

Learners or Earners?
Interviews with International Students in Canada on Navigating
Student-Worker Mobility Pathways

by

Deanna Merriam

Bachelor of Arts, University of New Brunswick, 2022

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the Graduate Academic Unit of Political Science

Supervisor: Leslie Jeffrey, PhD, History and Politics

Examining Board: J.P. Lewis, PhD, Chair, History and Politics
Hepzibah Muñoz-Martínez, PhD, History and Politics
Tobin Haley, PhD, Social Sciences

This thesis is accepted by the Dean of Graduate Studies

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK

August 2024

© Deanna Merriam, 2024

Abstract

This thesis explores the lived experiences of international students in Canada, examining the impacts and outcomes of Canada's International Student Program (ISP) that positions students as not only educational participants but also flexible economic assets. Through a brief review of international student policy developments, it is argued that these changes reflect a deliberate effort to commodify international students' labor to meet Canadian labor market demands. The thesis also draws on migration literature to highlight the exploitative risks inherent in foreign labor pathways, applying these concerns to the International Student Program. Through the use of qualitative semi-structured interviews with international students and support professionals, this study reveals the challenges students face under these policies including permit or program navigation, financial instability, and most notably adverse impacts on well-being. This study highlights the complex relationship between Canada's various mobility programs and notes the benefits of utilizing qualitative methodologies in researching program outcomes.

Dedication

To the foundations of my being. My mum, Kathryn, for her unwavering kindness and enrichingly creative soul; my dad, Christopher, for his unrelenting attention to detail and steadfast confidence in my aptitude; my sister, Jenika, for her endless friendship and sunny disposition; and my partner, Samuel, who as far as I am concerned should be awarded a degree alongside me for his everlasting support and companionship during this period and beyond.

I dedicate this thesis to you. Your contributions to my life have been immeasurable and deserve more recognition than I can provide here.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge and thank my committee members, Dr. Muñoz-Martínez, Dr. Tobin Haley, and chair Dr. J.P. Lewis for their much-appreciated commitment to reviewing my work. Their comments, questions, and insights have been immensely helpful throughout this process, and I thank them for their time and suggestions. I would also like to thank my supervisor and mentor, Dr. Leslie Jeffrey, who has provided support, guidance, and much-needed coffee throughout my degree, without which this thesis could not have been completed. I have been immensely lucky to have her as my supervisor.

I profusely thank my interview participants whose experiences are the foundation of this thesis. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to talk to them and recognize the paramount role that their honesty has played in the completion of this thesis.

I also thank my friends Holly Howe and Danielle Davies for their excitement about this project and their exuberant friendship. Thank you to my parents, Kathryn and Christopher, for an incredibly fun childhood that has allowed and encouraged me to pursue my interests. Thank you to my sister, Jenika, for keeping me up to date on hot gossip while I hunkered down and wrote this. Lastly, thank you to my partner Samuel Arseneau for his endless supply of encouragement throughout my degrees. He made sleepless nights of writing easier, long days of editing happier, and has helped me every step of the way.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	v
List of Tables	vii
List of Figures	viii
List of Abbreviations	ix
Chapter 1- Introduction.....	1
Study Significance	6
Current Research.....	6
Gaps in the Literature.....	8
Thesis Structure	10
Chapter 2 – Literature Review	15
Immigration and Multiculturalism.....	15
<i>Selective Immigration</i>	16
Migrant Labour Programs--Problematized	17
<i>Socially Engaged Research</i>	19
<i>Expanding Migrant Labour Programs</i>	22
International Student Program as a Labour Program.....	23
<i>The Gap</i>	25
Chapter 3 - Methodology	26
Data Collection Method:	27
Research Ethics:	31
Recruitment.....	31
<i>Sampling</i>	31
<i>Eligibility Criteria:</i>	33
<i>Time Commitment:</i>	33
<i>Final Sample:</i>	34
Information Collection: Conducting Interviews	34
Data Analysis Methods	37
Project Timeline.....	40

Limitations	40
<i>Sample Size:</i>	40
<i>Cultural / Racial Bias:</i>	41
Chapter 4- Policy and Analysis.....	43
International Student Policy Development	44
Temporary Foreign Worker Pathway Concerns	48
The 2014 TFWP Overhaul: Redirecting Attention.....	49
<i>The Post-Graduate Work Permit Program</i>	60
The IMP: Challenges of Ambiguity.....	63
The International Student Program (ISP) Concerns	69
Chapter 5 – Results and Discussion.....	81
Key Finding 1: Accessing Clear Information	82
<i>Navigating IRCC Information</i>	82
<i>“Other Actors” Involved</i>	86
<i>ISP Program Changes</i>	89
<i>Discussion on “Accessing Information”</i>	92
Key Finding 2: International Student Wellness.....	97
<i>Wellness and Mental Health</i>	97
<i>Lack of Community and Loneliness</i>	100
<i>Bias and Discrimination</i>	104
<i>Discussion on “Wellness”</i>	106
Chapter 6- Conclusion	111
Summary of Findings.....	112
Implications.....	114
Limitations	116
<i>Racial & Cultural Bias</i>	116
<i>Sample Size and Timeline</i>	118
<i>Contextual</i>	118
Further Research	119
Bibliography	123
Appendix A: International Student Interview Guide	131
Appendix B: International Student Support Professional.....	132
Curriculum Vitae	

List of Tables

Table 1 Differentiating the TFWP and the IMP	53
Table 2 Primary TFWP streams before and after the 2014 overhaul	54

List of Figures

Figure 1 Increasing IMP usage	58
Figure 2 International Student Study Permit Holder	76

List of Abbreviations

CBSA	Canada Border Security Agency
CEC	Canadian Experience Class
ESDC	Employment and Social Development Canada
GCMS	Global Case Management System
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoC	Government of Canada
IMP	International Mobility Program
IRCC	Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
ISP	International Student Program
LMIA	Labour Market Impact Assessments
OCWPP	Off-Campus Work Permit Program
PGWP	Post-Graduate Work Permit
PGWPP	Post-Graduate Work Permit Program
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
PR	Permanent Residency / Permanent Resident
REB	Research Ethics Board
TFW	Temporary Foreign Worker
TFWP	Temporary Foreign Worker Program

Chapter 1- Introduction

Over the past year international students in Canada have garnered significant media attention, illuminating a range of challenges faced by this group including fears of deportation, housing insecurity, and poverty (Harrison 2023; O'Neill 2024; Tascher 2023). Headlines such as *"He came to Canada with a college acceptance in hand. Next week, he's scheduled for deportation"* (Harrison 2023) and *"No International Students!! As need grows, Brampton food bank turning some away"* (Bhugra 2023) paint a vivid picture of the increasing challenges faced by some international students while in Canada which have earned widespread news coverage. This surge in media coverage has revealed a troubling landscape where international students have found themselves navigating unclear immigration pathways, inadequate support systems, and unrealistic expectations set by educational institutions and policymakers (Darrian 2024; O'Neill 2024, Todd 2024). While discussion is facilitated through news coverage of international student issues, a concerning anti-foreigner narrative has also emerged. Surveys and opinion pieces also getting published in the media reflect a growing sentiment among Canadians that the influx of international students strains local resources and infrastructure, exacerbating issues such as the housing crisis (Al Mallees 2023; MacRae 2024; Donovan 2024). These concurrent discussions in the media outlining prevalent concerns about the structure of the international student program (ISP) and a growing discontent in Canadian's attitudes towards foreign nationals including international students prompts research to explore the ways that Canada's international student program might influence the domestic economy, or vice-versa.

In this thesis, I argue that international students have faced significant negative impacts on their daily lives due to the inadequacies of the ISP. By first reviewing international student policy developments since the early 2000's I argue that international students in Canada have increasingly been treated as workers to supplement market needs. Rapidly changing study permit regulations are shown to intentionally commodify their labour, signaling a transition from viewing international students as solely educational participants, or "learners" into foreign labour market assets, or "earners". Additionally, I argue that as international students are increasingly utilized as a foreign labour force, they are exposed to vulnerabilities outlined in migrant labour including inaccessible or ambiguous program information, a lack of labour standards (facilitated through Labour Market Impact Assessments or LMIAs), restrictive conditions on permits that limit mobility, and poor quality of life outcomes due to federal disregard for program sustainability and participant success. Interviewing students who navigate life under these program conditions proved that not only was there merit in literature that notes the inaccessible nature of Immigration, Refugee, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) pathways, but that students also face negative outcomes on their mental health due to program shortcomings. Students in the interviews described experiences with not fully understanding program restrictions, not being able to navigate government websites without external assistance, and how program oversights allowed student financial insecurity and isolation which thoroughly harmed their mental health.

Throughout this thesis, some discussions rely on foundational understandings that may require elaboration such as the role of capitalism in policymaking, the rise of neoliberalism, or the long-debated intention and role of the state. Firstly, understanding

the role of “the state” in this context should be clarified and restricted to the role of the federal state. While provincial governance can play a role in the regulation of labour, the federal state is considered for the purpose of this thesis. Theorizing the role and intention of the state has been subject to many ongoing debates, with a long history of seemingly paradoxical classifications that place it both as a structure existing within governance frameworks but also a structure that facilitates them (Jessop 2001; 2022). Literature concerned with clarifying this difficult position, placing the state as existing either inside or outside the influence of society can be summarized, according to Bob Jessop’s 2022 work, as either “state-centered” theory or “society-centered” theory (Jessop 2022). These broad classifications refer to the complex and often polarized approach to understanding how the state may (society-centered) or may not (state-centered) be influenced by societal forces and the world around it. This debate is particularly important to reflect on as this thesis explores the idea of the state financially benefitting from the use of mobility pathways for economic gain within a capitalist system.

In the context of this thesis, recognizing that the discussed mobility pathways and programs are embedded within a financial system that allows for the state (and higher education institutions) to gain profit from migrant and student program participation may help understand the relationship between the state and its interest in facilitating these pathways. The use of programs where participants, such as students, pay high differential tuition fees and may go on to participate in the domestic economy through labour creates a system where international students may be treated as a income generators, maximizing profits and revenue generation at institutional (paying tuition to higher education institutions) and federal (contributions to the labour market, living expenses, paying taxes

on income, etc.) levels. Additionally, the programs discussed also exist within the context of neoliberal globalization, defined by Jie Zheng in their 2010 work as “*a historical process, in which the interconnectedness of nation-states and regions has been strengthened through the international economic, social and cultural intercourse and flows across borders*” (Zheng 2010 p. 220). The state-led development of both student and migration programs as discussed throughout this thesis should be considered embedded within the rise of neoliberal globalization, where programs such as the ISP have become a relied upon and state-recognized essential form of human capital, with parliamentary reports emphasizing the immense economic, cultural, and social contributions of this group (Zheng 2010, Immigration, Refugee, and Citizenship Canada 2023b). In this way, the states actions have directly related to capital accumulation and economic gains, utilizing the role of students and migrants in a neoliberal era.

As Jessop notes, rather than firmly defining a theoretical approach as either state-centered or society-centered, it can be beneficial to problematize a research area with considerations into this complicated relationship between state and society, recognizing how the state in relation to the specified research area may be impacted by (or impact) society. Doing so can help identify factors that are well suited for “exploring, describing, interpreting and explaining the problem” (Jessop 2022 p. 81). In the context of this thesis, I apply this approach by recognizing the role of the state in the continued use and expansion of mobility programs, and see it as not a completely autonomous structure uninfluenced by social forces, yet also not solely as a structure designed to carry out capitalist and neoliberal societal interests. Instead, I consider the state as in between these realities, where it possesses some relatively autonomous reach, yet exists within the

constraints and is influenced by a deeply engrained neoliberal globalized society that implements, utilises, and benefits from capitalistic programs that regulate human capital for profit through the programs of interest in this thesis.

The ongoing theoretical debates on the role of the state, while important and relevant to discussions had within this work, are not the central focus of this thesis and will not be elaborated upon in-depth. This thesis presents an empirical contribution to some of these state theory discussions by providing insights into the outcomes of policy decisions and state programs entrenched within a neoliberal system, utilizing fieldwork to implement a bottom-up approach to understanding participant experiences. The presented discussion around policy decisions, and the outcomes of interviews which note the impacts of program participation on students may be useful in state theory discussions to understand the consequences of state mobility programming within a for-profit system.

Ultimately, this thesis discusses the multifaceted experiences of international students and argues that changing federal policy decisions intend to utilize international students as flexible economic assets shape participant's realities, and that the risks of exploitation inherent in foreign labour programs impact outcomes for student wellbeing. In doing so, this research highlights the importance of understanding the complicated relationships between foreign worker programs and international student programs, as well as the risk of vulnerabilities present in Canada's several mobility pathways through the use of first-hand experiences provided through interview methodologies. In doing so, this research highlights the importance of understanding the complicated relationships between foreign worker programs and international student programs, as well as the risk of vulnerabilities present in Canada's several mobility pathways through application of

first-hand experiences. These findings highlight the need for policymakers to step away from utilizing students as Earners who have little choice but to be flexible labour assets due to the impacts of changing restrictions on their wellbeing, and the need to implement clear policy information that properly prepares students for their time in Canada, allowing these Learners to thrive.

Study Significance

This study contributes to discussions pertaining to international student program policies and experiences by isolating specific lived experiences and challenges faced by participants in the program, which in this case are determined to be trouble accessing permit information, and mental health struggles. The purpose of this study is to better understand the experiences of international students as they navigate life in Canada under their federal program restrictions, and determine how the concerns outlined in foreign worker literature are relevant to the daily lives of those in Canada's ISP, effectively bridging the gap between migrant worker concerns and international student concerns. By bridging this gap through first-hand accounts of student experiences, attention can be drawn to the magnitude of issues that impact foreign nationals participating in Canada's workforce, and problematize the shared challenges across Canada's various mobility programs.

Current Research

As international student challenges and the programs broader critiques gain attention in the media, turning to literature on the experiences of foreign nationals in Canada shows that there is a current body of research that examines mobility pathways in Canada that facilitate the movement of foreign nationals through migration and

immigration programs. Existing research highlights concerns around the risk of participant exploitation inherent in Canada's mobility programs-- namely the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP), which is often discussed in the media as the prominent foreign national worker program (Tungohan 2016; Sharma 2012; Chowdhury 2019; Marsden 2021a; and Vosko 2014; 2022; Strauss & McGrath 2017). Concerns within this body of literature discuss inadequate housing for foreign workers, poor treatment through experiences with racism or social othering, and immobility faced by migrants possessing strict work permit.

The TFWP is not the only mobility program that has faced criticism, as the International Mobility Program (IMP) introduced in 2014 as a new mobility pathway for foreign workers has also seen increasing conversations about its potential to replicate the risks associated with the TFWP. (Vosko 2022; Marsden et al. 2021b; Tucker 2020; Lu and Hou 2019; Marsden et al. 2021a). As critics note, the introduction of the IMP did not signal an end to the potential for exploitation within migrant work, rather, it introduced a less regulated landscape for migrant workers to navigate (Vosko 2022; Tucker 2020). Another federal mobility pathway, the International Student Program, has also been faced with concerns of exploitation replicating those of the TFWP and IMP-- often regarding the program's intentions and ability to provide a safe environment for foreign nationals to succeed in the Canadian market (Scott et al. 2015; McCartney 2021). Some authors argue that this pathway functions as a tool for the Canadian government to progress its economic and national interests though collecting high tuitions and using the program as a form of worker pathway rather than a educational pathway to provide high-quality educational experiences to the international students participating in the program (Zheng

2010; She and Wotherspoon 2013; Johnstone and Lee 2014; McCartney 2021; Brunner 2023). Through these works, it is clear that the body of research on Canada's mobility programs and their risks is well established, with clear critiques around the treatment and experiences of foreign nationals in the programs.

Gaps in the Literature

Despite these ongoing discussions around the risks of exploitation or vulnerabilities inherent in migrant worker pathways, and the concern around international student program usage, there is little research available that examines the impact of the program's structure and operation on lived experiences of students actively participating in the program. Particularly as over the past 20 years the federal government has focused on policy changes that regulate the labour ability of international students to match the changing needs of the domestic economy, literature neglects to examine the specific interactions or potential impacts of frequent international student labour policy changes and the lived experiences of the students whose labour is being regulated. The outcomes potentially faced by international students who navigate changing restrictions on their labour while completing their educational experience in Canada should be further explored, similarly to Vosko's 2022 argument that research would benefit from further studies that examine the experiences of those in mobility programs in order to elaborate upon the actual impacts of participation in a mobility pathway that may foster vulnerabilities.

Additionally, another gap in the literature is the lack of methodologies utilized that bring forward first-hand accounts and discussions with international students navigating their program changes. Particularly important when discussing topics such as

marginalization, exploitation, or racialized experiences, literature in this field does not always utilize interview methodologies that allow the international Student Program participant the ability to describe their experiences navigating this pathway in-depth and explore areas in need of focus from researchers. Literature on the IMP and ISP largely rely on permit data to indicate the popularity of programs and utilize TFWP literature to indicate the potential concerns that could persist, however, research would benefit from sitting down with IMP and ISP participants in order to determine if these theorized concerns are valid and persist in their lived experiences. Interviewing or becoming involved with the participants of study-- especially in fields concerning complex identities and vulnerabilities-- helps create insightful research that is supported by first-hand experiences and allows the studied group the ability to control or direct areas of concern informed by their answers. In the case of this study, utilizing a socially engaging methodology was incredibly useful in determining the impacts of policy changes and program restrictions on the lived experiences of students. Because this study approached engagement with international students in a semi-structured way that encouraged exploratory discussions, unexpected findings were determined such as the extreme mental burden faced by students as they navigate an isolating program.

Furthermore, literature on migrant worker mobility pathways such as the TFWP and the IMP often exclude considerations of international student workers in their discussions as they possess study permits rather than distinct work permits, which is a complication in research further explored in Chapter 4. This separation of worker classifications positions international students away from other types of foreign labour, which prevents discussions around exploitation in migrant labour literature from applying

to international student workers. By separating international students from other forms of temporary foreign labour, it keeps this group of workers hidden and relatively under-discussed in literature. Literature that does not examine foreign labour with considerations for international students due to the separation of study permit from other migrant work permits leaves a gap in our understanding around what international students should be classified as-- particularly as international student policies have been evolving to focus on their labour capabilities. Addressing this gap in the literature through an analysis of prominent critiques within migrant labour research, as well as international student program literature identified similar problems between these two fields and note concerns that exist between these two groups with separate but similar permits, prompting the further consideration of international student workers in migrant worker research.

Thesis Structure

Following this introduction, Chapter 2 of this thesis reviews relevant literature in order to provide a broad understanding of popular discussions pertinent to this study and its focus. This section begins by reviewing prominent discussions in immigration and multiculturalism literature, where immigration and multiculturalism policy in Canada has been argued to be significantly influenced by economic factors and the interests of corporations. These economic interests and commodification of skilled immigrants leads to the critiques of point-based immigration which creates an unrealistic image of the ideal immigrant. Next, migrant labour programs are problematized through a review of literature that indicates immigration studies neglect to consider the role of the migrant in economic exploitation. This section argues that migrant labour is inherently precarious,

with oppressive regulations that ensure migrants remain immobile, insecure, and exploitable. Research that discusses the benefits of socially engaged research (such as interviews and ethnography) is noted here, alongside a further discussion of the benefits these methods bring to migrant labour literature. Following this, more recent migrant labour literature is explored which critiques the expansion of migrant labour programs through the creation of the International Mobility Program. Here, literature is highlighted that emphasizes the risks of underdiscussed migrant labour streams such as the IMP, leading into a discussion on the International Student Program and its recent literature that also positions it as an emerging area of study in need of further review due to its position as another program that poses economic gains through exploitation.

In Chapter 3, the methodological considerations made throughout the design and operation of this study are described. First, this chapter reviews data collection methods and the decision to utilize a qualitative approach to explore international student experiences that can be considered marginalized. Next, the use of semi-structured interviews is justified noting the considerations made to structuring questions that could foster discussion, elaboration, and participant control. Following this, recruitment methods are outlined, noting the use both convenience and snowball sampling in order to utilize my network connections having previously worked in international student office settings. Eligibility criteria is also outlined in this section, alongside the time commitment for this study that dictated some of the methodological decisions like conducting a cross-sectional study. Final sample information is noted to be five international students, and two international student support professionals invited to participate for contextual advantages. Data collection is then described, detailing the considerations made during

interviews, and is then followed by a review of the use of Braun and Clarke's 2006 (and later refined 2017) framework on thematic analysis as a data analysis method. The study's timeline and subsequent limitations are then discussed to complete the discussion on methodology.

In Chapter 4 this thesis dives into three key sections; an international student policy analysis, a review of major concerns in TFWP and IMP literature, and a review of concerns found within the ISP. First by examining the major policy developments faced by international student in Canada, it is argued that the federal government has been intentionally utilizing international students to fill labour market needs, and expanded regulatory policies that unrestricted student labour-- especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. This shift that moved international students away from their role as educational participants was adjusted in mid-2023, when policies were further changed to once again restrict the labour of students now that post-covid recovery is no longer as needed shifting students back into their role of educational participants. The dual identities of international students observed within policy as both creates a potentially precarious experience where international students are subject to changing regulations which dictate their ability to be mobile by emphasizing their role as either a student or a worker depending on market needs.

Chapter 4 then goes on to discuss the predominant concerns within TFWP and IMP literature, noting that exploitation persists throughout the program's changes, and that research into this program has become increasingly difficult as the IMP's unclear structure fosters confusion. It is ultimately determined through analysis of literature's concerns that the challenges outlined in migrant worker literature are both prominent and

relevant in international student considerations as the IMP encompasses Post-Graduate Work Permits (PGWP), meaning that students seeking out pathways to permanent residency (PR) are impacted by the problems within migrant mobility programs, and that international students who occupy positions under similar conditions to the IMP also become difficult to research and monitor to prevent exploitation. In addition to the problems of the TFWP and IMP, Chapter 4 also outlines the vulnerability concerns discussed in TFWP and IMP literature that persist throughout the ISP, and identify the role Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) plays in facilitating structural and operational concerns that have the potential to perpetuate exploitative conditions for international students in the ISP.

In Chapter 5, results from the interviews are discussed. Using the thematic analysis outlined in chapter three, two key themes or findings are noted. The first key finding explores the challenges international students face in accessing and understanding international student program information. Using quotes from the interviews, this finding is developed into supporting sub-themes; students face difficulties navigating convoluted IRCC information, international students are turning to unreliable sources for permit-related advice, and the complexity introduced by frequent program changes in recent years that presents challenges for international students. Reviewing this finding, it is further developed through a discussion that connects and positions challenges accessing permit information to literature that supports this as a challenge faced by international students. The second finding outlined in this section covers the challenges of international student wellness that was discussed in the interviews. This finding notes how participants discussed at-length challenges experienced by themselves and peers

related to mental health. This finding is further explored through three sub-themes, the significant stressors (specifically burnout, insomnia, and financial insecurity) associated with international student life, the impacts of a lack of community during their time in Canada, and experiences with bias and discrimination when seeking academic, personal, and professional engagements. This second finding is followed by a discussion on how international student wellness is by far the most significant finding of the study and relates this outcome to additional literature which supports the experiences noted by participants.

