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**International and Refugee University Students in Canada:
Trends, Barriers, and the Future
Les étudiants universitaires internationaux et réfugiés au Canada :
tendances, obstacles et avenir**

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Abstract

This conceptual paper draws on a diverse selection of primary and secondary sources highlighting recent trends in international and refugee university student enrollments, participation, and outcomes in Canadian universities. Several key issues emerged through the analysis. First, refugee students and children of refugees have amongst the lowest participation and graduation rates in Canadian universities, due largely to language and literacy barriers and their status as first-generation postsecondary students (i.e., students whose parents did not attend postsecondary education). Second, although almost 60% of domestic university students are now female, international and refugee student enrollments remain male dominated. These disparities indicate that broader structural and sociocultural issues that impact university participation for members of certain groups and communities remain factors in university participation and completion. Implications for policy and practice conclude the paper.

Résumé

Cet article se fonde sur une sélection diverse de sources primaires et secondaires pour décrire et contextualiser les tendances récentes quant aux inscriptions, à la participation et aux résultats des étudiants internationaux et réfugiés dans les universités canadiennes. Plusieurs problèmes clés émergent, tels que le fait que les étudiants réfugiés et les enfants de réfugiés présentent la participation et les taux d'obtention de diplômes les plus bas des universités canadiennes, ceci étant largement dû aux barrières de langue et de littératie ainsi qu'à leur statut d'étudiants universitaires de première génération (c'est-à-dire, des étudiants dont les parents n'ont pas étudié dans un établissement postsecondaire). De plus, bien que près de 60 % des étudiants du pays soient de sexe féminin, les étudiants internationaux et réfugiés inscrits restent majoritairement masculins. Ces disparités indiquent que des problèmes structurels et socioculturels plus vastes ayant un impact sur la participation universitaire pour les membres de certains groupes restent un facteur de participation et de résultats universitaires, et que ces disparités sont renforcées par les pratiques de recrutement et d'inscription des universités canadiennes. Cet article se conclut par les implications quant aux politiques et aux pratiques.

Keywords: international/refugee students; internationalization of Canadian higher education; first-generation postsecondary students; English as a second/additional language; Canadian higher education

Mots Clés : étudiants internationaux/réfugiés; internationalisation de l'enseignement supérieur canadien; étudiants postsecondaires de première génération; anglais seconde-langue/langue supplémentaire; enseignement supérieur canadien

Introduction

A generous amount of attention has been dedicated towards the internationalization of higher education in recent years, including focus on curricula (Leask, 2015; Stein, 2017a), pedagogy (Gopal, 2011; Prowse & Goddard, 2010), faculty (Dewey & Duff, 2009; Kim, Wolf-Wendel, & Twombly, 2011), branch campuses (Altbach, 2015; Verbik, 2015), research and institutional partnerships (Sakamoto & Chapman, 2012; Sutton, 2010), virtual and distance education (Bruhn, 2017; Sadykova & Dautermann, 2009), recruitment and marketing (Chen, 2008; Stein, 2017b), critical perspectives and “problem areas” (Beck, 2013; Stein, Andreotti, Bruce, & Suša, 2016), representations in the media (Anderson, 2020; Park, 2010) and, perhaps most notable in terms of measurable impact, the global mobility of students (Anderson, 2015; Knight, 2012). This paper will concentrate primarily on the latter and present data on enrollment trends in Canadian universities and to what degree the educational, social, cultural, and linguistic barriers or challenges impact the integration and outcomes of international and refugee students, while recognizing that these two broad categories of students are complex, diverse, and have unique needs, experiences, and life histories. To contextualize these issues, this paper begins with a presentation of the recent enrollment developments and demographics of university students in the country, followed by a review of related research concentrating on the experiences, challenges, and outcomes of international and refugee university students in Canada.

The Internationalization of Canadian Higher Education

Canada and its universities have widely embraced the ongoing internationalization of higher education in the country for a variety of well-documented social, cultural, educational, and economic purposes (Anderson, 2015; Li & Tierney, 2013). Ninety-six percent of Canadian universities report internationalization as a central component of their strategic planning with over 80% placing it within their top five key priorities (Universities Canada, 2014). A target announced in 2012 that aimed to double the number of international students by the year 2022 to 450,000 (Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, 2012) was exceeded five years early in 2017 with 495,000 students (Civinini, 2018). This report, entitled *International Education: A Key Driver of Canada's Future Prosperity*, unambiguously frames the Canadian federal government as a highly motivated proponent of internationalization in the country. Additional government documents have been similar in their tone, motivations, and plans to increase the number of international students in the country (c.f. Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2010, 2011; Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, 2011, 2014).

