NOT YOUR CASH COW, NOT YOUR SCAPEGOAT

Student Migration & Canadian Universities

by THE RACIALIZATION OF ASIAN INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS Collective

Fernwood Publishing
Halifax & Winnipeg

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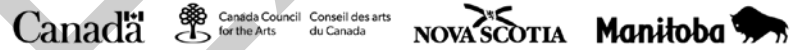
Printed and bound in Canada

Published by Fernwood Publishing
Halifax and Winnipeg
2970 Oxford Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3L 2W4
www.fernwoodpublishing.ca

Fernwood Publishing Company Limited gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Book Fund and the Canada Council for the Arts. We acknowledge the Province of Manitoba for support through the Manitoba Publishers Marketing Assistance Program and the Book Publishing Tax Credit. We acknowledge the Nova Scotia Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage for support through the Publishers Assistance Fund.



Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication
Title: Not your cash cow, not your scapegoat: student migration and Canadian universities / by The Racialization of Asian International Students Collective.
Names: Racialization of Asian International Students Collective, issuing body.
Description: Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: Canadiana 20250311410 | ISBN 9781773638058 (softcover)
Subjects: LCSH: Students, Foreign—Canada. | LCSH: Students, Foreign—Canada—Social conditions. | LCSH: Asian students—Canada. | LCSH: Student mobility—Canada. | LCSH: Racism in higher education. | LCSH: Universities and colleges—Canada.
Classification: LCC LB2376.6.C3 N68 2026 | DDC 371.826/910971—dc23

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PREFACE

The Racialization of Asian International Students (RAIS) Collective stems from a research collaboration that was initially meant to compare the treatment of international students from Asia at five Canadian universities in 2018. It soon became more than a research project, as the COVID-19 pandemic began before we could commence our fieldwork. As many members of the collective are racialized international and domestic students and faculty, RAIS meetings became a locale for kindred minds to connect and reflect on the treatment of international students amid a rise of anti-Asian racism, xenophobia and nativism, and at a time of heightened discussions around reconciliation, anti-Black racism, decolonization, equity, diversity and inclusion, as well as anti-academic — especially anti-university — sentiment in Canadian society. Over the years, we asked ourselves whether this research project is self-contained, or, through its execution, analysis and dissemination, imbibes the politics of its time. What did the researchers who are racialized migrants and/or international students think of the public discourse laced with racist tropes? How were they made to remember their racially ranked place in various Canadian communities?

With an awareness of and dedication to understanding the connections between developments regarding student migrants and other Canadian realities, including settler colonialism, racism, sexism, classism and ableism, individual members of the RAIS Collective have continued their own academic and nonacademic work in addressing such questions, sometimes individually, sometimes in collaboration. While individual members of the collective do not share a unifying intellectual project, we share similar axiological standpoints and normative concerns for better supporting racialized student migrants to Canada, at this time in our

history. Some of us work within institutions to dismantle institutional hurdles and advocate for better inclusion. Some are required to comment in public media and online on the treatment of student migrants or other social justice topics. Some of us participate in demonstrations and protests in support of better equity for migrant groups, including student migrants. Some are still learning and navigating the Canadian landscape as international students. And all of us have developed a community of care and praxis that centres the importance of addressing racialization and the inequities experienced by student migrants in contemporary Canadian society.

While scholarly attention to migration and the international student experience in Canada has increased steadily over the past decade, we did not anticipate the political climate of fierce anti-immigration, nationalist protectionism, and related populist discourse that has emerged since we started our research. Over the five years that we have been gathering our reflections and sharing our analytical insights on the topic, the Canadian and international landscapes international students, especially racialized student migrants, must navigate have changed significantly. We are deeply concerned and saddened about the exacerbation of political rhetoric in recent years that has led to the targeting of racialized student migrants in many jurisdictions. Where we began this study is radically different than where we are ending. As a collective, we are aware that our insights have evolved and will continue to evolve. At a time when the higher education landscape is shifting rapidly and continuously, we share a core belief that there are major trends in Canadian society regarding racialization, immigration and higher education that connect to international realities and that will be key in shaping what comes next. We truly believe that community building and grassroots collaboration are essential to advocate for and support racialized student migrants in their journeys.

As such, the production of this book is inherently linked to the creation of the RAIS Collective, combining the research collaboration initiated in 2018, the community of care emerging during the COVID-19 pandemic and discussions related to Canada's 2020 racial reckoning, as well as growing concerns with a national shift towards scapegoating international students. We did not envision for this research collaboration, which already produced one edited collection and a special issue, to conclude with this collectively written manuscript. Nonetheless, it

became necessary. Our monthly online conversations to discuss technical challenges to conducting our study — to share pandemic experiences and to think through how our study fits other larger concerns of the 2020s — led to a collective realization that processes like internationalization, racialization and nation-building are best described in the banal and the local. Everyday life moments of racialized student migrants have resonance with current nation-wide processes and we felt these needed to be documented, highlighted and explained. This seems even more significant to us at a time of a noticeable shift in how student migrants and international education are discussed by Canadian institutions and in Canadian society at large.

This book is a collective endeavour with a perspective that transcends our individual voices, which sometimes diverge on key insights. The manuscript was written in dialogue among members of the collective, assigned to specific tasks. While some of us took the lead in developing the conceptual approach, conducting fieldwork in a particular site or writing specific chapters, our shared insights, discussions and disagreements are the common ground on which this book is based. Within the collective, smaller groups were organically created, out of individual member interests, to work on specific dimensions or parts of the manuscript. Full-time faculty members took the lead in coordinating research and writing efforts, chapter by chapter, in constant dialogue and collaboration with junior members of the collective. We recognize the power imbalances between members of the collective, notably within academia. Even if senior collective members adopted many feedback mechanisms and engaged in co-writing, these power relations remain somewhat in place, if only as junior members of the collective followed tasks as prescribed by senior members or had only specific opportunities, via meetings, to shape the larger arc of the project. As such, we wish for readers to understand that this collective reflection cannot be, and should not be, attributed to one specific individual of the collective, or to associations or groups with which we are or will be affiliated. This manuscript is the result of many hours of discussions and debates that reflect a shared standpoint and commitment to the importance of highlighting racialized student migrant experiences and narratives, the responsibility of Canadian institutions in better supporting them, and the necessity to achieve racial and social justice within Canadian higher education.

