student would be a person of colour and speaking English as a foreign language versus a white international student from an English-speaking country.

Two students said they understood the concepts of a “traditional” and “non-traditional” international student in terms of the roles they performed at a host university:

In-su: “Traditional” means “passive” and “non-traditional” means “active,” trying to participate in UBC, become a real UBC student.

Steve: When I was in undergraduate school, a foreign student was there to pick up ideas from the university and take them back to their home country. I am here as an international student to pick up from international ideas and make contributions, may be that’s a non-traditional way.

In the end of the focus group, the students were asked if there were anything they would have done differently if their experiences at UBC were just a dream and their real trip to Canada was the next day. Half of the focus group participants said they would think twice about coming to UBC or go to another Canadian or American university if they had a second chance. Others said they had a good learning experience and it was worth some of the struggles they had to overcome.

In sum, the focus group provided a space for participating international students to connect with each other. This was the first opportunity for all of them to explore their experiences in detail and with a group of other people. Most important the focus group provided a space for non-native English speakers to find much in common with native English speakers. Prior to the focus group, none realized they shared certain experiences or were able to connect with each other in any meaningful way in or outside their classrooms.

CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this research was to explore the experiences of international graduate students at the University of British Columbia. It also examined their views about internationalization at UBC. The findings from this study indicate that experiences of international students are as varied as their diverse backgrounds. However, a few patterns have emerged. Classroom participation presented challenges for students from non-English speaking countries. They were uncertain of their English skills, lacked background in Canadian issues, and not used to participating in spontaneous classroom debates. These challenges are consistent with those identified by other researchers (Sharma, 1972; Huxur et al., 1996; Thorstenson, 2001; Wolf, 2002). For example, Wolf (2002) found that students who come to North America “with the expectation that the professor is the source of unchallenged wisdom and the gatekeeper of cultural knowledge” (p. 12) have difficulty participating in classes where the professor “performs the role of devil’s advocate or, indeed, agitator” (p. 12). Participants appreciated learning about Canadian education. It was new knowledge for them. However, similarly to findings from Appiah-Padi’s study (1999), a number of participants felt excluded from the courses focused on provincial matters where they had limited opportunities to contribute. They also needed explanation of specific terminology and cultural phenomena. In contrast, participants were highly motivated and enjoyed participation in courses involving international issues. Few interviewees took part in social events and extra-curricular academic activities. They did not make good use of student services. Several participants reported feeling excluded from the community. They lacked connections with Canadian students and faculty. Masters students, speakers of English as

a foreign language, had difficulties finding on-campus jobs. They were also financially insecure.

This study has confirmed the findings of other studies by Cadieux (1984), the AUCC (1988), and Ishii (1997) that supervisors have a large impact on experiences of international students. Students were more successful when their supervisors advised them about campus resources, took an interest in their academic, social and financial needs, encouraged them to participate in seminars and conferences, and connected them with other faculty members. Participants agreed that international students should be more active in sharing their backgrounds and participating in campus activities, but they needed the university to reach out for them as well and make them feel important part of campus.

Based on the findings above, I identified areas where the majority of participants felt their needs were not fully met and improvements would enable them to have better educational and social experiences. These areas included academic programming, social interaction, community sensitivity, support services, institutional policies, and the role of international students in internationalization. The CBIE and AUCC identified the same areas as important to internationalization in their policy documents and reports. I ask in this section whether experiences of international students are consistent with proposals from these key Canadian advocates for international education as well as UBC documents promoting internationalization. The section also addresses two themes not discussed fully in the literature but which emerged as important for study participants: the meaning of "international student" and connections among international students.

Discussion

The Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC, 1995) recommended that universities should make full use of expertise of international students in teaching, research and in the classroom. International students can be an important educational resource if engaged pro-actively. However, many participants did not enjoy this kind of recognition. Faculty and domestic students rarely expressed an interest in them.