Other support for internationalization predictably comes from universities themselves. Canadian universities almost uniformly identify the internationalization of their student bodies as top priorities in their planning, marketing, and recruitment strategies. With declines in government funding for postsecondary education since the 1990s (CAUT, 2015; Statistics Canada, 2014), Canadian universities are more consistently relying on international student enrollments and their tuition contributions to account for government funding shortfalls (Crawley, 2017). As an example, two highly-ranked Canadian research universities, the University of Toronto and the University of British Columbia, have 20% and 23% international student enrollments respectively (University of British Columbia, 2017; University of Toronto, 2017) and correspondingly have amongst the highest tuition fees in the country for international students (see Table 1). International enrollments across the country continue to increase and predictions suggest the recent exclusionary policies (and discourses) in the United States and Britain could make Canadian universities even more desirable for international students wishing to avoid certain real or perceived anti-immigrant stances and migration outcomes of the current administrations and the overall social and political climates in the United States and United

Kingdom (Lane, 2017). Reports as of May 2017 indicate that international student enrollments were up considerably for some Canadian universities (25% and more), with record numbers of students from the United States (Chiose, 2017).

Table 1: Undergraduate Tuition Fees in the Humanities and Arts 2016–2017

Institution	Tuition (CAD)	
	Canadian	International
University of Toronto	\$6,400–\$11,520	\$31,000–\$42,560
University of British Columbia	\$5,088–\$6,771	\$24,486–\$30,359

(Universities Canada, 2017)

Enrollment Trends in Canadian Universities

This section draws primarily from the national statistical agency of the Canadian federal government, Statistics Canada, including unreleased data acquired through two custom tabulation requests. At the time of this paper’s completion, the most recent available data set reporting on international and refugee student enrollments in the country was for the 2014/2015 school year. This section will therefore concentrate on a 14-year period (2000/2001–2014/2015) to track the most recent trends available and developments in the student composition of Canadian universities. Secondary sources dealing with international and refugee students in Canadian universities will additionally be drawn on to provide in-depth and interpretive data to inform this discussion and situate individual students’ experiences and outcomes. Both are used to present a more comprehensive view of recent trends and issues regarding the internationalization of higher education in the country. Two primary groups are focused on in the ensuing discussion: international university studentsⁱ and, as a subset of this larger international student category, refugee university students,ⁱⁱ although information addressing domestic Canadian students is also drawn on to better contextualize the discussion. As Altbach and de Wit (2015) recently noted, “Increasing political and military tension in several parts of the world will inevitably affect international higher education” (p. 4) and the trends outlined below are certainly indicative of this.

Table 2 highlights the overall changes in university student enrollments according to residency status for the school years 2000/2001 and 2014/2015. All three categories of students experienced steady increases over this 14-year span with international students growing almost 250% compared to domestic increases of just over 40% and refugee increases of 63%. Perhaps most telling is how the proportion of students in particular groups to total enrollments has changed. In 2000/2001, international students comprised 5% of total enrollments and by 2014/2015 this number had risen to 12%, with certain leading Canadian universities reporting considerably higher numbers compared to the national average (as noted above).

Table 2: Domestic, International, and Refugee Student Enrollments in Canadian Universities

Status	2000/2001	2014/2015	% Growth
Canadian	805,422	1,145,985	42%
International	45,735	159,687	249%
Refugee	3,543	5,781	63%

(Statistics Canada, n.d.-a, 2017)

Tables 3 and 4 present international and refugee student enrollments over this same time period for the leading 10 source countries to Canadian universities. In the international student category, China is most notable, sending over 53,000 students to Canadian universities in 2014/2015 alone and forming a third of total international student enrollments. Other countries' rapid growth over this time period—including India, Saudi Arabia, and Nigeria—reflects the recent targeted recruitment of students in these areas by the Canadian federal government (Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, 2014), while students from other top-10 countries, namely the United States, have increased more moderately over this period. Due to recent changes in the American political climate, however, Canadian universities could experience a noticeable uptake in applications and enrollments in the near future.