— RAIS Collective

1

CONSOLIDATING CANADA

Student Migration, Racialization and Nation-Building

In this book, we critically explore the support for, and integration of, international students enrolled in Canadian universities, especially their experiences with racialization and related discrimination. We focus on student migrants from Asia at five Canadian universities, highlighting the ways in which the status of international students is framed and deployed by Canadian institutions, including local governments and communities, and how racialization processes, which we define below, manifest on and off campus. Racialized student migrants to Canada, who were considered global talents twenty years ago, have now been made responsible for various societal ills as part of a rise of local populisms and anti-globalist, anti-intellectual and nativist sentiments. As education or student migrants—especially racialized ones—come to Canada, they are increasingly blamed for long-standing problems and issues plaguing Canadian society, such as affordable housing and the high cost of living. The current scapegoating of student migrants aligns with a prevalent ethos in Canadian society that instrumentalizes their contributions, while questioning and compromising their membership in the very same society. As Yvonne Su (2025) argues:

> There is a cost to the misplaced blame that needs to be brought to light. When political leaders, media outlets and think tanks frame international students as the main source of societal woes, they miss the opportunity to fix underlying problems […] Focusing on immigration also means we miss the opportunity

> as citizens to build any kind of political momentum for policy changes on housing, asylum, health care and education. We need to change the narrative so that politicians and media stop vilifying international students and focus on systemic solutions.

In this chapter, we contextualize the contributions international students make to Canadian universities, putting into perspective their recruitment and retention in the Canadian higher education sector since the 1970s, including during key moments of the sector's neoliberalization and internationalization (processes discussed further in Chapters 2 and 3), and the material and ideological benefits that accrue. Importantly, we relate this accumulation of benefits to the recent and ongoing scapegoating of the international student, a familiar dynamic in Canadian nation-building. We then present the conceptual and methodological parameters and the contributions of the Racialization of Asian International Students (RAIS) research project on which this book is based. The book is composed of seven chapters, each elaborating key findings along five themes. However, as we were bringing the project to a close, rapid changes in immigration policies, including the policies of international student recruitment and retention as well as study and work permits were introduced by the federal government. The changes were comprehensive enough that the RAIS project is ending at an entirely different era. International students have come to embody what is wrong with the Canadian immigration system; when the project started, international students were hailed as the very symbols of an emerging knowledge economy. As such, we conclude with some cautionary tales and strategies for what, seemingly, is a new era in Canadian higher education, adopting post-2024 as a benchmark (Garcia-Sitton 2025).

Higher Education, Student Migration and Nation-Building in Canada

The number of international students and their contributions to the Canadian economy have increased significantly in the last twenty years. From 2010 to 2023, the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) recorded a 119 percent increase in the number of international students in Canada, with close to 495,000 international students in Canada in 2017 at all levels of study (CBIE 2018). Since then, these trends have continued, reaching more than one million international students

at all levels of study in 2023 (CBIE 2023a; 2024). Across the Canadian postsecondary sector, there were 620,000 international students both in 2019 and 2021 (Crossman et al. 2022). From 2000 to 2009, the number of international students enrolled in universities increased 5 to 8 percent per year, with a 17 percent jump recorded in 2019 (Kim et al. 2024, 3). From 2022 to 2023, the number increased by 29 percent (CBIE 2023a; 2024). Most of these students were from countries in Asia, which was in line with the recruitment strategies promoted and facilitated by Canadian universities and governments. In 2019 alone, 60 percent were either South Asian or East Asian, at 33 percent and 27 percent, respectively (Kim et al. 2024, 5).

It is well documented that such increases in the recruitment of international students by Canadian universities have been motivated, especially since the 1990s, by a gradual loss of public funding, increased privatization and marketization of the sector, and competition between postsecondary institutions (Montsion and Caneo 2024). Conceived colloquially as *cash cows*, international students from countries that are considered to have a high demand for high-quality education came to be identified by Canadian universities as a spatial fix to continue their operations and to expand without addressing these core problems, such as chronic provincial underfunding of higher education (Shahrokni et al. 2022). In concrete terms, this spatial fix meant raising tuition fees for international students to cover operational deficits and systemic constraints, such as the political untenability to raise tuition rates for domestic students. This marketization of the Canadian postsecondary sector — the apex of which we witnessed during the research for this project — was initiated in the 1970s with the introduction of a differential fee structure for international students (see Chapters 2 and 3 for more details). For instance, the University of Toronto introduced differential fees for international students in 1977, setting the stage for Canadian universities, with government support, to "mine international students for cash" (Chua 2022). In the 1990s, the Ontario government officially acknowledged this instrumentalization of international students, both by excluding them from the Ontario Health Insurance Plan in 1994 and by allowing each university to fix the international tuition fee rates in 1996 (Chua 2022).

At the federal level, the 1990s were the years when Team Canada missions, Canada Education Centres, and the branding of Canadian education overseas were introduced (Kim et al. 2024). From the early

2000s onward, Canada began actively participating in the so-called global race for skills or war for talent. Also, the federal government launched a more skills-based immigration policy, and various commissioned reports articulated the need for skills to grow Canada's knowledge-based economy (Chatterjee 2025). In 2008, the Canadian government launched the Canadian Experience Class as a two-tier pathway for permanent residency for international students, a harbinger of institutionalizing a Canadian *edugration* framework through which migration for education purposes serves as a pathway to temporary labour migration and eventually, permanent status (Brunner 2021; discussed in Chapter 2). During this period, when education migration became federalized, the federal government's role in facilitating the recruitment of international students also grew to include the establishment of various federal-provincial agreements to boost recruitment and retention and the creation of the post-graduate work permit (Kim et al. 2024).

In the decade that followed, such arrangements and permits became significant policy avenues through which a steady stream of student migrants entered Canada. Tellingly, in 2016, the president of Universities Canada referred to Canadian universities as "the Pier 21 of the 21st century" (quoted in Brunner 2022). Specifically, the Government of Canada has developed two national strategies — one by a Conservative government and the other by a Liberal government — since 2014 to support higher education institutions' recruitment and retention of international students, and it is supposedly working on a third strategy. These strategies are meant to provide a national vision for higher education institutions' ongoing internationalization efforts. As stated in the first national strategy (2014–19), "the Government of Canada will work with the provinces and territories, Canadian educational institutions, and other stakeholders to double the size of our international student base […] by 2022 [… which] will create new sources of jobs, economic growth and prosperity in every region of the country" (Government of Canada 2014, 11). The strategy emphasized the immediate benefits to local economies across the country and the potential for long-term growth through the training of highly skilled labour.