The British Columbia Centre for International Education (BCCIE, 2003) stated that friendships that develop between Canadians and international students during their stay in BC contribute to global understanding and building long-term relationships that foster goodwill between Canada and other countries. My findings show that, although international students may contribute to development of world friendships by making friends with each other, Canadian students are not necessarily part of these friendships. Studies that arrive at similar findings often generalize it as a problem for all international student population; however, my study has found that participants from English-speaking countries were largely successful in making friends with domestic students and unsuccessful in making friends or associating themselves with other international students. Another finding unique to this study is that a number of participants from non-English speaking countries lacked meaningful connections with faculty members. Besides cultural differences, language barriers constrained the ability of several participants to make social contacts. This is consistent with other findings (Mackeben, 1999; Gallagher, 1993) that cite English as the key challenge for many students from non-English speaking countries. Kauffmann et al. (1992) wrote that one of the most

frequently touted objectives of study abroad is to create positive attitudes toward peoples of other cultures. It is assumed that if individuals are simply given the opportunity to interact, mutual understanding and positive attitudes will ensue. However, a large body of research shows that people are more likely to feel favourable toward another group in a supportive environment where there is opportunity to go beyond superficial interaction. Unfortunately, the findings here and elsewhere show that contacts where international students and local students go beyond “superficial interaction” are infrequent. The CBIE (1989) questioned how cross-cultural understanding could be achieved without improved opportunities for international students to know Canadians. If one rationale for accepting international students is to enhance Canada’s future trade relations, international students must have extensive and positive interactions with the campus as well as larger community.

Investigations (AUCC, 1995; Nelles, 2000) suggest that successful internationalization requires reform in the area of service delivery. The uprooting associated with studying in a foreign country goes far beyond the typical separation issues faced by domestic students. International students are more likely to experience more problems and have access to fewer resources. Kauffmann et al. (1992) describe human development as a function of person/environment interaction mediated by an appropriate ratio between challenge and support. If an environment is overly challenging, students may be overwhelmed. In order to work with individual needs, styles and aptitudes, this ratio between challenge and support must be appropriate. However, this research indicates that international students are largely unaware of student services and not used to taking advantage of them. Where services were used, this was more prevalent

for participants from non-English speaking countries. In contrast from other studies (Ishii, 1997), participant responses indicate that international students need to use services not just in the beginning of their programs, but throughout their programs. Students who received information from their advisors or other international students were also more likely to take advantage of the services than the students relying on information from emails or brochures. This finding reinforces the fact that word of mouth is the best way to reach international students.

This research shows that the university's commitment to internationalization has not fully impacted institutional policies affecting international students. High tuition, limited financial aid and access to employment create unnecessary financial hardships for international students, especially those who are non-native speakers of English. Trek 2000 (UBC, 1995) stated that the cost of a university education should not be a barrier and that UBC would be enhancing scholarship and bursary funds. I question whether this commitment means increased support for international students.

Studies prior to this one have not paid specific attention to international students' views of their inclusion in campus community. Participants of the OECD Seminar in Hiroshima, Japan (1989) made a point that institutions should increase efforts to improve community receptivity for international students. Fourteen years later, my study has revealed that non-native English speakers did not for the most part feel included in either campus or department community. A few of them felt neither excluded nor included. None reported a sustained effort by the department or the campus generally to welcome international students. In contrast, doctoral students felt very much included. The University of British Columbia Internationalization Strategy (2003) stresses connections

with international alumni and encouraging their interest and involvement in the university's future plans. Yet, if some students do not feel part of the community when they are here, there is not much hope that they will identify with the university upon graduation.

