The Dispossession of International Students by Canadian Higher Education as a form of Imperialist Extraction from the Global South

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Abstract:

This paper explores the growing prominence of international students, particularly those from India, in the Canadian labour landscape and the roles played by higher education and the immigration system in facilitating this trend. International students experience a considerable degree of dispossession in this process; first, higher education institutions charge exorbitant international tuition fees, which often necessitates spending funds on profit-motivated recruiters to facilitate their application process given the consequential nature of an academic offer. Second, the immigration system renders international students' status in Canada subject to stringent conditions, and whose infrastructure falls severely short in supporting them. Consequently, international students are likely to absorb the costs of these dispossession mechanisms, often by enduring sub-optimal housing, food, and mental health conditions. Ultimately, these dispossession mechanisms create the conditions for the cheapening of these international students' labour power, resulting in the creation of an underclass of workers that occupy a significant portion of the low-wage economy in Canada. This paper argues that the dispossession created by higher education and the immigration system constitute a manufacturing of differential surplus

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rates among international students in the labour market, amounting to imperialist extraction of labour from the global south.

Introduction

Of late, Canada has seen discourse around international students increasingly coming to the fore within mainstream media and political circles, specifically in relation to the question of housing. There seem to be the beginnings of a conflation between the housing unaffordability crisis and the increase in international students coming to Canada (Ellis, 2023). In their official discourse, federal government officials have alluded to a strain on collective resources or issues of capacity in order to justify tightening immigration regulations for international students. This has seen a doubling of the income requirement (excluding travel and tuition costs) that international students must meet before immigrating to prove that they have the means to support themselves (Robertson, 2023).

This relatively new and growing national attention to international students comes following a significant growth in their numbers over the past several years. According to the Canadian Bureau of International Education (CBIE), the decade between 2012 and 2022 saw a 170% increase in the number of international students coming to Canada (CBIE, 2023). Canada in particular has become one of the top targets for students in India looking to pursue higher education abroad, even leading to the proliferation of a complex migration industry in India to assist potential students with paperwork and other issues relating to immigrating to Canada (Marom, 2022). Indian international students comprise the greatest share of all international students, accounting for approximately 40% in 2022 (CBIE, 2023). The numbers, though, look quite different between international students in universities and colleges. Between 2021 and 2022, while Indian and Chinese students represented the largest groups of international students attending universities at relatively similar levels, Indian students made up the vast majority of international students attending colleges, representing numbers ten times higher than the next largest group of international college students, which are Filipinos (CBIE, 2023). One major factor incentivizing the flow of international students to Canada is the perception that the track

toward obtaining status as a permanent resident in Canada is relatively shorter and simpler when compared with other western countries (Marom, 2022). Along this path toward permanent resident status, though, international students, both during their studies and after graduating from their program, find themselves needing to take up low-wage and precarious work to support themselves, contrary to the emerging narrative that they constitute a great strain on collective resources. Relatedly, international students are overrepresented in low-wage sectors like accommodation and food services, among others (Crossman et al., 2021).

In this paper, I argue that both higher education and the immigration system in Canada act as sites of dispossession for international students, constituting an extraction of surplus value from the global south and creating a precarious underclass of student-workers in the domestic context. I will begin by laying the theoretical groundwork to conceptualize the notions of 'dispossession' and 'precarity', in order to apply those concepts to the situation of international students in Canada. I will then address a few points on methodology. Subsequently, I will outline several mechanisms by which both higher education and the immigration system in Canada serve to dispossess international students, and, thus, create the conditions of both precarious work and precarious living. Lastly, I will tie questions of dispossession faced by international students back to the broader issue of global south-north dynamics, and how this issue concerning international students in Canada constitutes an extraction of surplus value from the global south.