This vision was adjusted in 2019 to ensure the long-term sustainability of these internationalization practices. In *Building on Success*, the Government of Canada specifies: "Attracting students from a wider diversity of countries, as well as to a greater variety of regions and schools,

would foster sustainable growth of Canada's international education sector and distribute the benefits more equitably across the country" (Government of Canada 2019, 4). This directive, which emphasized how the recruitment of international students would translate into a success story for the Canadian labour market and its need for highly skilled migrants, also responded to the over-reliance on international students from a small number of countries. For instance, while China, India, and South Korea have been long-standing source markets, since 2014, there has also been an increasing focus on Bangladesh and Vietnam (Kim et al. 2024, 4). Moreover, the strategy spoke to concerns about how internationalization is practised by Canadian institutions, as well as the perceived impacts of large numbers of international students on local communities across Canada and these students' living conditions, including challenges related to affordable housing and the cost of living (Pottie-Sherman et al. 2024).

As such, this was a period of aggressive and well-orchestrated strategies of recruiting international students to the Canadian postsecondary sector. Presumably, this was to help Canada rise within the ranks of the global race for skills (Human Resources Development Canada 2002) and to secure accessible labour for Canada's local economies, all while fortifying the country's cash-starved higher education institutions. In 2021, as Canada was emerging from the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic and recruiting historically high numbers of students, the minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), Marco Mendicino, had a "simple message" for international students: "we don't just want you to study here, we want you to stay here" (IRCC 2021). As the IRCC (2021) press release explained, the retention of international students for long-term settlement in Canada was an asset to Canadian society:

> The government has made significant efforts to encourage international students to settle permanently in Canada. They bring strong employment and language skills, bolstered by their Canadian education and work experience, so they are typically well positioned to apply for permanent resident status. More than 58,000 graduates successfully applied to immigrate permanently in 2019, and their decisions to stay in Canada will help to address our stark demographic challenges.

This perspective from the federal government, however, changed rapidly in 2023 and 2024 during the tenure of the IRCC's minister, Marc Miller. This is when the official discourse shifted toward blaming international students for societal problems. Lisa Brunner and Roopa Desai Trilokekar (2024) indicate that "for decades the federal government has used international students as solutions to multiple policy problems — especially labour market and economic immigrant shortages — until international students suddenly *became*, in their eyes, the problem" (emphasis in original). This shift in the government's message and society's growing reluctance to welcome greater numbers of education migrants are both indicative of a long-standing conceptual tension in the design of these internationalization strategies, as student migrants came to be conceived as both desirable migrants for Canadian society and not worthy of attention for social integration and upward social mobility (Beck 2024, 22). This tension is especially evident when the public discourses both at the federal and provincial levels are contrasted with the praxis of Canadian institutions. For example, while Canadian universities, with the support of the Canadian government and its EduCanada website, enthusiastically opened their doors to international students by branding and marketing an inclusive and equitable Canada and Canadian higher education (Liang and Stack 2022; Shahrokni et al. 2022), they treated these students differently from domestic students. Among various systemic inequities that we discuss in subsequent chapters, international students paid much higher tuition fees than domestic students, with the payment gap between the two widening from $12,293 in 2007 to $31,452 in 2022 (Kim et al. 2024, 7). This tension, as further discussed in Chapter 7, is the result of internationalization strategies designed to support the growth and prosperity of Canadian universities despite their critical funding problems, including the gradual reduction of public funding (Sabzalieva et al. 2022).

Between 2007 and 2014, tuition fees increased for both domestic and international students by about 40 percent. However, starting in 2014, not coincidentally the year Canada's *International Education Strategy* was first released, the picture starts to look quite different: from 2014 to 2022, tuition fees rose 64 percent for international students, compared to 19 percent for domestic students (Kim et al. 2024, 8). In Ontario, between 2018 and 2025, the average international undergraduate student tuition rose, "from around $35,000 to just under $50,000. They now

pay five times more than domestic students" (Chaudhary 2025). Such figures vary by institution. Where international student tuition fees for most arts and science programs were about $35,000 in 2023–24 at York University and Toronto Metropolitan University, they reached $60,000 per year at the University of Toronto, in stark contrast to $11,000 for domestic students (Chatterjee 2023). With provincial governments not increasing their support for university students, some commentators have started to frame universities as publicly assisted rather than public institutions (Leadbeater 2025).

The economic benefits of international students are experienced by both Canadian universities and by the Canadian society as a whole. In 2012, international students spent $8.4 billion in the Canadian economy, which increased to $21.1 billion in 2018, with the sector's impact on the Canadian economy rivalling that of the auto, lumber, and aircraft sectors (Government of Canada 2014, 2019; Kim et al. 2024, 7). In 2022, international students, as well as any visiting friends and family members, spent $37.3 billion in Canada, or 1.2 percent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This spending supported an estimated 361,230 jobs, with international students paying, directly or indirectly, $7.4 billion in tax revenue. It also accounts for 23.1 percent of Canada's service exports (Government of Canada 2022).

Such benefits can be measured in nonmonetary or ideological terms as well. As the country emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic — an event that changed family composition (e.g., divorces and deaths), reshaped governance priorities, and exposed and deepened existing social vulnerabilities — student migrants, some of whom had been hailed as frontline heroes during the pandemic, started to be blamed for societal ills such as increased crime rates, the housing crisis and crisis of affordability, and the strain on food banks and social services (Esses et al. 2021; Su 2025). Indeed, we are writing this at a time when the Canadian state and publics across the country have scapegoated the international students for many enduring social and public policy crises. The era of the federalization of education migration in Canada, which was characterized by the support and involvement of the federal government in the recruitment of international students as an economic advantage to the country (Kim et al. 2024), thus, analytically, has to be replaced by a post-2024 era. The new period solidifies and institutionalizes many long-standing implicit negative reactions toward student migrants. Once

presented as global talents, they become more publicly accused of various societal ills and in need of stricter controls.

This shift prompted the federal government to impose a cap on the number of international students in the postsecondary sector. This cap included a 35 percent reduction in study permits for 2024 (364,000 new permits issued) with a further 10 percent decrease in 2025, stricter financial eligibility requirements for study permits, restricted open work permit eligibility for spouses (now limited to students in master's, doctoral, or select professional programs), and a decrease in the number of hours they are allowed to work off campus (Government of Canada 2024, 2025a). According to Colleges and Institutes Canada, these measures resulted in $2 billion in revenue being at risk for Canadian institutions and seismic changes in education migration patterns, as student enrolment declined by 54 percent (Michael McDonald quoted in Hassan 2024). Federal legislation builds on or is reinforced by various provincial measures to restrict access for international students, including restricting their access to healthcare coverage in Manitoba, doubling their tuition fees and French language requirements in Québec, and requiring Canadian institutions to provide housing guarantees, thereby curtailing the number of enrolment offers (CBC News 2025; Government of Ontario 2024; Olson 2024). As we write, the impacts of these policies are being felt across the postsecondary sector, and they are helping to shed light on the contributions international students make to Canada as well as the extent of Canada's reliance on these contributions.