Most participants in the study listed numerous connections with other international students. These ties provided major sources of academic and social support. This finding is consistent with those of many studies (Neice & Brown, 1977; Cunningham, 1991; Ishii, 1997; Rajput, 1999). According to Garrod and Davis (1999) the experiences of international students vary widely. At the same time they share much as a group because of the common experience of change, of shifts in their perceptions of a host college or university, their host country, their homeland, and ultimately themselves. Studies have shown that international students are more comfortable with each other because they possess an intimate understanding of the needs and concerns associated with living and studying in a foreign environment. The sense of difference, and sometimes inferiority, that many international students feel among local students disappears when interacting with other international students. In a diverse student body, no one group can be singled out as a minority because they all are minorities (Garrod & Davis, 1999). Some studies (Woolston, 1995) frame this phenomenon of international students preferring to interact with other international students as a problem. On the contrary, this finding demonstrates the importance of mutual support among international students on campus and the value of increased efforts to create opportunities for international students to interact.

The findings from the interviews have demonstrated that the “international student” is multi-faceted phenomenon, with different meanings depending on the individual or the group in question. The participants felt different from local students because of their cultural, social, linguistic and professional backgrounds. Some could not get over the focus on these differences and felt like foreigners and outsiders throughout their stay. International students in other studies also often mention feeling different from local students. They talk about “occupying a space separate from other students - a space entirely individual, because of the absence of family and community, and yet collectively representative of the curiosities of culture, history, and geography” (Garrod & Davis, 1999, p. 250). However, several students here thought that their status entailed certain duties: namely to share their culture with local people, to learn about the host culture and share it with the people in their home countries upon return. This understanding helped them to go beyond their differences.

Most students in this study attested to the fact that study abroad experiences had changed them. They became more independent, more confident, and more pro-active. Their cultural and learning horizons have broadened. Although previous investigations on outcomes of “study abroad” experiences were of undergraduate students in their early twenties going abroad for a term or an academic year, this research shows that international graduate students, between 30 and 40 years of age, completing their entire degrees in a foreign institution, may share the same personal outcomes.

Consistent with findings from other investigations of international students’ satisfaction (CBIE, 1988; CBIE, 1999; Song, 1995), the challenges reported here did not significantly influence satisfaction with overall experiences. They believed they struggled

a lot but they also learned a lot. Lulat (1996) explained satisfaction with studying abroad as a “testimony to the success in ‘negotiating’ with an alien educational institution, bureaucracy, people, language and culture, and alien landscape and weather” (p. 5). Studies consistently show that international graduates with the strongest sense of identity and purpose when they leave their host institution are invariably those men and women who have confronted significant challenges in their study abroad experiences.

Participants’ responses suggest that learning about internationalization raised certain expectations. They speculated about implications for teaching, learning, research and services at UBC. Several participants said that the university’s efforts to internationalize only meant expanded recruitment efforts, and tuition increases for international students. The “double-face” of internationalization with its promise both to transform university and to make money, so vividly discussed in Nelles (2000), has not gone unnoticed by international students. In response to my queries, many participants agreed that institutions need to remember the academic, financial and social benefits they bring. They named the university as a whole, faculty, international and Canadian students as the main beneficiaries. Although international students have been historically recognized for academic and cultural contributions to host universities (CBIE, 1987; Coalition, 1998; Shabahang, 1993), their support to the general international student community on campus has not been highlighted in other studies. Advocates of international education have recommended that international students be more valued by institutions (CBIE, 1981), and they should be viewed as “partners in internationalization” (Ebuchi, 1989). Yet, many participants in the study did not feel this recognition. The students thought that the university was still in the first stage of internationalization, only

attracting international students and sending students abroad. They called upon the university to take internationalization more seriously and address their greater involvement.

It is noteworthy that there were participants who were either very negative or very positive about the relationship between international students and internationalization at UBC. Some thought that UBC was committed to internationalization and accustomed to hosting international students while others believed internationalization had nothing to do with international students. Despite such differences, when international students in the study discussed improvements they wanted to see in their academic and social life, and later when they explored what internationalization should be about, their answers seemed remarkably similar. In both cases, they wished to see more sharing of cultures on campus, more opportunities for participation in class discussions, more efforts to attend to the needs of people from different cultures, and more integration of international materials and perspectives in the curriculum. Internationalization as understood by international students carries a promise of a more supportive environment, enriched educational and social experiences and visibility for them and their issues. At the same time, the reality of UBC's commitment to internationalize leaves them disappointed when they do not see these changes happening.