Chapter 6 then provides a conclusion to the study, summarizing the findings noted above, and discussing the implication of the research outcomes. These implications conclude that there are legitimate concerns around the available information of Canada's mobility programs as demonstrated by the review of TFWP and IMP literature as well as the results of interviews. Additionally, this section solidifies the benefits of utilizing semi-structured interviews to research international student concerns, and emphasizes the necessity of approaching research that examines vulnerable situations or identities with holistic considerations about the individual outside of their labels, which can be assisted by more involved methodologies such as interviews. This chapter then goes on to outline some of the limitations of the study, including racial and cultural bias, sample size and timeline, and contextual limitations. Following this, recommendations for future research are proposed in order to conclude the thesis and encourage future discussions.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Immigration and Multiculturalism

In order to develop arguments on the position and experience of international students in Canada, it is vital to first explore how other foreign nationals who work in Canada have been discussed in literature-- turning now to the works on immigration and multiculturalism in Canada. Immigration literature is seen to have largely taken off in the 1980's, where works on immigration and multiculturalism policy in Canada were argued to be significantly influenced by economic factors and the interests of corporations (Richmond 1982; Rotstein 1983). Abraham Rotstein noted in his 1983 work that Canada's economy sought to attract skilled workers and professionals, leading to the creation of immigration policies that prioritized individuals with specific skills and expertise to the benefit of the businesses (Rotstein 1983). This approach to immigration emphasized an interest in human capital and viewed immigration as a crucial economic tool to bolster the Canadian economy and reduce unemployment. In this context, businesses played a pivotal role in advocating for immigration policies that addressed labor shortages and promoted economic growth, raising questions around the boundaries of state and corporate interests. This trend was forwarded by Richmond in 1982 where it was argued that immigration policies directed by business interests posed unique risks to the long-term success of the Canadian economy (Richmond 1982). He explains that without a holistic approach that considers the disparities between white ethnic immigrant experiences and non-white experiences, Canada's push for a so-called multicultural nation may fail, as with its attempts to implement meaningful immigration and multiculturalism policy. He goes on to explain that in order to implement successful

multicultural and immigration policies, they must consider the racial bias workers will experience, as the use of their human capital in Canada largely depends on their interest in staying as long-term immigrants (Richmond 1982).

Selective Immigration

The ideas presented by Richmond and Rotstein around immigration as a short-sighted corporate gains strategy contributed later to literature that highlighted the notion of an Ideal Immigrant, which contained a more nuanced understanding of multiculturalism in immigration policy, emphasizing the impact of policymaker's interests in economic contributions rather than retaining immigrant labour. Here, literature turns towards critiques of the points-based immigration system, which awards permanent residency on the basis of quantitatively measured criteria (Green and Green 1995; Green 1999; Tannock 2011; Reitz and Sklar 1997; 2001; 2005). This immigration system has faced significant critique in this body of literature, which argues the system places a perceived overemphasis on education and professional credentials, potentially favouring highly skilled and highly educated individuals while overlooking the contributions of those with other valuable skills or experiences (Green and Green 1995). Critics also argued that the points-based immigration system might not effectively capture the diverse range of talents and expertise needed for a robust and well-rounded society as even if individuals possess adequate skills and education, they could still face alienating experiences with racism and exclusion once in Canada (Green 1999). Additionally, as Reitz argues throughout his work, immigration policy that utilizes the points-based system which prefers specific high-skill and education often neglects to make adequate considerations for where these immigrants will work or contribute to the

Canadian economy, leading to what is then argued to create a system that wastes the high-skill potential of its immigrants (Reitz and Sklar 1997; 2001; 2005). Furthering this critique, literature also notes how the points-based system neglects considerations that would truly indicate a federal interest in diversity, such as placing an emphasis on family reunification classes to establish a multiculturally integrated Canada (Green and Green 1995). It is argued that placing immigration emphasis on measures such as bringing spouses and children into Canada rather than expanding economic streams could foster diverse communities and integrate families into the Canadian economy for longer, fulfilling the supposed interest in multiculturalism while also contributing to the Canadian economy (Green and Green 1995; Sweetman 2006).

Migrant Labour Programs--Problematized

Following the above review of literature that discusses the intention of immigration pathways to operate as economic assets that benefit corporate interests through their labour contributions, literature on migrant labour responds to the positioning of immigrants as a labour tool-- calling for attention to migrant labourers in the Canadian workforce.

This field of literature redirects attention away from the idea that immigration is solely where economic exploitation may take root and identifies the use of temporary foreign labour through migrant worker programs as a vital consideration in need of discussion. Specifically citing the need to separate categories of foreign labour in order to avoid assumptions that all labour is immigrant labour, Sharma argues that federal migrant worker programs restrict the mobility of migrants to a degree that creates a category of labour that is inherently unfree and precarious (Sharma 1997). These sentiments are

echoed throughout the body of literature, which indicates the need to examine migrant work through labour pathways such as the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and its sub-programs. In doing so, critiques of migrant worker program structure emerge that situate these pathways as inherently and intentionally exploitative in the interest of economic gains (Macklin 1992; 1999; Bakan and Stasiulis 1994; 1997; Sharma 1997; Fudge and MacPhail 2009; Akbar 2022). Literature that examines the structure of the TFWP argues that the precarious status of temporary foreign workers in Canada is intentionally maintained through systemic exploitation, marginalization, and oppressive regulatory mechanisms, all of which prioritize economic gains over the well-being and rights of migrant workers. Despite federal recruitment efforts to bring migrants into Canada through worker pathways, literature argues that migrant worker programs are designed to maintain temporariness by positioning migrants more as visitors than immigrants, which raises concerns of who is responsible for their wellbeing as they lack access to social supports typically delivered to Canadian citizens or Permanent Residents such as healthcare or welfare (Macklin 1992, 1999).

Similarly, it is also argued in this literature that sub-programs of the TFWP such as those pertaining to seasonal agricultural work or domestic care work may border on conditions of indentured servitude, where the marginalization of migrant workers represses their mobility and prevents them from leaving their poor conditions (Bakan and Stasiulis 1994; Akbar 2022). This marginalization is argued by Bakan and Stasiulis to occur through systemic neglect and lack of rights where workers have been required to rely on their employers for housing arrangements or healthcare while under potential fears of deportation should they address issues while maintaining their goals of achieving

permanent residency (Bakan and Stasiulis 1994; 1997; 2003). This area of discussion indicates the potential for the exploitation of migrant workers due to the program's closed permits, which tie workers to specific employers during their time in Canada, further limiting their ability to negotiate fair wages and decent working conditions. As Judy Fudge notes, restricting workers to singular employers facilitates power dynamics within the home and workplace, resulting in the potential for exploitation to occur (Fudge 2012). As Ethel Tungohan widely discusses in her work, this closed permit system creates a power imbalance and makes migrants vulnerable to mistreatment and abuse by corrupt or greedy employers as workers who speak against their treatment, or conditions have faced threats of deportation in the programs history (Tungohan 2016). These critiques collectively emphasized the need for comprehensive and specific reforms to address the structural flaws and vulnerabilities created within the TFWP in Canada.

The work in this area of literature indicates a direct argument; the structure of Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker Program and its sub-streams is designed to maintain a dependent and temporary yet exploitable labor force, benefiting economic interests at the cost of human rights and social justice for migrant workers.

Socially Engaged Research

As literature emerged discussing the exploitative structure of the migrant worker programs and its specific pathways such as the agricultural stream or the live-in caregiver stream, this field sees a shift in methodological approaches, where some authors moved to utilizing methodologies in their research that could help draw specific conclusions around the actual experiences of individuals navigating these theoretically precarious forms of labour. This area of literature utilizes intersectional identities and understanding

of migrants as complex individuals as a tool that could help highlight specific unique circumstances previously theorized about. To do this, many authors turn to interview methodologies as a way of uncovering the specific outcomes of previously discussed exploitative labour pathways (Basok 1999; 2000; 2002; Preibisch 2004; Tungohan 2017; 2018a; 2018b; 2020).

One significant contributor to this body of work is Tanya Basok, who has extensively used interview-based research to delve into the lived experiences of migrant workers in Canada. Basok's research reveals a range of experiences among migrant workers, from complaints about exploitative treatment by their employers to accounts of more paternalistic, yet still problematic, relationships. For instance, while some workers described their employers as treating them like "animals" and exercising excessive control, others referred to their employers as good people, reflecting a positive, familial relationship (Basok 2000). This emphasizes the complexity of migrant workers' experiences, which are often dependant on the individual flexibility and kindness of their employers. Basok's interviews also highlight the significant barriers migrant workers face, such as the lack of convenient and affordable public transportation, which isolates them and reinforces their dependence on their employers (Basok, 2000). Similarly, Kerry Preibisch's work further emphasizes the broader community context by including interviews not only with migrant workers but also with employers, government and industry representatives, rural residents, and members of migrant advocacy groups. This comprehensive approach paints a more detailed picture of the migrant labor experience by acknowledging the influences of locals (as detailed by Basok) and applying this idea to the community at large. Findings from this community-centered work indicate that the

housing arrangements for migrant agricultural workers, which are often restricted, grant employers' considerable control over the social and personal behavior of the worker. This control occurs in various ways, from restricting the entry of visitors to providing or withholding access to transportation. While some employers allow workers some freedom, others use the threat of dismissal as a powerful mechanism of control, as participants highlighted the fear of losing their legitimacy as a temporary resident due to being unemployed (Preibisch, 2004).

Ethel Tungohan's series of works on migrant labour experiences in Alberta further contributes to this methodological shift by very critically and carefully employing interviews and critical ethnography in her research to explore the multifaceted experiences of migrant workers in a way that considers research as a tool to advance understandings and contribute to social justice for the migrants she studies. Writing an article on the complex nature of socially engaged research, Tungohan noted the role of intention in conducting research in this field; indicating how the approach of the researcher, as well as the intention of the research's impact may shape socially engaged research away from positive contributions when researchers do not intend for their work to contribute to social justice (Tungohan 2020). Bearing in mind these considerations, findings from these methodologically engaging contributions to literature highlight aspects of migrant experiences not often discussed, such as the first-hand impacts of racism, loss or restructuring of their foreign identities, or the impacts of living and working in abysmal conditions (Tungohan 2017; 2018a; 2018b). Through these interview methodologies, researchers have been able to move beyond theoretical discussions to uncover the tangible, lived experiences of migrant workers. This approach not only

humanizes the participants of the study but also provides a more accurate and detailed understanding of the exploitative dynamics at play that had only been noted as potential risks in alternative works. The incorporation of intersectional identities and a holistic view of migrants as complex individuals have proven to be crucial in highlighting the specific and unique circumstances faced by these workers, thus advancing the discourse in significant ways.

Expanding Migrant Labour Programs

Leading up to 2014 in light of the mounting public pressures from the public and academics alike, the Government of Canada implemented reforms to migrant labour programs and introduced the International Mobility Program (IMP). A separate migrant worker pathway than the TFWP, this high-skill migration stream aimed to fill a wide-variety of high-wage positions in the domestic economy (Vosko 2022). This new program opened the door to a new body of literature that focuses on the use of this mobility pathway to not only advance economic gains through the use of migrant labour, but to do so through less-regulated and less-scrutinized means (Vosko 2022). As Tucker notes in his 2020 work, this emerging body of literature addresses how migrant labour streams falling under the TFWP have been subject to public controversy, however, “While there are good reasons for this attention, too narrow a focus on these workers has left relatively unexamined a second category of migrant workers, in what since 2014 has been labelled the International Mobility Program (IMP)” highlighting how the IMP has not been subject to widespread critique despite its use of migrant labour (Tucker 2020 p.373). Despite the lack of widespread attention in larger migrant labour literature, this area of academic discussion highlights several key critiques used to inform the direction

of this thesis, including; the continued use of restrictive closed-permits despite government claims that the IMP would foster healthy work environments (Marsden et al. 2021a), unsustainably high numbers of IMP migrant labour entering Canada at rates that indicate instability of social supports and housing (Tucker 2020; Vosko 2022), and the reduction of migrant labour protections such as Labour Market Impact Assessments (LMIAs) (Chartrand and Vosko 2021). The academic focus on the IMP reveals ongoing issues within new migrant worker pathways and prompts new discussions around how workers in these under-studied fields may be faced with exploitation and vulnerability--expanding on previous TFWP literature. These works not only extend their critique beyond the TFWP but also note the need for continued and comprehensive research to ensure that the evolving landscape of migrant labor policies in Canada is equitable.

International Student Program as a Labour Program

Another federal mobility pathway, the International Student Program (ISP), has also been faced with concerns of exploitation similar to those observed in the TFWP and the IMP. The literature on the ISP draws on prior research into migrant labor programs, particularly the potential for exploitation and economic motivations (McCartney 2021). Through examining the ISP and its function as a labor pathway for international students, scholars argue that the ISP serves not merely as an educational exchange program but as a strategic tool for the Canadian government to advance its economic and national interests. This is demonstrated through the collection of high tuition fees and the usage of international students as labour contributors rather than focusing on providing high-quality academic experiences for the participating students (She and Wotherspoon 2013; Johnstone and Lee 2014; McCartney 2021).

The ISP is therefore argued to be evolving from a straightforward mobility program, intended to internationalize Canadian universities and enhance the country's educational landscape, into a neoliberal strategy that recruits international students primarily for their potential as temporary labor (Johnstone and Lee 2014). This shift in perspective is supported by arguments that international students have become increasingly commodified within this framework. Brunner (2022) extends this argument by suggesting that international student labor is not only commodified but that international students themselves are now perceived as ideal immigrants. This perception is rooted in the fact that these students acquire Canadian education credentials, are trained to meet specific labor market needs through their degrees, and often meet the language proficiency requirements that other immigration candidates may struggle with (Brunner 2022).

Furthermore, literature highlights how international students are encouraged to apply for permanent residency through various post-graduation pathways. This strategy is seen as beneficial for the federal immigration system, as international students are effectively pre-vetted and prepared for immigration by their participation in their Canadian academic institutions (Brunner 2022). This creates a seamless integration of education and immigration, where international students are prepared to fulfill labor market demands upon graduation, thereby alleviating some of the pressures on the broader immigration system (Zheng 2010; Brunner 2022; 2023). The positioning of the ISP as a program influenced by educational, economic, and immigration policies indicates the complex role of international students as a labour market asset influenced by trends of neoliberal policy frameworks.

The Gap

Despite these ongoing discussions around the intention of the ISP to function as an economic labor pathway, and its similarities to migrant worker programs that have garnered critique in past literature, there is little research available that examines the impact of the program's structure and operation on the lived experiences of students participating in the domestic economy throughout their time in Canada through interviews. Particularly regarding international students who utilize their ability to work in Canada during their studies, rather than through post-graduate work permits, this unique group of workers is under-discussed in literature researching Canadian foreign labor and mobility programs and their potential risks and impacts.

To address this gap, my research aims to explore the lived experiences of international students who engage in the Canadian labor market while studying. Through interviews with international students, I seek to uncover whether the concerns of exploitation observed in programs like the TFWP and IMP persist within the ISP. This study will provide insights into how the ISP's dual role as an educational and labor pathway affects international students' work experiences, highlighting potential areas of concern for students and the broader implications of policy's interaction with the student experience. By focusing on the firsthand accounts of international students, this research will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the ISP's impact on its participants, offering valuable perspectives for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders involved in shaping the future of international education and labor mobility in Canada.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) outlines qualitative research design in 4 steps: establishing a context of a study, identifying significance of a problem, identifying a gap, and clarifying the purpose of the study. Using this, I designed my research to follow this framework, outlined briefly here. First establishing the context of my study, I returned to the critiques presented by migrant labour authors that indicates the risk of exploitation inherent within programs such as the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) (Tungohan 2016; Sharma 2012; Chowdhury 2019; Marsden 2021; and Vosko 2014; 2022; Strauss & McGrath 2017), and the complexities of the International Mobility Program (Vosko 2022; Marsden et al. 2021a; Marsden et al. 2021b; Tucker 2020; Lu and Hou 2019). Next, I identified the significance of this problem by applying these critiques to the International Student Program, which has faced critiques due to its position as a mobility pathway and an economic tool for the federal government (Zheng 2010; She and Wotherspoon 2013; Johnstone and Lee 2014; McCartney 2021; Brunner 2023). Following this, I noted the gap in research where there is little research available that examines the impact of the ISP's structure and operation on lived experiences of students actively participating in the program. Finally, I considered my purpose for conducting this research, which was to better understand the experiences of international students as they navigate life in Canada under their changing federal program restrictions, and determine if the concerns outlined in foreign worker literature are impactful to the daily lives of those in Canada's international student program.

This chapter will review research design, data-collection methods, sampling strategy, data analysis methods, project timeline, and limitations associated with the decisions made in this study.

Data Collection Method:

In Dana Moree’s 2018 work “Qualitative Approaches to Studying Marginalized Communities”, she identifies the importance of considering researcher positionality in research and emphasizes the importance of using qualitative methods when studying a potentially marginalized group. Stating “what we know about research among marginalized communities is that if we want to integrate them, it is better to choose research designs that enable closer and longer contact with the researched population and that also include their perspective when planning and conducting the research” Moree indicates that methods which promote contact with the group of study are ideal-- especially when seeking to understand or utilize their perspectives and experiences in research (Moree 2018, p. 8-9) As my project seeks to study international students who may face stigma, exploitation, and bias, this study utilizes qualitative interview methods that facilitate interaction between researcher and participant.

The decision to utilize qualitative semi-structured interviews was not, however, decided on from the very beginning of this project. Starting out, I attempted to find information on programs, their complications, and their impacts through a review of relevant policy decisions and amendments throughout the 2000’s. Over the course of several months, I utilized the Government of Canada’s News release website to trace current international student policy announcements and amendments to map out policy developments and develop a historical policy progression. This process was meant to

give me a holistic understanding of the current and historical policy landscape that might allow me to develop a discussion around the permit and program conditions. In addition to seeking out relevant releases from the Government of Canada website, I also relied on authors such as Dale McCartney (2021) and Yan Guo and Shibao Guo (2017) who have reviewed the foundation and progression of some international student policies in Canada in their own works. Reviewing these sources became a pivotal point in the research process as I struggled with accessing clear or direct permit regulations and faced several barriers to gaining a robust understanding of the ISP, as information on program usage and participant engagement in the labour market is not readily accessible. Navigating the policy changes while attempting to discern the “best” way to participate in the ISP quickly became challenging and largely motivated my decision to turn to semi-structured interviews. After realizing that permit information and participant experiences were more obfuscated in policy and literature than initially thought, utilizing semi-structured interviews to learn more about participant experiences directly from the source. The previous work on policy history and development has been repurposed and included in Chapter 4 under International Student Policy Development.

As the nature of the project sought to discuss employment and personal experiences of international students across the province, I looked into the use of virtual methods in conducting research interviews. Turning to past work on virtual research methods, Tungohan and Catungal (2022) discussed their experiences with virtual interview methodology, highlighting the shortcomings and benefits of this emergent technique. Noting that while in-person interviews have possessed benefits such as body-language indicators, increased opportunities at establishing rapport between researcher

and participant, and the connection of having a face-to-face conversation, the COVID-19 pandemic brought forward an opportunity to utilize new technologies that could mean greater comfort and safety for participants (Tungohan and Catungal 2022). Virtual interviews can not completely replicate traditional in-person interviews and --according to Tungohan and Catungal-- should only be utilized when in-depth considerations are given to the participants comfort, access to both technology versus transportation, privacy concerns, ability to engage with open conversations in their environment, and more (Tungohan and Catungal 2022). Flexibility in interviews was also paramount, as when implementing a virtual interview, technical difficulties are likely. The ability to troubleshoot technical problems and maintain open communication around technical abilities is a form of good faith and contributes to building a new wave of virtual rapport between participant and interviewer. Because of the benefits and potential challenges of utilizing virtual interviews, I chose to give participants the option of in-person or virtual interviews to ensure that participants knew they could control the environment of this study.

For the purpose of this study, semi-structured interviews were selected. According to Leech et al., (2013), semi-structured interviews are designed with a general set of questions in mind, however, the questions selected are not simple yes-or-no questions, and are instead designed to allow participants the freedom of exploring their answers as in-depth or as general as they would like (Leech et al. 2013). Semi-structured interviews allow for researchers to broadly direct the discussion to a general area (in this case, international student experiences within the workforce and in Canada), but still ensure that participants have the ability to note additional, adjacent topics of importance or

relevance. This interview structure recognizes the participant as a legitimate authority on the subject of interest and ensures that their experiences are not restricted solely to the topics specified as important by the researcher (Leech et al. 2013).

This thesis utilizes qualitative semi-structured interview methods with international students with work experience in Canada, and international student support professionals. The full interview guides for both students and support professionals can be found in the Appendix (Appendix A & B). Interview questions were separated into three general sections for both categories of participants.

1. Personal / Student Experiences: This first section was designed to gain a basic understanding of the student's background and their current work situation. For advisors, this section was used to elaborate on their positioning within the student experience and outline the advisor's understanding and thoughts surrounding the student experience.

2. Program information: The second set of questions was designed to help students elaborate on their understanding of programs such as their study-permit, the IMP (and PGWP if mentioned), their work restrictions, and how they access information about their study permit restrictions. For advisors, this section was used to highlight the actual program restrictions commonly in place for the general international student body, and summarize trends around common concerns, issues or misunderstandings regarding study permit and work restrictions.

3. Conclusion / discussion: The last section was designed to encourage participants to reflect on their experiences and add additional information that

they personally felt important to share for future discussion or as advice to future students. This section was also designed to allow participants to address passionate concerns relevant to their experiences and could prompt further discussion outside of the interview prompts.

Research Ethics:

In order to conduct interviews, I completed a Research Ethics Board Application through the University of New Brunswick. I outlined my groups of interest, my interview questions, and my procedures to ensure privacy and security of all participant data and information. This application was approved on February 6th, 2024, where I was permitted to begin recruitment and conduct interviews with interested participants.

Recruitment

Sampling

As the goal of this study was not to draw generalizable conclusions around the opinions and experience of international students in Canada, a non-probability sampling method was deemed satisfactory. Recruitment for this study was therefore conducted via both convenience sampling and snowball sampling.

Convenience sampling, described by Mweshi and Sakyi (2020) to be “the selection of a sample of participants from a population based on how convenient and readily available that group of participants is” (Mweshi and Sakyi 2020 p. 192), was used during the recruitment phase of this study due to the time restrictions associated with this project. Recruitment was primarily conducted through social media and email. The contact information for cultural clubs and international student societies was obtained from student government websites, and social media information was found through

individual searches on Instagram and Facebook that reflected that listed clubs and societies. Recruitment letters were sent to the listed emails and included a brief overview of the study, and the Research Ethics Board (REB)-approved Letter of Information. In addition to student societies and clubs, I emailed student government communication officials who could connect me with additional participants or share the study, and international student support professionals who could send my study invite through newsletters received by all international students at the academic institution. I also directly emailed four student support professionals who engage with international students full-time to discuss their perceptions of international student concerns.

