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**The Conflicting Aims of Higher Education  
Admission and Immigration Selection  
Criteria in Canadian 'Edugration'**

**October 2022**

**Editors:**

**Antje Ellermann, Alessandra Santos, Matthew Wright and**

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## Abstract

In higher education-migration, or *edugration*, immigrant-dependent countries attempt to retain international post-secondary students as ‘skilled’ foreign workers and ‘ideal’ economic immigrants. However, higher education’s role as an immigrant selection actor in this process has been largely overlooked. In this paper, we use Bourdieu’s conception of capital to consider the relationship between Canadian (1) higher education institutions’ international student admission criteria, and (2) criteria of key economic immigrant programs which subsequently target these pre-selected international students. Our findings indicate a misalignment between the two selection processes, highlighting a potentially exploitative and relatively unregulated policy arena governing international students as they attempt to acquire the necessary capital to qualify for permanent residency.

**KEYWORDS:** higher education, international students, economic immigration, capital, edugration

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## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Higher education-migration, or *edugration*,<sup>2</sup> is a growing global trend in which the recruitment and retention of international post-secondary students as ‘skilled’ foreign workers and ‘ideal’ immigrants is a policy strategy used to supplement local labor market and demographic needs.<sup>3</sup> Spurred by a so-called global talent war, *edugration* represents a talent-for-citizenship exchange in which international students’ economic capital, knowledge, and work are traded for the acquisition of citizenship in “a stable, democratic, affluent polity.”<sup>4</sup> Foreign nationals who earn post-secondary credentials within certain countries receive preferential treatment in economic immigrant selection processes, e.g. access to open work permits, tailored immigration streams, and/or extra points in points-based systems. As demonstrated by circulating discourses informed by neoliberal approaches to immigration, such applicants are assumed to have more desirable immigrant characteristics – in particular, higher official language abilities and more locally-relevant skills – compared to those without a host-country credential,<sup>5</sup> and thus, in theory, require less government-funded settlement support.

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2. Ann H. Kim and Min-Jung Kwak, “Introduction: Education Migration, Social Mobility, and Structuring Institutions,” in *Outward and Upward Mobilities: International Students in Canada, Their Families, and Structuring Institutions*, ed. Ann H. Kim and Min-Jung Kwak (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019), 11; and Lisa Ruth Brunner, “‘Edugration’ as a Wicked Problem: Higher Education and Three-step Immigration,” *Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education* 13, no. 5S (2022): 26.

3. Lesleyanne Hawthorne, “Designer Immigrants? International Students and Two-step Migration,” in *The Sage Handbook of International Higher Education*, ed. Darla Deardorff, Hans de Wit, John Heyl, and Tony Adams (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2012), 417–37; Shanthi Robertson, *Transnational Student-Migrants and the State: The Education-Migration Nexus* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Recruiting Immigrant Workers: Canada 2019* (International Migration Division, August 13, 2019); and Alexandra Bozheva et al., “Global Policy Discourses on Immigration and International Student Mobility” (Panel presentation, 5th International Conference on Public Policy, Barcelona, Spain, July 8, 2021).

4. Ayelet Shachar, “The Race for Talent: Highly Skilled Migrants and Competitive Immigration Regimes,” *New York University Law Review* 81, no. 1 (2006): 158–9; and Kate Geddie, “Policy Mobilities in the Race for Talent: Competitive State Strategies in International Student Mobility,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 40, no. 2 (2014): 235–48.

5. Global Affairs Canada, *Building on Success: International Education Strategy (2019-2024)* (Ottawa, ON: Global Affairs Canada, 2019), Greetings from the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship; and Emma Sabzalieva et al., “Ideal immigrants in name only? Shifting constructions and divergent discourses on the international student-immigration policy nexus in Australia, Canada, and Germany,” *Policy Reviews in Higher Education* (2022).

Yet despite *edugration's* broad promises, in Canada, some internal federal government reports have indicated the policy's failure to meet ambitious labour market outcome expectations.<sup>6</sup> Although international students are positioned as 'pre-integrated,' many face challenges when transitioning into the Canadian labour market; for example, they are underemployed relative to their domestic counterparts, and find the transition to permanent residency (PR) more challenging than expected.<sup>7</sup> Major Canadian media outlets regularly highlight instances of international student exploitation, particularly in relation to unregulated immigration recruitment agents, housing, and employment.<sup>8</sup> This gap – between *edugration's* promises and its on-the-ground reality – raises ethical concerns.

In Canada, *edugration* is typically a multi-step process, entailing (1) an initial post-secondary study period, (2) a temporary work period after graduation, and, for those successful in the labour market, (3) the transition to PR. Within this process, higher education (HE) institutions play a major role. Alongside the state, they shape the mobility of international students by organizing, supplying, and marketing *edugration* opportunities in the global economy.<sup>9</sup> They then play a direct role in international student recruitment (through both directly-employed staff and contracted agents), gatekeeping (through both admissions and degree conferral procedures), surveillance (through mandated reporting of international student

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6. Citizenship and Immigration Canada, "The Post-graduation Work Permit Program: Options for Program Resign" (Internal report, Advice to Minister, June 2015), 9-11; and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, "Post-graduation Work Permit Program: Recommendations" (Internal report, Executive Committee, January 22, 2019), Summary of the Outcomes of PGWPP Objectives and Program Integrity.

7. Colin Scott et al., "International Students as 'Ideal Immigrants' in Canada: A Disconnect Between Policy Makers' Assumptions and the Lived Experiences of International Students," *Comparative and International Education/Éducation Comparée et Internationale* 43, no. 3 (2015): Article 5; Rashed Al-Haque, "University Internationalization, Immigration, and the Canadian Dream: How Federal Citizenship Immigration Legislation Marginalizes International Graduate Students," *Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education* 9 (2017): 5-9; Huyen Dam, Joyce Chan, and Sarah Wayland. "Missed Opportunity: International Students in Canada Face Barriers to Permanent Residence," *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 19, no. 4 (2018): 891-903; Roopa Desai Trilokekar and Amira El Masri, "'International Students are...Golden': Canada's Changing Policy Contexts, Approaches, and National Peculiarities in Attracting International Students as Future Immigrants," in *Outward and Upward Mobilities: International Students in Canada, Their Families, and Structuring Institutions*, ed. Ann H. Kim and Min-Jung Kwak (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019), 25-55; and Amira El Masri and Noah Khan, "International Students' Lived Experiences: A Review of Literature" (Resources and Reports, Centre for Global Education and Internationalization, Sheridan College, Brampton, ON, January 2022).

8. Nicholas Hune-Brown, "The Shadowy Business of International Education," *Walrus*, August 18, 2021; Dakshana Bascaramurty, Neha Bhatt, and Uday Rana, "Canada's International Student Recruitment Machine is Broken," *Globe and Mail*, November 4, 2021; Nicholas Keung, "'Employers Make You Work Like a Slave' — This International Student Who Fought for Wages Urges Others to Raise Their Voice," *Toronto Star*, April 4, 2022.