This study shows that the barriers to integration of international students are the same obstacles that prevent them from playing an active role in internationalization. Like Cunningham (1991), this study has found that the lack of institutional support and insensitivity to international students' issues present barriers. Classes focused on local issues where international students have limited opportunities to contribute and lack of

meaningful interactions with Canadian students and faculty members also constitute significant barriers. Institutional, provincial and federal policies related to increases in differential fees, limited financial aid and access to employment opportunities similarly offer impediments to integration of international students and limit their impact on internationalization. As students devote more time to on-campus employment to help with high tuition fees, they can contribute less time to activities outside the classroom.

The participants in this study had various perceptions of an international university. Several students thought that the presence of international students and visitors on campus and a variety of educational programs made UBC an international university. Others said that presence did not guarantee involvement: international people have to be used as important resources in order for UBC to claim the status of an international university. The Bridge to the 21st Century: Internationalization at UBC (1996) stated that although universities worldwide are now “international” in awareness, few in fact have the stamina or the resources to be “international” in practice. The comments of many international students in this study suggest that UBC has much work to do on its way to being “international” in practice in terms of its reception and education of international students.

Recommendations

International students participating in this research came to study in Canada because they wanted to learn from Canadian educators, they wished to share their experiences and backgrounds, they were interested in Canadian culture and other cultures, they wanted to improve their prospects at home, and hoped to better understand

themselves. The recommendations offered address how international students could better achieve these goals and how a host university could assist them.

Recommendations for Departments and Faculties

Individual departments and faculties should be central in providing academic, social and employment supports to international graduate students. This study recommends departments and faculties to set up academic writing courses as well as introductory seminars about Canadian education. Such seminars would “provide a general outline of the foundations of the field, and opportunity for faculty and students to engage in dialogue about the schools of thought, approaches, and academic traditions which prevail in both host and home countries” (Huhur et al., 1996, p.13). International students wishing to improve their English skills should have access to advanced level English courses taught by professionals. Students would particularly benefit from these courses if they could take them in the first months of their stay before taking classes in regular programs. It would ease their process of integration in the mainstream classroom and provide opportunities to make friendships with other international students.

Respondents to the latest AUCC survey of internationalization at Canadian universities viewed involvement and strong interest on behalf of faculty members as the most important organizational factor affecting internationalization of curriculum (Knight, 2000). Specific recognition of faculty members for their international involvement would benefit the process of curriculum internationalization.

International students should be encouraged to participate in extra-curricular academic and social activities. Departments should be encouraged to run peer programs to match new international students with continuing international and Canadian students.

Since some international students preferred to seek help from other international students rather than from counsellors, faculty members, or Canadian students, departments with significant international student enrolment should create a position of an international peer advisor.

Recommendations for Faculty Members

Professors who wish to increase participation of international students in their classes should invite their opinions and encourage sharing experiences from home countries. Classes allowing for comparisons among different educational systems and opportunities for international students to reflect on what they had learned at UBC and how they can apply this knowledge to their home countries would benefit international and ultimately all students. Examples and articles from different cultural contexts would also increase motivation and inclusiveness. When Canadian issues are discussed, professors should ensure the explanation of terms and abbreviations. Assignments where Canadian students are encouraged to write papers or design oral presentations together with international students would help both groups learn more about each other.

Recommendations for International Students

International students in the study advised other international students to be proactive in finding things they do not know, not to hesitate to ask for help and to seek advice from other international students. They recommended receptivity to new opportunities and connecting with faculty members doing research related to their home countries. They recommended being outspoken about ideas and needs, taking initiative in sharing their cultural backgrounds and educational experiences at UBC, and getting

involved in campus academic, social and political activities. They advised others to define their goals and seek ways to accomplish them through effective use of campus resources. They suggested more pro-active efforts to socialize and establish friendships with Canadian and international students. They recommended volunteering as it provides useful work experiences that would help them in getting paid jobs. They suggested participating in events where they could meet and develop connections with more international and Canadian students, creating support groups at the department, faculty and university level, and getting involved in campus student groups. Interviewees advised other international students to think more of what it means to be international students and what constitutes their role or roles on campus.