Regardless of the recent tensions these policy changes have unleashed and the direction in which the endangered postsecondary sector is headed, we maintain that the about-face in higher education migration policies is consistent with developments in Canadian society and the use of immigration and higher education as a nation-building tool (CBIE 2023b). It authenticates, moreover, a historic pattern of scapegoating and abandoning migrants in times of crisis (Su 2025). Even the launch of the "Global Impact + Research Talent Initiative" by the federal government in late 2025 — which opens the door to the recruitment of international researchers including graduate students — is framed through a language that values researchers only. This leaves, undisturbed, the current rationale for student migrants (Government of Canada 2025b). Through these policy changes, Canadian governments at all levels have aided and benefited from the scapegoating of migrants and fear mongering, and this

approach allows them to manage the current crises in ways that garner support and legitimacy and build cohesion among the otherwise disparate Canadian public. Viewed in this context, the internationalization of Canadian universities and the aggressive recruitment of international students — followed by the post-2024 shift in public policy including the cap on student numbers — seem to be aligned with Canada's settler colonial capitalist ethos (Bauder 2011; Bauder and Mueller 2021; Chatterjee 2019). Amid this significant — and predictable — shift in public discourses against racialized student migrants in Canada, we aim to shed light on their experiences, with a specific interest in how racialization affects their integration both on and off campus, as well as their broader migratory journeys.

Research Objectives and Foci

This collaborative research endeavour started in 2018, at a time when the recruitment and retention practices toward international students from Asia were expanding and then continued amid the changes provoked by legislation and the COVID-19 pandemic. Many members of the RAIS team have contributed for years to studies of specific groups of international students living in Canada, or how they have been supported by and integrated into particular institutions and cities. We designed and conducted a rare pan-Canadian study of the treatment and integration of international students at Canadian universities, one that is unique as a multi-city and multi-university study focused on multiple nationality groups. The scale of the project allowed us to find similarities across five sites: the University of British Columbia (UBC, Vancouver), the University of Manitoba (Winnipeg), the University of Toronto (Toronto), the Université de Montréal (Montréal), and Dalhousie University (Halifax). It was also designed to examine three groups: student migrants from China, India, and South Korea enrolled at Canadian universities.

Here, we need to provide a few conceptual clarifications. First, in this book, we refer to people coming to Canada to study as *student migrants* who are engaged in *edugration* or educational migration more broadly. We use the term *international student* when referring to the students' relationship to Canadian institutions and the administrative category that Canadian governments and universities have designed and implemented. In this view, racialized student migrants have many experiences and encounters while studying in Canada, and these

experiences and encounters transcend their relationships with Canadian institutions, even though the administrative category of the international student structures their journey. Second, we refer to student migrants from China, India, and South Korea as student migrants from Asia. This is not meant to homogenize or reduce the diversity of the research participants' experiences and encounters, but it does assist in identifying the similarities amid the differences in their migration journeys, integration, and racialization.

Further, racialization, which is central to our inquiry, is a debated concept. Its efficacy and merit in relation to racial formation has been the subject of much academic conversation (see Murji and Solomos 2005; Omi and Winnant 2015; see also Goldberg 2005 and Hochman 2019 for a useful overview of the debates over its usage). As we suggest earlier, the internationalization of Canadian universities followed by the scapegoating and containment of the very students they welcomed as crucial for national prosperity is aligned with the historic exploitation of racialized immigrant labour and dispossession of Indigenous nations, key pillars of settler colonialism. Our understanding of and approach to the racialization of student migrants from Asia is situated within this complex nexus of race, labour, land, and nation-building. We are informed by critical race theory (Bell 1980; Brown and Jackson 2021; Delgado and Stefancic 1998), the overarching framework of decolonial thought (Nichols 2020), with particular emphasis on the lessons from anti-racist and Indigenous struggles for justice in settler nations (Byrd 2011), and critical studies on the colonial politics of international higher education (Chatterjee and Barber 2021). The cognate concepts of race and racism also demand some clarity which we specify in subsequent sections and through our analysis.

Following the tenets of critical race theory, we consider race as social or socially constructed but with substantive material effects. As Alana Lentin (2015) writes, of more concern is not what race is, but what it does. Racism is endemic to institutions of the liberal nation states and racialization is that conjoined social, political and/or administrative processes/phenomena which, by adding substance to the fictitious concept of race, mark some peoples as outside a given norm. While working with these broad definitions, we strove to maintain nuances. For example, Chinese, Indian, and Korean international students are considered in this research to be racialized as Asian (read: as a descriptor of othering) which

position them, in this context, outside of Canadianness. But we appreciate that each student group has been subjected to distinct racial formation historically (i.e., race was ascribed to them differently and in different spatiotemporal contexts), and therefore as differently racialized. Thus, we understand race as social/socially constructed, and racialization as a material process of ascribing racial characteristics — however fictitious — to a given racial formation. On that note, we acknowledge similar dynamics could unfold for Asian students in the diaspora subjecting them to the racial formation of Asianness even when they fall under the domestic student category. Racialization, we are aware, is context specific. As such, in our effort to understand the racialization processes these students experienced, we paid attention to spaces within and outside academic institutions and across different city spaces. Similarly, we wanted to understand how these processes work differently across this diverse group of students and how each understood the encounters they had.

Following from these conceptual foundations, we formulated our questions as follows:

- What are the academic and nonacademic racialization experiences and processes that affect, and are shaped by, student migrants from Asia at Canadian universities? Where is racialization experienced the most? What do these encounters look like?
- How does racialization work similarly and differently across groups of student migrants from Asia? How do Chinese, Indian, and Korean student migrants interpret racialized encounters? What is the role of contextual factors in this process?
- How does racialization shape the experiences of student migration to Canadian universities, including access to support services? How do the various discursive and institutional mechanisms produce racialization and shape integration?

Answering such questions not only sheds light on an empirical case that is underexplored, but it can also support a growing segment of students at Canadian universities who are redefining the university landscape as well as community politics and sociodemographic profiles of various cities and provinces. This study is unique given its scale, the ways in which it offers a counterpoint to the relative silence about racialization in the current landscape of international education in Canada, and

its contribution to future policy and programmatic pathways. It also offers pan-Canadian insights through contrasts and comparisons of cities, universities, and ethnic groups. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the related wave of anti-Asian racism, an increase in social polarization, and the rise of nativism in Canada, examining this migrant group, which has encountered racialization of various sorts, reveals the novel subtleties, challenges and resilience that come with navigating these processes on and off campus.