In addition to convenience sampling, I used snowball sampling once I had my first few interviews. Mweshi and Sakyi (2020) describe snowball sampling as a method of recruitment that has known members of a research population help identify and inform other members of their group that may be interested in participating in a study (Mweshi and Sakyi 2020). Especially as participants eligible for the study may be required to fulfill more than one criteria (i.e. have work experience and be an international student) utilizing snowball sampling methods was used to spread the word of the study through workplace peers, friend groups, roommates, and more. Once interviews were completed, participants were encouraged to share their experience in the interview with peers or other international students that they believe may be interested in joining the study. Additional contact information was given out should students have any questions about their participation, and students openly discussed other individuals that they would reach out to.

Eligibility Criteria:

For this study, students at the post-secondary level were eligible to participate, and the duration of time in Canada preceding interview participation was not considered. Students of any non-Canadian nationality were considered eligible, provided they required a study visa to complete their studies in Canada. Participants in this study were also required to have held employment in Canada during their study (on or off-campus) in order to participate, as the study was designed to compare international student experiences in the workplace to critiques of migrant programs where transnational individuals faced risks in the workplace. Participants were not considered ineligible on the grounds of age, sex, race, religion, years of post-secondary attendance, or campus location. No participants that expressed interest in the study during active recruitment were considered ineligible. In short, an interested participant would have to be an international student who is actively pursuing their education and have held or actively hold employment during their time studying in Canada in order to be eligible for the study.

Time Commitment:

Due to time constraints, this project was a cross-sectional study of international students' experiences and reflections on their time in Canada. Participants were asked to reflect on their experiences and opinions based on the time they had spent in Canada and in the workplace in order to gauge their concerns and lived-experiences. This research design only examined what students feel are the most important challenges facing them at that moment, and asked them to reflect on their experiences, however, it should be noted that responses were limited to what students were feeling at that point in time. These

interviews did not approach a full review of participants' evolving and changing feelings about their time in Canada, and focused on the stories they were willing to share that were important to them. As Paul Spector notes in his 2019 work, cross-sectional studies can be efficient research designs when beginning new lines of inquiry into a topic or field, which is what my project was intending to do (Spector, 2019).

A longitudinal study could have examined these participants over a set period of time to determine how student experiences may develop or change over the course of their degrees, however, due to time constraints this design was not feasible. Alternatively, authors such as Spector suggest that studies related to strain or stressful experiences could be approached by longitudinal studies (specifically noting diary/journal entries as beneficial) but concluded that longitudinal studies may not present the causality benefits that assume researcher bias is removed from result interpretation (2019). Therefore, I moved forward with a cross-sectional study.

Final Sample:

This study involved seven individuals: five international students enrolled at post-secondary institutions, and two international student support professionals. Participants were located within New Brunswick, Canada, and were selected and interviewed in the order that they replied to recruitment efforts. Two individuals responded to recruitment after thematic analysis had begun. They were thanked for their interest and informed that they would be contacted should further interviews be needed. No participants requested their information be withdrawn.

Information Collection: Conducting Interviews

From early March to late April 2024, seven semi-structured interviews were conducted. Participants were invited to participate in a 30–45-minute interview that would take place over Zoom. Several participants faced difficulties accessing the Zoom meeting, therefore the option was given to meet over Microsoft Teams instead. Additionally, two participants requested in-person interviews, and a private room was booked to host these interviews. Ultimately, five of the interviews were online, and two were in person. When participants first entered the meeting, approximately 10 minutes was taken to review the completed consent form, engage in small talk, and ask if the participant had any question before beginning the official introduction to the interviews. Before commencing the recording of the meeting, all participants were asked if they would prefer to not appear on camera and were given the chance to adjust the meeting to their preferences. Consent was given before all recordings commenced. All meetings were recorded via Microsoft Teams recordings, which were privatized through meeting preferences. Participants were given access to these recordings for one week as I transcribed and reviewed the footage and were encouraged to review the materials and contact me in the event they would like to change, remove, or add onto their interview. After one week, the recordings automatically expired and were permanently deleted. Interviews ranged from approximately 30 minutes in length to 75 minutes, depending on the engagement of the participant. All participants were notified at the 30-minute mark, and again at the 45 minute mark, and reminded that they were in no-way obligated to continue.

When conducting interviews, it was important that this study implemented strategies that were considerate of existing power hierarchies that exist between the

researcher and the participant. As Herron outlines in her in-depth review of qualitative feminist interviewing, interview practices and qualitative research benefits when researchers utilize power-sharing and deep listening strategies during interviews (2023). She argues that qualitative interviews are complex interactions between individuals that require a deep, attentive consideration to not only the words spoken during interviews, but also the silences, hesitations, pauses, and redirections that may occur during a study (Herron 2023). Strategies employed during interviews in line with deep listening practices included giving space to participants when deep in-thought, allowing participants to go “off-topic” when interpreting questions, considering reasonings for subjects (if any) that were faced with hesitancy, identifying participant enthusiasm for particular subjects and encouraging the continuation of their interested discussions, and more.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in order to gather qualitative results for analysis. To gather this data, interviews were transcribed during the week following each meeting. All identifying information was removed from transcripts, including names, home countries, employment locations (which were replaced with employment fields), references to identifiable individuals in the community, and specific programs of study. Transcripts contain all of the participant dialogue, as well as all of the researcher dialogue, which were only edited in matters pertaining to grammatical errors (such as sentence repetition, stuttering, and clarity when abruptly responding to previously discussed topics). The interview participants were codified as either S1, S2, S3, etc. to identify student status, and support professionals were coded as P1, P2. The code sheet was printed, and then deleted from my computer. The printed code sheet is kept in a

locked filing cabinet that only I have access to, and transcripts were then moved to an encrypted USB which is kept in a separate locked cabinet that only I have access to.

Data Analysis Methods

After interviews were transcribed, participant identities were removed, and privacy was ensured, the transcripts were prepped for thematic analysis which would allow for the identification of patterns and themes present across all interviews.

Referencing Braun and Clarke's approach to Thematic Analysis, results were drawn from the transcript data.

In their 2006 work "Using Thematic Analysis in psychology", Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke pushed for researchers to consider the benefits of thematic analysis, which they describe as a method that allows researchers to "identify, analyse, and report patterns within data", and go on to highlight the ways that thematic analysis allows researchers to draw rich conclusions about their interviews across a wide number of theoretical frameworks (Braun and Clarke 2006 p. 79). In this 2006 work, they outline a step-by-step framework to adequately implement a thematic analysis that was later reformed in a 2017 collaborative work in "The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology" (Terry et al. 2017). In this study, thematic analysis was used when reviewing transcripts in order to draw out shared experiences, common discussion points, and unexpected concerns.

Using a thematic analysis approach in this study helps categorize interview content and helps navigate researcher involvement as it considers the researcher's interpretations of transcript data and helps implement a multi-step approach to ensure proper considerations are taken during analysis (Terry et al. 2017). Some of the steps undertaken

are discussed further below and are taken from Terry et al's 2017 adapted approach of Braun and Clarke's original 2006 approach to Thematic Analysis.

(Phase 1: Familiarization) Immediately following each interview, I arranged for an hour of journaling to highlight a summary of the interview, and note ways that I would describe the participants behaviour, outlooks, and general tone during the interview. I then reviewed these notes and amended them after finishing transcription to ensure participants were accurately summarized and the "big ideas" were noted.

(Phase 2: Coding) Once transcription was complete, I reviewed the transcripts and began to highlight shared topics between interviews. I used a colour-coded system to relate the topics across participants, such as "red = study permit discussion" and then used these groups to arrange my initial themes. Additionally, during the week after the interview, I reviewed the video transcripts to outline if a student was particularly animated about one topic over another, if they were avoidant of discussions, or if they had a tone of disinterest or excitement, etc. when discussing particular topics.

(Phase 3: Theme Development) Guided by my research questions, I then considered my discussion groupings in the context of my questions to determine the identified theme's relevance to my overall project. This consideration highlighted information from transcripts that did or did not align with the expected discussions prompted from my research questions. To examine this, I asked myself the following when comparing initial themes to the goals of the study:

- Did participants talk about their visas and permits? What specifically?
- Did participants discuss their top concerns?
- How did participants react when discussing federal programs?

(Phase 4: Review Themes) Once themes were reviewed in relation to the broader interests of this project, they were then applied individually across each interview. Doing this raised questions around whether a theme I had assigned to a topic was really representative of each individual comment in its larger conversational context. I reviewed each transcript with only one theme in mind, double checking to be certain that the tones I had noted, and the larger context of the dialogue were still relevant to the theme. This resulted in the creation of sub-themes that are immediately relevant to the specific quotes used in the study, but still contribute to the larger themes discussed.

(Phase 5: Defining Themes): After themes were deemed relevant across the interviews individually, they were then re-examined and defined within the context of the research to ensure their significance within the interviews was accurately portrayed. In this phase, each theme and their sub theme were re-examined to determine if any overlap was present, and if clear and separate findings from the interviews could be presented effectively. In this phase, some sub-groups were amalgamated and review re-occurred until the findings were considered separate, relevant, and still considerate of the greater contexts within the interviews.

(Phase 6: Producing a Report) Returning again to my initial research goals, I turned to academic literature to position my interview results in a broader context with connections to relevant academic discussion. Relating my key findings to past academic work contextualizes and legitimizes these findings and allows the findings to contribute to an ongoing field of literature and fill gaps in the understanding of federal program impacts.

Project Timeline

After receiving REB approval at the beginning of February 2024, recruitment began to gather participants for the study. Recruitment was conducted on a rolling basis, spanning February 2024 to May 2024. Participation interest slowed significantly as exam season approached for students in April, therefore the recruitment period extended after the exam season (April 2024) to ensure potential participants who were busy with exams had the opportunity to express their interest without additional academic pressures. Interviews were conducted on an ongoing basis after receiving the necessary informed consent forms. Interviews took place from early March 2024 to late April, 2024-- recruitment efforts were not effective after May 2024. Interview transcription and recording review occurred within one week of each interview's completion. Each interview recording was deleted within one week to ensure adequate timeframes for transcription and to review participant's tone/expressions. Thematic analysis was conducted in full upon the completion of the last student interview in late April 2024.

Limitations

Sample Size:

These results must be considered in conjunction with the several limitations experienced during the course of this project. The first being sample size; my small-scale interview study is unable to draw generalized or widely applicable conclusions about the experiences of international students. This study drew in 5 student participants willing to discuss their experiences in university and at work in Canada. It should be noted that international students are a non-homogenous group, with multiple factors having the potential to change student experience outcomes while in Canada including skin colour,

ethnicity, religion, fluency in English, number of international students from home country attending the same university, wealth, etc. To supplement the low sample size of student participants, and also to shed light on observed trends, I interviewed 2 international student support professionals. These professionals discussed common experiences observed in the international student body and helped designate some discussed issues as common or non-common based on the conversations they have with students themselves. These support professionals provided valuable insights into the international student experience; however, it should be noted that these workers may have been limited in conversations due to federal licencing guidelines that prevent individuals in their position from providing long-term immigration or employment advice. Contacting a larger sample of support professionals in various networks such as employment, education, mental health, etc. could have helped draw conclusions around the observations of an international student support network in Canada.

Cultural / Racial Bias:

Another limitation of this study is the presence of cultural and racial bias. This study centers around the experiences of an international group and discusses topics pertaining to challenges or barriers associated with this identity. I, as the interviewer, am a white Canadian and must acknowledge that asking participants vulnerable questions about their mental wellbeing or frustrations during their time in Canada could have placed my participant in a vulnerable position. I designed my interviews to be semi-structured in order to give participants control over what topics they explored and the depth in which we discussed them, however, I acknowledge that expecting or assuming trust with sensitive or challenging topics is not possible. I aimed for a maximum of 10

participants in order to have enough time to build a better connection and rapport before commencing the interviews to hopefully alleviate feelings of distrust. As mentioned above, I utilized the aforementioned international student professionals to navigate the possibility of racial or cultural bias in my interviews and incorporated the trends they have seen in their professional careers while engaging with international students from their position of greater connection and trust.

Chapter 4- Policy and Analysis

Canada's approach to international student policy has undergone significant transformation over the decades, reflecting a shift from viewing international students primarily as educational participants to recognizing them as crucial economic assets. This evolution is marked by several pivotal policy changes that redefined the status and role of international students within the Canadian landscape. Canada's International Student Program is a significant and popular mobility pathway, with Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) indicating that the international students that comprise the large program "make immense economic, cultural, and social contributions to Canada" (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada 2023b p. 21). In this section, the progression of the international student program from policy initiatives dedicated to facilitating the entrance/exit of students that engage with Canadian higher education into a program that strategically reaps the financial benefits of international student labour is explored. International student policy has seen a distinctive and demonstrable shift that has moved international students away from solely engaging in higher education, and instead has positioned them as invaluable and flexible financial assets vital to the economic success of Canada through their labour force. In this section, I will begin by reviewing a brief policy history pertaining to the regulation of international student workers. Following this, the prominent concerns around the temporary foreign worker program will be reviewed alongside a critique of the international mobility program in order to outline key issue areas that could be applied to international students as temporary foreign nationals. Finally, this section ends with an application of these

migrant labour concerns to the international student program, highlighting how the program fosters the potential for exploitation to occur.

International Student Policy Development

The gradual shift of international student policies that expanded international student's ability to interact with and contribute to the Canadian labour market can be understood through a brief review of relevant policies from 2002-2022. Turning to the early-2000's highlights the beginnings of a trend in federal policy that commodified international student labour and created the foundation for its profitability. The introduction of the Immigration Refugee Protections Act in 2002 set a precedent for promoting highly educated foreign nationals as excellent candidates for immigration, and is a turning point for the use of international students as a long-term economic retention strategy (McCartney, 2021). This idea was further implemented through the 2005 introduction of the Post-Graduate Work Permit Program (PGWPP) and the 2008 Canada Experience Class (CEC) which created pathways targeted at highly educated and highly skilled international students to contribute economically through their labour while on a path to PR (Government of Canada News 2006a; Government of Canada News 2008; Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada 2011). Concurrently, in 2006, the Off-Campus Work Permit Program (OCWPP) was introduced and expanded the labour mobility of students to now allow for off-campus work (up to 20 hours per week) when they had previously been restricted to on-campus employment (Government of Canada News 2006a; Government of Canada News 2006b).

Entering the 2010's, the federal government released the International Education Strategy (2014-2019, renewed for 2019-2024), which officially positioned international

students as a central aspect of Canada's economic agenda. By focusing on attracting and retaining international talent, this strategy aimed to expand Canada's higher education recruitment in order to stimulate economic growth by attracting international student workers (Government of Canada 2014) and signaled the official commodification of international students as labourers within federal policy (McCartney 2021). Following this, the introduction of the COVID-19 pandemic provided an opportunity to once again expand the role of international students as a source of labour, as IRCC implemented pandemic recovery policies that utilized international students by eliminating the 20-hour per week cap on their labour in 2020 (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada 2020) later citing the "important role international students can play in addressing our labour shortage, while continuing to pursue their studies" (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada 2022b). IRCC later extended the duration of the PGWPP and increased the number of international students they would allow to transition into the PGWP, as "these talented and skilled international graduates play a vital role in addressing our labour shortage, and those nearing the end of their post-graduation work permit are already well-integrated into Canada's labour market and work in key industries across the country" (Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada 2022d). All of these 2002-2022 policies expand international student's ability to interact with the labour market and demonstrate that through deliberate policy decisions, student labour has not only faced decreasing work restrictions and pressure to engage in the domestic workforce, but has also become commodified and relied upon by the federal government. In this way, international students have been faced with policy decisions that have been

shifting them away from their position as temporary educational participants, and has increasingly pushed them towards a position akin to temporary foreign workers (TFW).

The recent 2023 and 2024 policy decisions to restrict and regulate international student entry to Canada and their labour once admitted points to a new direction for international students in policy-- one that repositions them as students, rather than workers. This shift sees policy that had previously focused on expanding international student labour become restricted in order to regulate the ability of international students to engage with the labour market and the potential need for these individuals to rely upon social supports. Turning to December 2023, IRCC implemented several new policies that impacted the financial situations of international students and post-grads, including an increase to the proof-of-funds requirement (raising it from \$10,000 to \$20,000 per year of study excluding tuition and travel costs) in order to ensure that new international students would have adequate funds to not face insecurity once in Canada (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada 2023c). Additionally, December 2023 also saw restrictions to the PGWP, as the expansions to the program implemented throughout the COVID-19 response were concluded, no longer extending the PGWP duration and effectively reducing the number of international post-graduates who are working in Canada (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada 2023c). Following this, throughout the early months of 2024 IRCC further restricted international students from accessing labour opportunities by introducing a limit on the total number of international students permitted to enter Canada that decreases the amount of new students by 35% (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada 2024a), and by re-introducing the weekly hour-caps for international student workers that limit working students to 24-

hours per week during the academic term (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada 2024b).

These 2023-2024 restrictions come about as the deliberate expansion of policies from 2002-2022 that promoted the use of international students in the labour market had resulted in a high number of international students who entered Canada and faced financial insecurity, housing insecurity, and food insecurity (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada 2024a) rather than just contribute economically through their labour and tuition. As such, the 2023-2024 policies indicate the intention to restrict both international student entry and work in order to position them once again as students with excellent immigration potential and labour contributions, rather than an oversaturated worker population that has been facing insecurity in the ISP mobility pathway.

As evidenced by the historical policy approach to international students, the federal government positions these students as both learners and earners, where they are brought into Canada under the façade of international education while program intentions seek out these individuals for their labour contributions. This dual positioning prompts further exploration into what each of these identities mean for the student experience and the vulnerabilities that may be associated with existing as a foreign national working in Canada, or as a foreign national studying in Canada. This overview of Canada's international student policies from 2002 to 2024 highlights a changing landscape that transitions students from academics to employees and back again at the interest of the domestic labour needs. Initially, policies expanded the roles of international students beyond academia, integrating them into the Canadian labour market and leveraging their contributions to the economy. However, the recent regulatory shift in 2023 and 2024

suggests refocusing on the primary educational purpose of these students while navigating the consequences of earlier policies. These dual identities of international students—as both educational participants and economic contributors—create a complex and potentially precarious experience where international students are subject to changing regulations and restrictions which dictate their ability to be mobile by emphasizing their role as either a student or a worker depending on market needs. The evolution of Canada's international student policies emphasizes the need for a thorough understanding of the multifaceted roles of international students, prompting this thesis to examine the prevalent vulnerabilities that exist within both the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, and later the International Student Program to analyze the potential risks that students may face when engaging with either role—learner or earner.

Temporary Foreign Worker Pathway Concerns

As Canada's international student policies have evolved, shifting from an initial focus on mobility pathways to a broader reliance on economic contributions through labor, the need to understand the risks of existing as a foreign national participating in the Canadian workforce emerges. To do this, Canada's primary foreign labour pathways -- the TFWP and the IMP-- are explored to determine key problems that impact their participants. This section delves into the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) and its subsequent (and problematic) transformation into the International Mobility Program (IMP), in order to determine potential risks and vulnerabilities that could be applicable to international students in the workforce. By critically examining these worker pathways, this section identifies risks that could be similarly applicable to international students, especially those participating in programs like the Post-Graduate

Work Permit (PGWP). Ultimately, two key concerns are highlighted; the introduction of the IMP in 2014, which turned public attention away from the majority of foreign worker programs (including the PGWP), and the IMP's ambiguity that fosters confusion and prevents understandings of who temporary foreign workers are, where they work, and if they are facing vulnerabilities. These concerns outlined in migrant worker literature are both prominent and relevant in international student considerations as the IMP encompasses the PGWP, meaning that international students seeking out pathways to PR are impacted by these concerns, and that international students who occupy positions under similar conditions to the IMP also become difficult to research and monitor to prevent exploitation.

The 2014 TFWP Overhaul: Redirecting Attention

The Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP), up until 2014, included an extremely wide range of migrant worker programs that encompassed closed-work permit positions and open-work permit positions facilitated through both low-skill and high-skill worker pathways. The TFWP encompassed nearly all forms of migrant work (over 200 fields), including open-permit and closed permit work, high-skill and low skill positions, and nearly every previously established special skill stream (such as the live-in caregiver stream and the seasonal agricultural workers stream) (Employment and Social Development Canada 2022). This vast program allowed foreign nationals to enter Canada for a temporary period of time in order to fulfill positions in the Canadian labour market that could not be filled by a domestic worker. Employers interested in hiring a Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) would have to complete a Labour Market Overview (later renamed Labour Market Impact Assessment-- or LMIA) that would provide information

to the government to indicate the unsuccessful recruitment efforts to hire a Canadian, the proposed wage, the location of the employment opportunity, how many other TFWs the employer employed/ wanted to employ, and more (Marsden et al. 2021b). The main positions found within the TFWP leading up to 2014 were the agricultural and domestic care work sub-programs that required migrants to possess a closed employer-specific work permit, and required LMIA's. The TFWP, leading up to 2014, began to face backlash surrounding its treatment of workers, with criticisms forming around the use of closed-permits and the inadequate nature of the aforementioned LMIA's-- citing concerns that worker exploitation would take place within the program.

Leading up to the 2014 overhaul of the TFWP, many advocates pushed for the government to impose strict employer regulations, changes to work permits, and in-depth employer reporting in order to fully understand the extent of potential harms faced by migrants in the TFWP (Vosko et al. 2014; Tungohan 2016; Marsden et al. 2021a). Referencing the dangers of employer-specific work permits (Tungohan 2016; Marsden et al, 2021a), racial bias in the workplace (Chowdhury 2019; Chartrand and Vosko 2021), and substandard working conditions or treatment (Strauss and McGrath 2017), academics positioned the dangers of the TFWP as an imminent concern. Specifically, many of these critiques centered around the usage and treatment of TFWs in the agricultural worker stream, the live-in caregiver stream, and other low-skill streams, as workers in these areas were tied to employers through their work permits, and unable to leave without the threat of deportation should exploitation occur (Marsden et al 2021b) . These critiques also included a lack of worker access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), inadequate housing, and unfair hours for low-skill workers. These issues, among others, were

significant discussions at the time, and critiques came from both academics and activists alike (Tucker 2020). The rise of TFWP criticisms leading up to the 2014 program overhaul painted the Government of Canada in a negative light, with many indicating that the TFWPs design and implementation allowed for exploitation to occur (Tungohan 2016; Marsden et al. 2021b; Chartrand and Vosko 2021). The amount of public backlash around the TFWP preceding 2014 must not be understated, as it has been credited as a motivation for implementing the overhaul of the program in 2014 (Marsden et al. 2021b; O'Donnell and Skuterud 2022).

In 2014, The Government of Canada announced the overhaul of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) and introduced what is now known as the International Mobility Program (IMP) in a reclassifying effort aimed at resolving migrant exploitation critiques (Marsden et al, 2021b). The overhaul-- announced through Employment and Social Development Canada-- was described as an effort to improve the clarity of the TFWP and its subgroups, increase government transparency to the public amid recent concerns, and foster accountability (Employment and Social Development Canada 2014). The overhaul split the TFWP into the two programs in order to create distinction between pathways and their specific requirements, and supposedly help increase awareness around the use of risk mitigation mechanisms -- such as Labour Market Impact Assessments-- that would help Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) track, and monitor TFWP usage. While this government undertaking may seem like progress in the face of criticisms, the overhaul can also signify a point in which the TFWP was split into two as a rebranding effort that utilized the public attention around agricultural work, care work, and low-skill migrant labour (now classified under the TFWP) to prevent less-

understood IMP streams (such as post graduate work, high skill labour, and intra-company transfers) from receiving the same scrutiny and backlash (O'Donnell and Skuterud 2022). The 2014 overhaul announced that temporary foreign work streams would be separated into two groups and claimed to “offer greater clarity and transparency ... to reduce confusion and better reflect the major differences between the various streams” (Employment and Social Development Canada 2014). The 2014 overhaul of the TFWP is a significant turning point for migrant worker pathways, as the introduction of the IMP is considered by many academics to be an intentional rebranding away from the problematic TFWP and expansion into a larger, ambiguous new group of migrant workers (Vosko 2022).