Recommendations for Canadian Students

International students encouraged by their Canadian classmates to join in classroom discussions or to socialize with them after classes were more satisfied with their experiences. They wanted more connections with local students. This study calls upon Canadian students to be more attentive to their international peers. Domestic students should encourage their international classmates to share experiences from their home countries in class discussions and provide help in explaining culture-specific terms mentioned in class. Canadian students may wish to invite international students to join them for holiday celebrations or other social events outside the classroom. Faculty members could also encourage such informal connections.

Recommendations for Student Services

Most participants in the study did not have opportunities to explore their experiences with other students prior to the study. International House could host seminars where students will reflect on what they experience. When students study abroad, "they are experiencing major dislocations relative to their ideas and their values and assumptions. The balance between assimilating experiences and new ideas into the existing world-view and expanding that view to accommodate new material is crucial" (Kauffmann et al., 1992, p. 156). The impact of overseas experience is not realized "without some deliberate reflection and examination" (Kauffmann et al., 1992, p. 157). Such seminars would recognize the importance of the study abroad experience.

International students in the study reported having no prior knowledge of how Canadian universities operate. They were unaware of the administrative structure of the university, its decision-making process, student support services, student government and the role of students in general, or the benefits of involvement in campus life. Workshops on these topics would better orient international students to UBC. Department and faculty orientations designed specifically for international students could include information about services available on campus and explanation of benefits of using them.

Recommendations for the University

UBC should increase financial assistance to international students by allocating more money for bursaries and scholarships, by persuading the provincial government to invest in education of international students, and through targeted fundraising. The 1999 CBIE survey of international students recommended that universities and colleges

enhance efforts to ensure that international students are aware of existing programs and services and are invited to participate. It also emphasized the need for constant communication between international students and service organizers. However, the AUCC study (1998) pointed out that good practices are often labour intensive and require additional financial and human resources that are not always available. Improved staffing and budgetary provisions would be necessary to provide proper services.

UBC should raise awareness of the importance of international students, the benefits they bring to campus and the issues they face. Cunningham's study (1991) recommends that senior administration develop a code of ethics to recognize the institutional role of international students. Staff and faculty development workshops would increase greater sensitivity to international student issues. Regular assessments of international students' needs should be conducted.

It is important for international students to be involved in the discussions about internationalization and the meaning of an international campus. UBC would benefit from their views on internationalization: what internationalization means to them, what role they play and should play and how they can be involved. Cunningham's study (1991) recommends "every effort should be made to create an effective forum for international students in Canada so that their voices may be heard on issues related to their sojourn in Canada" (p. 14). International students would benefit from opportunities to lead and to become involved in organizing campus academic and social events.

Recommendations for Policy-Makers

Numerous studies conducted by the CBIE and AUCC show that Canada continues to suffer from the absence of coherent policies in regard to international students and

international education in general. International student policy is multi-dimensional in nature. Strong co-ordination at federal, provincial and institutional levels is necessary to establish this policy. It should contribute to a welcoming environment for international students in Canada. It should benefit the students from the developing countries as well as students from developed countries. Like the CBIE studies and surveys on international students in Canada (1976-2000), this study recommends that policy-makers on the national, provincial and institutional levels consider the easing of work restrictions for international students, including permission to work and volunteer off campus and increase scholarship support. Increased efforts should be made by educational institutions to expand campus-based employment opportunities for international students.

