Article

Intersectional Realities: Addressing the Gaps in Equity Infrastructure to Include Racialized International Students at a Canadian University

Shamiga Shamy Arumuhathas
Ontario Tech University, Canada

ABSTRACT: *This study investigates the disjuncture between Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization (EDID) discourse and the lived experiences of racialized international students (ISs) within a Canadian postsecondary institution. Drawing on a heuristic qualitative case study situated at Southwestern Ontario University (hereafter "Ontario University"), the study explores how racialized IS interprets and navigates inclusion, exclusion, and institutional responsiveness. Framed through critical race theory (CRT) and intersectionality, this paper offers a rigorous, counternarrative-driven inquiry into how Euro-Western institutional norms and EDID frameworks frequently erase or marginalize cultural, religious, and geopolitical complexities. Rather than treating these experiences as isolated or anecdotal, this study positions the voices of the IS as generative sites for rethinking the global EDID infrastructure. In doing so, it pushes for a transnational reimagining of inclusion that centers epistemic justice, continuous feedback loops, and institution-wide accountability. On the basis of semistructured interviews with eight (8) racialized ISs, this study reveals how institutional EDID frameworks often reproduce exclusion by privileging Eurocentric norms while neglecting the geopolitical, racial, and cultural complexities that shape transnational belonging.*

INTRODUCTION

International student (IS) enrollment in Canada has soared to record levels, surpassing one million in 2023 (Statistics Canada, 2023). However, 2024 brought significant policy changes: the Canadian government capped new study permits at approximately 280,000, reflecting a 45% decline compared with the 515,880 permits issued in 2023 (CBIE, 2024). Universities proudly portray themselves as inclusive global campuses, celebrating diverse student bodies as a hallmark of institutional strength (Buckner et al., 2023; Buckner et al., 2021). Internationalization has become a core strategy in Canadian higher education institutions (HEIs), tied not only to ideals of global citizenship and intercultural learning but also to market-driven imperatives (Trilokekar et al., 2020). Institutions have aggressively expanded IS recruitment "in the name of creating global citizens and generating additional revenue" (Buckner et al., 2023). This duality reflects broader neoliberal policy trends, wherein financial logics (Stein & Andreotti, 2016) intertwine with diverse goals. This dynamic is noted by students and scholars, who observe that universities often prioritize revenue from internationalization over investments in systemic support for students from diverse backgrounds. At the same time, Canadian HEIs' commitments to equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization (EDID) and global frameworks (Tamtik & Guenter, 2019), such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4, which advocates for inclusive and equitable quality education, underscore a moral imperative: internationalization must advance equity and not merely serve institutional self-interest (Ordonez-Ponce et al., 2024).

Tensions exist in its celebratory narrative. While racialized ISs are praised for adding multicultural value, their diversity is often viewed narrowly (Kim et al., 2023). Most Canadian ISs come from China and India, and recent increases in Asian student enrollment have sparked anti-international sentiment and racist backlash in media and society (Arumuhathas et al., 2024; Buckner et al., 2023; Firang & Mensah, 2021; Rezai-Rashti, 2024). This reveals a disconnect between universities' claim to promote diversity and condemn discrimination. However, their EDID strategies often overlook ISs, who are students of color and should be central to anti-racism efforts. Support structures are siloed: EDI offices address domestic racism, whereas IS services handle logistics, with little coordination (Arumuhathas, 2024). This separation causes many racialized IS inequities to fall through institutional cracks.

Research consistently demonstrates that racialized IS faces unique and systemic challenges. Despite the considerable heterogeneity among these students on campuses, universities tend to treat them as a homogenous group, often viewing IS through a deficit-oriented, monolithic lens. This essentialism reinforces

stereotypes: ISs commonly report being subject to racialized microaggressions and discrimination in their academic and social lives (Glass & Westmont, 2014; Guo & Guo, 2017). They are regularly positioned as cultural "outsiders." Studies have noted, for example, that white ISs often pass as "locals," whereas their Asian, African, or Middle Eastern counterparts are habitually othered and regarded as perpetual outsiders (Calder et al., 2016; Chen, 2006; Kim et al., 2023). In Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs), racialized IS becomes highly visible 'Others', marked by accents, appearance, or religion as different and inferior (Yao et al., 2019). These patterns reflect what Lee (2007) terms "neo-racism"—prejudice against those deemed culturally or nationally different rather than explicit bias against skin color, which allows discrimination to be recast in seemingly race-neutral terms (Arumuhathas, 2022, 2023, 2024; Rezai-Rashti et al., 2024). In effect, cultural origin becomes a proxy for race, enabling new forms of exclusion even as overt or covert racism is publicly disavowed.