9. Allan Findlay, "An Assessment of Supply and Demand-side Theorizations of International Student Mobility," *International Migration* 49, no. 2 (2011): 162-90.

enrolment data),<sup>10</sup> and, to varying degrees, settlement (through student services such as orientation and career programming) and immigrant selection.<sup>11</sup> These all occur while HE institutions benefit from – and, in some cases, are deeply reliant on – the enrolment of international students and their (typically differential) tuition fees, as well as academic labour performed by international graduate students.<sup>12</sup>

Although the internationalization of HE has received significant scholarly attention, few have explored HE's role in the *edugration* process specifically and its involvement in the policy's failed promises. This oversight is related to two key features of *edugration*. First, even though HE institutions play multiple roles on behalf of the state immigration regime, these roles are largely *de facto* with little, if any, government oversight<sup>13</sup> and are thus frequently overlooked and poorly understood. Because HE is not traditionally viewed as a migration actor, it can be difficult to recognize its function as such.<sup>14</sup>

Second, international student admissions (to both HE institutions and 'host' countries) are essentially uncapped, contrary to PR admissions which are more tightly controlled by the state.<sup>15</sup> As a result, *edugration* functions as a filter over time; only those able to gain admission to a HE program, graduate, endure extended periods of precarity as temporary residents, and succeed in competitive labour markets ultimately qualify for economic immigration. The filtration which occurs in the labour market post-graduation is the most visible and thus the most researched, overshadowing the layers of filtration which occur before and during international students' post-

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10. Lisa Ruth Brunner, "Higher Education Institutions as Eyes of the State: Canada's International Student Compliance Regime," *Globalisation, Societies and Education* (2022).

11. Lucie Cerna, "The Internationalisation of Higher Education: Three European Universities in Comparative Perspective" (working paper, Centre on Migration, Policy and Society, Oxford University, Oxford, 2014); and Lisa Ruth Brunner, "Higher Educational Institutions as Emerging Immigrant Selection Actors: A History of British Columbia's Retention of International Graduates, 2001–2016," *Policy Reviews in Higher Education* 1, no. 1 (2017): 22-41.

12. Lisa Ruth Brunner et al., "International Graduate Students as Labour: Revisiting the Global Imaginary" (Paper presentation, Annual Meeting of the Canadian Society for the Study of Higher Education, Virtual, May 15-17, 2022).

13. Cerna, "The Internationalisation of Higher Education;" Simon Morris-Lange, "International Students as Future Immigrants?! An Analysis of How Higher Education Institutions Respond to Changing Societal Expectations" (PhD diss., Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, 2022).

14. Brunner, "Higher Educational Institutions as Emerging Immigrant Selection Actors," 22-41.

15. Robert G. Gregory, "The Two-Step Australian Immigration Policy and its Impact on Immigrant Employment Outcomes" (Discussion Paper, IZA, Bonn, Germany, 2014), 17.



secondary study. These tensions and misalignments between HE and the state deserve more nuanced attention.

To better understand HE's role in *edugration*, this paper uses Bourdieu's theory of capital and the Canadian context to better understand the relationship between (1) HE institutions' international student admission criteria, and (2) the criteria of economic immigrant selection programs which target international students. In doing so, we demonstrate how HE institutions' international student admission criteria misalign with states' immigration admission criteria. We first introduce key characteristics of contemporary *edugration* in the Canadian context. We then provide an overview of capital (and, more specifically, cultural capital) as conceptualized by Bourdieu, followed by two brief summaries: key points regarding Bourdieu's views of HE, and key points regarding the application of Bourdieu's ideas to the topic of immigration. We then discuss our methodological approach and present our analysis of HE and key immigration pathway selection criteria. We conclude with a discussion of the ethical complexities raised by our analysis.

## *Edugration* in the Canadian Context

As HE institutions, recruiting agents, and provincial and federal governments increasingly presented Canada as a “world of possibilities” to prospective international students over the past two decades,<sup>16</sup> the number of international students in Canada quintupled.<sup>17</sup> As a result, the modest growth in Canadian public postsecondary enrolment is now driven entirely by

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16. Scott et al., “International Students as ‘Ideal Immigrants;’” and “Paths to Permanent Residency in Canada and Immigration,” EduCanada, last modified January 31, 2019, <https://www.educanada.ca/live-work-vivre-travailler/work-travail/residency-permanent-resident.aspx>.

17. Youjin Choi, Eden Crossman, and Feng Hou, “International Students as a Source of Labour Supply: Transition to Permanent Residency” (Economic and Social Report, Statistics Canada, Ottawa, ON, June 23, 2021), 2.

international students, who comprise ~16% of all students<sup>18</sup> yet pay ~40% of all university tuition fees.<sup>19</sup>

International students did not pay differential tuition in Canada until, during the 1976 federal transfer payment negotiations, international students were newly classified as migrants and “therefore undeserving of taxpayer support.”<sup>20</sup> Today, HE’s growing share of revenues from tuition and fees (31.6% in 2019/2020) is due partially to increases in international student enrolment and the higher fees they pay, a trend occurring as the share from provincial governments has declined.<sup>21</sup> Both HE systems and the state have come to rely heavily on international students’ expenditures (estimated at \$21.6 billion CAD in 2018), and their potentiality as economic immigrants is seen as crucial to Canada’s long-term economic and population growth strategies.<sup>22</sup>

Not all international students wish to remain in Canada. However, upon graduation, roughly half of international students obtain an open post-graduation work permit (PGWP) valid for up to three years.<sup>23</sup> PGWP holders form a rapidly growing proportion of Canada’s temporary foreign workforce.<sup>24</sup> Both the federal and provincial governments offer PR pathways specifically targeting recently graduated international students with either demonstrated or likely success in the labour market. In the eyes of the state, these are “ideal” immigrant candidates because they are “young, have Canadian educational qualifications and in-demand labour skills, and are proficient in one of [Canada’s] official languages.”<sup>25</sup> In recent years, almost three-quarters of

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18. Statistics Canada, “International Students Accounted for All of the Growth in Postsecondary Enrolments in 2018/2019,” *Daily*, November 25, 2020. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/201125/dq201125e-eng.htm>.

19. Statistics Canada, “Financial Information of Universities for the 2018/2019 School Year and Projected Impact of COVID-19 for 2020/2021,” *Daily*, October 8, 2020. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/201008/dq201008b-eng.htm>.

20. Dale M. McCartney, “‘A Question of Self-Interest’: A Brief History of 50 Years of International Student Policy in Canada,” *Canadian Journal of Higher Education/Revue canadienne d’enseignement supérieur* 51, no. 3 (2021): 36.

21. Statistics Canada, “Tuition fees for degree programs, 2021/2022,” *Daily*, September 8, 2021. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210908/dq210908a-eng.htm>.

22. Global Affairs Canada, “Building on Success,” 2-3.

23. Eden Crossman, Yuqian Lu, and Feng Hou, “International Students as a Source of Labour Supply: Engagement in the Labour Market After Graduation” (Economic and Social Report, Statistics Canada, Ottawa, ON, January 18, 2022), 3-4.

24. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Recruiting Immigrant Workers*.