Suggestions for Further Research

Additional research would be useful to establish a strengthened database of international student experiences. Research on how various members of the university community view international students and internationalization is needed. The role of international students in furthering internationalization in higher education requires further clarification. Services and adaptation strategies of institutions to international students need study. More research is needed on how institutions internationalize programs and how they deal with international students.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to examine experiences of international graduate students and their views about internationalization at the University of British Columbia. The findings reveal few signs telling international students that UBC is actively involved

in the process of internationalization. Improvements are necessary in the areas of curriculum and service provision to international students. Enhanced efforts are necessary to integrate international students in extra-curricular academic and social activities. It is important to introduce international sensitivity training for local faculty, students, and staff. The role of international students in internationalization should be clarified. Institutional and government policies should contribute to the provision of welcoming environment for international students in Canada and empower them to be active in internationalization. A greater involvement of international students will ultimately benefit all members of UBC community.

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APPENDIX A: INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ENROLMENTS IN CANADIAN
UNIVERSITIES

Table 1: Graduate/Undergraduate International Student Enrolment in Canadian Universities, 1982/83-1999/00

Year	Undergraduate	Graduate	Total
1982-83	24,321	8,068	36,074
1983-84	26,434	9,634	36,068
1984-85	23,800	9,650	33,450
1985-86	20,787	9,685	30,472
1986-87	18,292	10,019	28,311
1987-88	16,720	10,397	27,117
1988-89	17,507	11,900	29,407
1989-90	18,546	13,615	32,161
1990-91	20,328	14,859	35,187
1991-92	21,748	15,286	37,034
1992-93	21,596	15,220	36,816
1993-94	20,354	15,097	35,451
1994-95	19,141	14,284	33,425
1995-96	18,223	13,212	31,435
1996-97	18,468	13,215	31,683
1997-98	20,026	13,085	33,111
1998-99	22,158	13,398	35,556
1999-00	26,776	14,595	42,371

Source: Statistics Canada (1998-2000). *Education in Canada*, Catalogue no. 81-229 – XIB.

Table 2: International Students at Canadian Universities as a Percentage of Total Enrolment by Level of Study, 1982/83-1999/00

Year	Percentage of Total Undergraduate Enrolment	Percentage of Total Masters Enrolment	Percentage of Total Doctoral Enrolment	Percentage of Total Enrolment
1982-83	4.3	9.2	23.3	5.2
1983-84	4.1	8.7	22.7	5.0
1984-85	3.7	8.3	21.6	4.5
1885-86	3.1	8.4	21.3	4.1
1986-87	2.7	8.4	21.3	3.7
1987-88	2.4	8.4	21.6	3.5
1988-89	2.5	9.2	23.9	3.7
1989-90	2.6	10.4	25.8	3.9
1990-91	2.6	11.0	26.3	4.2
1991-92	2.9	12.8	25.0	4.3
1992-93	2.8	10.4	25.0	4.2
1993-94	2.7	9.4	24.7	4.1
1994-95	2.6	8.8	23.0	3.9
1995-96	2.4	8.3	20.9	3.7
1996-97	2.6	8.7	19.8	3.8
1997-98	2.8	8.9	18.4	4.0
1998-99	3.1	12.0	18.1	4.3
1999-00	3.7	N/A	N/A	4.9

Source: CBIE (2001). *The National Report on International Students in Canada*.

Table 3: International Student Enrolment as Percentage of Total University Population by Province, 1994/95-1999/00

Province	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00
British Columbia	5.9	5.6	5.4	5.8	6.2	6.4
Quebec	4.4	4.5	4.9	5.3	5.7	6.3
Nova Scotia	4.3	3.9	4.3	4.5	5.0	5.7
New Brunswick	2.5	2.6	2.7	2.9	3.8	5.4
Alberta	3.9	3.3	3.4	3.3	3.4	4.1
Saskatchewan	2.9	2.9	3.0	3.2	3.6	4.0
Ontario	3.2	2.9	2.9	3.0	3.3	3.8
Manitoba	4.8	4.0	3.5	3.4	3.3	3.6
Newfoundland	2.4	2.5	2.2	2.5	2.8	3.2
Prince Edward Island	1.8	2.1	2.2	2.4	2.4	2.9
Total	3.9	3.7	3.8	4.0	4.3	4.8