This study employs critical race theory (CRT), as outlined by Ladson-Billings (1998, 2013) and Patton (2016), with a specific focus on intersectionality, a tenet introduced by Crenshaw (1991). The CRT offers a robust framework for analyzing how systemic racism and power disparities influence the experiences of marginalized groups, particularly racialized IS within HEIs. Unlike assimilationist perspectives that suggest that IS should adapt or 'cope' with challenges, CRT demands a critical examination of the underlying structures of oppression that perpetuate these difficulties (Patton, 2016). It situates race and racism as central, enduring elements of the institutional landscape, rather than anomalies, emphasizing that discrimination is embedded in the everyday functioning of HEIs. This perspective is especially relevant to international higher education (IHE), where intersections of oppression, racism, nativism, socioeconomic status, caste, and other axes of identities interrelate and reinforce each other in shaping IS experiences (Lee, 2007; Guo & Guo, 2017).

An intersectional CRT approach enables a nuanced understanding of how race, nationality, religion, ethnicity, gender, class, and global markers of discrimination intersect to influence individual lived experiences (Yao et al., 2019). The intersectional framework also engages with epistemic justice by questioning whose knowledge is legitimized or marginalized in EDID discourse, pushing universities to include diverse students not only but also to value their ways of knowing. Situating this analysis within transnational CRT conversations enables critical engagement with how Canadian higher education participates in global hierarchies of knowledge and belonging. For example, an African Muslim female student may encounter different challenges than an East Asian Christian male student on campus. Central to this analysis is underlining the agency and resilience of racialized IS while critically exploring how institutional policies and practices either perpetuate marginalization or foster empowerment. This approach situates the inquiry at the intersection of internationalization and EDID, revealing how neoliberal university agendas and colonial legacies may clash with commitments to equity and inclusion.

This heuristic case study explores the experiences of racialized IS at Southwestern Ontario University, not as an isolated institutional depiction but as

a lens into systemic exclusions embedded within global higher education. Rather than treating EDID frameworks as neutral or universally inclusive, this study interrogates how Euro-Western discourses, shaped by settler multiculturalism, reproduce exclusion when exported uncritically across transnational lines. By foregrounding intersectional identities and lived realities, the research illuminates how racialized ISs are often rendered invisible within institutional diversity agendas, advancing a call for globally reflexive and contextually responsive EDID infrastructures rooted in counternarratives and epistemic justice. At its core, this study interrogates the intersection of race and internationalization within equity discourse, specifically how racialized ISs are governed through institutional EDID frameworks that reproduce Euro-Western hierarchies under the guise of inclusion. While multiple nodes of marginalization exist, such as religion, class, gender, and geopolitics, which shape student experiences, this analysis illuminates how racialized ISs are discursively and materially positioned within a globalized yet racialized university system.

The following research questions guide the study: How do Ontario universities' EDID discursive policies and strategic initiatives related to internationalization and EDID respond (or fail to respond) to the needs of racialized IS, and what changes in institutional practice could better align IS support with principles of equity, inclusion, and global sustainability?

- How do racialized ISs experience and interpret moments of inclusion and/or exclusion within the institutional spaces of an Ontario University?
- In what ways do racialized IS perceive and navigate the limitations of a predominantly Euro-Western understanding of EDID, and how do these limitations condition their sense of belonging and identity at the university?

By addressing these questions, this study reveals how racialized ISs navigate the structural exclusions embedded within Ontario's higher education landscape, the province that hosts the largest number of ISs (CBIE, 2024). However, the invocation of "equity" in institutional policy often remains performative, abstracted from the lived realities of global learners. What constitutes genuine equity must be rethought, not as equal access within an already stratified system but as the dismantling of Euro-Western hierarchies that render specific cultural, linguistic, and epistemic identities invisible or deviant. Universities must confront how current EDID frameworks often reproduce what they claim to resolve and instead commit to transnational, relational, and justice-centered approaches that honor intersectional differences, not assimilating them (Hou et al., 2024; Kim et al., 2023). This study decisively addresses a significant gap by scrutinizing how racialized IS in Canadian HEIs interprets and navigates the discourses of EDID. This inquiry is essential to advancing theoretical frameworks and policy development on

LITERATURE REVIEW

Canadian International Higher Education

Canada's IHE emerged in the 1960s and 1970s as a federal public policy aimed at addressing globalization and demographic shifts (Trilokekar et al., 2020). Guided by van der Wende's (2001) framing, IHE evolved into a state-led endeavour prioritizing economic growth, skilled migration, and global prestige. However, neoliberal policies position ISs as economic commodities, legitimizing differential fee structures and institutional autonomy (Cameron, 2006). Despite its stated commitments, IHE often overlooks the discrimination, racism, and isolation that racialized IS experiences, reducing their inclusion in superficial diversity narratives (Appia, 2021).