25. Global Affairs Canada, “Building on Success,” Greetings from the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.

those who obtained a PGWP after graduation became permanent residents within 5 years of graduation,<sup>26</sup> and the share of new economic principal PR applicants with previous Canadian study experience has increased from 6% in 2000 to 38% in 2019.<sup>27</sup> In other words, *edugration* is now a major component of Canadian immigration, and policy shifts during the COVID-19 pandemic point to a continued, if not increased, focus on international students as a source of permanent residents.<sup>28</sup>

Among international students, there is significant variance in PR transition rates. Roughly 30% of all international students who entered Canada since 2000 became permanent residents within 10 years.<sup>29</sup> However, the proportion was much higher amongst graduate students (>50%); those with Canadian work experience (obtained either while studying or after graduation) (60%), particularly in higher-paying jobs; and citizens from countries with relatively low gross domestic products (GDP) (e.g. >60% of those from Nigeria and India).<sup>30</sup> Students who do successfully transition to PR appear to have relatively positive labour market outcomes in the long run.<sup>31</sup>

We know that former international students who go on to immigrate to Canada have been, at the time of landing, "younger, more educated, more likely to speak an official language and much more likely to have pre-immigration earnings in Canada than immigrants who did not study in Canada" – all positive predictors of Canadian labour market success.<sup>32</sup> Still, there is some debate regarding the relative 'value' of the one characteristic which sets international students apart from other potential economic immigrants: a Canadian post-secondary degree, diploma, or certificate. In the US, Canada, and Australia alike, "receiving-country education in and of itself does not necessarily generate a clear advantage for immigrants unless it is validated

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26. Crossman, Lu, and Hou, "International Students as a Source of Labour Supply," 10.

27. Eden Crossman et al., "International Students as a Source of Labour Supply: A Summary of Recent Trends" (Economic and Social Report, Statistics Canada, Ottawa, ON, March 23, 2022), 4.

28. Lisa Ruth Brunner, "Towards a More Just Canadian Education-migration System: International Student Mobility in Crisis," *Studies in Social Justice* 16, no. 1 (2022): 79-102.

29. Choi, Crossman, and Hou, "International Students as a Source of Labour Supply," 3-4.

30. Crossman et al., "International Students as a Source of Labour Supply," 2-3; Yuqian Lu and Feng Hou, "International Students Who Become Permanent Residents in Canada" (Insights on Canadian Society, Statistics Canada, Ottawa, ON, December 10, 2015), 4.

31. Crossman et al., "International Students as a Source of Labour Supply," 4.

32. Eden Crossman and Feng Hou, "International Students as a Source of Labour Supply: Pre-immigration Study in Canada and Post-Immigration Earnings" (Economic and Social Report, Statistics Canada, Ottawa, ON, February 23, 2022), 11.

by the labor market.”<sup>33</sup> In Canada specifically, a recent analysis suggests that “Canadian credentials take some time to translate into stronger economic outcomes” but eventually do so “in the longer term,” regardless of Canadian work experience.<sup>34</sup> Still, the effect of Canadian study and credentials on labour market outcomes, independent of other factors and experiences, remains unclear.

Since 2015, Canada has managed its economic immigration system with a tool called Express Entry (EE), which uses a comprehensive ranking system (CRS) to rank applicants. The initial CRS was designed based on findings which found that “studying in Canada has very little predictive power [of earnings] in either the short or intermediate term” compared to language, Canadian work experience, age, and education (not necessarily Canadian), and that former international students had lower initial earnings compared to others with similar sociodemographic characteristics.<sup>35</sup> As a result, the CRS did not award points, and thus give any ranking preference, for applicants with a Canadian education credential when EE was first launched. It was only after “strong advocacy from the education sector and other stakeholders such as provinces, territories and employers” that this was adjusted.<sup>36</sup> Today, a relatively small number of points are awarded based on the possession of a post-secondary Canadian education credential, which may be in place for other policy goals (e.g. to attract international students and increase the potential immigrant pool).

International students’ post-graduation work experiences are impacted by a complex mix of external contexts (e.g. employer characteristics and location), professional or educational characteristics (e.g. subject and level of study), and personal characteristics (e.g. experiences of racism and pressure to obtain PR);<sup>37</sup> a full account of their labour market underperformance is beyond the scope of this paper. In general, however, the narrative that international students are ideal immigrants – and, conversely, that Canada’s *edugration* system is a win-win for all

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33. Feng Hou and Aneta Bonikowska, “Selections Before the Selection: Earnings Advantages of Immigrants Who Were Former Skilled Temporary Foreign Workers in Canada,” *International Migration Review* 52, no. 3 (2018): 721.

35. Eden Crossman et al., “International Students as a Source of Labour Supply,” 4.

36. Aneta Bonikowska, Feng Hou, and Garnett Picot, “Which Human Capital Characteristics Best Predict the Earnings of Economic Immigrants?” (Analytical Studies Branch Research Paper, Statistics Canada, Ottawa, ON, August 26, 2015), 17.

37. Crossman and Hou, “International Students as a Source of Labour Supply,” 2.

38. Trilokekar and El Masri, “International Students are...Golden,” 25-55.

involved – is being questioned by policy makers, academics, and the public alike.<sup>3839</sup> The difficulties international students face in the labour market after graduation, including those who do eventually obtain PR status,<sup>40</sup> suggest the need to better understand HE's role in Canada's larger immigration regime, especially given HE's reliance on *edugration*. For this reason, we now turn to an overview of Bourdieu's conceptualization of capital.

## Bourdieu's Conceptualization of Capital

Bourdieu initially utilized cultural capital as a hypothesis to explain uneven academic achievement of children from different classes. Although his work on cultural reproduction as applied to educational advantage has been critiqued – e.g., for being overly deterministic and ignoring individual agency, and for overlooking gender and race alongside class – Bourdieu's conceptualization of cultural capital remains relevant<sup>41</sup> and is particularly popular among researchers of the sociology of education.<sup>42</sup>

For Bourdieu, distinguishing between different forms of capital showed the “relations between positions occupied within the distributions of the resources,” such as HE and the immigration systems.<sup>43</sup> As he proposed, economic capital is the form of capital that can be “immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights.”<sup>44</sup> In contrast, cultural and social capital are “transformed, disguised forms of economic capital,” which:

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39. Brunner, “‘Edugration’ as a Wicked Problem,” 25-37.

40. Sabzalieva et al., “Ideal immigrants in name only?”

41. El Masri and Khan, “International Students’ Lived Experiences.”

42. Alice Sullivan, “Bourdieu and Education: How Useful is Bourdieu's Theory for Researchers?,” *Netherlands Journal of Social Sciences* 38, no. 2 (2002): 144-66.

43. Annette Lareau and Elliot B. Weininger, “Cultural Capital in Educational Research: A Critical Assessment,” *Theory and Society* 32 (2003): 567-606; and Jason D. Edgerton and Lance W. Roberts, “Cultural Capital or Habitus? Bourdieu and Beyond in the Explanation of Enduring Educational Inequality,” *Theory and Research in Education* 12, no. 2 (July 2014): 193-220.

44. Pierre Bourdieu, “Social Space and Symbolic Power,” *Sociological Theory* 7, no. 1 (1989): 17.

45. Pierre Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital,” in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John Richardson (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986), 243.

produce their most specific effects only to the extent that they conceal (not least from their possessors) the fact that economic capital is at their root, in other words – but only in the last analysis – at the root of their effects.<sup>45</sup>

Cultural and social capital can, under certain conditions, be converted into economic capital. Bourdieu thus suggested that understanding the operations of cultural and social capital could help explain the promotion, or hindrance, of social mobility in stratified societies.