We provide a complex but clear profile of the racialization experiences of Chinese, Indian, and Korean education migrants at Canadian universities, focusing on these three groups because they were, when we began our research, the largest populations of student migrants by country of origin. In 2017, China (including Hong Kong and Taiwan), India, and South Korea contributed 28 percent, 25 percent, and five percent of the total number of international students, respectively (58 percent of all international students in the country; CBIE 2018). Moreover, these groups have all experienced discrimination and racialization (Dehaas 2013; Todd 2014). Chinese, Indian, and Korean international students may have similar experiences, as they coexist in the same host communities, but they also have racially specific encounters due to their different degrees of visibility, their socioeconomic and ethnic profiles in the host community, and the type of public attention they attract (Erel 2011; Grosfoguel 2004). For instance, the number of Korean international students at Canadian universities is significantly smaller than the number of Chinese and Indian students, but as the third largest group, their relatively smaller presence will show how their lower visibility impacts their racialization experiences, in contrast to the experiences of Chinese and Indian students (Kwak 2012; see Chapter 5).

Moreover, the five university study sites are the largest universities in the largest cities in five Canadian provinces. The provinces were selected based on their sheer numbers of international students, geographical dispersion, the significant proportion of student migrants from Asia they host, and the high percentage of international students they have in relation to the provincial population. We drew on some quantitative insights from national surveys conducted by the CBIE to guide the development of our protocols for semi-structured interviews with international students and administrators at the five universities mentioned earlier. Through the interviews, we aimed to gather information from student participants

on their migration journeys and networks, their university and city lives in Canada, and their motivations for and impressions of being in the country, with an emphasis on integration, racialization, and the available support services. In the interviews with the administrators, we focused on their institution's internationalization strategies, support services for international students, and links between internationalization and other university priorities, such as anti-racism initiatives. Each university was selected because it had long-standing plans to profit from the business of international education over the last twenty years, while also proposing some solutions to the challenges faced by international students, especially in terms of living conditions, academic transitions, tuition fees, and post-graduation and immigration pathways.

Across the five sites, we conducted 145 semi-structured interviews; the interviewees included 128 student migrants, 15 university administrators, and 2 local community leaders. The site team at Université de Montréal also conducted online focus groups with student migrants from Asia to contextualize some of the findings. At each site, we generally interviewed more student migrants from China and/or India than students from South Korea or nonracialized students from European countries, who, in turn, served a comparative purpose. All interviews were conducted virtually between July 2021 and March 2024. Originally, this study was designed in a way that student interviewees would be invited to submit diaries, and participate in focus groups and arts-based activities for us to tap into a more social understanding of their educational migration experience and less conscious reactions to daily encounters, but we started fieldwork after March 2020, so we adjusted the methodological instruments of this study to the research restrictions posed by the first waves of the COVID-19 pandemic. While we analyzed the CBIE's national surveys to guide the design of our interview protocols, our team also conducted an exhaustive review of policy documents from each university included in the study. We examined the universities' visions, initiatives, and activities as they pertained to internationalization and racialization and anti-racism and equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) since 2018. Our site teams also gathered and assessed the discourses around international students found in other university documents, including through the universities' public communication and through local and student media coverage. These environmental scans of each university helped contextualize and historicize these institutions' framings of international students.

For the interviews, we opted for individual online meetings with student participants and administrators. Semi-structured questionnaires for student participant interviews covered the educational migration trajectories (premigration and during stay in Canada) and aspirations of students (post-graduation plans); experiences on campus, notably in the classroom and with student services; and social life and interactions with peers, on and off campus. A clear division between experiences prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and after structured these interviews. Similarly, we asked administrators about their institution's internationalization strategy, support services for international students and the integration processes, and challenges for this study group, notably for students from Asia, pre- and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the inability to meet in person, we decided not to arrange focus groups. We also decided not to switch to in-person interviews when we had the option to do so. Interview data was collected, structured, and first analyzed by each site team of the five locations in order to highlight local dynamics and realities, hence allowing each site team to understand the key features of their case study prior to engaging in cross-institutional and pan-Canadian analytical conversations on similarities and differences.

Aside from the COVID-19 pandemic and other campus restrictions like the protest encampments on campus demanding Palestinian freedom in 2024,[1] each site had its own challenges in recruiting both students from specific countries of origin and university administrators. While each site team was able to recruit through physical and online posters, the success rate varied significantly. At smaller universities like Dalhousie and the University of Manitoba, it was more difficult to re-cruit international students from China, leading to an over-representation of students from India. In the case of the larger universities, namely University of British Columbia and the Université de Montréal, there was an overrepresentation of student migrants from China. Other differences include over- or underrepresentations by gender, program, and level of study. Moreover, each site had unique features that added complexities to the contrasts we could draw.

1 The presence of an encampment on campus initiated and managed by students supporting Palestinian freedom has meant that many of the people who could discuss international students, anti-racism, and EDI measures have been exceptionally busy managing the university side of the protests. This made it difficult to schedule interviews (although there was interest among the administrators to participate in the study).

For instance, the Universityé de Montréal participants stressed the importance of the province's unique linguistic profile and politics, while smaller university sites in Manitoba and Nova Scotia revealed connections between social justice for student migrants with other historically marginalized groups at a time of racial reckoning (e.g., the 2020 protests against anti-Black racism, reconciliation efforts with Indigenous Peoples, anti-Asian racism during the pandemic).

As such, this book stems from an intensive documentation of local dynamics and institutional realities as experienced by student migrants from China, India, and Korea in five locations across Canada. The analytical interest of the collective is to draw from these local experiences — exploring similarities across sites as well as differences and variations in the study of processes of national importance, such as internationalization, racialization, edugration, educational migration, and, to some extent, nation-building. To this end, our use of interview materials is carefully curated to speak to the broader realities we are analyzing. Identified by double quotation marks, such firsthand insights often lack context or background on interviewees, aside from the university of affiliation, the ethnicity of the student and, at times, gender. This is intentional to ensure the anonymity of student and administrator participants, especially for citations documenting the experiences or stories of participants from smaller universities. Moreover, the use of these primary insights are meant to humanize and ground the real-life consequences and structuring influences of such processes for student migrants themselves, rather than only documenting their stories. As one of the first of its kind, this study — which had to adapt significantly because of the COVID-19 pandemic and more specifically to post-2024 shifts in government policy on international students — offers unique insights on processes such as racialization, and the overall experiences of racialized student migrants from Asia to Canadian universities.