Conceptualizing Dispossession and Precarity

Nancy Fraser, in chapter 1 of "Cannibal Capitalism", provides a useful framework that I will draw on in conceptualizing 'dispossession'. This framework involves distinguishing, what she calls, 'expropriation' from the traditional Marxian conception of 'exploitation'. Marx's conceptualization of 'exploitation' is defined by the appropriation of surplus value, by capital, from the labour done by workers in exchange for wages that are supposed to cover their living

costs, or costs of reproduction, so that workers are physically and mentally fit to continue contributing their labour to capital day after day (Fraser, 2022). Thus, by this definition, exploitation is defined within the confines of wage labour and the sphere of production. Fraser contrasts this with 'expropriation', which she calls "the background conditions of possibility for exploitation" (Fraser, 2022, p.8). She defines 'expropriation' as the "brute confiscation of others' assets, for which they [the capitalists] pay little or nothing; by funneling commandeered labor, land, minerals, and/or energy into their firms' operations, they lower their production costs and raise their profits" (Fraser, 2022, p.15). She goes on to say: "Expropriation works by confiscating human capacities and natural resources and conscripting them into the circuits of capital expansion" (Fraser, 2022, p.34). One can conceive of expropriation as comparable to the notion of 'primitive accumulation' advanced by Marx. Though, the one distinction that Fraser makes is that expropriation, unlike primitive accumulation, is not a one-off event that serves as a pre-condition for capital accumulation to occur, but rather that it constitutes an ongoing process that facilitates capital accumulation in the sphere of production via exploitation (Fraser, 2022). If exploitation corresponds to the 'productive' sphere, it can be said that expropriation maps broadly onto the 'reproductive' sphere. While the 'reproductive' sphere traditionally refers to 'social reproduction', or "the forms of provisioning, caregiving, and interaction that produce and sustain human beings and social bonds" (Fraser, 2022, p.9), I am referring to the reproductive sphere in a broader sense that encompasses elements that are not exclusively contained within 'social reproduction', on which I will further elaborate shortly. Thus, to re-articulate the distinction between exploitation and expropriation: whereas the wages earned by workers is theoretically supposed to cover their costs of reproduction, this is often not the case, and expropriation (by capital) serves to continue to undermine this relationship between wages and the costs of reproduction.

Guy Standing in "Understanding the Precariat through Labour and Work" provides tools that help further flesh out this distinction

between the productive and reproductive spheres, and in particular, how expansive the reproductive sphere can be. Standing, drawing on Engels, distinguishes between 'work' and 'labour', where 'work' has use value and 'labour' has exchange value, that is, it is done in exchange for a wage (Standing, 2014). What Standing here refers to as 'labour', I prefer to call 'labour-power', along traditional Marxian definitions, given that labour-power is what is sold to the capitalist in exchange for wages; labour-power represents a commodity that is sought out and purchased by the capitalist. Standing makes the crucial point that not all 'work' constitutes labour-power (Standing, 2014), alluding to the division between the productive and reproductive spheres. Within the reproductive sphere itself, as alluded to previously, there exist other forms of 'work' that do not fit neatly into the box of 'social reproduction'. On this point, Standing (2014) details several other forms of 'work' that exist in the reproductive sphere, including:

> Reproductive work (including training, retraining and preparing oneself for labour or other work); waiting-for-labour — important as a form of time use . . . ; work-for-labour (unremunerated but exploited acitivity, on or off workplaces); work-for-debt; and work-for-state (which is increasingly significant in tertiary society). (p.964)

Another useful framework Standing provides is the concept of 'social income'. He notes that there are six streams that have the potential to contribute to one's livelihood:

> The first is self-production, the food, goods and services produced directly . . . including what one might grow in a garden or household plot. Second, there is the money wage or the money income received from labour. Third, there is the value of support provided by the family or local community, often by way of informal mutual insurance claims. Fourth, there are enterprise benefits that are provided to many groups of employees. Fifth, there are state benefits, including social insurance benefits, social

> assistance . . . and subsidised social services. Finally, there are private benefits derived from savings and investments. (Standing, 2011, p.11)