Bourdieu defined social capital as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition...which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital” – in other words, social connection and obligations.<sup>46</sup> Cultural capital, on the other hand, referred to the accumulation of assets in three different states: embodied (“in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body”), objectified (“in the form of cultural goods...which are the trace of realization of theories or critiques of these theories, problematics, etc.), and institutionalized (“a form of objectification which...confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee,” such as educational certifications.<sup>47</sup> At its core, cultural capital consists of “specialized skills [which] are transmissible across generations, are subject to monopoly, and may yield advantages or ‘profits,’” – an intentionally broad definition.<sup>48</sup>

Cultural capital cannot be understood without briefly considering three Bourdieuan concepts: habitus, practice, and field.<sup>49</sup> *Habitus* is an embodied disposition and set of preferences and tendencies we develop during our earliest interactions.<sup>50</sup> As children internalize their immediate caregivers’ particular way of being, they acquire cultural capital associated with their habitus.<sup>51</sup> One’s *practices* refers to “their behavioral repertoire,” resulting from the interaction of their habitus and cultural capital within a given field’s context.<sup>52</sup> Finally, the concept of a *field*

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46. Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital,” 252.

47. Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital,” 248-9.

48. Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital,” 243.

49. Lareau and Weininger, “Cultural Capital in Educational Research,” 569.

50. Edgerton and Roberts, “Cultural Capital or Habitus?,” 194-95.

51. Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 72-95.

52. Deborah Reed-Danahay, *Bourdieu and Social Space: Mobilities, Trajectories, Emplacements* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2020), 22-27.

53. Edgerton and Roberts, “Cultural Capital or Habitus?,” 195.

references the norms (both formal and informal) governing a sphere of activity and is “characterized by [its] own particular regulative principles” (i.e. ‘the rules of the game’).<sup>53</sup> One’s position within a field “derive[s] from the interrelation of their habitus and the capital they can mobilize in that field.”<sup>54</sup>

Two additional points are significant to understanding cultural capital. First, the value of cultural capital, habitus, and practice is always relational and depends on the field; if we think of a field as a card game, for example, the cards one is dealt might be their cultural capital, and the way they play the game – their practice – depends on their habitus.<sup>55</sup> Second, as mentioned, cultural capital can be transformed into symbolic capital “when it appears to be an intrinsic attribute” – e.g. an ‘innate’ talent.<sup>56</sup> However, cultural capital is both inherited and acquired, and the inherited aspects in particular are often invisibilized – which makes cultural capital appear to be entirely acquired through talent. This concealment was key to Bourdieu’s critique of HE, which we turn to next.

### Bourdieu and Higher Education

In *The State Nobility*, Bourdieu focused on HE as a field.<sup>57</sup> He suggested HE was not liberatory but rather “a sorting machine that selects students according to an implicit *social* classification and reproduces the same students according to an explicit *academic* classification, which in reality is very similar to the implicit *social* classification.”<sup>58</sup> This sorting process reproduced and legitimized domination through class, with elite institutions in particular “attract[ing] and recruit[ing] students who already have the habitus and dispositions that the schools purport to instill in them.”<sup>59</sup> HE institutions thus enabled “the realization of a social classification in guises that allow it to be accomplished invisibly,”<sup>60</sup> creating “a legitimate and

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53. Ibid.

54. Ibid.

55. Edgerton and Roberts, “Cultural Capital or Habitus?,” 206.

56. Reed-Danahay, *Bourdieu and Social Space*, 32.

57. Pierre Bourdieu, *The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power*, trans. Laretta C. Clough (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996).

58. Rajani Naidoo, “Fields and Institutional Strategy: Bourdieu on the Relationship between Higher Education, Inequality and Society,” *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 25, no. 4 (2004): 459.

59. Reed-Danahay, *Bourdieu and Social Space*, 100.

60. Bourdieu, *The State Nobility*, 36.

consecrated group whose dominant position in social space is accepted as natural”<sup>61</sup> and preserving the social order. For this reason, people conceive of “academic nobility” as “different from blood nobility while still granting it all the properties attributed to dominant groups whose domination is legitimated by birth, in other words, by virtue of their essence.”<sup>62</sup>

Bourdieu was also concerned with HE’s relationship with the state, both of which he saw as serving the “higher interests” of “devotion to ‘public service’” only “insofar as in so doing it serves its own interests.”<sup>63</sup> He saw academic titles as a “privilege symbolically instituted and guaranteed by the state” which rendered “the state as a public treasury of material and symbolic resources guaranteeing private appropriations.”<sup>64</sup> Academic titles are thus, in his words, “state magic” – which, in their conferral, change both nothing and everything.<sup>65</sup> They are simultaneously bureaucratic and an act of symbolic violence, changing “the collectively attributed meaning and publicly recognized social value of the act or thing in question, with very real consequences.”<sup>66</sup> The state “bears upon us all,” and, as Loïc J. D. Wacquant wrote in the foreword to *The State Mobility*, it is ultimately the school which “is the state’s most potent conduit and servant.”<sup>67</sup> He also noted that “educational qualifications never function perfectly as currency [as] they are never entirely separable from their holders: their value rises in proportion to the value of their bearer.”<sup>68</sup>

Bourdieu’s comparison of nobility by degree to that by blood bears resemblance to the talent-for-citizenship exchange, in which those who ‘lose out’ in the ‘birthright lottery’<sup>69</sup> are able to trade their seemingly innate talent in the form of cultural capital – primarily academic credentials, language abilities, and work experience – for citizenship. Yet *edugration* complicates this process in that HE is working even more directly with the state in the reproduction of global inequality through the selection of immigrants. For this reason, we next briefly review how Bourdieu’s forms of capital have been applied to immigration.

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61. Reed-Danahay, *Bourdieu and Social Space*, 100.

62. Bourdieu, *The State Nobility*, 373.

63. Bourdieu, *The State Nobility*, 375.

64. Bourdieu, *The State Nobility*, 377.

65. Ibid.

66. Bourdieu, *The State Nobility*, 377.

67. Bourdieu, *The State Nobility*, xviii.

68. Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital,” 248.

69. Ayelet Shachar, *The Birthright Lottery* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).



## Bourdieu and Immigration

International migration was not a direct focus of Bourdieu.<sup>70</sup> However, his work has been used widely in migration studies to analyze capital accumulation strategies.<sup>71</sup> For example, many have found that professionals who enter the field of migration based on work experience gained in a different country often struggle to achieve the same success as in their original careers, making social capital highly significant to immigrants' employment searches and economic outcomes.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, in Canada, "place-based recognition of qualifications [serve] as a mode of distinction," requiring immigrants to expand their Canadian-recognized cultural capital in an attempt to overcome a racially-based ordering of immigrants in the labour market; only by acquiring a Canadian degree or diploma are many immigrants able to escape underemployment.<sup>73</sup> It is this failure to translate capital across transnational social fields that led countries such as Canada to focus on two-step migration, i.e. recruiting temporary residents with existing host-country work experience as immigrants, in an attempt to reduce 'brain waste' or 'brain abuse' due to the labour market's failure to recognize foreign experience credentials.<sup>74</sup>

We also know that citizenship is "a culturally produced category [that] manifests itself in formal (legal and institutional) as well as informal (practiced and cultural) forms," and both formal and informal forms of citizenship can be conceptualized as forms of capital; in other words, citizenship "serves as a strategy of accumulation that is deliberately deployed and can be exchanged into other forms of capital."<sup>75</sup> However, deploying formal citizenship (or somewhat

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70. Reed-Danahay, *Bourdieu and Social Space*, 3.