The IMP can be described as a migrant worker pathway that is intended to facilitate temporary employment under various foreign agreements, encompassing a high number of sub-programs (over 90) that make understanding the program's scope and impact quite difficult (Vosko 2022). As Vosko explains, the IMP's goal is to further national competitiveness and target high-skilled workers in order to progress Canadian economic and national cultural interests (Vosko 2022). To better understand this ambiguous classification of migrant workers, Table 1 outlines the major differences between the two categories, and shows the divide between the TFWPs low skilled worker focus and the IMPs high-skill worker focus (Employment and Social Development Canada 2014). It should be noted that the IMP, while introduced in 2014, did not create new migrant pathways or worker streams, but was instead a rebranding of open work permit pathways for migrant labourers.

Table 1 Differentiating the TFWP and the IMP

Temporary Foreign Worker Program Objective: Last resort for employers to fill jobs for which qualified Canadians are not available	International Mobility Programs Objective: To advance Canada's broad economic and cultural national interest
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on employer demand to fill specific jobs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not based on employer demand
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unilateral and discretionary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Base largely on multilateral/bilateral agreements with other countries (e.g. NAFTA, GATS)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer must pass Labour Market Impact Assessment (formerly LMO) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Labour Market Impact Assessment required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead department ESDC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead department CIC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No reciprocity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based largely on reciprocity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer-specific work permits (TFWs tied to one employer) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally open permits (participants have greater mobility)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Majority are low-skilled (i.e. farm workers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Majority are high skill / high wage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Last and limited resort because no Canadians are available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workers & reciprocity are deemed to be in the national economic and cultural interest
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main source countries are developing countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main source countries are highly developed

Table 1: A table provided by the Government of Canada in the ESDC's 2014 report on the changes to the TFWP. This table outlines the differences between the TFWP and the newly formed IMP, and specifies each program intention.

(Source: ESDC, Overhauling the Temporary Foreign Worker Program June 20, 2014, Government of Canada, <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/foreign-workers/reports/overhaul.html>).

Despite its claim to increase transparency, the introduction of the IMP during the 2014 overhaul of the TFWP utilized and took advantage of public concern around the TFWP, and led the public eye away from the larger IMP category and focused on the same-name-yet- "new" TFWP. Eric Tucker explains this issue in his 2020 work, noting how an increasingly narrow focus into the TFWP leaves behind the new (and larger) group of unknown IMP workers who have gone unscrutinized by the public (Tucker 2020 p. 373). While public discourse pre-2014 centered around mistreatments in the TFWP and its streams (such as agricultural work and other low-skill labour streams), this 2014

overhaul reclassified the majority of migrant workers away from the TFWP label and effectively turned the public eye away from the newly implemented IMP--ensuring the public criticisms remained isolated to the TFWP. In Table 2, information from the ESDC's 2014 *Overhaul of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program* has been used to demonstrate the composition of the TFWP before the 2014 overhaul, after the 2014 split, and what aspects the IMP took on from the TFWP in its mandate. As the majority of migrant workers exist within the IMP category, some authors maintain that despite the government's efforts to separate the two programs post-2014, the IMP could still replicate the threat of exploitation present within the TFWP leading up to 2014, and must be thoroughly examined to determine the extent of these threats (Marsden et al. 2021b).

Table 2 Primary TFWP streams before and after the 2014 overhaul

TFWP Pre-2014 Overhaul	TFWP Post-2014 Overhaul	IMP Post-2014 Overhaul
<p><u>High-skilled workers:</u> includes occupations that typically require post-secondary education and/or formal certification, specifically managerial, scientific, professional and technical positions as well as the skilled trades.</p> <p><u>Low-skilled workers:</u> includes occupations that usually require lower levels of formal training, such as a high school diploma or a</p>	<p><u>High-wage:</u> positions at or above the provincial /territorial median wage; examples of high-wage occupations include managerial, scientific, professional and technical positions as well as the skilled Trades.</p> <p><u>Low-wage:</u> positions below the provincial/territorial median wage; examples of low-wage occupations include general labourers, food counter attendants, and sales and service personnel.</p>	<p>All streams of work permit applications that are LMIA-exempt automatically fall under the IMP. Examples include but are not limited to:</p> <p><u>North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA):</u> partnership that allows foreign nationals in certain occupations from partner countries to work in Canada without the requirement</p>

<p>maximum of two years of job-specific training, such as general labourers, food counter attendants, and sales and service personnel.</p> <p><u>Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program:</u> allows for the entry of foreign workers from Mexico and a number of Caribbean countries to meet the temporary, seasonal needs of agricultural producers when there are shortages of available Canadians.</p> <p><u>Agricultural Stream:</u> allows employers to hire temporary foreign workers from any country for on-farm primary agricultural positions for a maximum of 24 months when Canadian citizens are not available.</p> <p>Many of the requirements of the Agricultural Stream mirror the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program since working conditions for the temporary foreign workers are similar.</p> <p>Live-in Caregiver Program: enables</p>	<p><u>Primary Agricultural Stream:</u> includes positions related to on-farm primary agriculture such as general farm workers, nursery and greenhouse workers, feed lot workers and harvesting labourers, including under the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program, which enables the entry of foreign workers from Mexico and a number of Caribbean countries to meet the temporary, seasonal needs of agricultural producers.</p> <p><u>Highest-demand, highest-paid or shortest-duration:</u> Labour Market Impact Assessments for in-demand occupations (skilled trades), highly paid occupations (top 10%) or short-duration (120 days or less) entries will be provided within a 10-business day service standard. As for all requests to hire temporary foreign workers, LMIA's would only be granted after a rigorous review of all of the elements of the employer's application in each of these cases.</p> <p><u>Live-in Caregiver Program:</u> no change</p>	<p>of a labour market test like a LMIA's.</p> <p><u>International Experience Canada (IEC) initiative:</u> agreements with partner countries that allow young Canadians to live and work abroad for up to two years without meeting labour market or many of the other strict requirements to work and travel in other countries.</p> <p><u>Post-Graduate Work Permit Program:</u> International Students who have graduated from their institution can work up to three years (depending on the program completed) through the PGWPP. Work in this program counts towards PR applications.</p> <p><u>Intra-company transferees:</u> Companies are able to transfer foreign nationals to their Canadian branch without a labour market impact assessment. foreign nationals entering Canada using this labour market test</p>
--	--	---

<p>qualified temporary foreign workers to come to Canada when Canadians are not available to provide unsupervised and full-time care for children, seniors or people with disabilities in the private residence of those persons for whom they are hired to care.</p>		<p>exemption will be highly skilled and truly bring specialized knowledge to Canada</p>
---	--	---

Table 2: Outlining the separation of the primary TFWP streams before and after the 2014 Overhaul of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, with the introduction of the International Mobility Program. (Information taken from: ESDC, Overhauling the Temporary Foreign Worker Program June 20, 2014, Government of Canada, pgs. 8, 27, 28, <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/foreign-workers/reports/overhaul.html>)

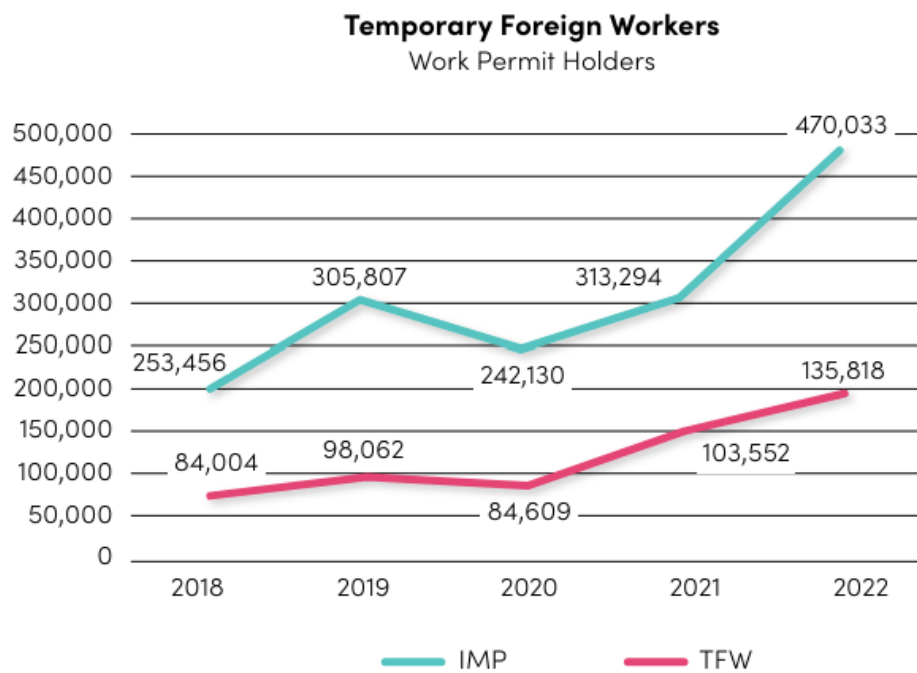
The IMP, like the TFWP, is ultimately designed to facilitate the employment of temporary foreign workers through international agreements or positions that promote progress in the global economy (Chartrand and Vosko 2021). This program does not require employers to prove that there is a domestic need for migrant labour, as most participants working in IMP sub-programs possess an open work permit meaning that they are not reliant upon one employer, have employment mobility, and are not subject to the inspection regime that exists within the TFWP which uses Labour Market Impact Assessments (LMIAs) (O’Donnell and Skuterud 2022). The IMP’s step away from using LMIAs is significant as it signifies the IMP’s intention to step away from monitoring methods that have previously been demanded by advocates for TFWP reform (Marsden et al. 2021a; O’Donnell and Skuterud 2022). One of the most significant features of the IMP is its wide-ranging inclusion of diverse fields of employment, encompassing “the

rest” of temporary foreign work that does not fall under the TFWP’s streams. This expansive scope renders it challenging to pinpoint the program's specific impacts and usage, as the majority of work in this stream is open-permit work which does not require LMIAAs, as mentioned above. Not utilizing LMIAAs in the IMP means that there is less data available around fields of work, employer usage, and wage information (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada 2014). The decision to step away from monitoring practices in the IMP at a point in time where public demand was high for TFWP accountability raises concerns around the intention of the federal government in ensuring that the IMP adequately reduced /prevented risks of exploitation.

The IMP’s removal of LMIAAs also prevents policymakers from making informed decisions by preventing access to information on subprogram data (such as specific administered wages or migrant occupational trends) that otherwise would have been accessible in the TFWP as a transparency measure. The wide-ranging yet under-discussed IMP pathways now make up the vast majority of temporary foreign workers entering Canada, making up over 77% of all temporary foreign workers in Canada in 2022 (470,033 out of 604,382) (see Figure 1) (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada 2023). To compare, the number of migrant workers in positions that would go on to be IMP positions was less than 40,000 in 1995, indicating a nearly twelve-fold increase in usage since 1995 (Tucker 2020). As Tucker (2020) notes, as the IMP continues to expand there is a significant chance that Canada will rely on this program to facilitate and implement new migrant worker pathways and continue to increase the IMPs usage. [In light of this significant usage of the IMP, in-depth LMIAAs would be beneficial in ensuring access to up-to-date information about program usage, and facilitate program

transparency where a greater understanding of program impacts or employment trends could be observed and researched. Measures such as LMIA are an important measure that can help make migrant labour experiences more transparent, and may help bring greater awareness to the growing, and potentially exploitative IMP (Chartrand and Vosko 2021).

Figure 1 Increasing IMP usage.



*The total unique count may not equal the sum of permit holders in each program, as an individual may hold more than one type of permit over a given period.

Figure 1: A table provided by IRCC in their 2023 report on Canadian immigration, highlighting the increase in IMP usage compared to the increase in TFWP usage since 2018. This table indicates the number of work permits distributed through each program per year and does not include the number of individuals who transition to PR.

(Source: IRCC, 2023 Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration. November 24, 2023, Government of Canada, <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/ircc/documents/pdf/english/corporate/publications-manuals/annual-report-2023-en.pdf>).

The 2014 overhaul of the TFWP ultimately did not signal an end to the potential for exploitation within migrant work, rather, it therefore introduced a less regulated landscape for migrant workers to navigate. Specifically, as one-third of IMP workers are still bound by closed-permits, this leaves two-thirds of IMP workers with open-permits and no labour market tests to help determine the practices and intentions of their employer. As the majority of IMP workers do not have LMIA's associated with their employment, they are not covered by their protective measures introduced by the Government of Canada in the overhaul of the TFWP such as the ensured access to suitable housing, health insurance, and fair wage assurances. Because IMP employers are not required to prove that migrant labour is required in positions before hiring through LMIA's, the IRCC does not conduct investigations to determine employer compliance with labour standards, and it therefore becomes increasingly difficult to monitor migrant labour-- especially in the IMP (Chartrand and Vosko 2021). The IRCC does indicate that employers undergo regulatory measures when hiring temporary foreign workers, stating *“Both programs inspect employers to verify compliance with regulatory conditions, which includes requiring employers to be actively engaged in the business for which the offer of employment was made, to comply with laws that regulate employment and the recruitment of employees, to provide wages, occupations and working conditions as set out in the offer of employment, and to make reasonable efforts to provide abuse-free workplaces”* (Canada Gazette 2018), however they further specify that these measures only apply to the one-third of IMP workers with closed permits.

The International Mobility Program has continued to face criticisms as it brings in more migrant labourers despite the previously identified problems within the Temporary

Foreign Worker Program-- particularly pertaining to the dangers of closed-work permits which closed ties a TFW to a specific employer. A key critique made against the TFWP by academics is the negative impacts of the standard employer-specific closed permits found within the program (Vosko 2022). These criticisms argue that closed permits enforce a power dynamic between worker and employer, where the TFW's work permit is dependent on employer approval and their confirmation of employment (Marsden et al. 2021b). Should the TFW raise concerns and be forced out of work, their permit is no longer valid, and they are therefore no longer allowed to stay in Canada. This dynamic could prevent TFWs from leaving exploitative work conditions and has been heavily scrutinised by academics (Vosko 2022). Despite these concerns, the IMP (which is often identified by its open-permit positions), was implemented in a way that still allows for closed permits in some of its sub-groups, such as the intra-company transfers. Closed permits make up over 33% of the IMP, meaning that the program replicates the vulnerable conditions found within the TFWP's closed permit critiques and can replicate an environment that puts workers at risk of exploitation by limiting job mobility, fostering power imbalances between employees and employers, and fostering a dependency on employers (Marsden et al. 2021a). These conditions may compromise the overall well-being and rights of migrant workers, necessitating a careful examination of permit structures and a commitment to safeguarding the rights and dignity of the one-third of IMP workers still participating in closed-permit subgroups.

The Post-Graduate Work Permit Program

Outside of closed-permit IMP subgroups, programs such as the Post-Graduate Work Permit (PGWP) program utilize open permits following an international student's

graduation from a Canadian academic institution. The PGWP is supposed to provide international postgraduates and their spouses with opportunities for meaningful employment in Canada, however it has inadvertently replicated conditions of exploitation through the IMP's systemic limitations. Despite holding open work permits, the strictly defined duration and limited prospects for renewal leave workers in a state of vulnerability, where job insecurity prevails (Vosko 2022). Additionally, the time constraints imposed by the PGWP permits (often limited to 2 years) may also compel these IMP participants to accept poor-quality jobs due to pressure to obtain employment ASAP, sacrificing career stability pathways and thereby undermining the intended benefits of the program (Statistic Canada 2022).

Adding to these PGWP challenges is the absence of clear pathways to permanent residency (PR), particularly if the jobs secured by recent graduates entering the PGWP fall outside a narrow set of occupational categories, such as professional, technical/skilled trades, and management occupations. This restrictive criteria not only limits the scope of employment options but also obstructs the potential for a smooth transition to PR, contradicting the assumed mobility inherent in the program (Vosko, 2022). Additional research also indicates that securing high-wage work as an international student or directly after graduation increases a PGWP holder's chance of going on to obtain PR, showing that graduates' long-term success is directly related to their employment options during and immediately after their studies (Statistics Canada 2022). Relating migrant worker long-term success to their ability to obtain high-quality employment highlights the pressures faced by workers in this IMP subgroup who are under strict time constraints to not only achieve immediate success, but also have their potential for PR at stake as

well. The lack of diverse pathways to PR within the IMP further perpetuates a system where postgraduates and spouses of students are impeded from accessing permanency due, in part, to the nature and quality of the jobs on offer-- something that they cannot largely control (Lu and Hou 2019). The information available on transition rates for IMPs, specifically these postgraduates, could indicate a disconnect from the presumed norm of smooth transitions into permanency for those incorrectly categorized as 'mobile', and instead highlight further ways that the IMP may replicate exploitation concerns (Vosko 2022).

As we consider the structural constraints faced by IMP workers in the PGWP stream such as the harsh time constraints and lack of control over PR opportunities, it should also be noted that this subgroup is seeing unprecedented numbers of participants. The Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP) program increased in usage from 64,700 in 2018 to 98,500 in 2019, a number that is only increasing as structural concerns such as those mentioned above continue to be noted (Statistics Canada 2023). The absence of a cap on IMP sub-groups amplifies apprehensions about the program's ability to adequately manage and ensure the well-being of its participants. Notably, the PGWP has emerged as the "single largest and fastest-growing component of international mobility," with tens of thousands of international students entering this open-permit labour mobility program after graduation from a Canadian institution in order to stay and work in Canada (Kachulisi and Perez- Leclerc 2020 p. 9). The rapid growth of the PGWP, as well as the rapidly increasing numbers of international students preparing to enter the PGWP indicates that examining the outcomes of the IMP's subgroups such as this PGWP is necessary to determine if the participant experiences indicate program success (Statistics

Canada 2022). The current trajectory of IMP usage suggests a disproportionate reliance on the PGWP, and decision-makers are left scrambling to address the vulnerabilities and challenges associated with such unchecked expansion including impacts on the domestic housing market, the rise in food insecurity, and high numbers (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada 2023a). The unsustainable increases in IMP usage within the PGWP subgroup emphasizes the need for federal programs to consider potential outcomes such as those discussed above in order to amend and implement programs that actually prioritize the well-being and rights of individuals within the worker pathways, as the current program is now navigating the consequences of unsustainable usage and poor outcomes. As this program attains unprecedented use, the absence of a PGWP limit highlights the dangers of utilizing and promoting a worker pathway that is not able to sufficiently accommodate and support its workers with proper protections and assurances for their quality of life in Canada. The exceptional numbers of IMP and PGWP program participants has not garnered widespread attention to vulnerabilities in the pathways such as those identified in the TFWP, which must be remedied.

The IMP: Challenges of Ambiguity

Another glaring issue with the IMP is the level of difficulty in researching the program, as it lacks both internal reports (through the IRCC) and external reports (such as the Office of the Auditor General) that review and monitor program operations, making it ambiguous and unnecessarily complicated to research. This structural ambiguity through a lack of information, reflection, and reports on program usage covers the IMP in uncertainty and contradicts its supposed 2014 commitment to transparency and accessibility for researchers who wish to uncover the risks for workers within the

program (Employment and Social Development Canada 2014). One notable issue is the disparity between Employment and Social Development Canada (responsible for administering the TFWP) and Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (responsible for administering the IMP) in evaluating and reporting on their respective programs. For the TFWP, reports seem to be readily available through multiple offices, including the governing ESDC internally, and external governmental bodies including the Office of the Auditor General. In this respect, the IMP often operates under the radar, with minimal internal reporting mechanisms, and in many instances, it is excluded from consideration in ESDC reports on the trends of migrant workers. After the separation of the TFWP and IMP in 2014, the ESDC has conducted numerous in-depth reports on the experiences of migrants participating in Canada's temporary foreign work programs. These reports, however, neglect to include information on IMP streams and refer only to the low numbers of migrants working with the ESDC's low-wage and low-skill TFWP. This deliberate exclusion raises concerns about the program's accountability and the lack of a comprehensive, interdepartmental understanding of its impact on the Canadian labour market-- two features that are critical for research into the impacts of the program.

The absence of equal monitoring reports on the IMP from IRCC, and the TFWP from ESDC further exacerbates the research challenges. The scarcity of available information on the IMP limits the depth of analysis that researchers can undertake, as there is a distinct lack of comprehensive overviews of the IMP for researchers (or even the general public) to utilise in order to access comprehensive information. IRCC does collaborate with Statistics Canada in some cases to release reports on engagements of the IMP, however, these are almost always quantitative works aimed at examining

participation trends (Statistics Canada 2022). ESDC, on the other hand, undertakes more comprehensive reports of their TFWP, providing broad overviews of usage, employer interactions, labour market impacts and implications, and ways to clarify program usage for key actors involved (Employment and Social Development Canada 2022). While the ESDC's TFWP has garnered significant critiques, it must be noted the deeper analysis given to its program in comparison to the IRCC's IMP which may also influence researchers attempting to discuss the TFWP and IMP to lean into the available data on the ESDC's TFWP rather than form a complete picture including the IMP. The difficulty accessing information on the IMP not only impedes academic inquiry but also raises questions about the intentions of the IMP to be transparent to the public.

Even when glimpses of data on the use of IMP sub-programs are provided, the information is minimal, and reports do not explore the involvement of the IMP, or delve into the broader contexts, descriptions or applications of the IMP. This can be seen within ESDC's 2022 evaluation of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, where the IMP was mentioned broadly as a restructuring effort for the TFWP, while its sub-programs (in this case-- the Global Skills Stream) was mentioned in a side-box celebrating the government's investment "*Budget 2017 proposed an investment to support the continued delivery and improvement of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and the International Mobility Program. The investment builds on Canada's new Global Skills Strategy, which aims to facilitate the temporary entry of high-skilled international talent*" (Employment and Social Development Canada 2022). This quote is an example of how the IMP, while broadly discussed, is often not distinguished in depth from the TFWP group, and readers (turning to the text boxes next to this quote) are led to believe that the

GoC has invested \$280 million over 5 years, starting in 2017-18, and 50 million each year thereafter into the TFWP and IMP, when in reality the Global Skills Strategy is an IMP subgroup (Employment and Social Development Canada 2022). This lack of transparent reporting inhibits a nuanced understanding of how the IMP operates within the Canadian economy, and can lead readers to believe that the extensive funding being delivered by the Government of Canada is expanding upon the TFWP, when in reality the funds are for implementing new IMP streams-- like the Global Skills Strategy.