Ontario's Evolution and Trends in International Higher Education

Although Canada has a federal international education (IE) strategy, the province of Ontario lacks a coherent IE framework (Trilokekar et al., 2020). As of 2024, the province has introduced an IE approach for K–12, yet its postsecondary policies remain fragmented and inconsistent. This fragmented approach reflects the shifting political priorities and economic imperatives that govern IHE in Ontario. The interplay of institutional autonomy, provincial budget constraints, and federal policies has fostered a system where institutional practices vary significantly, impacting IS access, inclusion, and belonging (Healey et al., 2008). Without greater policy alignment and consistency across the province, efforts to foster equity and holistic outcomes risk being subsumed by market-driven interests (Trilokekar et al., 2020). This provincial variation further illustrates how racialized ISs face uneven landscapes of support, underscoring the importance of critically examining institutional responses beyond isolated case studies.

EDID and Anti-Racism in Canadian Higher Education

Canadian research-intensive universities have increasingly embraced EDID and antiracism as institutional priorities (Chen, 2006; Tamtik & Guenter, 2019). However, despite widespread discursive commitments, these concepts often remain contested and ambiguous. Policy analysis reveals that 'equity,' 'diversity,' 'inclusion,' 'decolonization,' and 'antiracism' carry distinct institutional meanings and inconsistently guide practice (Tamtik & Guenter, 2019). This has profound implications for equity-deserving IS, as institutional narratives rarely address the intersectional complexities of race, nationality, ethnicity, and religion.

Equity within Canadian HEIs is variably defined as a tool for addressing systemic privilege, a means of promoting just access, or a process for identifying and dismantling structural barriers (Buckner et al., 2023; Tamtik & Guenter, 2019). Diversity also operates across multiple dimensions (Ahmed, 2012). Structural diversity focuses narrowly on increasing racial and ethnic representation, whereas interactional diversity captures the quality of cross-racial student interactions (Chen, 2006). Curricular diversity expands institutional focus to foster engagement with diverse knowledge and ways of knowing (Gurin et al., 2002). However, critics assert that universities often reduce diversity to superficial metrics or statistical exercises, producing 'cosmetic diversity' that

legitimizes institutional aims while obscuring deeper inequities (Ahmed, 2012; Buckner et al., 2021).

Inclusion within the institutional context is framed as fostering a sense of belonging and addressing systemic barriers that impede access and participation (Campbell, 2021). However, inclusion policies can also be used to mask discrimination when institutional practice fails to dismantle racism and discrimination meaningfully (Guo & Guo, 2017; Yuan et al., 2025). Similarly, while decolonization aims to unsettle the legacy of settler-colonialism within universities (Battiste, 2013), it often operates in tension with internationalization and revenue-generating global agendas.

Antiracism, positioned as a corrective lens, strives to expose and eradicate systemic racism across institutional structures, policies, and practices (Sue & Spanierman, 2020). However, when institutionalized, antiracism can also be reduced to symbolic or superficial performance (Ahmed, 2012), with racialized IS rendered objects of abstract diversity narratives. This gap between rhetoric and reality underscores the need for theoretical tools, such as CRT and intersectionality, to interrogate how EDID is operationalized in relation to globalized student populations. In this way, institutional approaches to EDID and antiracism often obscure as much as they reveal, underscoring the urgent need for more critically engaged policies that foster meaningful belonging, equity, and justice for racialized IS within Canadian HIEs.

Racialized IS in Canada: Navigating discrimination, identity, and belonging

Canadian universities benefit from hosting ISs of color, leveraging their presence to fulfill diverse narratives and economic objectives. However, the literature reveals how racialized ISs experience discrimination, microaggressions, and exclusion, challenging institutional equity claims (Popadiuk & Arthur, 2004; Yuan et al., 2025). Studies reveal microaggressions in classrooms, dormitories, and social spaces, where ISs encounter racial stereotyping and verbal slights (Calder et al., 2016; Houshmand et al., 2014). Chinese IS, for example, describes microassaults that undermine belonging and complicate their sense of security and acceptance (Houshmand et al., 2014). Similar dynamics affect IS from South Asia and East Asia, many of whom feel alienated due to language barriers and assumptions about their academic or economic status (Arumuhathas, 2024).

These exclusions intensify in times of crisis, such as the pandemic, where ISs of color were subjected to racist incidents and xenophobic narratives that compounded feelings of isolation and vulnerability (Rezai-Rashti, 2024). The prevalence of discrimination, compounded by financial burdens and linguistic stereotyping, creates environments where the IS must navigate precarious conditions with limited institutional support (Calder et al., 2016). Additionally, ISs are often confronted with systemic barriers rooted in racism, language discrimination, and institutional practices that impede belonging and academic success (Guo & Guo, 2017). Notably, earlier applications of CRT in IS scholarship (e.g., Museus & Truong, 2009; Yao et al., 2019) laid the necessary groundwork in recognizing institutional racism in internationalization. However, few studies critically account for how race intersects with caste, religion, language, or geopolitical status. This study builds on and extends CRT by

engaging intersectionality as an analytic and methodological imperative, illuminating new dimensions of racialized IS experience that remain undertheorized in dominant frameworks.