Table 3: Top 10 Source Countries of International University Students in Canada, 2014/2015

Country of Citizenship	2000/2001	2014/2015	% Change
China	4,212	53,634	+1173%
France	4,848	15,477	+219%
India	1,035	9,042	+774%
United States	5,286	8,178	+55%
Saudi Arabia	465	6,210	+1235%
Nigeria	243	4,707	+1837%
Iran	399	3,840	+862%
South Korea	1,413	3,582	+154%
Brazil	390	3,042	+680%
Pakistan	726	2,397	+230%

(Statistics Canada, n.d.-a)

In the 2014/2015 school year, there were just over 5,780 refugee students in Canadian universities (Statistics Canada, 2017). Refugee student enrollments in Canada remain relatively modest compared to domestic or other international students (detailed in Table 2), in part a reflection of these students' shifting residency status, the moderate numbers of university-aged students in the country at any given point, and their historically low rates of university participation in Canada (discussed below). Of particular note, however, are the countries of origin for those refugee students who *do* attend Canadian universities (see Table 4), with many being citizens of countries with middle to upper income economies (e.g., China, United States, United Kingdom, South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan; The World Bank, 2017), including two (Japan and the United States) amongst the leading economies in the world. Table 4 shows the leading 10 source countries of citizenship for refugee students in Canadian universities and Table 5, for comparison, shows the leading 10 source country claimants for refugee status in the country in 2015. As noted, Syrian migrants were the sixth largest refugee population in Canada in 2015, and yet only 21 Syrian refugee students attended university in the same year. Similar issues are present for Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya. All three, like Syria, are in the top-ten source countries of refugees to Canada, and yet in the 2014/2015 school year only 18, 12, and 9 students respectively attended Canadian universities (Statistics Canada, 2017).

Table 4: Top 10 Source Countries of Refugee University Students in Canada, 2014/15

Country of Citizenship	2000/2001	2014/1015	% Change
China	36	1,284	+3467
United States	789	660	-16
India	12	480	+3900
United Kingdom	24	249	+938
Iran	9	195	+2067
South Korea	39	141	+262
Taiwan	30	117	+290
Japan	36	93	+158
Hong Kong	48	87	+81
Pakistan	3	84	+2700

(Statistics Canada, 2017)

Table 5: Top 10 Refugee Claimants by Country of Citizenship

Country Citizenship	of 2015
China	1,498
Hungary	986
Pakistan	899
Nigeria	794
Colombia	696
Iraq	598
Syria	577
Libya	518
Somalia	505
Afghanistan	495
India	377

(Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada, 2015)

These numbers highlight the existence of persistent structural inequalities for prospective students within the general refugee class itself in terms of access to university education in Canada. This disparity suggests that certain refugees may be more educationally and economically advantaged compared to those from other regions, including Syria, Somalia, and Afghanistan, where generational conflict and sociocultural practices have impacted residents in myriad ways, including access to education. An additional factor could well include the necessity of English (or French) language proficiency required for admittance to Canadian universities. Refugees arriving from the United States, India, the United Kingdom, and Hong Kong have likely had better opportunities to learn and use English, in particular, which could translate to increased success being admitted into a Canadian university. Refugees arriving from more gender-inclusive societies with social and cultural practices that enhance girls and women's access to schooling could likewise influence the enrollment numbers of refugee students in Canadian universities, an issue discussed in greater detail below.

Residency status, gender, and university enrollments

Differences in Canadian university enrollments according to gender have been widely discussed due to the noteworthy reversal that has occurred since the early 1990s, with female students now comprising the majority of domestic student enrollments by a rather considerable margin (Christofides, Hoy, Li, & Stengos, 2008), although male students continue to dominate participation in certain STEM fields (Hango, 2013). Almost 60% of domestic students in Canadian universities are now female, a stark reversal in trends that saw males dominate university participation up until the 1980s (Frenette & Zeman, 2007). Reasons for this change in Canada (and the global West, more generally) have garnered considerable attention. Frenette and Zeman (2007) point to the social, physical, cognitive, and emotional differences that emerge early between boys and girls and which are further amplified as they grow older. By the age of 15, girls considerably outperform boys in Canadian schools and these factors in turn influence access to and success during university. Another cause for the current gender gap in universities is the disproportionately high representation of males in the skilled trades. Statistics Canada reports that 97% of tradespeople were male as of 1997 (Pyper, 2008). Although this number appears to have declined very slightly since (Ferguson & Zhao, 2011), males still dominate employment in these fields, which offer higher than average wages with fewer postsecondary requirements (and financial investment) than most university degrees (Pyper, 2008).