71. Umut Erel, "Migrating Cultural Capital: Bourdieu in Migration Studies," *Sociology* 44, no. 4 (2010): 642-60.

72. Li Xue, *Social Capital and Employment Entry of Recent Immigrants to Canada: Evidence from the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada* (Ottawa, ON: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, March 2008); and Li Xue, *Social Capital and Wages: Outcome of Recent Immigrants to Canada* (Ottawa, ON: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, May 2008).

73. Hongxia Shan, Ashley Pullman, and Qinghua Zhao, "The Making of Transnational Social Space: Chinese Women Managing Careers and Lives between China and Canada," *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 25, no. 2 (2016): 105-29.

74. M. Carolina Brandi, "Skilled Immigrants in Rome," *International Migration* 39, no. 4 (2001): 101-31; and Harold Bauder, "'Brain Abuse', or the Devaluation of Immigrant Labour in Canada," *Antipode* 35, no. 4 (2003): 699-717.

75. Harold Bauder, "Citizenship as Capital: The Distinction of Migrant Labor." *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 33, no. 3 (2008): 316.

similarly, PR) in order to obtain other forms of capital is not straightforward for immigrants, while full informal citizenship often remains elusive.

More specific to the purposes of this paper, a positive relationship between capital accumulation and international student mobility has been examined. Kim, for example, found that a US degree functioned “as a screening device to exclude other competitors” for international students, who participate in a larger global positional competition.<sup>76</sup> Findlay similarly posited that international students have “clear advantages over most other applicants from abroad, such as holding unchallengeable certification of their qualifications as graduates of [host countries’] universities,” giving their migration “a transformative power in translating socially the meaning of the “knowledges” that they possess.”<sup>77</sup> Other studies have sought to explain how much or what kinds of capital international students need to “increase their likelihood of staying and working in the West” – e.g. “improving their English language ability” or “studying STEM subjects.”<sup>78</sup>

Still, many international students face significant struggles in their efforts to find jobs in Canada after graduation;<sup>79</sup> for some, only upon returning to their home countries is their cultural capital accumulated in Canada valued.<sup>80</sup> This is despite the fact that international students increasingly wish to remain in Canada after graduation<sup>81</sup> and thus seek not ‘just’ a Canadian education but also the cultural capital (e.g. English skills, work experience) and social capital (e.g. networks and relationships) necessary for that transition.<sup>82</sup>

What no study has focused on thus far is the disjuncture between the specific forms of capital required for institutional selection and those for immigrant selection. This disjuncture is

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76. Jongyoung Kim, “Aspiration for Global Cultural Capital in the Stratified Realm of Global Higher Education: Why do Korean Students Go to US Graduate Schools?” *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 32, no. 1 (2011): 121.

77. Findlay, “An Assessment of Supply and Demand-side Theorizations,” 185-6.

78. Zizhen Wang and Philip J. O’Connell, “Social Capital and Post-Graduation Destination: International Students in Ireland,” *The Economic and Social Review* 51, no. 3 (Autumn, 2020): 401.

79. Roopa Desai Trilokekar, Amira El Masri, and Noah Khan, *Factors that Contribute to the Gap in Labour Market Performance of International and Domestic Graduates in Ontario and Nova Scotia* (self-pub., March 2022).

80. Joanna L. Waters, *Education, Migration and Cultural Capital in the Chinese Diaspora: Transnational Students Between Hong Kong and Canada* (New York: Cambria Press, 2008).

81. Canadian Bureau for International Education, *The Student Voice: National Results of the 2021 CBIE International Student Survey* (Ottawa, ON: 2022), 38-9.

82. Nancy Bepple, “International Students Strategies to Obtain Career-Related Work in Canada After Graduation” (PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 2014).

important to unpack, as Canadian HE institutions now have unprecedented influence in determining the makeup of Canada's future population. Canada's two-step migration model now increasingly selects permanent residents who complete some portion of the 'integration' process independently in the Canadian labour market<sup>83</sup> and, in the case of *edugration* pathways, at Canadian HE institutions.<sup>84</sup> This shifts the cost and responsibility of immigrant integration away from the federal government and onto various entities, including, through *edugration*, the Canadian HE system. It is this shifting landscape that the rest of this paper seeks to address.

## Methodological Approach

Measuring the complex capital accumulation process is difficult. The ability for an international student to gain acceptance to a HE institution or to immigrate to Canada, for example, requires a combination of capital developed not only over their lifetime but passed on from generations before. We also acknowledge that international students accumulate capital through their experiences in Canadian HE, although the extent to which they do so remains unclear. Our study takes a modest aim. We seek not to measure capital accumulation, nor to comment on the capital accumulation achieved through HE, but rather to simply compare the admission criteria of HE institutions and certain immigration selection criteria. Our research question thus asks: how closely do HE admission criteria align with those of Canadian immigration programs targeted at international students?

To answer, we employed a multiple case study method<sup>85</sup> to understand the role of HE's admission criteria in *edugration*. This method was selected to compare commonalities across several cases; it involved first a within-case analysis, followed by an across-case analysis.<sup>86</sup> We limited our focus to HE institutions and economic immigration programs operating in the

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83. Antje Ellermann and Yana Gorokhovskaia, "The Impermanence of Permanence: The Rise of Probationary Immigration in Canada," *International Migration* 58, no. 6 (2020): 45-60.

84. Karine Tremblay, "Academic Mobility and Immigration," *Journal of Studies in International Education* 9, no. 3 (2005): 196-228; and Emma Flynn and Harald Bauder, "The Private Sector, Institutions of Higher Education, and Immigrant Settlement in Canada," *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 16, no. 3 (2015): 538-56.

85. Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 4th ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2016), 37-41.

86. Merriam and Tisdell, *Qualitative Research*, 232-234.

Canadian province of British Columbia (BC) as illustrative examples. We selected HE institutions representing a range of institution sizes and types, including a research-intensive university (University of British Columbia [UBC]), a comprehensive university (Simon Fraser University [SFU]), a polytechnic university (Kwantlen Polytechnic University [KPU]), an applied/professional teaching-intensive university (Royal Roads University [RRU]), a college (Langara College [Langara]), and a private educational business (Fraser International College [FIC]). These institutions were selected because they (1) are Designated Learning Institutions as per Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) requirements, (2) enroll a significant proportion of international students, and (3) offer PGWP-eligible programs.

Within these institutions, we focused specifically on Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) programs or a corresponding program (e.g. the Bachelor of Commerce degree [BCom] at UBC and the pathway to a BBA at FIC). While there are differences between each institution's program in terms of student demographics, curriculum, and graduates' labour market outcomes, for comparative purposes we focused mainly on their admissions criteria and consider them roughly equivalent. Business was chosen because it has consistently been the top area of study for both domestic and international students in Canada and its enrolment growth over the past decade has been driven significantly by international students.<sup>87</sup>

There are many different immigration pathways international students take to gain PR. For the purposes of this paper, we limited our focus to the current (1) federal Canadian Experience Class (CEC) program and two BC Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) Skills Immigration streams: (2) the International Graduate (IG) pathway, and (3) the International Post-Graduate (IPG) pathway. These were selected because they are the three key PR pathways marketed to degree-seeking international students studying in BC.