METHOD

Research Design: Heuristic Case Study

This study adopts a heuristic case study approach to investigate racialized ISs' lived experiences amid EDID policies at an Ontario university. A case study allows an in-depth exploration of a bounded social phenomenon by focusing on a specific site and drawing from participants' narratives (Creswell & Porth, 2018; Yin, 2018). The heuristic nature of this inquiry (Stake, 1994) centers the researcher's interpretive role and reflective engagement with participants, acknowledging the relational nature of meaning-making. This method reveals the institutional dynamics and historical conditions that shape racialized perceptions of IS. By employing this approach, the study sought to foreground counterstories as critical narratives (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001), coconstructing space for racialized IS to articulate their lived realities within the "critical impetus" of institutional diversity policies (Ahmed, 2012). In doing so, this heuristic case study analyzes discursive policies and interviews with the IS to illuminate the (mis)alignment between stated EDID commitments and actual institutional practices.

Positionality and Reflexivity

As a racialized first-generation Canadian scholar and former (outbound) IS, I occupy a liminal space, both shaped by and resisting the dominant logics of Canadian settler colonial academia. Following Fine's (2002) call to "work the hyphens," I approached the research as a border-dweller, attuned to the interpretive dangers of overidentification and the extractive impulses embedded in institutional research. This insider-outsider positionality is not merely a methodological asset but a contested terrain of power, recognition, and epistemic negotiation. While my proximity to participants fostered relational trust, I remained critical of how my interpretations could reinscribe dominant narratives under the guise of advocacy. Reflexivity was not a virtue signal but a methodological imperative. Through sustained journaling during and postqualitative ethics, I documented discomfort, ethical tensions, and interpretive dilemmas, recognizing that qualitative inquiry is never innocent but always entangled in institutional and ideological stakes.

Research Site & Participant Recruitment

The study was conducted at a large public research university in southwestern Ontario, an institution that hosts the most ISs nationally. The site was intentionally selected because of its stated commitment to equity and internationalization, as outlined in its institutional policies and practices. To maintain confidentiality, the site is identified as "Ontario University" throughout the study.

Table 1: Participant Demographics & Academic Background (Racialized IS at Ontario University)

Participant	Country of Origin	Gender	Status	Program	Years of Study
Yasna	Iran	F	Graduate	Epidemiology	2+
Charles	China	M	Undergraduate	Psychology	4+
Ophelia	Taiwan	F	Undergraduate	Medical Science	5+
Miguel	Brazil	M	Graduate	Anatomy	2+
Chike	Nigeria	M	Graduate	Law	2+
Nicodemo	Togo	M	Graduate	Computer Engineering	2+
Anya	Trinidad & Tobago	F	Undergraduate	Computer Science	2+
Karan	India	M	Graduate	Media Studies	3+

Note. The participant names are pseudonyms. 'Years of study' refers to the time of enrollment in the current degree program at Ontario University.

Upon securing approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for human subjects, recruitment of participants was conducted with the support of Ontario University's International Office and the Office of EDID. An invitation was circulated via institutional email, websites, and social media platforms, supplemented by targeted communication with staff and IS groups. The study involved N = 8 racialized ISs (listed in Table 1) across a range of disciplines, representing diverse national, ethnic, and racial identities. All the IS participants were required to be proficient in English and enrolled as undergraduate or graduate students for at least one year.

Data collection

Data were collected through semistructured interviews and a review of institutional documents. The documents included publicly available policies, equity statements, and internationalization strategies, providing a discursive context for understanding Ontario University's EDID discourse. Semistructured interviews with IS participants were conducted via Zoom, allowing them to share narratives about their lived experiences within the institutional setting. ISs participated in two interviews spaced one to two weeks apart, allowing time for reflection and deeper engagement (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The first interview established trust and gathered preliminary narratives, whereas the second elicited nuanced insights and counterstories.