Many consider this recent change to be a corrective swing, with females taking more prominent roles in university enrollments where historically they have been marginalized or excluded due to a range of discriminatory sociohistorical causes and considered “physically or mentally unfit to endure the rigours of advanced study” (Andres & Adamuti-Trache, 2007, p. 97). Although much attention has focused on this reversing gender gap for domestic populations, very little has been directed to the gender composition of international and refugee students at Canadian universities. Table 6 details the enrollments in 2000/2001 and 2014/2015 according to gender and residency status. For Canadian students, as noted, females considerably outpace male participation and these percentages (58% female, 42% male) have remained static over the last several decades. International student enrollments, however, remain male-driven despite increased focus on reducing systemic gender inequality and access to postsecondary education globally.

Table 6: Enrollments in Canadian Universities by Gender

Status	Gender	2000–2001	Ratio	2014–2015	Ratio
Canadian	Male	337,413	42%	478,128	42%
	Female	467,856	58%	667,332	58%
International	Male	24,942	55%	85,548	54%
	Female	20,784	45%	74,004	46%
Refugee	Male	1,977	56%	2,970	52%
	Female	1,566	44%	2,793	48%

(Statistics Canada, n.d.-a, 2017)

A closer analysis reveals that seven out of the leading 10 source countries of international students to Canada are dominated by male enrollments (see Table 7). India, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan are of particular note. These three countries are amongst the leading providers of international university students to Canada and are all disproportionately represented by male students (70%, 75%, and 80%, respectively). Other countries, such as China, more closely mirror

domestic enrollment differences with the majority (53%) of the 53,634 students being female. For refugee students specifically (see Table 8), six out of the top 10 source countries had more male students attending Canadian universities than female, although the relatively low numbers results in minimal impact on total enrollments in the country. The disparities for both categories of students indicate the persistence of causes that are impacting university participation for female members within these groups, especially for students from many of the leading source countries of international and refugee students to Canada. As Brooks and Waters (2011) note “very little has in fact been written about gender differences in relation to international students” (p. 66). Some insights, however, can be gained from UNESCO’s longstanding work to identify and reduce gender-based inequalities in education accessibility, research that indicates potential causes for the gender disparities in many of the top-sending countries of international and refugee students to Canada.

Poverty, geographical isolation, minority status, disability, early marriage and pregnancy, gender-based violence, and traditional attitudes about the status and role of women, are among the many obstacles that stand in the way of women and girls fully exercising their right to participate in, complete and benefit from education. (UNESCO, n.d., para. 4)

These conditions that instigate barriers of participation in the domestic contexts for girls and women are likely to extend to Canada as well, including challenges overcoming insufficient secondary education or other gender-based inequality that persists over the course of migration. For domestic enrollments, there are also ongoing conversations exploring the “boy gap” or “boy crisis” in education, and ways to ensure male students’ participation and performance in education are better understood (Cappon, 2011).

Table 7: Top 10 Source Countries of International Enrollments by Gender, 2014–2015

Country of citizenship	Gender	2014–2015	Ratio
China	Male	25,410	47%
	Female	28,173	53%
France*	Male	7,845	51%
	Female	7,632	49%
India*	Male	6,306	70%
	Female	2,733	30%
United States	Male	4,092	50%
	Female	4,086	50%
Saudi Arabia*	Male	4,656	75%
	Female	1,551	25%
Nigeria*	Male	2,754	59%
	Female	1,950	41%
Iran*	Male	2,322	60%
	Female	1,518	40%
South Korea	Male	1,755	49%
	Female	1,824	51%

Brazil*	Male	1,755	58%
	Female	1,284	42%
Pakistan*	Male	1,917	80%
	Female	480	20%

(Statistics Canada, n.d.-a)