While the second stream, namely wages, is typically the greatest portion of a worker's social income, and thus constitutes the largest contribution to one's livelihood, this framework is useful because it highlights the several other ways one's livelihood can potentially be secured. This framework makes it clear that one is able to attain their livelihood via both the productive sphere and the reproductive sphere, though to differing extents that are politically mediated. It is only the second stream, namely wages, that is situated within the productive sphere. All other streams do not require one to enter into the market to sell their own time or labour-power in exchange for securing their livelihood, and hence these streams can be more or less situated in the broadly reproductive sphere. Standing argues, crucially, that a feature of increasing precaritization experienced by workers is the convergence toward wages, the second stream, as comprising a growing proportion of the means by which one is able to secure their livelihood (Standing, 2011). In other words, the remaining 5 streams of social income that help contribute to one's livelihood become increasingly eroded.

From this, we can synthesize an understanding of what I would call the 'dual aspect of labour'. On one hand, there is labour-power, situated firmly in the productive sphere, that represents the commodity workers sell to capital in exchange for wages. On the other hand, there is what I call 'reproductive labour' (or simply 'labour'), that constitutes the vast and wide array of work one does to support their own ability to sell their labour-power. Expropriation, as conceived by Fraser, targets the reproductive sphere and undermines one's ability to rely on this sphere to secure a livelihood, by dispossessing them of, in Standing's terms, non-wage streams of social income. Thus, dispossession can be defined as a process of this kind of expropriation.

Valeria Pulignano and Glenn Morgan (2022) provide crucial insights to be able to connect this division between the productive and reproductive spheres, or labour-power and 'reproductive labour', to an understanding of precarity. Pulignano and Morgan describe a trend toward increasingly precarious work that is characterized by " the fragmentation of tasks (by time and by function), . . . increasing unpredictability and extreme variability in working hours and pay, as well as . . . little in the way of benefits such as sick pay, pension rights and so on" (Pulignano & Morgan, 2022, p.115). Pulignano and Morgan argue that this precaritization of work carves out a greater role for families to play in supporting its members that are employed in precarious jobs, especially in situations created by the instability of flexible hours or uncertain pay (Pulignano & Morgan, 2022). This fits squarely within Standing's analysis that precaritization results in a vacuum in the 'reproductive sphere' that needs to be filled by other means. Pulignano and Morgan are asserting that this vacuum is subsequently filled through increased uncompensated reproductive labour from the part of families. Another crucial intervention made by Pulignano and Morgan is encapsulated by the following sentence: "It is precisely where the value of labour power is lowest that the input of domestic labour is often minimal" (Molyneux, 1979, as cited in Pulignano & Morgan, 2022, p.120). This points out that the lack of supports in the reproductive sphere, which is a feature of precarity, actually has an additional 'cheapening' impact on the rate at which one is able to sell their labour-power. This is because, given a greater level of communal support, or non-wage streams of social income, one is not compelled to accept comparatively lower wages. In summation then, precarity can be defined as the increased burden created in the sphere of 'reproductive labour' to be able to support the ability to sell one's labour-power. Further, precarity emerges as a social condition caused by dispossession.

Methodological Notes

The theoretical grounding outlined in the previous section serves as a terrain upon which one can start to understand and analyze the

dispossession of international students. It must be noted that distinctions between productive and reproductive spheres, as well as other concepts such as 'work-for-labour', 'work-for-state', social income and more cannot be understood to be absolute or universally applicable. Rather, they are approximations that serve as useful tools that bring into view the mechanisms of dispossession as they will be outlined in the following section. The scope of this paper includes combining a theoretical approach – drawing on social reproduction theory – and a qualitative empirical approach that conducts an analysis of international students' interactions with higher education and immigration processes. Together, this provides an understanding of how international students become dispossessed, rendering their labour-power cheaper than domestic Canadian labour. In addition to analyzing the various mechanisms of dispossession that occur within Canada, there is also a need to analyze the mechanisms of dispossession that occur in the global south that encourage migration to Canada. This is outside the scope of this paper, though it would be an important component of future research in this area, along with several others that I outline further in the concluding section.