Moreover, the process of accessing data for research on IMPs, even when made available, is convoluted and difficult to understand unless the reader is already well-acquainted with the IMP and its sub-programs. When the IRCC posts data or reports on the IMP, it is rare that the material outright identifies itself as a subprogram to the IMP. The report may, however, identify itself solely using the name of the sub-group it represents. For example, when seeking out information on IMP monitoring and revision, I found a report evaluating the Global Skills Strategy (the aforementioned subgroup of the IMP) (Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada 2022a). In this report, there was no indication of any involvement with the International Mobility Program (including no use of the name or “IMP”), and instead could only be identified as an IMP subgroup due to its referral as a program for high-skilled TFWs, and information gathered from additional readings on the Government of Canada website on the IMP (Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada 2017). No mention is made in this report of the IMP or its mandate, and the program is only referred to as involving TFW’s; furthering confusion for researchers who wish to step away from the TFWP and research the IMP specifically (Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada 2022c). Because of communication like

this, even when data is posted, it becomes an unnecessarily difficult task to understand when a program is considered a part of the IMP and extract meaningful insights. These barriers are not exclusive to researchers, as the IRCC has also identified the lack of information as problematic, stating “*awareness of the short-term work permit exemptions under the GSS, was relatively low, even among Border Services Officers who are responsible for assessing eligibility for these exemptions at Port of Entry*” (Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada 2022a p. 7). The fragmentation of information across various IRCC reports, websites, and news releases impedes a holistic understanding of the IMP, and makes it challenging for researchers to grasp its overall impact on workers and contribution to the Canadian workforce.

In addition to a lack of accessible IMP information from IRCC, it is also uncertain if the necessary information that could be used in reports even exists. While the IRCC has data on the hundreds of thousands of IMP permits being administered, it is questionable if IRCC even possesses additional information such as employer treatment, market impacts, employer names, employee field of work, wage information, etc. Excluding international students, the IMP accounts for over half a million participants (Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada 2023b). There is little to no direct contact between the IRCC administering the IMP and the employers who hire open-permit IMP participants. Most of the data collected is self-reported by participants, such as through tax forms. For example, Statistics Canada’s 2022 report used PGWP program participants income tax forms to determine their earnings and field of study. In some cases, employers do contact the IRCC, however, according to the IRCC website this is largely regarding employer-reported labour infractions or violations (Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada

2016). Even when IMP group reports have been made available, these highlight the impact of not having enough available information, saying *“For IRCC, it is difficult to track and develop meaningful reports on the number of foreign nationals who have used short-term work permit exemptions. In particular, the Global Case Management System (GCMS) is not used as a tool to document who gets the exemptions, when, and where. The lack of metrics and information makes it difficult to report on the full impact and outcomes of [this IMP subprogram] and to identify potential integrity issues”* (Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada 2022a p.7). The reliance of the IMP on self-reports highlights the need for IRCC to obtain additional information on the specific usages of the IMP and its subprograms including sectoral, wage, and treatment as a standard of operation (Vosko 2022). Because of the IRCC’s use of self-reporting mechanisms over structurally embedded worker monitoring practices, there is a lack of available information for researchers to pull from when examining the IMP and its trends, further preventing meaningful discussions around program risks and vulnerabilities for workers.

Ultimately, the IMP's inherent complexity, limited internal reporting, problematic data access, and inadequate monitoring practices pose significant challenges for researchers seeking to understand the usage and experiences of migrant workers under this migrancy pathway and raises doubts around the motivation of the IRCC to keep migrant worker information available to the public. Bridging these gaps in understanding is essential not only for academic inquiry but also for fostering accountability within Canada's migration and labour policies, which have seen both expansion and blurred boundaries for international students. As international student policies have increasingly

positioned students as economic contributors through their temporary foreign labour, the lines between student and worker have become increasingly blurred. International student positioning within the temporary foreign workforce also highlights the need to critically examine migrant workers pathways like the TFWP and IMP in order to determine the potential risks associated with international students entering the workforce both as students during their studies, and as IMP participants through the PGWP. Therefore, understanding and addressing concerns in migrant labour literature is crucial for a holistic understanding of how Canada's policies affect all migrant workers, including international students who navigate their dynamic and changing roles as both worker and student.

The International Student Program (ISP) Concerns

In addition to the vulnerabilities and risks associated with the TFWP and the IMP as outlined above, there is also a need to critically examine the International Student Program (ISP) to determine the ways in which international students could still face vulnerabilities when they are restricted to being students. The ISP is not just an academic pathway but also a significant economic and social conduit, intersecting with the vulnerabilities identified in the TFWP and the IMP. Understanding these risks is crucial as the unique position of international students, who navigate both educational and labor markets, may remain susceptible to various forms of exploitation and insecurity. This section aims to shed light on the persistent vulnerability concerns within the ISP, drawing parallels with the challenges faced by participants in the TFWP and IMP.

In this section, I highlight some of the vulnerability concerns discussed in TFWP and IMP literature that also persist throughout the ISP, and identify the role IRCC plays

in facilitating structural and operational concerns that have the potential to perpetuate exploitative conditions for international students in the ISP. To do this, I first note that the ISP replicates vulnerabilities present within the IMP through its use of work restrictions through permits, akin to IMP's open-work permits. These study permits do not require LMIA's, and share the concerns outlined by authors such as Vosko (2022) who argues that decreased monitoring and improper regulation with IMP open permits prevents meaningful assessments and protection from malicious employers. Next, I discuss the inconsistent classification and usage of ISP study permit data in federal reports on foreign workers and note how inconsistent usage of permit data contributes to uncertainties around whether international student workers can or should be classified as foreign workers. Third, I highlight how some of IRCC's 2023 ISP reforms indicate their awareness of concerns and the negative outcomes that have been systemically perpetrated throughout the program-- such as student financial insecurity. Fourth, I note how IRCC's oversight in implementing the ISP without considerations for social supports is a significant risk to the success of those in the program, as the ISP reaches unprecedented use exceeding that of the TFWP and the IMP. Finally, this chapter concludes by emphasizing how IRCC's flexibility around study permit work restrictions (such as their rapid expansion during the post-Covid-19 labour shortage and subsequent restriction during economic hardship) indicates federal intentions to utilise this heavily populated, yet under-discussed and contextually ambiguous group of (foreign) workers as an economic tool with little regard for the individuals existing within.

International students studying in Canada are able to work for employers without obtaining a work-permit, as their study permit acts as an open work permit (as long as

they are in a degree program, their program is longer than 6 months, they are studying full-time, and access a Social Insurance Number) (IRCC n.d.). Study permits are in many ways subject to the similar conditions as an open-work permit, as they do not require LMIA's and are not subject to employer applications before starting employment. As previous IMP-focused authors such as Vosko have noted, the use of open-permits does not indicate a lack of exploitation, a line of concern that can also be applied to study permits (Vosko 2022). As the student applies to jobs without a monitoring system in place (such as LMIA's) that could prevent known malicious employers from taking advantage of foreign workers, they could be entering a position that relies on foreign labour or intends to take advantage of newcomers. Despite the open nature of the study permits, study permit holders are, however, faced with some restrictions. Study permits often do not allow students to work more than a predetermined number of hours, and control job mobility through restricting hours based on location (such as off-campus versus on-campus work restrictions) (Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada n.d.). In one study, Calder et al. (2016) found that international students faced employment barriers due to their study permit restrictions as they were systemically led to compete for less-restricted on-campus jobs. By not restricting the number of work hours on-campus, international students were left with little choice but to work in cafes, libraries, and other on-campus locations that were not directly relevant to their careers in order to continue to afford their educations (Calder et al 2016). While they had job mobility with open-permits like IMP workers, they remained restricted by the nature of jobs being offered to them, and were left immobile by their permit structure, preventing them from progressing their careers in Canada. The use of open-permit-esque study

permits has the potential to leave international students in vulnerable positions where they risk entering dangerous employment opportunities without monitoring, or face job insecurity due to the restrictive nature of the permit conditions for on-and-off-campus work.

The treatment of international student study permits in Canada, particularly in comparison to temporary work permits seen in the IMP and TFWP, also raises complex questions about student worker status, monitoring, and the implications for the students participating in the program. When researching the IMP, and its PGWP subgroup, it becomes apparent that while international students who have graduated and enrolled in the PGWP are considered IMP participants (and therefore temporary foreign workers), international students who are still completing their studies (while possessing an IRCC study permit that-- as described above-- allows them to work under similar conditions to an open-work permit), are not always outright considered to be temporary foreign workers or a part of the IMP. Positioning international students who are still enrolled and completing their studies as workers that fall outside of the TFWP and IMP, while allowing international student graduates to be PGWP participants and classified as temporary foreign workers raises questions around where--if at all--international students fall in their status as foreign workers.

Specifically referring to how federal government bodies such as ESDC, IRCC, and Statistics Canada classify and discuss international student workers in temporary foreign worker contexts, international student workers are contextualized ambiguously through reports and online resources. The federal government does not outright include international student workers in its reports on TFWP activity as a specified TFWP or IMP

subgroup, but does still include ISP numbers in foreign worker reports by placing them in a separate “study permit” category as seen in one Statistics Canada report on foreign worker distribution in the Canadian labour force (Statistics Canada 2023). In this 2023 report, the categories of temporary foreign workers by permit type are listed as “Temporary Foreign Worker Program”, “International Mobility Program”, and “Study Permit”, indicating that international students who possess study permits can be classified among the TFWP and the IMP as temporary foreign workers (Statistics Canada 2023, P. 3). This classification is not consistent, however, as other reports through IRCC and ESDC show that international student workers are sometimes referred to as IMP participants, and sometimes excluded from IMP or TFWP datasets entirely (Employment and Social Development Canada 2014; Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada 2022c). Given the inclusion of international student workers in some Statistics Canada, IMP, and IRCC reports, international student workers and the conditions surrounding their work experiences require examination. The inconsistent classification and usage of ISP permit holder and worker data in some Statistics Canada, IMP, and IRCC reports contributes to uncertainties surrounding the program, and whether international students should be considered and treated as temporary foreign workers.

Neglecting to properly classify the workers in the ISP is not a unique problem for IRCC, as they have also faced criticism for neglecting to review and reform the ISP to the detriment and poor outcomes of its participants for over 20 years. In late 2023, IRCC began to announce the series of reforms to the ISP that were not only long overdue, but also indicative of the IRCC’s awareness of ongoing problems faced by participants in their program. Specifically referring to the introduction of provincial attestation letters,

an international student limit, and the increase of proof of funds, IRCC made these program changes to ostensibly “[strengthen] Canada’s International Student Program and [protect] genuine students from fraud” (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada 2023a). These program changes should be regarded as only one side of the story, as it should be noted that many of the changes were not only overdue, but also in response to oversights in the structural foundations of the ISP that had gone unaddressed by the federal government. The first change (regarding requiring provincial attestation letters) was announced by IRCC in response to visa fraud which had (according to IRCC) been perpetuated by foreign immigration agents who were taking advantage of students (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada 2023a). It should be noted, however, that many of these students were permitted entry into Canada because of a lack of uniform program application through Canada Border Security Agencies, who should have been verifying university acceptance letters at the time of study permit distribution as international students enter Canada (Aulakh and Kelley 2023). Additionally, the implementation of an international student cap, where IRCC would be reducing the amount of study permits it administers each year, signifies a lack of oversight into the unregulated expansion of the international student program, and can be considered backtracking in the face of negative economic impacts (i.e. housing or food insecurity) that should have been considered in-depth before allowing the program to become unsustainably large. Also announced at this time was the increase in required proof-of-funds from 10,000CAD to 20,000CAD. This reform was long overdue, as IRCC explains *“The cost-of-living requirement for study permit applicants has not changed since the early 2000s, when it was set at \$10,000 for a single applicant. As such, the financial*

requirement hasn't kept up with the cost of living over time, resulting in students arriving in Canada only to learn that their funds aren't adequate" (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada 2023c). Increasing the required proof of funds while admitting that the funding requirement had not been evaluated for over 20 years does not indicate proactive or preventative decision making, but instead signifies IRCC's lack of concern for ensuring that international students have the necessary information to achieve financial security and are capable of maintaining an adequate quality of life once in Canada. These recent changes highlight IRCC's awareness of the impacts and poor outcomes the program has fostered, and raises concern around their disinterest in addressing these problems that have admittedly been occurring under their operation for over 20 years.

Additionally, as the ISP reaches unprecedented numbers exceeding that of the TFWP and the IMP as noted above, other concerns arise regarding IRCC's oversight in implementing the program with considerations for sustainable growth and social supports for its participants as this poses a risk for the international students in the program who may struggle. With extremely high numbers only growing in recent years, over 680,000 study permits were administered in 2023 (as noted in the IRCC's quarterly report on study permit administration) (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada 2024b), a drastic increase from the approximately 550,000 study permits in 2022 (see Figure 2) (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada 2024b). For comparison, the entirety of ESDC's TFWP accounted for only 135,818 workers in 2022, while the entirety of the IMP and its subgroups (not including international students still enrolled in their studies) accounted for 470,033 workers (see Figure 1) (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

Canada 2023b). The international student group is undeniably a significant labour force when directly compared to other foreign work programs such as the TFWP and IMP. Through annual reports to Parliament, the IRCC has indicated the distinct impact of international student workers, noting that international students make a significant contribution to the Canadian economy, with an estimated contribution of \$23.5 billion to Canada’s gross domestic product (GDP) in 2019, and \$15.4 billion to Canada’s gross domestic product in 2020 (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada 2022c p. 9; Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada 2023b p. 6). Outside of the financial contributions this group makes through their study permit work, the sheer number of workers must also be considered, as this influential group of workers is not supplied with adequate social support should they be unable to access employment.

Figure 2 International Student Study Permit Holder

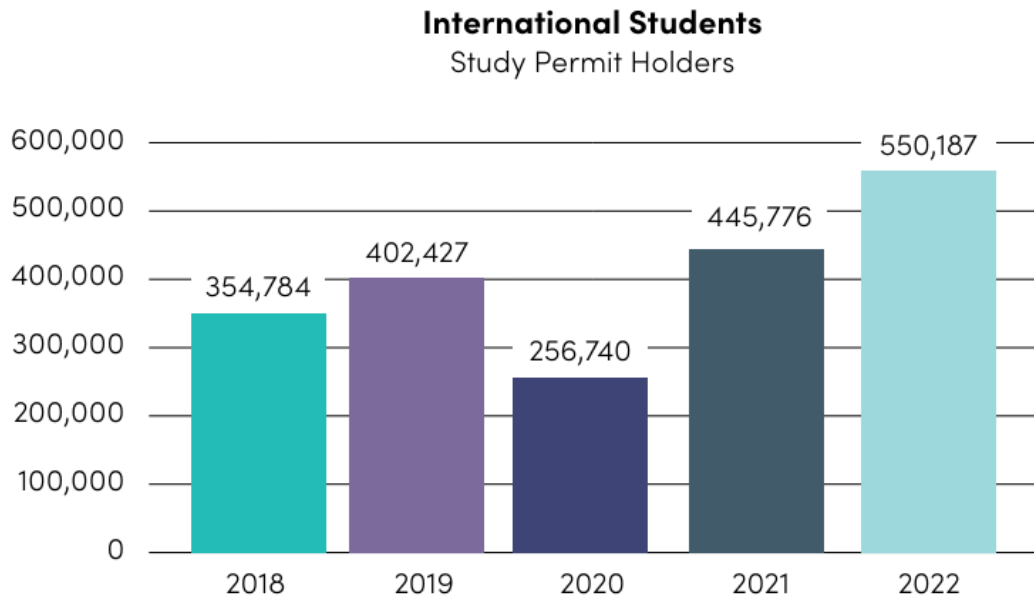


Figure 2: A table provided by IRCC in their 2023 report on Canadian immigration, highlighting the 550,187 international students in Canada since 2018. This table solely indicates the number of study permits distributed.

(Source: IRCC, 2023 Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration. November 24, 2023, Government of Canada, <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/ircc/documents/pdf/english/corporate/publications-manuals/annual-report-2023-en.pdf>).

The concern with unprecedented ISP participation extends beyond the need for increased monitoring, as the high numbers have contributed to an increased strain on available resources, as recently acknowledged by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada 2023a). The influx of international students has put additional pressure on essential resources such as food banks, housing, and employment opportunities, creating ripple effects on public resources (Bhugra 2023; Bhugra 2024; Statistics Canada 2024). Reports include international students forced to rely on food banks due to extreme costs of living (Bhugra 2023), international students turning to student government to access clothing, or housing (Bhugra 2024), and indicators that international students are more likely to reside in poorer quality housing than domestic student counterparts during their time in Canada (Statistics Canada 2024). These concerns are not, however, new to the subject of international students in Canada, and as Johnstone and Lee note in their 2014 work, international students have seen a distinct historic lack of access to social supports, and are prevented from accessing social supports for themselves and their families due to social exclusion, cultural pressure, and a lack of eligibility for social assistance programs (Johnstone and Lee 2014). These challenges highlight the necessity of implementing and operating the ISP with thorough considerations for the resources that should be made available to this group of workers, and indicates the challenges that await participants of the ISP should the program have been allowed to grow at unprecedented rates.

Introduced above, the recently evolving policy landscape of the international student program is also cause for concern as the rapid decision making and policy change implementation further complicates the experience of international students, and should be examined in order to determine the impact of program changes on these participants. Specifically, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, international student study permits faced changing restrictions to allow them to contribute to the declining Canadian economy. The IRCC has outright explained the use of international students as economic tools post-pandemic, saying *“this temporary change [to the 20/hour a week restriction] reflects the important role international students can play in addressing our labour shortage, while continuing to pursue their studies.”* (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada 2022b). Amending study permit restrictions to address short-term labour needs could pose risks to the overall success of students as they are expected to maintain and balance their study and work commitments without turning to part-time studies as this would violate the terms of their study permit and could potentially risk deportation (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada 2022b). Relying on international students to address and fix the post-covid labour shortages while also expecting them to maintain the same commitments to their studies as they did pre-pandemic indicates the oversight (or disinterest) of the federal government in considering the impact of program changes on the international student workers that were deemed essential in addressing and fixing Canada’s labour shortage, and also indicates the dangers of rapidly changing program regulation. In one report, IRCC notes that changes to the post-graduate work permit program were implemented rapidly to address the Canadian labour shortages, were not reviewed to predetermine the impacts of the

temporary changes, and that IRCC was working to assess impacts concurrently with program implementation (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada 2023b). The dynamic and changing nature of study permit regulations introduces a layer of unpredictability, making it difficult for students to navigate and plan their academic and professional trajectories effectively. The lack of long-term policy planning and rapid policy changes raises concerns about the potential for temporary policy to facilitate student worker exploitation. As policies change in the face of financial pressures, questions arise around whether federal programs like the ISP are changing to align with the actual benefit of the individual worker or instead towards the financial gain of a neoliberal government participating in the educational human capital flows during an economic crisis (Zheng 2010; She and Wotherspoon 2013; Brunner 2023).

Throughout this section, I have outlined problems relevant to the ISP that have the potential to replicate the concerns present in prevalent TFWP and IMP literature. Starting by reviewing the similar nature of concerns around open permit work in the IMP, the ISP's study permits replicate conditions of vulnerability and insecurity through their unmonitored structure, their work location restrictions, and weekly hour caps. Next, the inconsistent classification of ISP study permits and the usage of permit data as only occasionally relevant to foreign worker discussions and contexts replicates concerns about the IMP's ambiguous nature and highlights the dangers of unclear programs as international students remain in-between identities of worker and student. I then note the IRCC's awareness of ongoing issues within the ISP, referencing recent reforms to mitigate the ongoing negative outcomes persistent in the program, and contextualize these changes as a response to poor program structure which has perpetuated issues such

as financial insecurity for decades. I then emphasize the importance of proper ISP regulation in the face of an unprecedented number of participants in the program. The extremely high numbers of students entering Canada through the ISP necessitates an examination of program outcomes in the face of the above critiques to ensure that those permitted entry into Canada are adequately and sustainably supported if/when faced with hardship. Finally, I note how IRCCs flexible ISP and study permit restrictions such as its rapidly changing and temporary policies that have been expanded and restricted in recent years indicates federal intentions to utilise this under-discussed mobility program as an economic tool, which further complicates the experience of international students, and should be examined in order to determine the impact of program changes on these participants.

As authors such as Scott et al (2015), Marsden et al (2021a), and Vosko (2022) have noted, further research on international mobility programs is necessary in order to understand the broader implications, motivations, and impacts of IRCC pathways on the individuals involved with them who may be navigating these challenges. As the risk of exploitation argued to be present within the TFWP could persist through IRCC programs such as ISP, research that seeks to determine the specific experiences and impacts of these program pressures could yield results useful to the greater understanding of policy and program outcomes (Vosko 2022; Johnstone and Lee 2014; McCartney 2021; Netierman et al. 2022). It is for these reasons that this study now turns to qualitative semi-structured interview methods to explore these experiences and elaborate on the first-hand accounts of international students and professional international student support employees.

Chapter 5 – Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings from interviews conducted with international students (S) and their support professionals (P), focusing on two key issues identified during the research. The first key finding explores the challenges international students face in accessing and understanding international student program information. This finding is supported by three critical points: difficulties navigating convoluted IRCC information, international students turning to unreliable sources for permit-related advice, and the complexity introduced by frequent program changes in recent years. Following the presentation of the first finding, I enter into a discussion which argues that these challenges are connected to a broader issue of student distrust in the IRCC that is also discussed in relevant literature. Additionally, existing literature supports the notion that international students encounter difficulties in identifying resources for advice amidst multiple decision-makers and stakeholders. Moreover, the rapidly changing nature of student programs complicates decision-making processes for both participants and administrators.

The second key finding highlights concerns surrounding international student wellness, which emerged as the prominent finding from the interviews. Concerns of student wellness is supported as a finding by three main points: the significant stressors associated with international student life (such as homesickness and financial insecurity), a perceived lack of community during their stay in Canada, and instances of bias and discrimination when seeking academic and professional involvement. This section then enters into a discussion on student wellness which focuses on the compounding burden and impact of these stressors on international students. Literature notes the complex and

interacting nature of stress and the documented challenges of loneliness and community integration among international students. Literature that supports this finding also notes the lack of collaborative environments for students to feel involved, continuing environments of loneliness.

This section aims to deepen understandings of the complexities faced by international students and contribute valuable insights to contextualize the problems at hand as experiences by international students in the ISP.

Key Finding 1: Accessing Clear Information

Navigating IRCC Information

The first major theme identified in the interviews concerned navigating and accessing information from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) pertaining to the international student program, work permits, and study visas. Nearly every participant discussed challenges when seeking out information online from IRCC's website, and noted that they often have to turn to other methods to get an answer to their question. One participant noted when asked about the common international student experience with IRCC's site *"I think it depends on what [they're] looking for. There is a lot of information on the website that when I read it, yes, I can understand it. But there are some stuff that is also very vague and it doesn't respond or answer to your question directly at all. A lot of times, like all we can do is call IRCC directly and basically ask them the question because everyone's situation is also different as well"* (P1 2024).