Source: CBIE (2001). *The National Report on International Students in Canada.*

Table 4: Graduate/Undergraduate International Student Enrolment in BC Universities, 1989/90-1999/00

Year	Undergraduate	Graduate	Total
1989-90	1,413	1,608	3,021
1990-91	1,613	1,807	3,420
1991-92	1,762	2,096	3,858
1992-93	1,876	1,974	3,850
1993-94	1,873	1,971	3,844
1994-95	2,027	2,071	4,098
1995-96	1,944	2,056	4,000
1996-97	1,989	2,057	4,046
1997-98	2,586	1,963	4,549
1998-99	2,782	1,854	4,636
1999-00	3,016	1,977	4,993

Source: CBIE (2001). *The CBIE National Report on International Students in Canada.*

APPENDIX D: DEPARTMENT LETTER OF CONTACT

Dr. Carolyn Shields,
Department Head, Educational Studies
Faculty of Education, 2125 Main Mall
University of British Columbia
Vancouver, BC

July 25, 2001

Dear Dr. Carolyn Shields,

I am writing to request permission to conduct a study of international graduate students at the Department of Educational Studies in the Faculty of Education at UBC in partial fulfilment of the requirements for my Master of Arts program.

The topic of my thesis is: "Welcome to Canada? Experiences and Views of International Graduate Students at UBC." I think that international graduate students at the Department of Educational Studies can offer rich insights into international graduate students' experiences in the Faculty of Education and UBC in general. They are closely engaged in the field that is concerned with the issues of respecting cultural diversity and providing enabling supportive environments for all learners.

It has been noted on multiple occasions in a number of UBC reports and statements that international students are key agents of the process of internationalization at UBC. However, no specific attempt has been made to find out what international students think of their educational and cultural experiences on UBC campus. In this study, I intend to examine the experiences of EDST international students in relation to the university's vision of internationalization. I believe this study will contribute into a deeper understanding and visibility of international students' issues on this campus.

To accomplish this goal, I would like to interview ten international graduate students at the Department of Educational Studies. The interviews with each student will last approximately two hours. The questions will be open-ended. As a follow-up to the interviews, I would like to invite the students to participate in the focus group to examine broader issues that may emerge from one-on-one interviews.

Please be assured that the data from the interviews will be treated in a confidential manner; that is, only the principal investigator and the co-investigator will have access to the data. In order to proceed with the survey, I require a letter of consent from you to present to the University of British Columbia Ethical Review Committee. I also need a list of all international graduate students who are currently enrolled full-time in one of the programs at the Department of Educational Studies. To expedite the completion of this task, I have enclosed a consent form and a return envelope. I would appreciate if you

APPENDIX E: DEPARTMENT CONSENT FORM

To: Regina Lyakhovetska,
Department of Educational Studies,
University of British Columbia,
2125 Main Mall,
Vancouver, BC V6T1Z4

Re: "Welcome to Canada? Experiences and Views of International Graduate Students at UBC" study

_____ Yes, you have the permission to conduct research in this department as outlined in your recent letter.

_____ Please contact me to provide further information about the study.

_____ No, I am not able to grant permission.

Additional comments:

Dr. Carolyn Shields,
Head, Department of Educational Studies

APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Before Coming to UBC

1. Did you study abroad before? If yes, tell me about that experience.
2. What other degrees do you have?
3. Tell me about your employment experience before coming to UBC.
4. Did you travel abroad before?

UBC- the School of Your Choice

5. When did you come to UBC?
6. Why did you decide to study abroad for your current graduate degree?
7. Why did you choose to study in Canada compared to other countries?
8. How did you find out about UBC?
9. Why did you choose to study at the Faculty of Education?
10. What did you plan to accomplish while at UBC in terms of academic, personal and professional development? Have your goals changed?