Higher Education and Immigration as Sites of Dispossession

Having established the theoretical underpinnings for an understanding of dispossession, in this section I will outline some specific mechanisms by which higher education and the immigration system in Canada facilitate dispossession for international students. Though I discuss the mechanisms of dispossession corresponding to higher education and immigration separately, it is worth noting that there is not always a clear-cut distinction between these two institutions. Given that international students find themselves distinguished by higher education institutions from local Canadian students, their status as a student at a higher education institution is inextricably linked to their status as a 'temporary resident' or immigrant. Once I establish these mechanisms of dispossession, I will outline how these forms of dispossession create the conditions for precarious work and precarious living.

Dispossession within Higher Education

The first and most prominent means by which international students are dispossessed upon arrival to Canada is through the exorbitant tuition fees they pay, which are far higher than those of Canadian students. This is due to the growing trend of higher education institutions (universities and colleges alike) regarding international students as 'cash cows' (Marom, 2022) in light of dwindling provincial funding (McCartney & Metcalfe, 2018). In fact, according to Higher Education Strategy Associates, international students from India alone, excluding international students from other countries, contributed $2 billion to Ontario's post-secondary institutions' operating income in 2023, compared to the $1.8 billion contributed from the province of Ontario itself (Bhugra, 2024). Another factor contributing to exorbitant international student tuition fees is the fact that, even though provinces have been diverting funds away from post-secondary education over the past two decades or more, they have still taken it upon themselves to regulate domestic tuition rates, only allowing for certain thresholds of increases over a period of time. This is not the case with international student tuition, which is left entirely unregulated, in effect, leading to the targeting of international student tuition as

the single most flexible variable for post-secondary institutions to recover dwindling funds. According to Statistics Canada, the average undergraduate tuition fees for international students in the year 2006-2007 was $13,378 while that of the year 2023-2024 was $38,081 (Statistics Canada, 2023), representing an approximately 185% increase. The same figure for domestic student tuition over the same timeframe (between 2006 and 2024) was just 61% (Statistics Canada, 2023). In the year 2023-2024, international students pay more than 5 times the amount paid by domestic students in tuition fees (Statistics Canada, 2023). It can be said that the exorbitant tuition rates international students are required to pay reasonably amount to a 'brute confiscation' of their assets, a core feature of Fraser's conception of expropriation.

Another prominent mechanism of dispossession is the use of recruitment agents in origin countries by universities and colleges in Canada. The contracting of recruitment agents is especially prevalent among 'lower-tiered' institutions as they do not have the same level of name recognition as 'bigger players', but they still see international students, like other colleges and universities, as 'cash cows' in light of diminishing public funding and as worth the marketing investment (Marom, 2022). From the perspective of prospective students, recruitment agents are sought after to be able to help simplify a very bureaucratic but consequential process. They are sought after especially among those from less affluent backgrounds, many of whom may be the first in their families to pursue post-secondary education, as is the case with many Punjabi students coming to Canada, who form a large subset of Indian international students (Marom, 2022). However, the reality of several cases involving recruitment agents is one where prospective students and their families invest a lot of money in the process, hoping to guarantee the quality of one's application, only to find that they may have been defrauded by these agents in one way or another. Several report being misinformed or misguided by agents, especially as it relates to course registration, where students will arrive on campus to find that there was discord between the courses they were registered in compared to their actual degree requirements (Marom, 2022). This may be a result of the incentive structures for recruitment agents being oriented around simply assuring the prospective student a seat at the institution or within a program, with little regard for important details, in order to get paid. The result of this is that these students, upon arriving at their institution, must restructure and correct their course load, often resulting in additional fees to take extra courses, or having lost money for courses that were irrelevant to their program (Marom, 2022).