Another participant noted their struggle accessing information also stemmed from language barriers and suggested this is a common frustration, saying *"it's not like [IRCC is] a one website fits all, so they would have to talk to someone on the phone and ask*

about it... also, imagine someone who speaks English as a second language, right?" (S4 2024). Even when participants stated they had called the IRCC helpline to get questions answered, some noted that students would have to spend hours on the phone waiting for someone to be available to help them (P1, S3). In light of problems navigating and accessing information from IRCC, some participants highlighted tactics used to resolve their problems and access help, with one participant noting that they *"Google to help with the IRCC site. I google my question and add IRCC to find the right page because I just can't find the information through the site even if I try really hard- Google sometimes helps me, but it is confusing"* (S2 2024), while others rely on the study permit and work permit information given to them upon entry into Canada; *"I look at my study permit and if it doesn't say I can't do something, then I think I can do it. The restrictions are outlined on the study permit when you receive it"*¹ (S1 2024). Participants in the interviews identified difficulty when seeking out information from federal sources and noted some compounding factors associated with difficulty accessing information such as language barriers.

In addition to the challenges faced when looking up information online, participants also noted feelings of distrust or uneasiness around IRCC. One participant described this as an outright feeling of fear surrounding IRCC due to the language barrier between international students and IRCC agents. Participants discussed worries relating to misrepresenting themselves to the government, and the concern that a small mistake

¹ The student support professionals interviewed as a part of this study strongly advised against relying on a study permit for updated information as permit restrictions change and students should remain up-to-date on the changes as much as possible.

could in turn result in serious consequences (such as rejection from post-graduate programs). As one IS professional notes, *“The fear of just not wanting to make mistakes [when you’re talking to IRCC], I think that is very overwhelming for most students. Even though as a student you’re expected to have some sort of, you know, comprehensive understanding of English, in reality, it’s not even a 2nd language... you just have to try your best not to make mistakes and that is scary”* (P1 2024). Another participant gave an example when discussing their uneasiness when dealing with the IRCC, describing their friend’s experience getting rejected from a post-graduate work permit *“he was like a straight-A student. [The IRCC] stopped him from getting a work permit... He had to petition the IRCC and get a lawyer. He had to wait a year almost and fought it until he could get his work permit... it’s scary to think about”* (S2 2024). Especially when matters pertaining to part-time versus full-time studies came up, participants noted that many international students don’t always know the intricacies of what is “allowed” by the IRCC; *“[if students don’t adhere to the IRCC guidelines], the IRCC would reject the [work permit] application but this isn’t always made clear to students in advance before they take time off... most don’t know that they need to think about that and then they get scared”* (P1 2024). Some participants connected international student unawareness of IRCC regulations to the feeling of doing something “illegal”, with one participant noting how hearing about other international student’s experiences with the IRCC becomes a source of stress *“I hear about people getting sent home because they aren’t doing what IRCC said to...I feel like I’m breaking the law and IRCC will find out”* (S4 2024). These responses highlighted the prevalence of fear and distrust for the IRCC that exists within participants.

Even when international students are reviewing the requirements and abiding by restrictions, participants also noted that IRCC regulation enforcement can also be left up to agents' (border or IRCC) discretion. Some noted that IRCC visa approvals are not set in stone and that even once approved, they are not guaranteed a study visa, leaving students feeling vulnerable *“I made sure to insert answers correctly, check spelling and typos, and double-check administrative things. But even still, they give you the approval of the visa, they also tell you that at the entrance of the Canada border, the agent can actually revoke that and just say no. So it's not just about getting through the application for a Visa”* (S3 2024). Another participant noted that they felt extreme stress when reaching the Canadian border for the above reason *“I got approved for the visa but knew I could get turned around and sent home at the counter. I was sweating so bad, but then I was also scared they think I'm hiding something”* (S4 2024). Another participant noted that the IRCC also has several other discretionary measures in place to determine if international students are abiding by restrictions, including measures of *“reasonable progress”* to decide if a student's study visa should be extended, *“[if students have not been regularly enrolled in courses] then [IRCC has] the discretion to not extend their study permit at application time, or if they're **really** not going to classes, and instead they're out there working, they can issue removal orders”* (P2 2024). Students expressed feelings of unease around loose, discretionary measures when they also struggled to access information about what those measures explicitly are.

“Other Actors” Involved

Another discussion that emerged in the interviews about accessing and understanding information involved looking at **who** students turn to for information. One of the most important outcomes of this conversation was clarifying with international student professionals that international students are typically deterred from discussing permit and immigration questions with friends and family, and are instead encouraged to seek out advice from licenced professionals (P1; P2 2024). Students are encouraged to only seek out professional advice not just to establish lines of communication between legitimate support systems, but also to ensure that students have the most accurate and informed answers *“There are personal liability concerns there for the, say faculty or staff member that tries to answer immigration questions, and especially with things changing so quickly there’s a concern that they’ll get something wrong and the student will walk away with bad advice. There are real consequences at stake there”* (P2 2024). Getting international students to reach out to professional support is not an easy task, however, with professionals noting that international students can prefer to turn to family and friends to discuss permit information and receive advice about immigration because it is more comfortable for them. One participant explained that international students receive help from those close to them because *“a lot of time, to [international students] it’s not important if that person is regulated or is being trained to advise you, that is something that a lot of cultures² don’t really consider as an importance. It’s about your relationship*

² This speculation of cultures being the reason for international student’s disinterest is contextualized and expanded upon in further discussion below (see lack of community in section 2).

and if the person has done this before themselves” (P2 2024). These participants emphasized the need to spread awareness around who can advise students and related this issue to that of trusting foreign agents in one’s home country over federally informed and licensed individuals-- and noted that *“there’s varying degrees of regulation when it comes to foreign agents. It’s tricky to know if they’re up to date on all of the changing rules and regulations but we can’t really police that, so it’s up to the student to ensure who they’re consulting with has the proper designation.” (P2 2024).* In short, the international student professionals were clear that there is a “correct” way of going about gathering international student advice, and that there is a disconnect between the ideal approach and reality-- though the reasons for this disconnect were not agreed upon and will be elaborated upon in further discussion below.

Another discussion present in the interviews further specified the different actors involved with advising international students, as most participants described or mentioned the actors they consult with when discussing immigration, work permits, and study permits. Participants described a number of individuals they turn to, including friends, occasionally close family members, and trusted professors at their academic institution. Participants responded that they do not often engage with external supports, and often only discuss their questions on an as-needed basis via informal pathways. In several cases, participants were abiding by outdated regulations (such as not working more than 20 hours a week), and said that they do not often engage with news around international student regulation. These participants were also unaware of university-based supports and only referred to the IRCC as an actor they would confer with if absolutely necessary (see above unease regarding the IRCC). Participants expressed satisfaction

with chatting amongst other international students to inform themselves on possible outcomes around immigration and work permits, however, one professional noted “*Most international students rarely see the same outcomes because each student has a different work, study, home country experience...like, why can't I just apply to exactly the same thing that my friends did? But it doesn't work that way for immigration. You might sound very similar to your friend, but it doesn't mean that you are exactly in the same situation*” (P1 2024). In short, the interviews revealed that international students consult a wide variety of actors with varying degrees of authority when discussing their experiences and permits, including friends, coworkers, roommates, close family members, academic contacts, but less-so the “correct” individuals such as the IRCC or institutional representatives and professionals. Student preferences towards informal information networks and a lack of outreach from official support networks such as the IRCC could contribute to larger miscommunications that prevent students from making informed decisions.

Additionally, participants noted the significant role of age when discussing the international student experience and the actors that students might rely on, especially when first arriving in Canada. This was a note that several participants made when discussing their efforts coming to Canada, and their understanding of restrictions and programs after arriving. One participant summarized these sentiments saying “*International students enter Canadian programs at young ages, 17, 18 years old. Many have a difficult time realizing what they're signing up for in the long run, and it's hard to get young people like that interested in policy and procedure when they're moving halfway around the world and starting a new life.*” (P1 2024). The note that many

international students enter their Canadian academic careers at a young age was expanded by another participant who elaborated on their application experience; *“My mom really wanted me to come here, so she filled out all of my forms. She did everything for me because I wasn't even 19 at the time... she wanted me to come here so I just signed the forms”* (S2 2024). Participants also noted how turning to friends was a “safe” option compared to alternatives such as contacting the IRCC, with one participant explaining *“My parents wanted me to come here so they hired an agent, and they processed my application. I don't really think I know much about the application process, I was like 18, and I am scared the IRCC will ask me questions that I can't answer if I call for help with immigration or my work permit so I just ask my roommates”* (S4, 2024). These participant responses highlighted the role of age in seeking out external assistance when trying to understand information pertaining to work permits, study permits, and immigration.

ISP Program Changes

While discussing access to information with interview participants, another theme arose related to the recent federal changes to the international student program that have been rolled out over the last several months (e.g. international student caps, work restrictions, international student caps). Some participants described how the nature and speed of these changes have left many international students feeling tense, and out of the loop. One participant attributed this to the irregular nature of temporary changes such as those we have seen, saying *“[regulations around international students] could change monthly, it could change any time and students have no idea about the changes or the updates... you just have to really hope people talk about it and get their information*

correct” (P2 2024). Other participants expressed confusion over the recent changes, saying *“There’s a lot of temporary regulations in place, especially in the last two years, that the government has implemented. I try to keep up to date on those and interpret them because they’re challenging to navigate around sometimes-- the way they’re written.”* (P1 2024). Another referenced their struggle with understanding why the restrictions were changing, and who was making the decisions *“I feel like I can’t get answers on why the changes are happening... it’s as if [the government] just decided to make changes and we’re being punished”* (S4 2024). While most expressed that their understanding of the temporary changes was through talking to friends or seeing the changes discussed on the news, others, as mentioned previously, had no idea temporary changes were in place. When asked about this, they replied *“I guess I was more focused on school, but I was still financially struggling. Nobody really told me”* (S3 2024). The feelings of stress and frustration in the face of recent ISP changes and restrictions pointed towards additional concerns relevant to student’s access to clear and up-to-date permit restriction information, as the changes in place (e.g. the re-introduction of a weekly hour-limit for working international students) directly impact the outcomes of student experiences through controlling their financial security.

As discussed above, the recent changes to Canada’s international student program were present as a theme in the interviews, however, they also brought forward feelings of stress and concern for the future as many participants were unsure of what to expect from program changes in the coming years. For example, one international student program change that stuck out as a point of discussion was the \$10,000 increase in proof of funds requirements for new students. One professional outlined their concern, stating *“The*

government's implementation of these policies is in response to students generally not having enough to support themselves, so they have increased the requirement by \$10,000 as a result. But that doesn't change the reality for students, which is that the ones here right now have been told to save a certain amount of money for university [\$10,000 less per year than what is now required] and it isn't enough... That's definitely a source of stress.” (P2 2024) emphasizing the role of last-minute policy changes in shaping the international student experiences negatively. Participants also indicated that there was significant confusion around the changes, especially regarding how they are meant to afford such high costs in Canada without relief programs.

On the subject of international student program changes, it is also important to note that these interviews took place before Immigration Minister Marc Miller announced on April 29th, 2024, the new rules for international student work hours. During the time of these interviews, students were permitted to work full-time hours during the academic term. The implications of this announcement will be further examined in the Discussion, found below. As the hour-cap announcement had not been made yet, every participant expressed interest or concern about what future restrictions would be in place. One participant articulated this concern, stating *“students that are returning in September, we don't know if it's going to be 20 hours or full time or 30 hours, nothing in writing. [The government is] not really in a rush to make that announcement I guess because [international students] can work full time until September”* (P2 2024). Another participant described the tactics they and their friends had been using to prepare for poor outcomes, saying *“the 20-hour work cap might come back. We decided to all get as many hours as we can this summer to prepare, so I have two full-time jobs. My friend has 2*

part-time and I full-time. We've been recommending each other at our workplaces to try and get our hours up.” (S4 2024). Another participant described their relief in reaching the summer, “I’m graduating soon enough where the changes won’t impact me if they’re put back to 20 hours...I am thankful. If they changed then I don't know how I would afford rent or anything” (S2 2024). Leading up to the announcement of a new weekly hours cap, international students were faced with concern and anticipation that was worsened by the ambiguous nature of these rapid program restriction changes that left students feeling excluded from conversations.

Discussion on “Accessing Information”

This theme of concern emerging from the interviews--accessing clear international student information-- was expected and aligned with the research questions posed at the beginning of this study. As I prepared for these interviews, I spent time researching information presented on the IRCC website to inform my questions. This experience navigating the IRCC websites and attempting to access information regarding the IMP, the international student program, and subprograms such as the PGWP is detailed in the Analysis section. When participants were asked about their experiences with the IRCC site, or understanding information from IRCC, the outcome was clear; students seek out additional tools or actors when trying to answer their questions. Even when professionals were questioned about navigating the site for up-to-date information, they agreed that sometimes your only option is to call IRCC directly in order to get a clear or direct answer to a question. Between discussions on language barriers, vague information online, out-of-date instructions, and non-answers (i.e. not getting answers to a problem due to “case-by-case” considerations), these results indicate that international

students can face structural barriers that prevent them from understanding and abiding by IRCC regulations.

IRCC was also noted to be an intimidating agency for international students, indicating that students may not seek out advice from this regulatory body due to the “scary” stories shared among peers when discussing personal experiences. Stories of deportation, permit refusal and legal battles dissuade students from utilizing the IRCC resources, which can explain why students turn to more familiar resources when navigating permit or immigration information-- such as consultants from their home countries, or informal advisors such as trusted academic faculty members. This finding indicates the reliance and trust that international students place on their social interactions with peers, and aligns with Suzanne Beech’s 2015 work “International Student Mobility: The Role of Social Networks”. In this study, Beech reviews and highlights the vital importance of social networks³ in decision-making processes for international students, particularly when engaging with mobility programs (like the ISP). She notes how international students, when engaged with international mobility networks (peers), are directly influenced by these social interactions, and use the experiences of others to determine their own possible outcomes (Beech, 2015). Additionally, Sherrie Lee (2018) applies the concept of peer-brokering to the international student experience, where students seek out informal learning pathways that rely on peers to bridge cultural and knowledge gaps associated with one’s identity (Lee 2018). Here, international students

³ Social networks are described as “distinct sets of actors who interact and communicate with one another sharing resources and information in the process” (Beech 2015 p. 334). In this context, social networks refer to international students and their peers who are also participating in international mobility programs.

that place value on peer's IRCC warnings could be interpreted as utilizing peer-brokering methods to inform their own practices (navigating immigration and permit regulation). These works help contextualize findings where students abide by the warnings of "scary stories" others in their social networks may have about the IRCC.

Practices such as social networking and peer-brokering are, however, strongly advised against by the interviewed professionals who noted the dangers of receiving information from unlicensed sources and discussed the correct pathways for seeking advice from appropriate actors. These differences in "approved" approaches and "unadvisable" approaches signified a point of confusion among participants as many international students seemed unaware of the implications when seeking advice from any individual. It is also of note that no international student participant mentioned institutional immigration advisors as a relevant actor when asked "If you have a question about your study permit, what do you do?" and only noted their existence when later directly asked about the office. The discussions around study permit questions suggested that students are aware of a number of actors, however, were unsure what assistance/role each played, with actors such as institutional advisors not being considered as an immediate point of contact.

This points to a larger discussion around the numerous actors that are often referred to when discussing international student programs, including the Government of Canada, IRCC, home country immigration consultants or agents, Canadian immigration lawyers, Canadian immigration advisors through academic institutions, etc. The interviews indicated that students are faced with numerous decision-makers in their international student experience, and this could contribute to uncertainties when seeking

assistance. This finding aligns with Beech's 2018 work focusing on international student mobility as a migrant pathway, where it was argued that as higher education enters the realm of migration (largely due to neoliberalism and globalization), numerous agents emerge to become involved in the facilitation of this migrancy pathway. Beech argues that the emergence of numerous actors involved international student mobility pathways (such as the ISP), leads to the dissemination of information across institutional, regional, federal, and transnational lines, leaving participants to navigate an overcomplicated and often miscommunicated pathway (Beech 2018).

Additionally, as mentioned above, even when students do decide to navigate these pathways, some feel unease when contacting the IRCC, navigating their websites. Because of this, some students base their actions on those around them, and others state that they rely on the study permit information that was provided to them upon entry (years previous) into Canada. This differentiating approach to abiding by study permit regulations indicate that the various decision-makers involved non-uniform program implementation of the international student program may create feelings of uncertainty as some decisions are left up to participant and agent interpretation. This includes the IRCC agents reviewing study permit applications, work permit applications and appeals post-graduation, and Canadian Border Security Agency (CBSA) agents who administer study permits and work permits upon entry to Canada that have previously been critiqued for their lack of understanding of IRCC work programs (Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada 2022c).

These discussions of uncertain outcomes at the hands of program administrators became extremely relevant as the international student program continues to undergo

program changes and the implementation of new restrictions. Participants noted their feelings of uncertainty with the temporary measures allowing international students to work full-time hours, and rightfully so. This temporary measure has now at the time of writing been cancelled, with a new 24-hour per week limit on international student work taking its place (only 4 hours more per week than the previous restriction). In this case, participants were justified in feeling as though they needed to prepare for last-minute changes to their university planning which suggests that student concerns with government (mis)treatment and the ramifications for affording high tuition, high cost of living, and achieving a good quality of life when restricted to 24 hours of work per week should be considered in the policy development process. This finding aligns with literature such as Stein and Oliveira de Andreotti's 2016 work which argues that individuals participating in international student programs are a form of capital to the state, and may be treated as such for the purposes of national economic gain (Stein and Oliveira de Andreotti 2016). Student concerns around the post-covid-19 temporary measures allowing for unlimited labour during their studies were right in speculating the IRCC's decision to re-impose restrictions, as that is exactly what went on to occur. Other literature supports this finding such as Lisa Brunner's 2023 work which argues that higher educational institutions serve the needs of the state through their implementation of international student mobility pathways. These pathways, such as the ISP, are argued by Brunner to be intentionally subtle ways of surveying international student populations on behalf of the state under the guise of being hospitable and welcoming to students. The collaboration between educational institutions and the state to facilitate entry to a group

of international individuals and then control their mobility and labour power is ultimately validated through the interview results and these sources.

Key Finding 2: International Student Wellness

Wellness and Mental Health

The most prevalent issue that came out of my discussions with international students and their supporters was not about financials or employment but was instead related to concerns around mental health and wellbeing. Participants noted the ways in which international student experiences are primarily impacted by the state of their mental well-being, which is easily influenced by environmental factors such as home life, social life, academic achievement, etc. They indicated numerous stressors contributing to poor well-being and discussed experiences with depression, homesickness, burnout, insomnia, and culture shock. One participant discussed their belief that poor mental health exists among many international students, noting “*many international students face depression when they are in Canada because of money, studies or like peer pressure, family pressure. [My] friend ... he fell into depression because he wasn't able to pay his fees and because of the money. So [they] did attempt suicide, but thankfully [they were] taken to the hospital in time*” (S2 2024). Another professional highlighted the unique vulnerabilities associated with being an international student dealing with mental health struggles, saying “*Think about domestic students, and the degrees in which they vary... some have learning disabilities, some face mental illness. You can try to navigate university with that but when you're an international student halfway around the world? In another language? With no family supports or even with a family that doesn't recognize mental illness? There's such little supports for them*” (P1 2024). This

participant's sentiments were replicated in other interviews, where others noted feelings of vulnerability and a lack of access to targeted supports for international students (such as in counselling services, where participants noted their interest in a variety of language offerings, or racialized professionals that could relate to their problems) while studying abroad. Other participants described the consequences of lacking access to mental health supports when faced with additional compounding pressures from home, saying "*It's caused by steady pressure [from home] and family pressure to just graduate and get out of this system. That burden or the load that's on my shoulders, I fall into insomnia very quickly. I fell into a depression*" going on to describe how falling behind in school due to depression creates more stress, which in turn makes everyday life more difficult (S2 2024).

As briefly mentioned above, while many participants indicated concerns and stress around finances, most of these financial notes were in relation to compounding concerns around an inability to achieve a good quality of life while in Canada and positive mental health. When participants were asked about reasons why international students seek out employment during their studies, most described the necessity of accessing funds while in Canada in order to get by. The financial concerns often assumed to be a primary concern for international students is shown here to be a compounding problem that impacts student's outlook on life, their quality of life, and their relationship with family. Participants outlined the stress of scrambling to afford life in Canada and the internal struggles of deciding how to allocate their time as a student. One student noted observations of other international students choosing to take weeks off of school to work more hours as a result the pressure of financial stress, saying "*some of them are also*

struggling too...they would take two to three [weeks off of school] to work just to get enough money to pay off [their debts]. Because of that, it also affects their school, I would say because they are mostly working and too stressed to pay attention to the classes. They get mentally and physically exhausted by that” (S2 2024). This directly identifies the compounding nature of international student stressors, highlighting how financial insecurity led to academic underperformance as students miss class to catch up on debts, then face physical and academic burnout.

Other participants noted similar experiences with facing problems balancing work and school commitments, outlining decisions to work full-time hours (or as much as possible) during the school year in order to afford rent and groceries, and their high tuition compared to domestic students. These discussions almost always related back to the high cost of living in Canada, with many noting the stress of coming into Canada expecting finances not to be a major concern. One professional noted the ways that international students are led to believe that finances wouldn't be a major concern, *“I think [universities] make a lot of promises to international students before they come here i.e. with scholarships, with support. I think that's why international students and their families thought that [students] will stay here and the university will make sure that they fed or know they financially secure. I think that has to do partially with recruitment and also just messages that [the university] sent out to students”* (P1 2024). Ultimately, the interviews indicated that the financial concerns faced by international students are merely one part of a much larger problem of accessing adequate qualities of life while undertaking studies while in Canada.

Another theme present about international students' wellness was the approaches to mental health in Canada. Particularly, regarding the lack of awareness around international student mental health, several participants expressed unhappiness with Canadian approaches to the subject. Referencing Canadian interests in grouping international student problems with issues of regulation, participants emphasized the need to consider international students more holistically, "*[Canadians focus] on immigration, on the regulations, you know? ... I think that intersecting identity and also just like really understanding where [international students] are coming from and also understanding what this generation needs like it's not something that like we usually discuss --especially across Atlantic Canada*" (P1 2024). Others affirmed this sentiment when outright asked what the "biggest problem facing international students" was, saying "*I feel that nobody ever speaks on the mental health regarding international students and like what mainly causes those mental health problems or other kind of problems... So it was really like I have not seen anywhere like even on the news that comes up my phone, I do not see anything regarding international students and mental health*" (S2 2024). Other participants expressed their interest in discussing mental health topics in order to spread awareness of the challenges associated with being an international student, as they felt that most Canadians were not aware of the extent to which they struggle.

Lack of Community and Loneliness

Another observation made when discussing student wellness during the interviews was a focus on the international student community-- or more specifically, the lack of community. When asked open-ended questions about what students struggle with, participants noted they did not feel a sense of community among peers. For example, one

participant noted that they would absolutely consider loneliness a defining part of the international student experience, saying “*Loneliness [is a major problem], of course. But loneliness and not being able to make friends has become, you know, like quite common, especially after COVID when everyone came back to the ‘normal’ world that we living in. But I find that a lot of students are having a hard time to connect with other people*” (P1 2024). This sentiment was repeated across other interviews, where participants described feelings of isolation and loneliness when coming to Canada, and how their lack of socialization impacted their wellbeing. One participant extended their experience to other international students they know, saying “*...talking to others in my research group, most of [them] are international students and all they say is the same thing; they feel kind of lonely and they have a hard time talking to Canadians*” (S3 2024). This participant further expanded on this idea, clarifying that there is a distinct difference between international students' socialization with each other and international students' socialization with Canadians “*I found that Canadians have their groups and don't like talking to new people*” (S3 2024). Other participants related these feelings of loneliness to not only their social lives but also their work lives. Some described struggles with befriending or relating to coworkers who are Canadians, and mentioned the benefit of working within multicultural workplaces, “*When I first started working, I didn't know anybody because they were all local to this town. There were not many international students working there, maybe only one or two that I worked with and that I felt comfortable with... it was hard. It wasn't much of a nice experience*” (S2 2024). Loneliness was presented as the biggest problem facing international students throughout most of the interviews, and indicates the need to examine student experiences in-depth to

determine the extent to which loneliness, isolation, depression, and other consequences impact this group.