It is important to note that the immigration programs we analyzed are inherently structured to be nimble, giving policy makers the ability to frequently tweak selection criteria in an attempt to meet just-in-time economic needs. When travel restrictions limited the flow of permanent residents to Canada from abroad during the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, the selection mechanisms related to CEC were temporarily adjusted in several ways, significantly

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87. Statistics Canada, "International Students Accounted for All of the Growth."

lowering the minimum requirements.<sup>88</sup> In our analysis, we attempt to give a general picture of the core selection criteria for the CEC, BC PNP IG, and the BC PNP IPG programs, yet acknowledge further complexities not fully addressed in this paper.

We relied on institutional and governmental websites and guides for data collection. We first coded the HE institution admission materials and the government immigration systems based on three types of capital (economic, cultural, and social capital). Then, we compared those types of capital prioritized by both HE institutions and specific economic immigration programs. Finally, we compared the two to better understand how HE admissions criteria compare to economic immigration selection criteria.

## Findings: Higher Education Admissions

### Economic Capital

The central importance of undergraduate international students' economic capital to HE institutions' admission criteria is clear. In the 2021/2022 academic year, international undergraduate students paid, on average, five times that of domestic students in Canada per year (\$33,623 vs. \$6,693), while graduate students paid just over 2.5 times on average (\$20,120 vs. \$7,472).<sup>89</sup> In BC, the average annual international undergraduate tuition fee for a degree in business, management and public administration was \$27,152 compared to the average domestic tuition of \$5,970.<sup>90</sup> However, tuition varied by institution and degree. At UBC, for example, tuition for a Bachelor of Commerce degree in the 2022/23 academic year is \$55,384 for international students and \$7,788 for domestic students, a difference of more than 7 times. While institutional websites did highlight scholarships available for some international students, they were limited and were typically distributed in order to recruit students with embodied cultural capital which supports HE institutions' internationalization efforts. In sum, admission criteria require international students to have significant economic capital prior to enrolment.

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88. Brunner, "Towards a More Just Canadian Education-migration System," 89.

89. "Tuition Fees for Degree Programs: Interactive Tool," Statistics Canada - Data Visualization Products, Statistics Canada, modified September 10, 2021, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-607-x/71-607-x2019011-eng.htm>.

90. "Tuition Fees for Degree Programs," Statistics Canada.

## Cultural Capital

In addition to economic capital, international students require a relatively high level of institutionalized cultural capital in the form of official language test scores and/or graduation certificates for admission to BC's undergraduate programs. There are typically several different ways to demonstrate language capabilities (e.g. through a degree earned at an accredited institution at which English is the primary language of instruction), but many students entering an undergraduate program directly from a high school outside Canada take a test such as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). Minimum language test scores differ, as do minimum degree levels, the latter of which are required based on the applicant's country, school type, and level of study. Although institutionalized capital such as a test score or high school diploma is accumulated gradually over time, at the point of post-secondary admission it is evaluated directly and singularly. Additionally, credentials from certain institutions are valued over others. Table 1 shows a comparison of minimum IELTS scores required for BBA (or equivalent) programs.

Institution name	University of British Columbia (UBC)	Simon Fraser University (SFU)	Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU)	Royal Roads University (RRU)	Langara College (Langara)	Fraser International College (FIC)
Institution type	Public research-intensive university	Public comprehensive university	Public polytechnic university	Public applied/professional teaching-intensive university	Public college	Private educational business
Program	Bachelor of Commerce (BCom)	Bachelor of Business Administration	Bachelor of Business Administration	Bachelor of Business Administration	Bachelor of Business Administration	Pathway to Bachelor of Business Administration
Minimum language requirements (IELTS-Academic)	6.5, with no part less than 6.0	6.5, with no part less than 6.0	6.5, with no part less than 6.0	6.5, with no part less than 6.0  OR Undergraduate first-year entry programs with academic and language support: 6.0, with min. 5.5 in listening and reading, and 6.0 in writing and speaking	6.5	6.0, with min. 6.0 in reading and writing and 5.5 in speaking and listening  OR Integrated-entry: 5.5, with min. 5.5 in reading and writing and 5.0 in speaking and listening  OR Cornerstone-entry: 5.5, with no part less than 4.5, OR 5.0, with min. 5.0 reading and writing, and 4.5 in speaking and listening

*Table 1: Minimum IELTS scores required for BBA (or equivalent) program admission at select BC higher education institutions*

Notable is the ‘pathway college,’ operated by either host institutions or as private corporations, as an institutional form in BC.<sup>91</sup> RR, for example, offers a first-year entry program with academic and language support for those BBA applicants who do not meet the minimum IELTS score, while FIC operates as a private educational business operating entirely separate programs yet with some integration into SFU’s BBA program and accepted significantly lower IELTS scores. All the public institutions – UBC, SFU, KPU, RR, and Langara – also offer preparatory English for academic purposes courses as separate, not-for-credit programs with varying, but relatively low, admissions criteria.

The possession of institutionalized cultural capital does not necessarily imply the possession of embodied cultural capital; that is, the possession of a high TOEFL score does not necessarily imply embodied language ability. There is evidence that HE institutions increasingly seek to assess the embodied cultural capital of applicants beyond that which can be institutionally proven. The personal profile for undergraduate student admissions at schools like UBC, for example, helps institutions “determine whether an applicant will flourish here – not just because of their grades, but also because of the experiences and ambition they bring with them.”<sup>92</sup> At UBC, for example, the Personal Profile for BCom students now includes an interview component because, in the program’s words, “collaboration, in-class discussion, and public speaking are daily activities” and “your ability to listen to others and to communicate your thoughts and ideas clearly are essential to your success.”<sup>93</sup> This element thus assesses applicants’ embodied – as opposed to institutionalized – linguistic capital, allowing admission decisions to consider more than simply institutionalized cultural capital.

In addition to overt measures of embodied cultural capital, HE institutions internally value bodies differently depending on their embodied citizenship, language, and ‘cultural’ attributes. As evidenced by UBC’s international undergraduate recruitment report written for the 2015 Student Tuition Consultations, for example, UBC “is committed to recruiting from a

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91. Dale M. McCartney and Amy Metcalfe, “Corporatization of Higher Education through Internationalization: The Emergence of Pathway Colleges in Canada,” *Tertiary Education and Management* 24, no. 3 (2018): 206-20.

92. “UBC Student Admissions 101,” *TREK Magazine*, November 15, 2017.

93. Kate Wilson, “Tips for creating your BCom application video interview,” *UBC Admission Blog*, *University of British Columbia*, October 15, 2021, <https://you.ubc.ca/applying-ubc/blog/how-to-apply/sauder-video-interview-tips/>.

variety of countries, even if the numbers are small from an individual country, to balance the outside demand from certain countries,” and seeks a “healthy diversity of students from different countries, different linguistic and cultural backgrounds [to support] true internationalization and pedagogical goals.”<sup>94</sup> Students are thus recruited and admitted differently based on certain embodied cultural qualities in efforts to advance specific goals.

### Social Capital

In contrast with some post-secondary selection systems, social capital is less important to the undergraduate selection process at educational institutions in BC. Developing a connection with a potential supervisor, as well as obtaining reference letters, can be important in the research-based graduate student admission process, potentially more so for international students for whom a supportive supervisor can provide funding. Social capital can also be provided through field experiences and internships conducted through post-secondary workplace partnerships. However, in our analysis, it was not a significant factor in selection in the BBA program admissions at hand; for example, reference letters are generally not required or only requested as supplemental documentation.