Dispossession in the Immigration System

As noted by Stephen Castles (2004, as cited in Brunner, 2023b), modern migration is "about regulating North-South relationships and

maintaining inequality" (p.1088). This is especially the case for labour migration. While the neoliberal era has seen the liberalization of capital flows across international boundaries, it has seen the opposite trend for flows of labour in order to maintain existing disparities in labour costs globally. Lewis et al. (2015) have asserted that "many Western neoliberal states are increasingly creating a broad 'security continuum' . . . that stretches from terrorism to action against crime and includes migratory flows" (p.590). They continue: "This climate of migration securitization has spawned an active managerialist approach to migration by states" (p.590). This accords well with Brunner's (2023a) assertion that "international border policing has moved beyond the state's physical edge to include . . . internal border policing, a gatekeeping process within the state" (p.238). Thus, as immigrants, international students are subjected to intense bordering practices that are often ongoing processes throughout the duration of their temporary status in the country, which emerges from migration securitization. They must ensure that they are in constant compliance with

Canadian immigration policies, even though they are very often confusing and burdensome for many. Among several others, the following are three major difficulties faced by immigrants, including international students, outlined by Schmidt et al. (2023): "(1) the difficulty in connecting with IRCC [Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada] employees who can answer specific questions about their file; (2) the reliance on web-based applications; and (3) frequent changes to requirements and policies" (p.4893).

The difficulty in accessing IRCC agents is a product of the design of the immigration system to minimize in-person contact, largely due to the department attempting to reorient in light of cuts in operating funds (Schmidt et al., 2023). This has resulted in the second point where much of the handling of international students' sensitive and complex individual files is done over the web. One major issue with this is, as alluded to, that the complexities of each student's file gets 'flattened' (Schmidt et al., 2023, p.4895), giving rise to new

complexities and headaches. For example, many of the required forms that need to be filled out may only permit short answers or selection from a drop-down menu, where the nuances of each individuals' background is not taken into account (Schmidt et al., 2023). Attempts to circumvent these issues through a phone call with the department often yields few results, given that agents over the phone are not privy to more information about one's file than is accessible to the international student themself, often resulting in IRCC agents redirecting international students to online webpages to deal with the issue (Schmidt et al., 2023). In addition to the third point – that consequential inconveniences may often be caused by last-minute changes in policy – international students must also assume all the added financial costs associated with each step of the immigration process (Schmidt et al., 2023).

Immigration, on one hand, has stringent requirements, any deviation from which can result in one's removal from the country, but at the same time has a very slim and flimsy infrastructure that falls incredibly short of the support needed by international students. This contradiction highlights the role of bordering in creating an intense domain of reproductive labour in which one must continuously be engaged to maintain their status in the country and the prospect of building their future. This domain of reproductive labour, in Standing's terms, would constitute 'work-for-state', since this is uncompensated extra work that international students must engage in to comply with the terms of the Canadian government regarding their legal status. This additional reproductive labour must be taken on by the individual in the form of a cost, or for which the individual has to haphazardly attempt to convene with others – often virtually – to share this labour, as is the case with online immigration forums (Schmidt et al., 2023). The contingency of international students' presence in Canada, exacerbated by the severely lacking support infrastructure for immigrants, creates a situation where one's immigration status constitutes a debt that is owed to the country, whose burden is placed squarely on the individual international student, no matter how challenging their own situation is.

Dispossession, Precarious Work, and Precarious Living

I will now delve further into the question of how the aforementioned dispossession mechanisms create precarious work and precarious living for international students in Canada. I talk specifically about precarious work and precarious living together because, using the theoretical framework outlined earlier, precarity manifests out of the interaction between the 'productive' and 'reproductive' spheres. Precarity cannot simply be located within employment without considering its impact on the several forms of uncompensated reproductive labour that needs to be done to support one's ability to sell their labour-power in employment, and vice versa.