Critical Conversations

This study opened up many insightful avenues for us to reflect on the incorporation of racialized student migrants from Asia into Canadian society. It offers its own critique of Canada's instrumentalization of immigration for nation-building purposes and the ways in which studying the racialization of student migrants is part of a broader critical inquiry into structures of oppression engrained in Canadian society.

Specifically, we believe the remarks made by Canadian universities and governments to welcome international students have not been realized in practice, as they have also failed many migrant communities. We highlight the importance of being critical of the several interconnections between the integration of education migrants from Asia and Canadian society — namely, how we define the economic benefits of these students' presence and whether we can define those benefits in material terms only, as well as the nature and nexus of supports provided to the students. Moreover, missed connections between their integration and questions of EDI, decolonization, and anti-racism speak more directly to the impacts of structural features of Canadian society on the racialization of student migrants, most notably the role of conjoining processes like settler colonialism. Our study found interesting patterns in how student migrants from Asia navigate a racialized society and make sense of their place within it. Finally, our study also established the need to develop university support services that are embodied and emplaced and that treat international students in the fullness of their subjectivities.

Defining Benefits and Assessing Costs

As we discuss earlier in the section on higher education and student migration, student migration to Canada has been immensely profitable in pecuniary terms. In some ways, our study confirms what is already public knowledge: that because of their status, international students bear a highly disproportionate tuition burden in Canada. What our study nuances, however — and this is crucial at a time when these students have come to embody an immigration policy gone wrong in the Canadian national imaginary — is how their discursive construction as rich and spoilt is disturbingly and damagingly broad and vague. Our study, while confirming that international students have indeed been conceived of as cash cows, also sheds light on a number of nonmaterial arrangements that sharpen the edges of this exploitative machinery of revenue generation (McCartney and Scott Metcalfe 2018). These arrangements — both academic and nonacademic and on and off campus — are typically immune to public attention even though they benefit the host institutions and local communities. They also help us contextualize the role of the administrative category of international student in the edugration experience, as a starting point to fully grasp the diversity of experiences and trajectories. And we document and clarify the true costs borne by

these student migrants and show that these costs are inseparable from the ways their presence benefits Canada and Canadian postsecondary institutions.

For example, we repeatedly heard from students who spoke about international students' lack of access to financial support, as major public scholarships are reserved for domestic students (see Chapter 3), and about their disappointment in withdrawing from highly fragmented/decentralized student services because of their lack of meaningful support (see Chapter 4). Student migrants are expected to be agentic and competent navigators of complex university bureaucracies but are subjected to the fundamental disconnect between the services provided and student needs. Generic and impersonal services added to the burden of navigating massive bureaucracies, not to mention the fact that such services are often offered in languages and through practices with which they were not familiar (Chapter 4). The revenue-hungry institutions, cornered and coerced by decades of depleting public education funds even while the number of student migrants has increased, have idealized international students as desirable migrants but neglected their duty to provide the spectrum of support these young students may need while away from home, many for the first time in a long-term study-abroad situation. Meanwhile, these students find themselves in a country with a long and complex history of racism and a racially hierarchized society, particularly of the anti-Asian variety that was becoming uglier during the COVID-19 pandemic (see Chapter 5), and grappling with a heavy academic workload, unfamiliar pedagogical expectations, and stressful and confusing pathways toward employment and permanent migration.

They are doing so, moreover, at a time when administrative infrastructure in Canada is crumbling and politics has become divisive (see Chapters 4, 5, and 6). One key realization of the RAIS Collective, therefore, is that many of the benefits of international higher education accrue from the gap between the institutions' casting of the students as a mere administrative category, a faceless subject moving through the supposedly linear edugration trajectory (see Chapters 2 and 3), and the students' lived realities and aspirations (see Chapters 4, 5, and 6). These benefits, however, are limited when students struggle with a lack of meaningful relationships, piecemeal services and dismissal as being rich and spoilt or culturally needy and a drain on services. The gap between institutional plans, individual aspirations, and social alienation

do create profit, but only to be lost eventually, as we are witnessing in the current situation faced by international students and the future of the postsecondary sector.

Agentic Navigators of Bureaucracies and Hierarchies

Our study found that the services available for international students are often not well matched to their needs and specific situations. Proactive recruitment and declarations of support on the part of the institutions contradict ground-level realities for these students, namely, in the areas of housing, financial challenges, and barriers to social relations (see Chapters 2 and 3). Their needs ranged from academic to sociocultural to practical matters. They face financial pressures (see Chapter 2 and the discussion above on how Canadian universities utilize the difference in status between domestic and international students to generate revenue), forcing many student migrants to have to work on and off campus, thereby taking time away from their studies. When they seek support, they feel overwhelmed and dejected by the siloed services, long wait times and the disorganized state (described as anarchy by one administrator) of decentralized services. Language barriers and judgement based on a student's accent can also hinder their ability to access services. Across all research sites, students described a lack of wholesomeness and empathy in service provision and that they desired more sustained and caring relationships (see Chapter 4).

Students repeatedly talked about the need for cultural understanding and awareness among the university staff. A lack of appreciation of Asian cosmologies is something that came across in various off-campus, social settings as well (see Chapter 6). A number of students we spoke to shared that they do not care about or bother to use the services for the aforementioned reasons. As we contend in Chapter 4, faced with bureaucratic service provision and decentralized models of care, students often turn to their own communities. This, as we discuss in Chapters 2, 3, and 6, means students have to look elsewhere, frequently to specific ethnic communities, which can be viewed as a form of withdrawal and the resulting silences become imbued with racial tropes. What emerges is a self-help system which favours enterprising and transnationally mobile students or those with established diasporic communities (see Chapters 5 and 6). As we discuss in our conclusion to this book, migration journeys are plural and support therefore needs to be embodied and relational (see

Chapter 7). Students also shared their vulnerabilities, particularly the vulnerabilities they have experienced while off campus, and that they did not know who to turn to for support (see Chapters 4, 5, and 6). Again, we draw attention to the gap between universities' declarations of support and the actualization of this support, allowing institutions to maintain their financial bottom lines while pushing the cost onto students.