Data analysis

All the interviews were transcribed verbatim and assigned alphanumeric codes to maintain confidentiality. An inductive coding approach was used to identify recurring themes related to racialized IS experiences and discursive

policy enactment (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Open coding was conducted manually, enabling close engagement with the transcripts and the development of initial codes grounded in participants' own language. These first-level codes, such as "performative equity," "emotional fatigue," and "institutional silence," were then grouped into broader categories via constant comparative techniques. Axial coding was then conducted to illuminate the relationships between institutional policies and lived narratives, underscoring the interplay between stated institutional priorities and actual IS experiences (Creswell & Porth, 2018). Memo-writing supported analytic decisions and ensured transparency in theme development. A three-stage process, open coding, axial coding, and selective theme refinement, produced four overarching themes grounded in participants' counterstories. An audit trail ensured trustworthiness and methodological rigour throughout the analytic process. Triangulation was achieved by cross-referencing interview transcripts, institutional texts, and reflexive journals, which enabled a layered interpretation of discursive alignment and disjuncture. By cross-referencing institutional texts with IS narratives, this heuristic approach surfaced critical tensions and gaps, providing actionable insights for aligning institutional policies with the needs and aspirations of racialized IS.

RESULTS

This study explores racialized IS experiences amid EDID discursive policies and strategic initiatives related to internationalization at Ontario University, addressing (or neglecting) the needs of racialized IS students. The findings are organized into four thematic sections: (1) Hierarchies of Belonging and Social Segregation; (2) Cultural Essentialization and Misrecognition; (3) Navigating a Euro-Western Framework of EDID; and (4) Identity, Isolation, and Resistance. The four emerging themes illuminate how racialized ISs perceive Ontario University's EDID initiatives, reflecting both the spaces where belonging is fostered and those where systemic constraints impede their sense of belonging. Each theme draws explicitly on CRT's emphasis on structural racism and the centrality of experiential knowledge (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017), as well as intersectionality's attention to the compounding effects of race, class, and nationality (Crenshaw, 1989), to interpret how the IS navigates institutional power.

Hierarchies of Belonging and Social Segregation

A recurring sentiment across interviews was the perception of hierarchical belonging within the IS body itself. Racialized IS spoke openly about a stratified social environment in which certain international groups felt more valued and legitimized than others did. Nicodemo from Togo reflected:

In general, I will say that usually and definitely European seem to be preferred. I do interact a lot with different groups of international students, and if I'm going into more detail, I will say that the European general is definitely at the top. Somewhere, people from China and India and South America are in the middle ground. After that, there is the Middle East, followed by the Caribbean and Africans.

Nicodemo's observation articulates what CRT scholars call "everyday racial ordering" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001), where global power hierarchies are reproduced in institutional social life. His narrative resists liberal multicultural discourses of equal diversity, revealing instead a racialized economy of social legitimacy. Similarly, Anya, an Indo-Trinidadian, observed a marked separation between domestic and IS, where she remembered:

I have noticed a hierarchy, but I did not try to take note of it because it makes me sad. I guess there is not too much intermingling within the groups. Like Canadian-born people do, they tend to stick to themselves. In addition, if they do find international student friends, it's like more of a token friend, you know, like 'you're the cool exotic friend from the Caribbean, so maybe I can come to swim on your beach sometime', rather than just forming genuine connections and friendships.

This comment reinforces the symbolic inclusion but social exclusion that often marks institutional approaches to diversity, wherein inclusion is conditional, exoticized, or tokenistic. Emphasis on interest convergence (Bell, 1980) aids in unpacking how racialized IS may be tolerated in university spaces when it is seen as "additive" to dominant cultural capital but not when it is disrupted.

Miguel, from Brazil, elaborated on his experience:

With international students, it is easy to connect with them. International Students are more likely to be together because they understand each other. I think it's more difficult for us to integrate with Canadians. I mean, they're nice. They talk to us. However, it is not like a real integration, like a real friendship. I don't think [Ontario University] wants to bring us together, and I don't think they want to keep us separated. I think they just don't do anything.

Miguel's description underscores how institutional neutrality, while appearing benign, functions as a form of neglect. From an intersectional lens, this "nonintervention" disproportionately harms students positioned at multiple margins (e.g., racialized and foreign), reinforcing their invisibility within dominant networks.

Ophelia, an IS from Taiwan, believed that historical and political tensions shaped their interactions with peers from mainland China, indicating moments of exclusion despite a shared language and cultural proximity:

Although I speak the same language as the students from mainland China did, I felt excluded in group conversations. They would often form tight circles and, when I tried to join, the atmosphere would shift … sometimes they would respond briefly and then return to their own discussion, acting as if I weren't truly part of it. It felt like more than just a social divide … for me, at least, it felt rooted in a deeper political tension between Taiwan and the mainland, especially after their behavior changed once they determined where I truly from.

Ophelia's account illustrates the salience of geopolitical identity even within presumed shared cultural groups. This illustrates the premise of intersectionality, which posits that race and ethnicity are never experienced in isolation but intersect

with nationality and political history. Institutions that apply monolithic "Asian" categories risk erasing these dynamics.

Together, these narratives delineate how racialized ISs encounter layered exclusions across race, nation, and social capital, revealing the limits of institutional EDID discourses that fail to challenge deeper structures of racial hierarchy and power.