Table 8: Top 10 Source Countries of Refugee Enrollments by Gender, 2014/2015

Country of Origin	Gender	2014–2015	Ratio
China	Male	636	50%
	Female	648	50%
United States	Male	345	53%
	Female	312	47%
India	Male	297	61%
	Female	186	39%
United Kingdom	Male	129	52%
	Female	120	48%
Iran	Male	126	65%
	Female	69	35%
South Korea	Male	81	57%
	Female	60	43%
Taiwan	Male	54	47%
	Female	60	53%
Japan	Male	39	42%
	Female	54	58%
Hong Kong	Male	42	48%
	Female	45	52%
Pakistan	Male	51	61%
	Female	33	39%

(Statistics Canada, 2017)

Barriers and Outcomes

Unlike refugee students who encounter nuanced and persistent challenges accessing postsecondary education in the country, international students are by definition people who come to Canada on student visas with the express intent to study in Canadian schools. In general terms, international university students are reported to experience relatively high satisfaction levels and graduation rates (Grayson, 2008; University World News, 2013). Major factors contributing to these rates include the goal orientations of international students, who have moved to another country with the primary focus of achieving their (or their families') intended educational outcomes, as well as their comparatively strong socioeconomic status (Humphries, Knight-Grofe, & Klabunde, 2009). Also contributory is the parental education levels of international university students, with 70% reporting at least one parent who has postsecondary education (Humphries, Knight-Grofe, & Klabunde, 2009). What remains unexplored in the research (including this present paper), are the specific experiences and outcomes of the remaining 30% of international students who have parents with no prior postsecondary experience.

Refugee students, on the other hand, have been well-documented to experience barriers accessing university education and achieving success if admitted. Issues that impact refugee student access, participation, and achievement within higher education are often generational. Children of refugees in Canada have amongst the lowest university completion rates and subsequent job earnings compared to both domestic populations and other immigrant classes in the country (Hou & Bonikowska, 2016). One major barrier for refugee (and children of refugees) student success is the influence of being a first-generation postsecondary student (FGPS): students from families whose parents did not attend postsecondary education. Fewer than 15% of refugee fathersⁱⁱⁱ have university degrees from their home countries upon landing in Canada compared to, for example, 46% of fathers in the Skilled Worker class of immigrants (Hou & Bonikowska, 2016). Low socioeconomic status (SES) refugee parents also face the “deskilling” of their academic and professional credentials, forcing them into precarious employment positions and the necessity to work multiple jobs, resulting in limited time to concentrate on their children’s literacy development and education (Guo, 2009). Compounded with the language challenges new refugees experience, with 75% of newly landed refugees speaking neither official language (English or French), being a first-generation university student from a low-income family can be especially prohibitive. These issues are evidenced in the university completion rates of refugees in Canadian universities (only 27%) compared to other immigrant classes such as Skilled Workers (50%) and the Business Class (59%) (Hou & Bonikowska, 2016).

The level of parental education is one of the strongest preconditions affecting university participation and completion in Canada (Finnie, Mueller, Sweetman, & Usher, 2010; Ogilvie & Eggleton, 2011; Robson, Anisef, Newton, & Tecle, 2015). There are various contributing factors that influence the anemic postsecondary participation of FGPS: (a) well-educated people are more likely to form domestic partnerships with other well-educated people and these couples tend to have higher incomes, which in turn makes university participation more feasible for their children; (b) refugee families are amongst the lowest wage earners in Canada and these economic realities contribute to their low participation in university education in the country; (c) parents with high levels of academic success themselves are more likely to influence the academic aspirations of their children; (d) well-educated parents more often provide cognitively stimulating and literacy-rich home environments to their children, which typically translates to formal school-based academic success; (e) achieving higher marks at the secondary level is strongly influential in facilitating access to and success during university (Finnie, Mueller, Sweetman, & Usher, 2010; Statistics Canada, n.d.-b; Turcotte, 2011). The latter points in particular are worth additional consideration since language and literacy issues for many international and refugee English as an additional language (EAL) students can be guiding factors that impede or facilitate academic and social success. A wealth of literature exists on the additional language and literacy challenges that can influence students’ abilities to get admitted to university and succeed to their full capacities during their schooling. These include difficulties participating in classroom discussions and presentations (Fang, Clarke, & Wei, 2016; Morita, 2009; Zappa-Hollman, 2007), producing scholarly written texts (Anderson, 2016; Seloni, 2012; Zhang, 2011), accessing academic resources (Anderson, 2017; Nam, 2008; Okuda & Anderson, 2018), unpacking and implementing written and oral feedback (Anderson, in-press; Lyster, Saito, & Sato, 2013), understanding course expectations and pedagogy (Huang, 2009; Huang & Brown, 2009), and encountering discrimination against “non-standard” English language and literacy practices (Johnson & VanBrackle, 2012). The degrees to which students learn (or do not learn) to unravel and navigate the hidden (often Eurocentric) curriculum of western universities also influence their abilities or desires to integrate and participate (Leask, 2015). These issues and the