Using Standing's terms, one can reasonably conceive of the pursuit of higher education as a form of 'work-for-labour', which is to say that the work one engages in, in pursuing higher education, has the end goal of, in theory, elevating the price at which one sells their labour-power. In other words, pursuing higher education bestows a level of competitiveness in the labour market for those that are able to demonstrate their educational credentials. However, this is considered 'work', in Standing's terms, because the years-long process of obtaining a degree is often uncompensated. In fact, it extracts a cost, most evidently in tuition, one that is particularly high for international students in Canada. This cost is further added to with recruitment agent fees and travel fees among several others. This extremely high cost has, in many cases, resulted in families selling their property or taking out substantial loans to facilitate this 'education-migration' (Marom, 2022) to Canada. Tuition fees have an extended impact on a students' trajectory within Canada beyond simply being a fixed fee one must pay. Given the exorbitant rates, many students that pursue 'education-migration' look toward pursuing shorter degrees (often 2-year programs) with a less specialized focus to ensure that the rate of passing is higher, given that the tuition charged per course is extremely high and failing would mean needing to pay extra to take the course again (Marom, 2022).

Given the extent of resources mobilized by families of international students, the economic support received by them on an ongoing basis in Canada is minimal, hence international students must support themselves, and some even must contribute to the loans their families have taken out for them (Marom, 2022). In fact, according to Statistics Canada, the share of international students reporting positive T4 earnings increased from around 20% in the early 2000s to about 50% in 2018 (Crossman et al., 2021), mirroring the substantial increase in international student tuition fees during the same period. Given their contingent immigration status in Canada, the likelihood of their educational credentials to be less specialized, the lack of institutional support from both the higher education and immigration systems, and a wide range of other means of dispossession, international students are likely to funnel into low-skill, low-wage jobs (Marom, 2022) in order to attempt to start earning money to support their livelihood as quickly as possible. This, coupled with the restriction on international students working beyond 20 hours per week (Motla, 2023), opens the door for many to accept ‘cash work’ or work that is ‘under the table’, rendering them further susceptible to being overexploited by employers. Several instances have been reported where international students that are newcomers, who often happen to be women, are paid $6.50 or $7 per hour and/or are left vulnerable to sexual harassment or extortion in ‘under-the-table’ jobs (Motla, 2023).

As previously mentioned, international students receive very little support from higher education, even though they are generating large amounts of revenue and benefiting greatly from international student tuition fees. In fact, a significant portion of the revenue from international student tuition fees is, indeed, allocated toward marketing programs to drive further recruitment (Marom, 2022), at the same time that there is little focus on creating capacity for mental health services

(Buckner et al., 2023), or supports in housing or food accessibility (Bhugra, 2024). Considering Standing’s model of social income, the

higher education and immigration systems contribute in no meaningful way to any of the streams of social income. International students are not entitled to state benefits due to their designation as a temporary resident, nor are they entitled to 'enterprise' benefits (institutional benefits, in this case, from their college/university). Self-production in most western capitalist countries is rendered infeasible, especially if one is a newcomer. International students' wages as a stream of social income is quite greatly undermined given the exorbitant tuition costs, application costs, immigration costs, and travel costs incurred by them. And finally, community or family benefits are practically non-existent for many, given that they have immigrated alone to Canada. Pulignano and Morgan highlighted that situations of precarity create an increased role for reproductive labour to play in supporting one's livelihood (Pulignano & Morgan, 2022). They highlight, specifically, that it is the family that ends up taking on this role of assisting in reproductive labour. However, in the case of international students, though their pursuit of higher education creates situations of dispossession and precarity, most do not have family or some form of communal networks to take up this reproductive labour for them; this 'lost support', then, gets translated as 'costs absorbed' by individual international students, rendering their quality of life poorer and reinforcing their situation of precarity. This might manifest in a situation where, in an attempt to lower individual housing costs, several people cram into one house, in some cases having 15 or more people live under one roof (Bhugra, 2024). Another manifestation of this is the increased usage of food banks by international students, as they attempt to seek affordable access to food. According to Toronto-based Daily Bread Food Bank, usage among those on student, work, or visitor visas increased from 10% in 2022 to 24% in 2023 (National Post, 2023). Several international students have additionally had to resort to charities to support them, with Khalsa Aid having delivered over 5000 grocery bags of non-perishables to international students since June 2023 (Bhugra, 2024). This situation of incurring the costs of reproductive labour have afflicted some international students to such a great

extent that many have taken their own lives (The Canadian Press, March 15, 2024).