Another subject that came to light when discussing international students' sense of community was the difficult relationship some students have when reaching out to their families for support. Some participants noted that many international students and their families enter this experience with the belief that life in Canada is easier than life in their home country. This, as mentioned above, leads to some students feeling frustrated and ashamed if they find themselves struggling in Canada, far from home, and results in students feeling additional pressure and stress from their negative experiences in Canada. One professional explained the delicate nature of helping international students face problems without familial support; *“We sort of have to talk to the student. Like, kind of go into details of ‘have you talked to your family but like **really** talked to your family’? A lot of times they said, yes, I do. But I also know that they don't have anything going for them and some students are very scared to broach the subject with their family or their parents because they know that their parents struggle a lot in their home country.”* (P1 2024). Another participant described their belief that Canada was a “land of opportunities”, and how after living in Canada and facing struggles, they were unwilling to turn to family for support as they felt it would harm their family’s perception of them. One participant noted *“International students’ parents expect us to pay for their own [costs] with part-time jobs because there’s still a belief that, you know, money is easier to earn in Canada and you also earn a lot more in Canada”* (S4 2024). Especially when it came to financial struggles, participants described unwillingness to ask family for assistance, saying *“my situation might improve, but.... until then, it’s just gonna be, like, very poor. I can’t ask*

my family for help, because they already send me so much money for tuition” (S4 2024).

Throughout this theme, Canada’s international student program was shown to be deceptive, resulting in feelings of stress and separation from the participant’s family which can create a structurally isolating experience.

Additionally, when the topic of community was discussed, participants also related a lack of community as a factor that impacts their ability to access opportunities. One professional noted a trend with international students, describing how a lack of community connections can prevent international students from succeeding in the Canadian workforce as a lack of community prevents students from being exposed to cultural norms and habits, *“some dive head into the job because they have all the technical skills from back home. But if they can't manage relationships in Canada or understand expectations or just navigate certain social situations at the workplace... Those are the kind of things that unfortunately you don't find out until after they have been reprimanded. It's so huge to integrate students into Canadian norms to help them succeed in the Canadian job market” (P2 2024).* On this subject, some participants noted that they feel as though their position as international students keeps them from accessing opportunities that actually reflect their education, their skillset, or their abilities, as their lack of community prevents networking, and the opportunity to refine their skills in a Canadian context. One participant noted *“In [home country] I have a decade of experience in [professional field of study]. I work there in a high position, but here? I apply to dozens of places and all I hear back is [entry-level position]. I got lucky, many others don't get jobs. My experience at home does not matter here. I have to start over” (S1 2024).* Another participant added to this, noting that their struggles with accessing a

community meant that they were unaware of how to get jobs or how to manage affording an apartment for the first time-- things that many domestic students would learn through parental guidance or advice from peers and friends; *“I was clueless... I felt so alone. I mean, I didn't know that I had to work. Or even how to do that. I didn't know that I had to make ends meet... I spent my entire first year here just trying to learn how to figure things out for myself. I had to”* (S2 2024). A lack of community as an international student holds greater implications for accessing opportunities in the workforce, as international students who are socially isolated from a community do not have access to networking, do not have exposure to cultural norms, and are not able to access community guidance when navigating that process for the very first time.

Bias and Discrimination

Another theme that presented impacts on international student wellness was the racial barriers faced by international students. Some participants in the interviews outlined experiences with bias, and described this as a widespread problem in many areas of their lives. One professional shared what they described as a common experience, where international students are faced with the assumption that entering Canada on a study visa means that they or their families are financially secure, and have little worries; *“this is like a myth that you know, I have heard before and I'm sure that you've heard before too, that [international students] have a lot of money or come from wealthy families that, you know, can afford for them to go abroad, which is not true. They can't just 'go back where they came from'... This is a chance at a 'better life'”* (P1 2024). Participants also discussed how their past experiences before coming to Canada are not always seen as legitimate or useful, with one participant saying *“I go to see an*

employment counsellor and I want to write resume and cover letter but also want to convey my skill set and everything that comes with my identity. Only Canada experiences were included or relevant though” (S4 2024). Other participants noted that their home country experiences are not seen as beneficial to Canadian employers, and that, according to one participant, *“that's just the expectation... some employers are just, like, outright racist and discriminatory. No chances taken on international students”* (P1 2024). These barriers hinder the ability of international students to integrate and thrive in Canada and highlighting the need for more inclusive practices to support their well-being and success.

Additionally, some participants noted that they felt as though Canadians had work to do in order to create an adequate international student experience. The subject of inclusion came up several times, with participants expressing their desire for Canadians to reach out and involve groups like international students; *“people throw the word EDI around like it is... like a buzzword. But they don't do enough work to support, you know, people from marginalized communities; in the workplace; in education setting or in academia as well.”* (P2 2024). Another participant commented that the International students they know have to put in a significant amount of work to have a social life, saying *“[international students] put in the effort of being more social and accept that sometimes you may feel rude because you're bugging the same people over and over just because you wanna remove yourself from your room”* (S3 2024). Participants also added that they feel being an international student requires more work to make friends than if they were domestic students (S3; S4 2024). In these discussions, several participants identified language barriers and race as factors impacting their ability to establish connections with Canadians, with one noting *“I couldn't make friends at parties, I*

couldn't get the answer to a [facebook] messenger when trying to find a room to rent, I feel they saw me not look like them or see [non-euro-centric name] and think I'm not worth the effort” (S4 2024). Ultimately, participants noted that experiences with bias are prevalent in their day-to-day lives, and that experiences range from myths about a person’s financial background, to outright discrimination when seeking employment and housing opportunities.

Discussion on “Wellness”

To prepare to conduct interviews, I spent time trying to curate questions where students could discuss their work permit situations and worked to create an adequate semi-structured conversation for participants to explore their coworker and managerial relationships while also being also to explore additional topics of relevance to them. I anticipated comments on immigration processes or IRCC experiences and walked into this study thinking “Either they will have a fine experience at work, or they won’t-- in that case, I hope they’ll share with me why they are unhappy at work”. I hoped to use the experiences outlined by international students in their workplaces to contribute to larger discussions around international student mobility program vulnerabilities or help examine the ways that the international student program *could* allow for the unmonitored exploitation of international student workers.

Instead, my participants found their way into discussing greater shared concerns about international student quality of life, wellness, and mental health in addition to the somewhat anticipated access to information concerns. Participants shared their frustrations around maintaining wellness and mental health during their time in Canada and pointed to their belief that many Canadians operate under the assumption that

“international student concerns” pertain solely to regulation, immigration, and permits rather than the more important issue; the prominence of stressors throughout the international student experience and the way that this manifests in students. I am no exception to this and found that within each interview, participants were significantly less interested in discussing the International Mobility Program, study permits, and the PGWP, and instead wanted to focus on their sense of community in Canada, or the isolation faced during their studies. Mental health, loneliness, isolation, homesickness, depression, insomnia, financial stress, burnout, and a lack of community were all topics outright discussed or mentioned by participants when asked questions like “What is the biggest problem faced by international students?”. These responses made it very clear that even while federal changes are being made to the international student program, the pressing needs of this group relate to social support rather than financial or procedural reforms to the international student program. This separation of international student issues is aligned with previous literature examining international student experience, such as Scott et al’s 2015 study that noted the prevalence of international student concerns pertaining to homesickness, cultural differences, language barriers, poor mental health outcomes, discrimination, and more when researching the outcomes of international student mobility policy (Scott et al. 2015).

The interviews also suggested that international student wellness is a compounding issue, with many separate stressors impacting the whole individual. Students discussed their concerns with mental health citing stressors ranging from the (anticipated) financial, to (the less-anticipated) loneliness and isolation. One informing factor that came up during the interviews was not just the content or words spoken

regarding wellness, but also the interest and enthusiasm of some participants when exploring these feelings. When topics of making friends or navigating stress came up, some students spoke about their frustrations with an exasperated tone, while others became far more talkative and animated than when asked about permit restrictions. The physical responses in addition to the depth at which they discussed the trends of international student wellness indicated an eagerness to shed light on a subject these students were not often asked about. The approach and range of discussions on the lack of wellness in addition to its varied influences also indicated the complicated nature of achieving wellness. Related to the findings of Guo and Guo's (2017) study on the international student experience, this study also found that there are numerous compounding influential factors that contribute a student's state of wellbeing (Guo and Guo 2017). Among other results in their study, Guo and Guo found that international students faced difficulties forming relationships with locals, difficulties forming relationships with instructors and supervisors, and difficulties dealing with stereotypes and racism (Guo and Guo 2017). These problems compounded into a singular experience for many of their participants, and formed a broader, negative perception around the outcomes of internationalization policies in higher education. This study confirms the relevance of not just issues impacting student wellness, but the compounding nature of these issues and the role of internationalization efforts in Canada in facilitating these experiences.

Additionally, these findings indicated a strong sense of loneliness, and a lack of community that students could draw upon when in need of support. These interviews highlighted how international students are facing unique isolation from family members

through fear or hesitation when asking for help, and also identified ways in which students are also isolated from peers and their community. This isolation was, however, a complicated topic to navigate, as results indicated that in addition to social isolation and a desire for community, students were also simultaneously dissuaded from utilizing their international student experiences to socially network or participate in peer-brokering due to the complicated nature of immigration and permit regulations. The interviews, as mentioned above in the previous discussion, outlined the concerns and possible dangers associated with using social connections to access advice re: study permits, work permits, or immigration. This leaves students in-between problems, where permit information is not easily accessible, and where social relationships are difficult to navigate contributing to a complicated and arguably frustrating experience.

Through additional discussions that noted the exclusionary tendencies of Canadians, international students found that making friends in Canada was a challenge. In further discussions on the lack of community, the exclusion of international students from community opportunities was noted as a defining factor that isolates international students from integrating into their communities and accessing social opportunities. These findings are also seen in Calder et al's 2016 study where international students were surveyed and interviewed to determine their experiences with housing, finances, and the identification of other issues while in Canada. This study noted the role of support systems in international student success, saying "students are often unaware of [social supports] and turn for information and support to their personal networks, including family, friends, faculty colleagues, and, through the larger university, organizations such as student associations] going on to indicate that even when trying to

access support through these channels, this is only successful when international students are treated with reciprocity and given the space to co-reside as peers (Calder et al. 2016). As Participant P1 summarized excellently, *“I wish that there's a more holistic approach to how [Canadians] see international students. We need to basically decolonize education so that like [Canadians] get out of their comfort zone and try to connect with other people from different cultures and backgrounds. Getting New Brunswick, for example, to incorporate an inclusion strategy targeted at Canadians would really help.”* (P1 2024) indicating the need for comprehensive cultural considerations to be integrated into policy decisions and planning.

Chapter 6- Conclusion

This study aimed to explore if the rapid and frequent changes to international student policy landscapes could have impacts on the participants in the international student program. Particularly concerning how international students have been used through policy development to fill Canada's labour needs on short term and temporary basis, it is argued that international students have been faced with policy decisions that have shifted them away from their position as temporary educational participants, towards a position comparable to temporary foreign workers. The changes in policy direction are flexible and highly dependent on the economic interests of the federal government, leaving students in a position where their role in Canada can rapidly shift between that of "Learner" and "Earner", raising questions of what risks or vulnerabilities could be associated with both of these positions--if any, and how federal policy and program changes might introduce those vulnerabilities to the international student experience.

To explore the impact that these inconsistent labels may have on students, I first reviewed some of the concerns present in literature, noting the risks that may persist through different mobility pathways such as the TFWP, the IMP, and the ISP. These concerns informed semi-structured interview questions which were employed throughout 7 interviews with international students and international student support professionals. The interview transcripts were applied through a thematic analysis, which determined two findings: international students have trouble accessing up-to-date permit information, and that international students are faced with mental health and wellness concerns which impact their ability to thrive while studying in Canada. The interviews completed as a

part of this research yielded valuable findings that not only helped elaborate on the student experience and the goal of the study, but also highlighted areas that some participants considered more relevant than the actual research focus. Below I review the two key findings and some of the larger implications to this study's goals, as well as the potential contributions to literature in this field.

Summary of Findings

This study's first key finding argues that international students struggled with accessing and understanding study permit information. In the larger context of this thesis which seeks to determine whether international students are impacted by the changing policy landscape and face similar issues to those outlined in TFWP and IMP literature, this finding indicates that there is an impact, and the presence of concern. Participants indicated that international students face numerous barriers to accessing clear information, including some straightforward issues such as language, however other issues such as a distrust of IRCC, or the reliance for advice on non-licensed advisors were less expected. These findings highlighted the ways that international students have sought out additional avenues for assistance as the federal government is deemed to be an unhelpful or intimidating resource. Additionally, the changing policy landscape was directly referenced as a cause for concern by participants, who indicated that the changing policies impacting their labour restrictions at such intense rates fostered feelings of insecurity. The timing of the interviews occurred at a unique moment in policy decisions-- where it was after IRCC had announced the re-examination of the unlimited-hours work regulation for international students, but before IRCC had announced the reintroduction of the weekly-hour cap, which meant that participants were

notably unsure about what their lives might look like in a matter of months. The lack of information readily available from the federal government instilled a deep sense of insecurity in some participants, which exemplified the way that the changing policy decisions absolutely have an impact on international students through their livelihoods, their understanding of their programs, and their ability to plan for their future.

While accessing information and navigating policy changes were considered problems by participants in the study, interviews were also dominated by discussions of mental health and wellness-- indicating that this study's intention to determine whether there might be impacts on the lived experiences of those participating in the ISP was well-founded. As participants noted the ways that they are impacted by program regulations or permit changes, these were underscored by the notes of frustration or uncertainty that prompted further questions outside the range of permit information. Semi-structured interviews proved to be incredibly helpful in conducting these interviews as they provided enough structure to explore participants understandings of their permit, while also giving room for new areas of discussion to become developed and elaborated upon-- a feature that proved essential in this study as students turned to personal stories of dire struggles with mental health. This finding, which explored the compounding burdens that weigh on and impact the wellbeing of international students, was not one that had been expected to be present in such depth. While discussions of frustrations were expected to occur, the intensity that some participants experienced these feelings and situations indicated the inadequacy of my research question to properly allow for a full exploration of these struggles. Explored further in "Limitations" below, defining the research to not only seek out *if* international students experience impacts, but *how* they

are managing those experiences and the depth at which any struggles may impact them would have been beneficial had the subject been expected in such intensity.

Implications

This study indicates that there are legitimate concerns around the information available on Canada's mobility programs, including the IMP and the ISP. The struggles presented by the participants in the interviews in addition to the complexities outlined in Chapter 4 when discussing the IMP's obscure nature contribute to larger discussions in literature around the inaccessibility of worker and student information that could help understand, interpret, and protect those involved in the programs. Concerns regarding the lack of reporting within the IMP are replicated through the lack of cohesive information networks for the ISP, where students are unsure where to turn to get information, support professionals need to double-check through verbal communication with the federal government, and permit advice is not always valid through peer-brokering. In this case, the idea that information necessary to make informed decisions both exists and is readily available is deemed inadequate. Literature calling for the federal government to implement greater transparency practices must also consider and be critical of why necessary information is kept unavailable-- such as for justifications of economic interest or for program expansion. This research also indicates that the struggles experienced by researchers accessing information is a compounded burden for temporary foreign individuals seeking answers who face additional barriers in accessing correct information and may also be unable to ask their peers for assistance due to the risk of receiving dangerously incorrect information.

As mentioned above, this study also contributes to literature through its use of semi-structured interviews to examine the lived experiences of international students and the impact of policy and programs on their time in Canada. This study emphasizes the necessity and benefit of integrating methods that allow for elaborative discussions and the opportunity for participants to indicate what they truly feel is important in your area of research if they would like to. My interview questions did not outright ask about mental health, nor did they directly ask about the impact of their work restrictions on their wellbeing. My questions were structured to prompt conversations around the study permit process and work in Canada in the hopes that tones of frustration or discussions containing uncertainty could be prompted further and a discussion could follow. Because of this, my participants' concerns focused on the implications of navigating the international student experience, and the ways that they and their peers had navigated problems. Utilizing a questionnaire or a survey would not have allowed the discussion to travel into “uncharted” areas which emphasize the most important matters to the participant, incorporating follow up-prompts to expand on the theme. The use of interviews as a way to explore topics in need of further research-- especially those that relate to marginalized groups in vulnerable situations-- could be of use to future research that wishes to explore these topics.

Ultimately, - this research utilized the evolution of policy to determine how being placed in a position of both a Learner and an Earner may have impacts on lived experiences due to literature theorizing about vulnerabilities faced by both Learners and Earners, separately. I truly hope that literature may utilize this study as an emphasis on the inability to exist as solely one identity and the detriments of policy that restricts

foreign workers to their role in the economy. Due to the lack of work in this field connecting mobility pathways and their risks, I relied on the independent positions of “foreign worker” and “international student” to highlight potential concerns and vulnerabilities. While all relevant in their own regards and relevant based on the outcomes of these interviews, the compounding burden of the multifaceted role that international students play in Canada’s operation must not be understated. Participants outlined ways that international students face problems navigating programs, however, their emphasis on social isolation, mental distress, and the desire for community support and connection highlighted the need to step outside of boundaries of worker or student. As participants noted their feelings of homesickness, insomnia, culture shock, academic burnout, social isolation, suicidal ideation, depression, and more, the need to approach research involving vulnerable identities and experiences with holistic considerations for the individual outside of their Learner or Earner identity is vital in drawing conclusions around complex, intersectional individuals or marginalized groups (Moree 2018).

Limitations

Racial & Cultural Bias

As discussed in the methodology chapter, one prominent limitation of this study was the existence of racial and cultural hierarchies that could influence the data collection and interpretation stages of this study. This study centers around the experiences of international students in Canada, whom I am purposefully seeking out in order to explore the potential conditions of exploitation or vulnerabilities while in the workforce. In doing this it must be noted that I, as a white Canadian and a stranger to these participants, am asking them to discuss their personal lives and circumstances with me in order to explore

the international student experience. Further, I must acknowledge that by then asking my participants prompts that included vulnerable questions about their mental wellbeing or anger and frustration surrounding their time in Canada could have prevented open, honest discussions around what life has been like for these participants due to my existence as not only a stranger, but a white local Canadian. Interpreting vulnerable and heavy subjects such as those discussed throughout this work also could have been shaped by a researcher and participant dynamic on top of the Canadian / international student dynamic that was present, and I found that positioning myself as a learner rather than researcher in the interviews by asking for my participants assistance with understanding concepts or programs helped create a learning space where our discussions were not simply question and answer. Additionally, giving the participant opportunities to sit and think, decline answers, ask for clarification or rephrasing's in the face of language barriers, or answer with honest uncertainty was a vital learning curve that helped conversations to develop and grow.

I would also like to note that while many of my participants discussed feelings of homesickness or isolation-- particularly when rooted in experienced racism-- I cannot personally comment on these feelings and relied largely on the descriptions given to me by these individuals. Additionally, conducting a thematic analysis on subjects that I personally have not experienced meant that I relied heavily on my own understandings of tone, enthusiasm, disinterested that are based off of my own linguistic background in English, which most participants did not share. This reliance on participant accounts necessitates a careful consideration of the authenticity and accuracy of my reporting of these experiences and their implications, as my own cultural lens and biases could

inadvertently color the interpretation of their narratives through the thematic analysis process.

Sample Size and Timeline

These results must be considered in conjunction with the several limitations experienced during the course of this project. The first being sample size; my small-scale interview study is unable to draw generalized or widely applicable conclusions about the experiences of international students. This involved 5 international student participants willing to discuss their educational and labour experiences in Canada. These students provided valuable insights into their experiences; however this information is not generalizable to the broader international student experience due to the small sample size. To supplement the low sample size of student participants, and also to shed light on observed trends, 2 international student support professionals were invited to participate in the study. These participants outlined common questions, study paths, and experiences observed in the international student group that they interact with and helped designate some discussed issues as common or non-common based on the conversations they have had with students themselves. Additionally, the short duration of this study meant that my methods were restricted to those that incorporate short-term interactions with participants which further restricted the amount of depth I was able to go into throughout the interviews. A longitudinal study would have been beneficial in elaborating on the experiences of the small sample I had and will be discussed below in further research.

Contextual

The concerns and outcomes outlined by international students are in many ways part of separate discussions in literature, meaning that wide-ranging issues from program

frustration to personal mental health issues could not be fully explored in relation to each other given the context of the thesis. While literature is available pertaining to mental health struggles of international students, there is a lack of discussion on how program structures and policy information directly impacts these struggles. Even in cases where programs are discussed, only one aspect of wellness might be examined, indicating that the compounding and interacting nature of the various problems discussed in the interviews were unable to be robustly discussed through a comparison to findings in the literature. I would have liked to delve further into the specific mental health impacts, where these stem from, what they look like in daily experiences, and how students might navigate this, however the scope of my thesis meant that indicating that these impacts simply do exist was a sufficiently relevant finding. Additionally, it should be noted that international students are a non-homogenous group, with multiple factors having the potential to change student experience outcomes while in Canada including skin colour, ethnicity, religion, language, and more. Combined with the other sample size and timeline limitations of this study, I was unable to thoroughly examine how these identities might interact with the perceived and experienced impacts of participating in the international student program.

Further Research

This study could be interpreted as a preliminary review or pilot study on the on international student experiences while working within the International Student Program. Future research could benefit this study and draw conclusions around issues presented in this paper, as highlighted below. Alternative methodologies would also be-- in my opinion-- greatly beneficial in exploring some of the more sensitive subjects such

as mental health or navigating IRCC concerns. Cross-cultural focus groups could help students engage with shared international student experiences and explore topics not directly addressed by the researcher but instead brought up in conversation by other participants. Additionally, facilitating a longitudinal study to examine experiences over the duration of international students' degrees could expand on concerns faced at multiple points in a participant's academic career. Especially as students were noted to not fully examine the conditions of their permits until necessary, this method could document that process.

Further research could examine in greater depth the current study permits distributed to international students by field of study, and request information from IRCC pertaining to student areas of employment, the percent of students employed during their studies, and more to explore the actual impacts of international student workers on the Canadian labour force, as well as determine how many students are employed in their field of study before versus after graduation-- if at all. Utilizing IRCC data to determine relationships between employment during studies, during the PGWP, and after obtaining PR could yield insightful results about which international students are deemed worthy to remain in Canada as workers compared to those who are considered students and students only.

Future research could also emphasize the role of international students as not only learners or earners but highlight how students experiences are distinct from migrant labourers through the existence and usage of differential tuition fees in higher education institutions. The expectation of international students to pay extremely high tuition fees on top of their required proof of funds presents a unique position from other TFWP

participants who are entering Canada to work and are not expected to pay tens of thousands of dollars in tuition fees during their time in Canada. Future research could focus on the usage of international students as not only a source of labour but also a source of income for higher education institutions to explore the possibility of differential tuition existing as a unique vulnerability specific to the ISP.