others outlined above point to the considerable disparity of different groups' opportunities to access and successfully complete university education in the country and that such problems can be both systemic and generational. As Turcotte (2011) additionally notes, cultural factors related to parents' education levels are also contributive. Families migrating from contexts that restrict female participation in higher education or that restrict access to education for certain minority or displaced groups within the host country or region also strongly influence university participation and completion.

Reflections and Moving Forward

International students remain a growing population in Canada and this trend is unlikely to change in the near future. As underscored in the prior sections, of note are the remaining disparities in male to female enrollments for international students, including from seven of the top 10 source countries of students to Canada. Students from India, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan, in particular, which are part of this leading core group, remain markedly male dominated (70%, 75%, and 80%). These countries have been targeted as priority regions for student recruitment by the Canadian federal government (Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, 2014), indicating that male-dominated enrollments from leading source countries of international students might well be on the rise in the future. There must therefore be concerted efforts by Canadian universities and admission committees to address the remaining gender gap from many of these top-sending countries of international (and refugee) students to the country, as well as additional research investigating the gendered nature of university participation within these groups. Canadian universities in particular would benefit from more carefully considering their complicit roles in reinforcing structural gender inequality in recruitment and admission practices. This is particularly salient as universities and other stakeholders continue to reflect on not only the impact of importing internationalization to their universities in the form of globally mobile students, but how their values, practices, and commitments to equity, inclusion, and social justice are exported outwards as students return home after graduation.

Additional attention on refugee student university participation and graduation should also remain top priorities for universities, particularly given the recent upsurge of resettled refugees in the country driven largely by the recent crisis in Syria. This global emergency has contributed to a record number of refugees entering Canada (UNHCR, 2017). Given that almost half of these recent refugees are under the age of 18 (Friesen, 2017), immediate and targeted focus should be directed towards preparing and supporting newly arrived K-12 students in their transitions to postsecondary education. The education levels of these recently arrived refugees between January 2015 and May 2017 also foreshadow potential challenges ahead. Of the 79,615 refugees resettled in the country over this 16-month time period, 80% reported "secondary or less" education levels and 24% as having no formal education at all. Only 7% of recently arrived refugees reported bachelors, masters, or PhD levels of education (Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada, 2017). Due to the complex barriers that children from families with no prior postsecondary education encounter entering and succeeding in university, in addition to the added financial and language and literacy barriers, detailed support systems will be required for students very early on to mitigate these restrictive obstacles to their academic outcomes. Refugee students and children of refugees therefore remain a vitally at-risk population who require focused interventions to enable better access to university education and supports to succeed and graduate while there. Ensuring better supports are in place will have generational impacts as more highly-educated students may themselves become parents who will in turn have better earning potential and be able to support their own future children's academic endeavours. Additional research tracking the longitudinal experiences of refugee students' transitions from

secondary to postsecondary could offer much needed insight into the specific factors that influence or mitigate success for these students.

At its very core, university and other postsecondary participation and completion serve as vessels of socialization into not only English-medium academic discourses and communities required for academic and professional success, but into the broader Canadian society and economy as well. Programs, supports, and infrastructure are therefore needed to support refugee students' socialization into Canadian universities and communities. Although the challenges for many second-language FGPS students from low SES backgrounds may seem insurmountable, academic interventions have been established to help mitigate certain barriers. According to the OECD (2004), "The level of a student's reading engagement is a better predictor of literacy performance than his or her socioeconomic background, indicating that cultivating a student's interest in reading can help overcome home disadvantages" (p. 8). A major challenge for successful literacy interventions, however, remains the degrees to which students who speak English as an additional language are able to access curriculum in the language of instruction (Cummins, 2007). Cummins (2009) additionally notes, "Part of the reason why educational initiatives to combat underachievement among low-income and culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) learners have met with minimal success is that educational interventions alone do little to address the socio-economic realities that contribute to underachievement" (p. 38).