Cultural Essentialization and Misrecognition

Another dominant theme was the essentialization of culture, in which Ontario University and its stakeholders reduced the richness of IS identities to stereotyped markers. Karan, from India, expressed this phenomenon openly:

> The international center does programs … they do programs for Mexicans on the Day of the Dead, and for Indians, they have Diwali as a gala dinner. Culturally, there is awareness. However, again … it's also a very homogenized notion of culture, especially in a territorial and geographical sense … few people might even partake because the festivals are associated with a national identity. I mean, Diwali is like a prominent festival, but the university associates it with India as a nation. I have an international friend from Nepal, and he celebrates Diwali too, as there is also a large Hindu population, but the university doesn't recognize that. As a result, Nepalese students cannot partake in the event. This is a fundamental problem: in what ways are universities diverse?

Karan's reflection exposes what CRT scholars critique as "performance diversity", the strategic deployment of celebratory multiculturalism that obscures institutional complicity in deeper structural exclusions. These events operate through what Yosso (2005) might call dominant community cultural wealth, practices that reproduce whiteness and sanitize racial complexity through digestible, nationalistic displays of 'otherness'. Anya shared openly about feeling disconnected from both the wider IS group and the Indo-Canadian community:

> I noticed it was weird for me as Indo-Trinidadian because, like, I would not fit in among the Indian international students because I was not Indian enough for them. In addition, then with the first-generation or second-generation Indo-Canadian students, they felt more in tune with their culture, and I felt like an outsider too. Therefore, where do I fit in? Sometimes it felt like I had to justify myself for belonging. It felt like I was stuck in between worlds.

Anya's identity fracture reveals a double erasure: one from panethnic groupings that flatten intraracial diversity and another from diasporic tensions that challenge presumed authenticity. Intersectionality's emphasis on the simultaneity of social location (Collins & Bilge, 2016) helps situate her sense of liminality, not just as cultural but also as epistemic. Her voice reveals the limitations of institutional EDID frameworks that overcode identity through national belonging while ignoring diasporic or hybrid ontologies. Interestingly, the omission of caste dynamics within institutional narratives has surfaced as a critical concern. Karan asserted:

> Caste is an issue that has been systematically neglected by both India, of course, and the West. Therefore, caste as a marker is not present in the EDID. Even though it operates so pervasively in South Asia and not only

in India but also in Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal, it is very prominent. There is an established lobby where people champion caste distinctions, such as people in the ghettos, such as the Bunya caste, a trading class. The richer caste features prominently in terms of representation. Therefore, this discrimination is very real. However, the fact that caste is not recognized within institutional equity and diversity discourse is a sign of the endurance of the caste itself.

This observation reflects a significant omission within both institutional policy and Western-centric diversity models: the failure to recognize caste as a transnational system of oppression. From a CRT lens, this constitutes epistemic violence, a refusal to name structural caste hierarchies that continue to shape privilege and marginalization even in global North institutions. The invisibility of caste reveals how EDID discourses may be racially inclusive on the surface yet remain ontologically bounded by Western logics of race, ignoring forms of discrimination legible only through a decolonial or global subaltern perspective.

Taken together, these narratives underscore how essentialization and cultural misrecognition undermine the very goals of equity work. When institutions adopt "diversity as spectacle" (Ahmed, 2012), they risk reinforcing racial hierarchies under the guise of inclusion. The intersection of race, caste, and diasporic identity illuminates the structural limits of institutional EDID approaches and the necessity of adopting more critically reflexive, transnational, and anti-essentialist frameworks.

Navigating a Euro-Western Framework of EDID

Several participants responded to the limitations posed by an institutional approach grounded in a largely Euro-Western understanding of equity and inclusion. Miguel emphasized the pressures of assimilatory expectations:

I had such resistance. If you don't want to suffer like I am presently in my department, and if I had the option to assimilate from the beginning, I would have done it for sure. The faster you assimilate, the fewer exclusions you will face. If you can assimilate yourself into the dominant culture, I don't think you'll have many problems, to be honest. However, that's something I cannot do. My brain doesn't work the same way as the Northern European mindset, you know.

Miguel's account reflects the privileging of whiteness as normative within institutional structures. EDID, framed through a Euro-Western lens, becomes a disciplinary mechanism that rewards proximity to whiteness while penalizing cultural divergence. His resistance signals a refusal to assimilate into dominant ways of knowing and being fully. Chike, a student from Nigeria, remarked:

It feels like the university doesn't want to intentionally integrate us. They don't separate us, but they don't integrate us either. It's like being stuck in a gray area, making you feel invisible. You have to adapt to fit into a space that was not created for you.