In light of the international student program changes occurring throughout late 2023 and early 2024, a study could explore how these changes (such as setting caps on the number of international students entering per province, or the \$20,000 increased proof of funds requirement) might impact new international student outcomes compared to current international students who will be grandfathered through under the previous limits. Examining the experiences with affording life in Canada under a \$10,000 requirement versus a \$20,000 requirement would be interesting to determine if this policy decision actually yields an improvement on the quality of life for students once in Canada. This study could draw conclusions around whether the international student program changes resulted in meaningful impacts for participants or Canadians, such as if the changes are effective in reducing housing costs due to market de-saturation, or if students in specific provinces with international student caps see varied outcomes before and after the caps were set, and more.

Additionally, international student specific mental health research would also be greatly beneficial and highlight some of the issues described in this study in more depth. Specifically, a study that is dedicated to exploring the ways in which the international student identity might produce varied roles with distinct stressors unique from domestic students would be vital in understanding the impacts of international education programs

on the individual, as well as highlight areas in which programs and policy might be able to be amended to support struggling students. The participants in this study outlined their general feelings of stress, homesickness, insomnia, burnout and more, however, a study dedicated to isolating the exact stressors that exist within the international student experience and the relationships between them could highlight program areas in need of improvement, or contribute to literature around these marginalized experiences in Canada.

Bibliography

- Akbar, Marshia. 2022. "Who Are Canada's Temporary Foreign Workers? Policy Evolution and a Pandemic Reality." *International Migration* 60 (4): 48–60. <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12976>.
- Al Mallees, Nojoud. 2023. "Majority of Canadians say higher immigration is fuelling housing crisis: poll" *Global News*, November 29, 2023. <https://globalnews.ca/news/10126729/immigration-housing-canada-leger-poll/>
- Aulakh, Satbir, and Mark Kelley. 2023. "Dozens of Students Who Could Be Kicked out of Canada Say They Were Duped by Immigration Agents in India." *CBC News*, March 17, 2023. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/international-students-immigration-cbsa-ircc-india-1.6782999>.
- Bakan, Abigail, and Daiva Stasiulis. 1994. "Foreign Domestic Worker Policy in Canada and the Social Boundaries of Modern Citizenship." *Science & Society* 58 (1): 7–33.
- Beech, Suzanne E. 2015. "International Student Mobility: The Role of Social Networks." *Social & Cultural Geography* 16 (3): 332–50. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2014.983961>.
- Beech, Suzanne E. 2018. "Adapting to Change in the Higher Education System: International Student Mobility as a Migration Industry." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44 (4): 610–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1315515>.
- Bhugra, Saloni. 2023. "No International Students!!" As need grows, Brampton food bank turning some away" *CBC News*, Nov 09, 2023. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/no-international-students-as-need-grows-brampton-food-bank-turning-some-away-1.7024375>
- Bhugra, Saloni. 2024. "International students are in 'crisis.' Governments need to take responsibility: Peel charities" *CBC News*, Feb 11, 2024. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/international-student-crisis-ontario-post-secondary-1.7102412>
- Braun, Virginia and Clarke, Victoria. 2006. Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Brunner, Lisa Ruth. 2022. "Towards a More Just Canadian Education-Migration System: International Student Mobility in Crisis." *Studies in Social Justice* 16 (1): 78–102. <https://doi.org/10.26522/ssj.v16i1.2685>.
- Brunner, Lisa Ruth. 2023. "Higher Education Institutions as Eyes of the State: Canada's International Student Compliance Regime." *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 21 (2): 236–51. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2022.2037407>.
- Calder, Moira J., Magdalena Solina Richter, Yuping Mao, Katharina Kovacs Burns, Ramadimetja Shirley Mogale, and Margaret Danko. 2016. "International Students Attending Canadian Universities: Their Experiences with Housing, Finances, and Other Issues." *Canadian Journal of Higher Education* 46 (2): 92–110. <https://doi.org/10.47678/cjhe.v46i2.184585>.
- Canada Gazette. 2018. "Canada Gazette, Part 1, Volume 152, Number 50: Regulations Amending the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations." Government of

- Canada, Public Works and Government Services Canada, Integrated Services Branch, Canada Gazette. December 15, 2018. <https://canadagazette.gc.ca/rp-pr/p1/2018/2018-12-15/html/reg1-eng.html>.
- Chartrand, Tyler, and Leah F. Vosko. 2021. "Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker and International Mobility Programs: Charting Change and Continuity Among Source Countries." *International Migration* 59 (2): 89–109. <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12762>.
- Chowdhury, Fariah. 2019. "Permanently Temporary: The Production of Race, Class, and Gender Hierarchies Through a Study of Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker Program." In *Immigration and the Current Social, Political, and Economic Climate: Breakthroughs in Research and Practice*, 142–63. IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-6918-3.ch008>.
- Darrian Matassa-Fung, 2024. "B.C. international students hold protest against permanent resident policy changes" *Global News*. March 23, 2024. <https://globalnews.ca/news/10380277/bc-international-students-protest-residency-policy/>
- Donovan, Riley. 2024. "Opinion: The cap on foreign students doesn't go far enough" *Financial Post*, Apr 03, 2024. <https://financialpost.com/opinion/cap-foreign-students-doesnt-go-far-enough>
- Employment and Social Development Canada. 2014. "Overhauling the Temporary Foreign Worker Program." Program descriptions. June 20, 2014. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/foreign-workers/reports/overhaul.html>.
- Employment and Social Development Canada. 2022. "Evaluation of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program." Program results. April 19, 2022. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/reports/evaluations/temporary-foreign-worker.html>.
- Fudge, Judy, and Fiona MacPhail. 2009. "The Temporary Foreign Worker Program in Canada: Low-Skilled Workers as an Extreme Form of Flexible Labour" *Comparative Labor Law and Policy Journal* 31 (1): 101-139. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1552054>
- Fudge, Judy. 2012. "Precarious Migrant Status and Precarious Employment: The Paradox of International Rights for Migrant Workers." *Comparative Labor Law & Policy Journal* 34 (1): 95–132.
- Fudge, Judy. 2017. "The Future of the Standard Employment Relationship: Labour Law, New Institutional Economics and Old Power Resource Theory." *Journal of Industrial Relations* 59 (3): 374–92. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022185617693877>.
- Government of Canada News. 2006a. "Off-Campus Work Permit Program Launched". News Releases. May 2006. <https://www.canada.ca/en/news/archive/2006/04/off-campus-work-permit-program-launched.html>
- Government of Canada News. 2006b. "Canada's New Government to Extend Off-Campus Work Program to More International Students". News Releases. December 2006. <https://www.canada.ca/en/news/archive/2006/12/canada-new-government-extend-off-campus-work-program-more-international-students.html>
- Government of Canada News. 2008 "Government of Canada makes it easier for international students to apply to work off-campus". News Releases. September

2008. <https://www.canada.ca/en/news/archive/2008/09/government-canada-makes-it-easier-international-students-apply-work-off-campus.htm>
- Government of Canada. 2014. “Canada’s International Education Strategy: Harnessing our knowledge advantage to drive innovation and prosperity”. Ottawa: Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada.
<https://publications.gc.ca/site/fra/9.629478/publication.html>
- Green, Alan G., and David A. Green. 1995. “Canadian Immigration Policy: The Effectiveness of the Point System and Other Instruments.” *The Canadian Journal of Economics / Revue Canadienne d’Economie* 28 (4b): 1006–41.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/136133>.
- Green, David A. 1999. “Immigrant Occupational Attainment: Assimilation and Mobility over Time.” *Journal of Labor Economics* 17 (1): 49–79.
<https://doi.org/10.1086/209913>.
- Guo, Yan, and Shibao Guo. 2017. “Internationalization of Canadian Higher Education: Discrepancies between Policies and International Student Experiences.” *Studies in Higher Education* 42 (5): 851–68.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2017.1293874>.
- Harrison, Lane. 2023. “He came to Canada with a college acceptance in hand. Next week, he's scheduled for deportation” *CBC News*, June 8, 2023. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/international-student-deportation-toronto-1.6869251>
- Herron, Brigette A. 2023. “40 Years of Qualitative Feminist Interviewing: Conceptual Moments and Cultivating Ecosystems of Care.” *Qualitative Inquiry* 29 (6): 659–68. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10778004221139611>.
- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. 2011. “Evaluation of the International Student Program.” Assessments. April 6, 2011.
<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/reports-statistics/evaluations/international-student-program-2010/findings.html>.
- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. 2014. “Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) Exemption Codes – International Mobility Program.” Program descriptions. June 6, 2014. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/operational-bulletins-manuals/temporary-residents/foreign-workers/exemption-codes.html>.
- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. 2016. “Employer Compliance Inspections.” Program descriptions. January 19, 2016.
<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/operational-bulletins-manuals/temporary-residents/foreign-workers/work-without-permit/employer-compliance-inspections.html>.
- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. 2017. “Global Skills Strategy: About the Process.” June 12, 2017. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/work-canada/hire-temporary-foreign/global-skills-strategy.html>.
- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. 2020. “Removing barriers for international students working in essential services to fight COVID-19.” April 22, 2020. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees->

- [citizenship/news/2020/04/removing-barriers-for-international-students-working-in-essential-services-to-fight-covid-19.html](https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2020/04/removing-barriers-for-international-students-working-in-essential-services-to-fight-covid-19.html)
- Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada. 2022a. “Evaluation of the Global Skills Strategy (GSS)” July, 2022. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/reports-statistics/evaluations/global-skills-strategy.html>
- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. 2022b. “International Students to Help Address Canada’s Labour Shortage.” News releases. October 7, 2022. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2022/10/international-students-to-help-address-canadas-labour-shortage.html>.
- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. 2022c. “2022 Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration.” November 1, 2022. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/annual-report-parliament-immigration-2022.html>.
- Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada. 2022d. “New measures to address Canada’s labour shortage” April 22, 2022. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2022/04/new-measures-to-address-canadas-labour-shortage.html>
- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. 2023a. “Changes to International Student Program Aim to Protect Students.” News releases. October 27, 2023. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2023/10/changes-to-international-student-program-aim-to-protect-students.html>.
- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. 2023b. “2023 Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration.” November 24, 2023. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/annual-report-parliament-immigration-2023.html>
- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. 2023c. Revised requirements to better protect international students” News releases. December 7, 2023 <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2023/12/revised-requirements-to-better-protect-international-students.html>
- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. 2024a. “Canada to Stabilize Growth and Decrease Number of New International Student Permits Issued to Approximately 360,000 for 2024.” News releases. January 22, 2024. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2024/01/canada-to-stabilize-growth-and-decrease-number-of-new-international-student-permits-issued-to-approximately-360000-for-2024.html>.
- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. 2024b. “Canada to introduce new rules around off-campus work hours for international students” News releases. April 29, 2024. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2024/04/canada-to-introduce-new-rules-around-off-campus-work-hours-for-international-students.html>

- Jessop, Bob. 2001. "Bringing the State Back In (Yet Again): Reviews, Revisions, Rejections, and Redirections." *International Review of Sociology* 11 (2): 149–73. doi:10.1080/713674035.
- Jessop, Bob. 2022. "State Theory" in *Handbook on Theories of Governance*, 77-88. Edited by Christopher Ansell and Jabob Torfing. Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781800371972>.
- Johnstone, Marjorie, and Eunjung Lee. 2014. "Branded: International Education and 21st-Century Canadian Immigration, Education Policy, and the Welfare State." *International Social Work* 57 (3): 209–21. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020872813508572>.
- Kachulis, Eleni and Maya Perez- Leclerc. 2020 "Temporary Foreign Workers in Canada. (Background Paper)" April 16, 2020. Library of Parliament. https://lop.parl.ca/sites/PublicWebsite/default/en_CA/ResearchPublications/201936E.
- Lee, Sherrie. 2018. "Seeking academic help: A case study of peer brokering interactions" *Transitions: Journal of Transient Migration* 2 (2): 149-173. https://doi.org/10.1386/tjtm.2.2.149_1
- Leech, Beth L., Frank R. Baumgartner, Jeffrey M. Berry, Marie Hojnacki, and David C. Kimball. 2013. "Lessons from the 'Lobbying and Policy Change' Project" in *Interview Research in Political Science*. Ithaca, US: Cornell University Press. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/unb/detail.action?docID=3138479>.
- Lu, Yuqian, and Feng Hou. 2019. "Temporary Foreign Workers in the Canadian Labour Force: Open Versus Employer-Specific Work Permits," *Economic Insights*. no. 102.
- MacRae, Avery. 2024. "New survey finds Canadians can't cope with increasing numbers of international students" *CTV News Atlantic*, April 16, 2024. <https://atlantic.ctvnews.ca/new-survey-finds-canadians-can-t-cope-with-increasing-numbers-of-international-students-1.6849265>
- Marsden, Sarah, Eric Tucker, and Leah F. Vosko. 2021a. "Flawed by Design? A Case Study of Federal Enforcement of Migrant Workers' Labour Rights in Canada." *Canadian Labour and Employment Law Journal (CLELJ)* 23 (1): 71–102.
- Marsden, Sarah, Eric Tucker, and Leah F. Vosko. 2021b. "The Trilemma of Canadian Migrant Worker Policy: Facilitating Employer Access While Protecting the Canadian Labour Market and Addressing Migrant Worker Exploitation." In *Research Handbook on the Law and Politics of Migration*, 63–81. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- McCartney Dale. 2021. "'A Question of Self-Interest': A Brief History of 50 Years of International Student Policy in Canada." *Canadian Journal of Higher Education* 51 (3): 33–50. <https://doi.org/10.47678/cjhe.vi0.189179>.
- Merriam, Sharan B., and Elizabeth J. Tisdell. 2015. *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. Newark, UNITED STATES: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/unb/detail.action?docID=2089475>.
- Moree, Dana. 2018. "Qualitative Approaches to Studying Marginalized Communities." In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*. New York: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.246>.

- Mweshi, Geoffrey Kapasa, and Kwesi Sakyi. 2020. "Application of Sampling Methods for the Research Design." *Archives of Business Research* 8 (11): 180–93. <https://doi.org/10.14738/abr.811.9042>.
- Netierman, Elena, Lauren Harrison, Angela Freeman, Grace Shoyele, Victoria Esses, and Christine Covell. 2022. "Should I Stay or Should I Go? International Students' Decision-Making About Staying in Canada." *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 23 (1): 43–60. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-021-00825-1>.
- O'Donnell, Ian, and Mikal Skuterud. 2022. "The Transformation of Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker Program." *Canadian Public Policy* 48 (4): 518–38.
- O'Neill, Natasha. 2024. "Here's what international students wished they knew before coming to Canada" *CTV News*, Feb 6, 2024. <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/here-s-what-international-students-wished-they-knew-before-coming-to-canada-1.6758034>
- Reitz, Jeffrey G., and Sherrilyn M. Sklar. 1997. "Culture, Race, and the Economic Assimilation of Immigrants." *Sociological Forum* 12 (2): 233–77. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1024649916361>.
- Reitz, Jeffrey G. 2001. Immigrant skill utilization in the Canadian labour market: Implications of human capital research. *Int. Migration & Integration* 2, 347–378 (2001). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-001-1004-1>
- Reitz, Jeffrey G. 2005. "Tapping Immigrants' Skills: New Directions for Canadian Immigration Policy in the Knowledge Economy," *Law and Business Review of the Americas* 11(3 & 4): 409-432
- Rotstein, Abraham. 1983. "Foreign Policy and the Canadian Business Community." *International Journal* 39 (1): 136–45. <https://doi.org/10.2307/40202224>.
- Scott, Colin, Saba Safdar, Roopa Desai Trilokekar, and Amira El Masri. 2015. "International Students as 'Ideal Immigrants' in Canada: A disconnect between policy makers' assumptions and the lived experiences of international students," *Comparative and International Education: London*. 43 (3): 1-16.
- Sharma, Nandita. 1997. "Birds of Prey and Birds Of Passage: The Movement of Capital and the Migration of Labour." *Labour, Capital and Society / Travail, Capital et Société* 30 (1): 8–38.
- Sharma, Nandita. 2012. "The "Difference" that Borders Make: "Temporary Foreign Workers" and the Social Organization of Unfreedom in Canada" In *Legislated Inequality: Temporary Labour Migration in Canada* edited by Patti Tamara Lenard and Christine Straehle, 26-47. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780773586932-004>
- She, Qianru, and Terry Wotherspoon. 2013. "International Student Mobility and Highly Skilled Migration: A Comparative Study of Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom." *SpringerPlus* 2 (1): 132. <https://doi.org/10.1186/2193-1801-2-132>.
- Spector, Paul E. 2019. "Do Not Cross Me: Optimizing the Use of Cross-Sectional Designs." *Journal of Business and Psychology* 34 (2): 125–37. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-018-09613-8>.
- Statistics Canada. 2022. "International Students as a Source of Labour Supply: Engagement in the Labour Market after Graduation." Government of Canada.

- January 18, 2022. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/36-28-0001/2021012/article/00002-eng.htm>.
- Statistics Canada. 2023. "Foreign Workers in Canada: Distribution of Paid Employment by Industry." Government of Canada. December 21, 2023. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/36-28-0001/2023012/article/00005-eng.htm>.
- Statistics Canada. 2024. "Housing International Students: Housing Suitability across Municipalities." Government of Canada, May 22, 2024. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/36-28-0001/2024005/article/00001-eng.htm>.
- Stasiulis, Daiva K., and Abigail B. Bakan. 1997. "Regulation and Resistance: Strategies of Migrant Domestic Workers in Canada and Internationally." *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 6 (1): 31–57. <https://doi.org/10.1177/011719689700600103>
- Stein, Sharon, and Vanessa Oliveira de Andreotti. 2016. "Cash, Competition, or Charity: International Students and the Global Imaginary." *Higher Education* 72 (2): 225–39. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-015-9949-8>.
- Strauss, Kendra, and Siobhán McGrath. 2017. "Temporary Migration, Precarious Employment and Unfree Labour Relations: Exploring the 'Continuum of Exploitation' in Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker Program." *Geoforum* 78 (January):199–208. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2016.01.008>.
- Sweetman, Arthur. 2006. "NEED WE PURSUE IMMIGRATION OBJECTIVES ONE AT A TIME? Economic Growth, Family Reunification and Points Systems." *Canadian Issues* 68-71. <https://login.proxy.hil.unb.ca/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/need-we-pursue-immigration-objectives-one-at-a-time/docview/208685349/se-2>.
- Tannock, Stuart. 2011. "Points of Prejudice: Education-Based Discrimination in Canada's Immigration System." *Antipode* 43 (4): 1330–56. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2010.00864.x>.
- Taschner, Eric. 2023. "50-100 North Bay, Ont., college students are homeless" *CTV News*, Sept. 6, 2023. <https://northernontario.ctvnews.ca/50-100-north-bay-ont-college-students-are-homeless-1.6550332>
- Terry, G., Hayfield, N., Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2017). Thematic analysis. In *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology* (pp. 17-36). SAGE Publications Ltd, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526405555>
- Todd, Douglas. 2024. "Canada should warn guest worker, student applicants they're taking a big gamble" *Vancouver Sun*, June 24, 2024. <https://vancouversun.com/opinion/columnists/canada-foreign-workers-students-risk>
- Tucker, Eric. 2020. "Migrant Workers and Fissured Workforces: CS Wind and the Dilemmas of Organizing Intra-Company Transfers in Canada." *Economic and Industrial Democracy* 41 (2): 372–96. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0143831X17707822>.
- Tungohan, Ethel. 2016. "Changes to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and Caregiver Program." *Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities*.
- Tungohan, Ethel, and John Paul Catungal. 2022. "Virtual Qualitative Research Using Transnational Feminist Queer Methodology: The Challenges and Opportunities of

- Zoom-Based Research During Moments of Crisis.” *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 21 (April):16094069221090062.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069221090062>.
- Vosko, Leah F., Valerie Preston, and Robert Latham. 2014. *Liberating Temporariness?: Migration, Work, and Citizenship in an Age of Insecurity*. Montreal, CANADA: McGill-Queen’s University Press.
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/unb/detail.action?docID=3332770>.
- Vosko, Leah F. 2022. “Temporary Labour Migration by Any Other Name: Differential Inclusion under Canada’s ‘new’ International Mobility Regime.” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 48 (1): 129–52.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2020.1834839>.
- Zheng, Jie. 2010. “Neoliberal Globalization, Higher Education Policies and International Student Flows: An Exploratory Case Study of Chinese Graduate Student Flows to Canada.” *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences*, 2(1) , 216-

Appendix A: International Student Interview Guide

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES IN CANADA

- How long have you been studying in Canada?
- Are you currently employed?
- Without naming specific employers, can you tell me about your work history while in Canada?
 - Prompt: Overall, how would you describe your work experience thus far while in Canada?
- What prompted you to start working during your studies?
- Do [Did] you like your job?
 - Prompt: Why?
- What is your relationship like with your manager or employer?
- Do you feel as though being an international student impacts your experience at work in any way?
 - If yes: Can you tell me about that?

UNDERSTANDING PROGRAMS AND RESTRICTIONS

- How would you describe the average international student working experience?
- Do you know what Temporary Foreign Workers are?
- Do you know what the Canadian International Mobility Program is?
- Do you know what work restrictions you have that are related to your study permit, if any?
 - Prompt: How do you feel about work restrictions for international students?
- If you have a question about work permit information, what do you do?
 - Prompt: Do you feel like information about your work permit is accessible?

CONCLUSION

- What would you say to incoming international students, if anything, to prepare them for studying and working in Canada?
- Is there anything else that you would like to comment on regarding your experience working as an international student that we haven't touched on?

Appendix B: International Student Support Professional

STUDENT EXPERIENCES

- To start, could you tell me a little about your role and how you engage with international students?
- Aside from your position, where else might students turn to if they have questions about study permits and work permits?
- Previously, the Government of Canada temporarily removed the 20hr/week cap for international students. What do you think of this change?
- Why do international students seek out employment while studying in Canada?
- How would you describe the average international student experience of finding and keeping employment during their studies?

PROGRAM AND PERMIT INFORMATION

- Can you tell me about the restrictions placed on international students studying in Canada?
- How would you describe student's understanding of their study permits and the associated work restrictions?
- Prompt: Who do you think is responsible for ensuring that international students have and comprehend all of the necessary information about their study permits and work restrictions?
- Have you seen situations where students have not abided by the study permit work restrictions?
 - If yes: What happens in this situation?
- Do you receive many work or work restriction related questions as an advisor?
 - Prompt: What are some common questions you receive?
 - Prompt: Are there any blanket solutions to the questions or concerns that you may encounter?

CONCLUSION

- Is there anything else that you would like to comment on regarding your experiences working with international students that we haven't touched on?

Curriculum Vitae

Candidate's Full Name: Deanna Elizabeth Merriam

Universities Attended: **Bachelor of Arts: Political Science**

University of New Brunswick

September 2018-April 2022

Master of Arts: Political Science

University of New Brunswick

September 2022- August 2024

Publications: N/A

Conference Presentations: N/A