Young and Chan (2014) more specifically emphasize the necessity of school-based interventions to address the social, psychological, academic, and language concerns for refugee students. These can include art, drama, and play-based activities for pre-K to high-school students, involvement in a peer groups and other communities of practice, and language and literacy support in the form of specialized English language learner programs and refugee support teachers. The role of educational "culture brokers" (Yohani, 2013) are also critical to assist newcomers, parents and children alike, navigate their new schools and the broader education systems. At the postsecondary level, Ferede (2014) points to the gaps in curricular knowledge that can be an initial challenge for refugee students due to absences in formal schooling, which may result in the need for additional and specialized support early on to help students catch up to their domestic or international peers. This could, the author adds, take the form of "week-long remedial training" for students who require additional help prior to the start of their regular programs. Again, more empirical work is needed in this area that can investigate and track the influence of such interventions. As highlighted above, the sizeable costs of attending university should also be considered in the context of supporting refugee students and encouraging more widespread participation. Longer-term financial grants and subsidies for low-income refugee students would ease some of the economic barriers of university education and its ancillary costs. Guo and Chase (2011) also argue that universities must also go beyond the "one-time welcome orientation" (p. 316) model of helping non-domestic students integrate into their new academic communities. This could be partly achieved by faculty becoming more proactive in encouraging deeper relationships between domestic and non-domestic students, including mixing up cohorts or groups of students and designing activities and assignments that highlight international and refugee students' knowledge, expertise, and experience (see Leask, 2015 for a more nuanced discussion).

There is also a complex and perhaps contradictory negotiation that Canadian universities must better navigate. Although universities function as sites of socialization into the network of linguistic, academic, and sociocultural practices and communities often needed (and even desired) to enable newcomers' integration, this socialization can also have more sinister and colonial implications. De Oliveira Andreotti, Stein, Ahenakew, and Hunt (2015) importantly note that "universities often treat Indigenous and racialized faculty and students tokenistically,

and in ways that reassert the conditionality of their inclusion” (p. 34). International and refugee students might therefore be implicitly or explicitly socialized into practices and identities in order to adhere to these conditions and ensure their inclusion is accepted by those who gatekeep their success. Universities and educators can address this through additional efforts to internationalize and Indigenize pedagogy and curricula (Leask, 2015; Whitinui, Rodriguez de France, & McIvor, 2018), for example, and seek more responsive and reciprocal ways to challenge the conditionality of international and refugee students’ participation (and socialization) into Canadian universities, while likewise balancing the need to ensure students are enabled and supported in their academic endeavours.

Clearly the pathways towards equity and success are complicated, and yet they are more crucial than ever for both the short and long-term pursuits of Canada, its universities and students, and its citizens. It is incumbent on universities to be forward thinking in their admission practices to ensure students from low-income FGPS backgrounds, including many refugee and international students, are afforded additional opportunities to access university and eventually graduate. Grants, scholarships, and other funding opportunities should correspondingly be more greatly accessible to help mitigate the financial burdens for low-SES students. Once there, academic language supports and infrastructure should be transparent and accessible for students who require help to fulfill their potentials. The recruitment and enrollment of international students is also an area that requires attention in terms of the remaining gap between male and female participation. While the short-term benefits (including financial ones) from increased international student enrollments may be alluring for many universities, the moral and ethical impacts of unbalanced recruitment and admissions cannot be overlooked within the broader context of internationalization and higher education in the country.

ⁱ *International students* include all non-domestic university students excluding permanent residents.

ⁱⁱ *Refugee students* include refugees (and other foreign students with unknown status) studying in Canadian universities, as categorized by Canada’s national statistical agency, Statistics Canada.

ⁱⁱⁱ “The education and official language ability of fathers, rather than those of mothers, are used in the analysis, because fathers had higher average education levels than mothers in all classes, and there was a larger class difference in the education of fathers than in that of mothers” (Hou & Bonikowska, 2016, para. 41).

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