## Findings: Economic Immigration Admissions

### Canadian Experience Class (through Express Entry)

The CEC is the federal government’s main PR pathway developed partially to retain international students as immigrants. The CEC’s basic *minimum* defining selection criteria are one year of full-time skilled work experience in Canada – which can be accumulated via part-time work over the course of three years yet must not be conducted during the study period – and language exam results generally on par or lower than those required to enter many public HE institutions. The minimum IELTS score accepted depends on the skill classification of the applicant’s work experience, but notably (1) is based on the IELTS General test, rather than the IELTS Academic test, and (2) ranges from approximately 5 to 6. The CEC’s basic *minimum*

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94. University of British Columbia, “International Undergraduate Recruitment” (PowerPoint presentation, Student Tuition Consultations, Vancouver, BC, October 2015), slide 12.



program requirements thus put a strong emphasis on the embodied cultural and social capital needed to find a skilled job in Canada. The economic capital required is the application fee (\$850) plus an additional right of permanent residence fee (\$515) and the proven ability to support oneself financially in Canada.

However, the importance of embodied cultural capital for successful CEC immigration intensified in January 2015 with the introduction of EE. Before 2015, all individuals who met the minimum CEC requirements qualified for PR and were processed in a first-come, first-serve manner. However, EE added an additional selection layer on top of the CEC basic minimum program requirements, so that all those who qualify for CEC were put into a “pool” to compete for selection based on their points-based rank within the CRS, as discussed. The CRS measures elements such as age (younger is generally better, with ages 20 to 29 earning the maximum points), language (bilingualism in Canada’s official languages and higher test scores are better), and work experience (more years and higher skill level are better).

When EE was first introduced, many international student graduates who qualified for CEC were unable to accumulate enough points to be selected, apart from those who had significant work experience (heavily dependent on social capital) or could obtain the maximum points allotted for language abilities. This has fluctuated due to various adjustments to the CRS; however, English and/or French proficiency, or a provincial nomination, generally remain very important for many students to gain sufficient points for selection within the CRS.

### BC Provincial Nominee Program International Graduates

The BC PNP IG is a provincial program which seeks to retain skilled international graduates in BC. Operating in direct competition with CEC for international students, the BC PNP IG requires applicants to obtain a permanent, skilled, full-time job in BC, at a pay rate commensurate with the position, within three years of completing a Canadian post-secondary degree. While the employer does not have to formally sponsor the employee, they do have to provide documentation in cooperation with the application process. Whereas the CEC allows for the combination of multiple part-time or contract jobs, the BC PNP IG’s requirement of a permanent position arguably requires deeper forms of developed embodied cultural and social capital, on top of the institutionalized capital of a post-secondary Canadian degree. The

economic capital required is slightly higher in that there is an extra \$1150 fee paid directly to BC in addition to the federal \$1365 fees and proof of self-sufficiency.

In the past, the BC PNP IG (and the IPG, as discussed in the following section) have periodically been put on hold after becoming deluged with more applications than available spots allocated by the federal government. Similar to the CEC in EE, the BC PNP IG now also uses a points-based ranking system – in this case, at the provincial level – called the Skills Immigration Registration System (SIRS) to select applicants. This means those who meet the minimum BC PNP IG requirements are not guaranteed an invitation to apply. Through the SIRS, they are instead assigned a score based on the BC job offer skill level and wage (maximum 50 points each), language proficiency (maximum 30 points), related work experience and education level (maximum 25 points each), and regional district of employment (10 points, with more rural areas conferring higher points).

BC PNP IG applicants who *also* qualify for a federal EE program, such as the CEC (e.g. due to having one year of Canadian skilled work experience), may choose to submit their BC PNP IG application through the EE BC option, which earns them additional CRS points and often leads to faster processing times.

### BC Provincial Nominee Program International Post Graduate

The BC PNP IPG is a relatively unusual immigration program in Canada in that its central criteria is based on one piece of institutionalized cultural capital: a graduate-level degree in the natural, applied, or health sciences from a post-secondary institution in BC. No work experience is required. Although graduates of BBA (or equivalent) programs generally do not have a graduate-level degree and thus do not qualify for the BC PNP IPG, we included it in our analysis as an illustration of how different forms of institutionalized cultural capital are valued in Canada's immigration system. Like the BC PNP IG, the economic capital required includes an extra \$1150 provincial fee in addition to the federal \$1365 fees and proof of self-sufficiency.

Unlike those applying through the CEC and the BC PNP IG, BC PNP IPG applicants are not subject to the BC SIRS ranking system. However, BC PNP IPG applicants may also choose to submit their BC PNP IG application through the EE BC option.

## Findings: Alignments and Misalignments

To further examine alignments and misalignments between HE and immigration selection criteria, we mapped them across the types of capital as suggested by Bourdieu: economic, social, and the three forms of cultural (embodied, objectified, and institutionalized). Because multiple forms of capital were valued to varying degrees, we described them as primary, secondary, or limited.

	Economic	Cultural			Social
		Embodied	Objectified	Institutionalized	
<b>HE institutions admissions</b>	Primary	(Limited)	N/A	Secondary	(Limited)
<b>CEC (via EE) selection</b>	(Limited)	Primary	N/A	(Limited)	Secondary
<b>BC PNP IG selection</b>	(Limited)	Primary	N/A	N/A	Secondary
<b>BC PNP IPG selection</b>	(Limited)	Secondary	N/A	Primary	(Limited)

*Table 2: Forms of capital required for admission of international students/graduates*

As Table 2 illustrates, Canadian HE admission criteria for international students have two primary functions: first, they select students with *existing* economic capital; and two, they assess institutionalized cultural capital to *predict* international students’ ability to succeed at a HE institution. Canadian immigration admissions, on the other hand, primarily assess *potential* economic capital to subsidize the long-term tax-payer base of Canada. However, the capital required to qualify for these programs ranges from strictly institutionalized capital (in the case of the BC PNP IPG) to significant embodied cultural and social capital (in the case of the CEC) to very deep levels of embodied cultural and, likely, social capital (in the case of the BC PNP IG). The BCPNP IG and the CEC render the post-secondary experience as a time to rapidly acquire very specific embodied cultural and social capital necessary for a skill job search, while the BC

PNP IPG situates HE's role quite differently, positioning institutions as the (often unintentional) direct selection actors in the larger immigration system.<sup>95</sup>

## Discussion

Based on our findings, it appears that HE institutions pre-sort the Canadian labour market by mobilizing economic capital (i.e., limiting the admission of those who cannot afford tuition) under the guise of a justifiable meritocratic system (i.e., rewarding institutionalized cultural capital), which the Canadian government then relies on *indirectly* as part of its immigrant selection criteria (which more explicitly and primarily relies on cultural capital). In a sense, this masks a migration system where the ability to succeed in the labour market and acquire the necessary capital may be more pre-determined than one might assume.