Your Experiences as an International Student at UBC

Academic Experiences

11. What do you think of the academic climate at UBC compared to your home university?
 - a. Tell me about your relationships with faculty members.
 - b. Tell me about your relationships with classmates.
 - c. Do you participate in extra-curricular academic activities (seminars, colloquiums)?
12. Tell me about your classroom experiences:
 - a. What is the general content of your classes?
 - b. Tell me about your participation in class discussions.
 - c. What makes you feel comfortable in class?
 - d. What else can make you feel comfortable in class?
 - e. Do you have opportunities to share your experiences and culture in classes?
 - f. Do you feel encouraged to do so? If yes, who encourages you?
 - g. Would you like to have more opportunities to share your experiences in classes? Why?
13. Your academic work
 - a. Who helps you with academic questions if you have any?

- b. Did you need any help in academic work that was unavailable? What do you think can help?

Social life

14. What do you think of social climate at UBC compared to your home university?
15. Which social events did you participate in at the department?
16. Which social events did you participate in outside the department?
17. Why did you want to participate in social activities?
18. How do you get information about social events?
19. What could have made you participate in more social events?
20. Were you involved in organizing any events in your department or outside your department? Why?
21. Were you involved in any student organizations or committees on campus? Why?
22. Tell me about your friends at UBC. Where are they from?

Community

23. How would you describe the environment for international students at UBC?
24. Do you feel included in the department community? Why?
25. Do you feel included in the University community? Why?

Services

26. Which services available for all students at UBC do you know? Tell me about your experiences with them.
27. How did you find out about these services?
28. Which services available for international students specifically do you know? Which of them have you used? Could you describe your experiences with these services?

Finances

29. What are your main sources of financial support at UBC?
30. What do you think of the financial support available for you as an international student at UBC?
31. Do you receive International Partial Tuition Scholarship? If yes, would you be able to afford studying without it?
32. What do you think of the tuition amount you are paying?

Employment

33. Did you have any employment experience at UBC? If yes, tell me about it.
34. How did you get information about the jobs?
35. Could you describe your experience of looking for these jobs?
36. Who were the people (organizations) hiring you?
37. Did you do any volunteer work?

Exploring the concept of "international student"

38. Based on your experiences at UBC, what would be your definition of an "international student"?
39. What does it mean to you to be an international student?
40. Are you satisfied with how things turned out for you at UBC so far?

International Students Explore the Concept of Internationalization

41. When you hear about internationalization of UBC, what does it mean to you?
42. What would be your definition of "internationalization"?
43. Does it have anything to do with international students?
44. Does it have anything to do with you?
45. Do you see any role that international students currently play in internationalization of UBC?
46. Which role should international students play in internationalization?
47. How do you think UBC sees this role?
48. Do you think internationalization is happening?
49. Do you think UBC benefits from the presence of international students on campus? How?
50. Does UBC benefit from your particular presence? How?

Prospects for the Future

51. Is UBC an international university in your opinion?
52. How do you expect to be treated at an "international" university?
53. Is there anything else international students could do (to continue) to contribute to internationalization?
54. Were there any barriers preventing you from contributing?
55. Would you personally like to (continue to) contribute to internationalization of UBC campus? If yes, how? If no, why?
56. Have you talked about your experiences as an international student before this interview?
57. Do you need to have more opportunities to share your experiences as an international student?

APPENDIX G: FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

1. What do you think of your experience of participating in this study?
2. Would you like to talk more about any topic touched upon during the interview?
3. Imagine everything that happened to you at UBC was just a dream. Your trip to Canada is the next day. Is there anything you would do differently?
4. You were invited to sit on a committee to advance internationalization at your department. What sorts of recommendations would you make?
5. Imagine you are invited to present at the fall orientation at International House. Are there any stories from your experience that you would like to share with new students? What sort of advice would you like to give them?
6. Do you think you will stay connected with UBC upon graduation? Why?