Student Migrants and Considerations of Equity and Inclusion

A key question with which we grappled throughout the course of our research was the interconnection between international higher education/internationalization and international students' experiences and questions of equity. What we heard from students in talking about their experiences was about the gap between them and domestic students in institutional parlance and the banalities of their experience of racialization both on and off campus (see Chapter 6). We wondered whether these can be understood as not only matters of institutional policies and programmatic gaps but as equity issues more broadly (see Chapter 3). Considering that student migrants to Canada are largely from the Global South — particularly Asian countries in the context of our study — and considering that we worked in a climate of rising white nationalism, anti-Asian xenophobia, and overall antimigration nationalist rhetoric, these were questions of an organic nature (see Chapters 2, 3, and 6). As we note in Chapter 5, students' experience of race essentialization, during everyday tasks such as working, learning, shopping, commuting, and building interpersonal relationships, are an important factor in their edugration journey, much like racialized immigrants and diasporic settlement in Canada. Their experience — institutional, interpersonal, and social — cannot be dissociated from the whirlwind of change and centuries of racial politics in Canada.

Universities often promote the number of international students enrolled in their institutions to portray themselves as champions of diversity and difference and to sell diversity as a commodity (see Chapter 3). However, using student migrants to claim a market-worthy institutional image is "rife with problems as their integration into the university comes on fundamentally inequitable terms due to the enormous differences in tuition" (Parasram et al. 2024, 194). It is not surprising that recent scholarship has drawn attention to the superficial

nature of postsecondary commitment to internationalization and anti-racism (Buckner et al. 2024; Shahrokni et al. 2022).

Specific to our study, we question the efficacy of institutional EDI initiatives on the grounds of the economic logic of the recruitment of international students and how it clashes with the stated institutional principles of equity, diversity, and anti-racism. As discussed in Chapter 3, equity problems faced by racialized student migrants derive from the status of the international student, which relates to the lack of recognition of differences in nationality and the students' length of stay in Canada. Such gaps result in many inequities that are engrained in the very status of the international student, such as eligibility or ineligibility to access university bursaries, and an increase in the intersecting vulnerabilities both on and off campus. When international students are framed mostly in terms of postsecondary institutions' internationalization strategies, their integration into EDI measures is often lacking or misaligned. Although their presence is emphasized and presented as part of the diversity of the academic community, the lack of equity in support for their integration is evident (Buckner et al. 2024). This directly impacts students' experiences and perceptions as they navigate, with little to no support, their own racialized subject position in Canadian society (see Chapters 4, 5, and 6).

The latter came across most prominently while students grappled with their relationship with Black and Indigenous peoples at their universities and in the Canadian society more broadly. While movements for anti-racist justice and Indigenous sovereignty have reshaped this nation-state's political grammar during the very same decades of internationalizing, international students' engagement with these histories and politics, we found, are fractured and segmented. Many are products of colonial education systems and thus invest in the project of integration into Canada's mainstream academic community (read: domestic, white, and middle-class) in ways that make them complicit in the nation-building goals of the Canadian state and universities (Gesturing to Decolonial Futures Collective 2021), with the potential to turn equity into an instrumental concern. We also noted that participants frequently shared ambivalence about the racial nature of various encounters on and off campus, demonstrated lack of familiarity with the liberal multicultural character of racism in Canada, and connected their experiences with institutional apathy but not with the overarching project of settler

nation-building. We mention this paradox — of an inability to make connections across struggles while carrying shared experiences of oppression as racialized subjects — not as a condescending critique but as a critical observation that we elaborate in the next section.

Making Sense of Self as Racialized Subjects

One of our study's key questions was about racialization — how it is experienced by student migrants and how its varied manifestations across ethnic lines, community contexts and urban, semi- and non-urban settings shapes students' integration. We formulated these questions at a time when student migrants from Asia were attending Canadian universities in significantly higher numbers; at a time of racial reckoning on campus and beyond (all five of the study's sites, for example, had existing anti-racism strategies and initiatives); and at a time of a broader national commitment to decolonial justice. Our preliminary analysis of the data was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, when anti-Asian racism reared its head across the country once again (Guo and Guo 2021) and while the freedom summer 2020 protests were being held across the globe. In brief, the questions we asked were made more salient by the events unfolding at the time.

Across all research sites, student migrants shared various experiences of both subtle and explicit racist encounters (see Chapters 4, 5, and 6). A majority reported having what could be called subtle encounters, often disguised as harmless stereotypes (sometimes even positive stereotypes) and microaggressions, also understood as racial invalidations. These happened in the universities — in classrooms and elsewhere on campus — and in everyday spaces such as at grocery stores and bus stops. They experienced these encounters in workplaces, at social gatherings, through campus services, and when they were searching for housing. They were racialized because of how they look, act, and speak. Assumptions were made about their financial status, professional/academic aspirations, and faiths. Indeed, racialization, in overt and subtle forms, textured students' lives in Canada, in as much as it is part of the country's scripts of whiteness (see Chapters 2 and 6). Explicit forms of racist behaviour increased during the pandemic, following from centuries-long stereotypes of Chinese people as carriers of illnesses (see Chapter 5).

How students articulated and interpreted such experiences provided a glimpse into how they made sense of their place and journeys in various

Canadian settings. We write with an awareness of the fact that Canadian society is a settler colonial and white nationalist country, and that this fact is often hidden from student migrants through the separation of campus life from Canadian society. As the collective Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures (2021) powerfully articulates in their letter to immigrants to Canada (noticeably including students in their address), for the business of education to be successful in Canada, the country needs to be painted as beautiful, tolerant, and free. Bonita Lawrence (quoted in Okwuosa 2021) also reminds us that this representation of Canada is not a grounded reality even for Canadian citizens, and this separation between migrant and Indigenous subjects is how Canada works. This separation was further manifest in students feeling shocked by their racial encounters and their lack of cultural and historical reference points to the society in which they were living (see Chapters 4 and 5). Several students demonstrated a tendency to explain racial discrimination in ways that stopped short of describing the encounters as overtly and explicitly racist (see Chapter 5). On the one hand, their political disconnect from so-called hot topics such as the realities facing Indigenous and Black peoples in Canada and the war in Ukraine also made them rethink their place as Asians in Canada. On the other hand, their Canadian counterparts (e.g., faculty, staff, peers) showed a lack of understanding of Asia as a dynamic place with diverse cosmologies. That is, students felt, or at least thought of themselves as, racialized beings both in situations of social connections and disconnections.