The International Student Economy as Constituting Extraction from the Global South

In this section, I intend to demonstrate that the patterns of dispossession and precarity experienced by international students in Canada correspond to patterns of extraction and unequal exchange between the global south and north.

Transforming the old-style colonialism of the past, contemporary western capitalism has managed to maintain and entrench the same economic disparities between the global north and south. This imperialist dynamic between the north and the south is defined by the "appropriation and transfer of surplus value" (Wise & Martin, 2015, p.1) from the global south to the north. The central mechanism by which this appropriation occurs, Wise and Martin (2015) argue, is through 'global labour arbitrage' (p.8), which is defined as the "advantage gained by seeking lower wages abroad"

(p.8), facilitating the accumulation of 'monopolistic profits' or 'imperial rents' (p.8), by capital. This 'advantage' is sought through the dispossession of one's access to subsistence and means of production, turning their labour-power into a commodity (Wise & Martin, 2015, p.2). I argue that this dynamic of extracting 'imperial rents' is replicated in the dispossession experienced by international students as they immigrate to Canada for higher education, facilitating a flow of cheap labour into lower rungs of the Canadian economy.

Firstly, given my claim that the extraction that the Canadian economy benefits from is one that is economic, it is important to identify the symbiotic relationship between higher education and the immigration system in Canada. While higher education institutions often affirm holistic and meritocratic values as what drives their student recruitment and enrollment, immigration, on the other hand, serves

largely as an 'economic-driven nation-building' system (Brunner, 2023b, p.1089). Increasingly, however, given the intersecting positionality of international students in Canada being participants in higher education as well as immigrants, both institutions have begun to acknowledge the increasingly close relationship between them. For example, for the 2021 federal budget, during the pre-budget submissions to the House of Commons of Canada Standing Committee on Finance, higher education institutions "instrumentalized international students to position themselves as valuable actors in Canada's immigration regime to justify their requests for public financial support" (Brunner, 2023b,

p.1086), which is noteworthy, given that higher education falls under provincial jurisdiction, and hence does not primarily receive funds from the federal government, while immigration is squarely in federal jurisdiction. Another example of this symbiotic relationship is IRCC's temporary policy adjustment to allow certain international students to be able to work up to 40 hours per week off-campus, up from the regular 20-hour per week restriction, in response to labour shortages across several sectors in the economy (Sivakumar, 2023). In addition to higher education's understanding that it is an important constituent part of the immigration system, this demonstrates IRCC's understanding, crucially, of precarious international students as forming the backbone of Canadian labour, given that this labour sourced from the global south can be instrumentalized to meet the shifting needs of the domestic economy and keep the cost of labour down domestically.

Higher education institutions, though not representing capital directly, can be said to still extract imperial rents from prospective international students and their families in the global south through the exorbitant tuition fees they charge, as well as through their marketing mechanisms. One important aspect of this extraction of imperial rents is locating the origin of this extraction, which is the vacuum created by neoliberal cuts to public funding of the higher education sector. In order to recover revenues, the desire in the