Chike's "gray area" speaks to institutional ambiguity, where racialized ISs are neither overtly excluded nor fully embraced, a hallmark of what Ahmed (2012) critiques as the "nonperformative" nature of diversity policy. From an intersectional lens, his invisibility is not accidental but structural, shaped by race,

nationality, and institutional inaction. Moreover, institutional EDID practices often fail to consider the intersectionality of IS identities. Another participant from Nicodemo recalled:

> The university talks a lot about diversity and equity but does not understand the intersection of race, class, and nationality for international students. They assume that one approach works for everyone, regardless of where we come from or what we have experienced. The policies do not capture the complexities of who we are.

Here, intersectionality functions, as more than descriptive tools, become an analytic imperative. Institutional policies assume a universalized IS identity, erasing how overlapping systems of oppression (Crenshaw, 1991) affect students differently. Nicodemo's critique reveals the flattening of differences in EDID approaches, echoing critiques of "single-axis" thinking that fail to account for interlocking forms of disadvantage.

Collectively, these narratives illustrate how institutional equity practices often reproduce epistemic dominance through liberal inclusion frameworks that center Western logics and values. EDID policy, as interpreted by participants, operates not as a transformative tool but as a gatekeeping mechanism. Thus, CRT and intersectionality illuminate how racialized IS experiences not only cultural displacement but also policy-based marginality. This theme underscores the necessity of decentering whiteness and embracing anti-assimilationist, pluriversal approaches to equity in Canadian HE.

Identity, Isolation, and Resistance

The final theme captures the profound impact of discrimination, isolation, and systemic neglect that many racialized ISs experience, as well as their resilience and resistance. Yasna reflected:

> Some of my classmates arrived in Canada later, and a couple of months later, and they were black. The [domestic students'] behaviour toward them was even worse. They did not welcome them when they arrived. It was like they did not exist. Even their Canadian Black classmates did not acknowledge them. They always said I was their first friend and that I was the first person to make them feel welcome. It was heartbreaking.

Yasna's narrative reveals how intersectional systems of exclusion, race, nationality, and language compound the isolation of racialized IS. The fact that both domestic and IS failed to acknowledge Black newcomers reflects what CRT identifies as "racial distancing" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017), where minorized bodies are rendered hypervisible yet socially erased. This selective invisibility underscores the limits of institutional belonging, where diversity is celebrated symbolically but not practiced relationally. Comparatively, Nicodemo commented on his approach to combating isolation as a source of self-determination:

> When I came, I felt like I had to prove that I belonged every single day. Not only in the classroom but also in the spaces meant for 'international students.' I felt like an afterthought, like these spaces weren't made for people like me. However, I refused to disappear. I started finding

connections where I could, making friends one person at a time, and finding ways to survive this experience.

Nicodemo's statement resonates with Crenshaw's (1991) conception of structural intersectionality; he is not simply excluded owing to his race but through the compounded barriers of his nationality, program status, and presumed linguistic capital. His daily acts of survival and relational persistence challenge diversity, revealing instead the affective labour required to exist in exclusionary spaces. His story is a quiet counternarrative, reclaiming agency amid marginality.

Charles, a Chinese IS, recounted an experience with a teaching assistant that left him feeling dismissed, prompting him to channel that frustration into a hobby to keep his spirits afloat:

During one tutorial, the TA kept ignoring my questions, brushing them off like they weren't worth answering. It felt like no matter how hard I tried, I was just 'the Chinese guy' to him. That anger stayed with me, and it pushed me to prove myself. I started putting more hours into my work, going to the gym late at night, doing whatever I could to stay strong and showing that I refused to be dismissed.

Charles' experience reflects how pedagogical spaces are not neutral but are racially coded. His dismissal by a TA exemplifies what CRT terms "microinvalidations", subtle acts that undermine the legitimacy of racialized students' intellectual presence. However, Charles' embodied resistance, through physical discipline, academic striving, and self-validation, becomes a political act of refusal.

Racialized ISs refuse to be mere data points in diversity metrics; they assert relational, intellectual, and emotional subjectivity despite institutional silencing. This theme thus reaffirms the central role of CRT and intersectionality not only as analytical frames but also as modes of resistance and survival within Canadian higher education.

DISCUSSION

Ontario University's official commitment to EDID and its internationalization agenda paint an aspirational picture of belonging for all. However, the accounts shared by racialized IS reveal a more nuanced, contested, and challenging reality (Buckner et al., 2023). Their counterstories (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001) illuminate the paradox between institutional declarations of belonging and the lived experience of marginalization and hierarchical separation within campus spaces. What emerges is an unsettling disjuncture between an institutional discourse that foregrounds equity and the everyday realities of IS, whose belonging feels conditional, contested, and conditioned by a predominantly Euro-Western understanding of inclusion.