As a writing collective, we were thoughtful about how we characterize this range of experiences, the disconnects and the ambivalences over race and place that the interviewees demonstrated. Both racialization and how it operates on the settler colonial landscape are complex to grasp, and even more difficult to articulate. Similarly, while a growing body of scholarship is threading together migration (including study migration), anti-racist justice, Black liberation, and Indigenous sovereignty (Patel et al. 2015; Upadhyay 2019; Zellars 2020), this relational core of decolonial justice appears messier on the ground, even neglected, when it comes to real people making sense of their everyday lives and political subjectivities in complex institutions. Our decision to characterize the student encounters as racist-discriminatory-prejudicial, and their experience as that of racialization even when they themselves do not, is informed by these complex realities of conducting critical research in colonial spaces.

From Administrative Category to Humans

Our study challenges the long-dominant discursive construction of student migrants from Asia as agents of innovation and drivers of global classrooms who also happen to have deep pockets. First, we show that these students, despite how they are described in internationalization policy documents, are not merely an administrative category (see Chapter 2). They are living breathing human beings who have decided to migrate for their higher education after much deliberation and sacrifices by them and their families. Many have to muddle their way through in Canada as institutions are often failing them and societies blame them for problems not of their making, casting them as monolithic orientalized subjects. They have families back home who have exhausted their household resources to support them. They are complex peoples whose success in their migration journeys requires complex care (see Chapters 4 and 6).

Secondly, related to this point, we highlight the salience of understanding racializing processes in any future endeavour to support these students. We show that they have been subject to deeply damaging constructions, exacerbated by their distance from communities outside their campus, pandemic-era alienation, and the rise of populism (see Chapters 2 and 5). To change these constructions, we first need to understand these students in human and relational terms. As we discuss in the conclusion to this book (Chapter 7), Canadian institutions must frame their support as place-based and embodied, engaged and accountable. Simply replacing the category of the international student with a category of racialized student migrant will not be sufficient. We need to reintroduce a sense of humanity in the framing of racialized student migrants, and how that sense of humanity can be supported by community members, the universities the students are members of, and the different levels of government.

Listening to more than 120 student migrants showed us that their trajectories are by no means standard or linear. Rather, they are punctuated by specific experiences in the institutions where they are enrolled; in the cities where they have looked for friendships, housing and jobs; and in how their actual and perceived race and ethnicity have shaped their participation in classrooms on campus and beyond (see Chapters 5 and 6). Our appreciation of the diversity (to use now clichéd terminology) of student migration journeys allowed us to be confident in challenging

the temporal framework of edugration — widely promoted by Canada to attract global talent to its shores — as having failed to capture the realities of student migrant life in Canada. As the contemporary policies on international higher education rapidly shift and the postsecondary institutions face an existential crisis, our study has the potential to act as a public education tool to help us reckon with the labour, both material and affective, of international students in Canadian communities.

Chapter Overview

The next two chapters (Chapters 2 and 3) examine and criticize how Canadian universities, and Canadian institutions more generally, have framed and integrated international students into their operations. We start by focusing on the administrative category of the international student, as constructed and implemented by Canadian universities and reproduced by other Canadian institutions such as the Canadian media. We question the institutional practice of referring to student migrants by this administrative status of the international student, which we find creates a double exploitation in that it is reductive of the experiences of this migrant group and distinguishes them from the domestic student population. To highlight the diversity of their experiences, we centre educational migration journeys, including edugration, in our framing of this student migrant group. This allows us to highlight how intersecting processes of immigration and education interact with racialization to describe many experiences, treatment, and encounters of racialized education migrants from Asia to Canadian universities.

This discussion is followed by an analysis (Chapter 3) of the EDI frameworks Canadian universities have developed. In line with the institutionalization of anti-racist and decolonizing measures, we document how EDI visions and mandates are constrained in practice in the Canadian university context, as they are often distorted and co-opted by institutional logics. Our focus on racialized student migrants shows how this student group is excluded from EDI's ongoing efforts, and how the inequities education migrants experience most and that have the greatest impact (such as financial burdens and employment opportunities) persist even while EDI measures are being deployed. As EDI measures are supposed to allow better equity, inclusion, and representation of historically excluded or marginalized groups, the assumptions on which EDI parameters are built exclude the administrative inequities experienced by educational migrants.

The subsequent chapter (Chapter 4) provides some of the most significant empirical insights from this study, especially the perspectives of racialized student migrants from Asia and university administrators. We document and then question the assumption that the success and integration of this student group depends on student services addressing their so-called academic, linguistic, and cultural deficits. By documenting students' interactions with university services, we observe a disconnect between the services provided and students' needs. We also document students' strong critiques of the types of services offered and how they are delivered, including the long wait times and cultural insensitivities. Turning to the types of support provided outside the official institutional channels of universities, we briefly examine the role of these students' friends and peers, as well as the support provided by faculty and staff members in developing close mutual aid relationships. We also examine the need to rethink support services and centring long-term, caring, and often informal relationships.

Chapters 5 and 6 focus on the racialized experiences of student migrants from Asia at Canadian universities and show the complexities of such encounters and related reactions in various social contexts. In Chapter 5, we contrast the racialized encounters of student migrants across all five sites to show how these experiences are manifested, understood, and lived through expected scripts such as microaggressions or racial invalidations based on language, and through moments such as wearing a mask during the COVID-19 pandemic. As we observe that not all interactions are perceived as discriminatory by racialized student migrants, we rather focus on documenting the various strategies these students adopt to explain and justify these encounters, including ambivalence, avoidance, and acceptance. In Chapter 6, we zero in on key differences in student migrant experiences in Canada, especially differences stemming from the specific city where they study. By centring race, orientalist tropes, and scripts of whiteness — which are norms and everyday actions that centre and consolidate the gaze, discourse, and normality of white bodies (Gillman 2007) — we share the stories of student migrants to show how racialization is pervasive in the various ways they integrate or fail to integrate into Canadian society in their daily lives, such as at school or work and in finding housing. The study of these racialized encounters and how they are perceived by racialized student migrants from Asia provides unique insights into the Canadian

ethnocultural landscape and how student migrants build their own connections and communities while studying in Canada.

In the final chapter, Chapter 7, we reflect more broadly on the insights from the RAIS project for a post-pandemic world and post-2024 period in the Canadian international education landscape. By highlighting the significant impacts of the pandemic and the shift toward a more restrictive federal policy of recruitment and retention of international students from Asia to Canadian universities, we discuss the role of xenophobia and racism in constantly marginalizing the lives of student migrants. With recent international examples of securitizing the presence and intentions of student migrants for nation-building purposes, we also connect our study to concerning international trends affecting racialized student migrants' safety and speech. We conclude with some avenues for action, and moving forward, toward an actually welcoming and inclusive approach to student migrants.

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