global south for pursuing higher education in the global north is capitalized on by these higher education institutions to charge premium tuition fees. This amounts to a net subsidy of Canadian domestic tuition by international students, largely from the global south. This is best demonstrated by the fact that, as mentioned earlier, Indian international students alone contributed more to Ontario post-secondary institutions' operating income than did the Ontario government in 2023. Furthermore, in order to rigorously ensure that no potential revenue is lost due to the lack of name recognition by several universities and colleges, these institutions invest greatly in marketing their institution via recruitment agents with the hopes of generating a handsome return on their investment in the form of even higher revenues sourced from the greater number of international students that are recruited. In the process of these institutions' marketing schemes, prospective international students are further dispossessed as the recruitment agents they rely on improperly handle their files by cutting corners, creating extra financial costs and extra work for international students as they attempt to fix these issues. Institutions may be incentivized, even, to disregard the ways in which their own recruitment agents take advantage of prospective students given that confronting them may result in them directing prospective students elsewhere (Marom, 2022). Furthermore, as previously mentioned, even though these higher education institutions are generating great amounts of revenue from international students, they do not provide supports in terms of housing, food, or mental health assistance (nor are they compelled to by the government), which constitute some of the primary issues international students are faced with. One outcome of this is the eyeing of purpose-built student housing by large investors looking to profit off of the vacuum created by colleges and universities' incapacity to build student housing, resulting in many international students being further priced out (Newaz, 2023). The result of these complex interactions is a network of institutions and individuals in the global north, namely higher education, landlords, financial investors, and large employers being able to "amass profit and benefit from the disproportionate exploitation of groups like

international students" (Newaz, 2023, para. 10), who are from the global south, necessitating (and facilitated by) their funneling into low-wage work.

Hence, applying the framework of 'global labour arbitrage' to the international student economy in Canada: unlike the traditional conception of 'global labour arbitrage', comparative advantage for global north institutions is not gained by the simple 'wage differentials' or 'surplus rate differentials' (Wise & Marin, 2015, p.11) existing between politico-geographic boundaries. Instead, given the shared geographical plane upon which the global north institutions (higher education, Canadian immigration system, large employers, landlords, financial investors) and global south subjects (international students) exist, 'surplus rate differentials' are manufactured or developed via the various mechanisms of dispossession I have outlined throughout this paper. This is in close accord with Molyneux's (1979, as cited in Pulignano & Morgan, 2022) assertion that "it is precisely where the value of labour power is lowest that the input of domestic labour is often minimal" (p.120), though I would expand Molyneux's 'domestic labour' to reproductive labour more broadly. In effect, these mechanisms of dispossession cheapen the labour-power of international students, funneling them into low-wage work, and facilitating the expropriation of surplus value from them.

Conclusion

The core of this discussion on international students returns to Marx's conception of primitive accumulation. Unlike primitive accumulation though, the dispossession faced by international students, Fraser would argue, is not a one-off event but rather an ongoing and continuous process of expropriation, originating in countries of origin in the global south and enforced and upheld upon migration to Canada. As noted in an earlier section, given that migration is about regulating south-north relationships and maintaining inequality, this inequality is manufactured through the various forms of dispossession developed by higher education

institutions and the immigration system, often working in a symbiotic relationship.

The dispossession created by higher education institutions' exorbitantly high tuition fees and its marketing schemes undermines international students' 'social income' in the productive sphere, compelling them to rely on low-wage work to make up for this. The immigration regime works to ensure that newcomers are subjected to an ongoing bordering process that enforces differential social and economic rights. This bordering process constitutes a field of unpaid labour ('work-for-state') in which international students must rigorously stay on top of to secure the bare minimum of their livelihood, namely their right to stay in Canada. This creates a segmentation in the labour market between immigrant labour and local Canadian labour in order to sustain the overall depression of labour costs in the country.

The dispossession mechanisms described above simultaneously create a large sphere of reproductive labour that must be taken on by international students, often with no communal networks to share in that labour. This results in international students absorbing the costs associated with this labour, namely enduring sub-optimal conditions in terms of housing, food, and mental health, among others. While I drew largely from secondary sources to demonstrate these sub-optimal living conditions, further investigation using primary methods (including ethnography) would build on this research.

These additional burdens in the reproductive sphere caused by dispossession ultimately serve to cheapen the labour-power of international students compared to their local Canadian counterparts, effectively amounting to an absorption of surplus value in the global north from the global south. While using quantitative methods to demonstrate flows of south-north surplus value was outside the scope of this paper, this is certainly a worthwhile pursuit for future research in this area. Overall, these processes of dispossession by higher education and immigration contribute to the imperialist

extraction of surplus value from the global south, realized through the manufacturing of ‘differential surplus rates’ for international students.

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