Understanding the misalignments between HE and immigration selection criteria is significant because HE institutions increasingly mediate *edugration* as both direct and indirect initial immigrant selection actors. Since at least 2015, the Canadian government has been aware of the increasing role HE institutions play in selecting future immigrants, noting that “as international students are selected by educational institutions based on their own criteria and according to their policies, the [International Student Program] is demand-driven and the [Citizenship and Immigration Canada, now called IRCC] role is limited to processing applications of those students who have been accepted to study in Canada.”<sup>96</sup> In other words, HE's control over Canadian academic credential conferral, as well as the mode of instruction available to international students, now plays a crucial and unregulated role in determining the make-up of future Canadians.

We argue that HE admissions appear to reproduce distinction using citizenship as “a strategically produced form of capital,” which ultimately reproduces the Global North's existing economic privilege and power.<sup>97</sup> In *edugration*, academic titles do not only function *similar* to

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95. Brunner, “Higher Educational Institutions,” 22-41.

96. Citizenship and Immigration Canada, *Evaluation of the International Student Program* (Ottawa, ON: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, April 2015), 20.

97. Bauder, “Citizenship as Capital,” 315.

state citizenship;<sup>98</sup> they are a steppingstone *towards* it. However, this step comes with strings attached. Through *edugration*, future immigrants spend increasingly long periods of time in Canada as temporary residents (e.g. as international students) attempting to accumulate necessary capital, not only delaying their access to rights but subsidizing Canada economically. HE institutions' capitalization of this reproduction for economic gain is problematic; many international students come to Canada as consumers of a good, but may transition to migrant workers and stay as full citizens if and only if they can gain the sufficient capital on their own. This leaves institutions, labour markets, and states – to which international students lack full polity – to benefit from their attempts, even if failed.

Understanding the nuanced capital requirements for the various immigration options is confusing for many; since no government or institutional body is responsible for this work, it falls onto the international students themselves. Institutional staff members – such as international student advisors – sometimes attempt to translate this complex policy for students, but various challenges hinder their ability to do so, including limited funding for international student supports.<sup>99</sup> For HE institutions, the short-term implications of international student admissions, such as financial (e.g. recruitment) or otherwise strategic (e.g. internationalization) opportunities usually take precedence.<sup>100</sup> In general, it appears that most students underestimate the high levels of cultural and social capital necessary to obtain a job to qualify for CEC and the BC PNP IG, let alone acquire enough points in the EE and SIRS ranking systems. This creates a potentially exploitative situation where HE institutions – seeking students with economic capital – are able to capitalize on (and in some cases, advertise) the potential of immigration without accountability. In addition, since HE institutions are not intentionally structured to facilitate the accumulation of capital valued by immigration programs, only some of the sufficiently economic capital-rich students will realistically be able to independently acquire the cultural and social capital necessary.

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98. Bourdieu, *The State Nobility*.

99. Amira El Masri, Melisa Choubak, and Rashelle Litchmore, *The Global Competition for International Students as Future Immigrants: The Role of Ontario Universities in Translating Government Policy into Institutional Practice* (Toronto, ON: The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, 2015), 37-8.

100. Patricia Kelly, "Internationalising the Curriculum: For Profit or Planet?," in *The University in Transformation: Global Perspectives on the Futures of the University*, ed. Sohail Inayatullah and Jennifer Gidley (Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 2000), 161-72.

Despite being “central to governance and control,”<sup>101</sup> limited research exists on the long-term economic, demographic, and structural impacts of these shifting immigrant selection policies. Given the clear complex ethics surrounding internationalization,<sup>102</sup> education researchers in particular need to discuss whether educational institutions should indeed be responsible for ‘integrating’ the (hopeful) future immigrants they recruit by facilitating the accumulation of the capital necessary to make that transition.<sup>103</sup> In addition, research on skilled immigrant selection policies (as opposed to other sub-fields, e.g. settlement/integration) has traditionally been dominated by labour market management analyses within a state-centric, neoliberal perspective. Given the new realities of immigration selection policies, it is crucial for education researchers to contribute more to the growing discussion of a “radical political economy of skill” which “recognize[s] the fundamental conflicts of interest between labour and capital both within the firm and wider social formation, along with the role the state plays within these.”<sup>104</sup> We need to “see our way out of the dead-ends in current education theory and ideology by addressing two essential questions: ‘talent for what?’ and ‘education for what?’”<sup>105</sup> as well as develop “a conceptual framework that not only encompasses changes within education, work and the labour market, but also the relationship between the local, national and global.”<sup>106</sup> Unless we can clearly articulate and enact more ethical approaches to both education and immigration, those of us involved in Canadian HE research, teaching, and administration will continue to face competing and often incongruent motivations and demands related to *edugration*.

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101. Anna Boucher and Lucie Cerna, “Current Policy Trends in Skilled Immigration Policy,” *International Migration* 52, no. 3 (2014): 21.

102. Jane Knight, “The Changing Landscape of Higher Education Internationalisation – For Better or Worse?,” *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education* 17, no. 3 (2013): 84-90; Peidong Yang, “Toward a Framework for (Re)Thinking the Ethics and Politics of International Student Mobility,” *Journal of Studies in International Education* 24, no. 5 (2020): 518–34; and Sharon Stein, “Critical Internationalization Studies at an Impasse: Making Space for Complexity, Uncertainty, and Complicity in a Time of Global Challenges,” *Studies in Higher Education* 46, no. 9, (2021): 1771-84.

103. Beppe, “International Students Strategies,” 191-93.

104. Caroline Lloyd and Jonathan Payne, “Developing a Political Economy of Skill,” *Journal of Education and Work* 15, no. 4 (2002): 385.

105. Phillip Brown and Stuart Tannock, “Education, Meritocracy and the Global War for Talent,” *Journal of Education Policy* 24, no. 4 (2009): 387.

106. Phillip Brown and Hugh Lauder, “Globalisation, Knowledge and the Myth of the Magnet Economy,” *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 4, no. 1 (2006): 50.

Broadly speaking, through *edugration*, international student mobility has become a specific form of social mobility<sup>107</sup> through the accumulation of particular forms of capital. Yet as Reay describes, social mobility is “just as cruel and destructive as it is enhancing and transformative.”<sup>108</sup> Despite its “neo-liberal vocabulary of aspiration, ambition, choice, [and] self-efficacy,”<sup>109</sup> social mobility also represents the transference of mass institutional inequalities from society’s responsibility to that of the individual. In *edugration*’s case, this includes the process of ‘integration’ and settlement, which would-be immigrants are now expected to complete on their own, as students.<sup>110</sup> Since social mobility “is always about failure as much as it is about success,”<sup>111</sup> HE should consider its role in both.

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107. Alma Maldonado-Maldonado, “Academic Mobility as Social Mobility or the Point of No Return,” in *The forefront of International Higher Education: A Festschrift in Honor of Philip G. Altbach*, ed. Alma Maldonado-Maldonado and Roberta Malee Bassett (Dordrecht: Springer Science+Business Media, 2014), 127-37; and Kim and Kwak, “Introduction,” 1-22.

108. Diane Reay, “The Cruelty of Social Mobility: Individual Success at the Cost of Collective Failure,” in *Social Mobility for the 21st Century: Everyone a Winner?*, ed. Steph Lawler and Geoff Payne (London: Routledge, 2018), 147.

109. Reay, “The Cruelty of Social Mobility,” 152.

110. Catherine Dauvergne, *The New Politics of Immigration and the End of Settler Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 124-49.

111. Reay, “The Cruelty of Social Mobility,” 157.

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