Nicodemo, from Togo, captures this disjuncture sharply when he explains how belonging operates within a hierarchical structure that mirrors global racial and economic divides. His description exemplifies that belonging emerges not as a universal right but as an unspoken ranking of legitimacy shaped by racism, more specifically, neracism (Lee, 2007) and global economic status. Anya's experience

implies how this stratification operates both within international spaces and across the broader institutional environment. Like Nicodemo's account of hierarchy, Anya captures how this hierarchical belonging operates in everyday encounters, wherein racialized IS often remain isolated or objectified to superficial markers of diversity.

Miguel comments on institutional passivity, which allows such separation to be sustained between IS and domestic students. He asserted, "I think it's more difficult for us to integrate with Canadians... I don't think [Ontario University] want to bring us together … they want to keep us separated." Miguel's words underscore the sense that institutional policies operate in a vacuum, making statements about inclusion yet failing to facilitate spaces where meaningful intercultural connections (Hou et al., 2024) can form across racial and national lines. The narratives elucidate the subtle functioning of systemic racism (Patton, 2016) at Ontario University, possibly unbeknown to administrators who advocate for diversity.

Participants echo that institutional celebrations of culture often reduce racialized IS to simplistic markers of difference, creating a superficial, commodified understanding of diversity (Arumuhathas, 2024). Karan's description of Ontario University's limited grasp of Diwali reveals how institutional cultural celebrations often oversimplify and overlook internal diversity and tensions, thereby promoting basic narratives that ignore regional, caste-based, and ethnic distinctions within racialized subgroups. One can argue that this constitutes a form of epistemic erasure (Fricker, 2007), wherein Ontario University's singular framing of culture and religion privileges certain dominant narratives while marginalizing others. The promotion of Indian students as the primary representatives of "Hindu" culture not only obscures the diverse ways in which Hinduism is practiced across national and ethnic lines but also relegates Nepalese and other racialized ISs to a position of invisibility. In this way, the institution's approach to diversity operates as a technology (Buckner et al., 2021) of racial and religious simplification, rendering certain intersectional identities illegible within dominant discourse. By aligning its EDID policies with a narrow, static understanding of culture (Chen, 2006), the university privileges dominant groups and perpetuates hierarchical belonging, effectively denying nuanced expressions of spirituality and heritage.

Karan's account is also indicative of the invisibility of caste within institutional EDID discourse, making a critical link between international and local dynamics of discrimination: "Caste is an issue that has been sort of systematically neglected by both India, of course but also in the West. Therefore, caste as a marker is not present in EDID." In making caste legible, Karan exposes a significant omission within Euro-Western institutional discursive EDID policies, one that impacts a large segment of racialized IS whose struggles are shaped by caste dynamics that intersect with race, nationality, and gender, even creating factions and oppression among South Asian IS and first-generation South Asian Canadians.

The participants repeatedly emphasized the pressure to assimilate as a prerequisite for belonging with domestic students. Miguel's pressure to assimilate

accentuates the implicit, often unspoken, institutional expectation for racialized IS to relinquish their heritage, language, and unique mannerisms to conform to a dominant norm rooted in Euro-Western traditions. For others, belonging was felt as a liminal area, suspended between superficial gestures and systemic neglect. Chike, from Nigeria, describes this space sharply: "It feels like the university doesn't intentionally integrate us. They don't separate us, but they don't integrate us either." Such a memory exposes the campus space and operates as a site where racialized IS must navigate belonging as a matter of accommodation rather than mutual belonging (Glass & Westmont, 2014).

The testimonies shared by the IS illuminate the silos within the university that fail to recognize the global or transnational intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) of racialized ISs' lived realities. Yasna's observation of the marginalization of her new classmates points to the racial stratification that operates within the student body itself, a result of institutional inaction that allows racism and anti-blackness to flourish across lines of status and belonging (Yao et al., 2019). A related consideration, namely, the assumption that the IS of African descent will forge relationships and affinity with Black Canadians, reflects a naive understanding of the complexities involved. This perspective neglects the nuanced social, cultural, and individual factors that influence relationship-building processes (Hou et al., 2024). However, the current EDID infrastructure appears ill equipped to facilitate or even recognize these dynamics, thereby impeding meaningful engagement between these groups.

In parallel, Charles's account portrays how racism is felt sharply within spaces presumed to be neutral or inclusive. In his recounting of an interaction with a teaching assistant, racism emerges as a catalyst for resilience but also as a reminder of how belonging operates within a conditioned, constrained space of whiteness (Ahmed, 2012), wherein racialized IS must justify their worthiness and belonging through sheer perseverance and self-advocacy. Charles's experience of microinvalidation (Houshmand et al., 2014) is problematic, as it illustrates how spaces claimed as neutral or inclusive often remain structured by whiteness and unequal power dynamics. Ontario University's EDID infrastructure appears to overlook how racialized IS, like Charles, must continuously prove its worth and belonging to gain legitimacy within institutional spaces. This refers to a critical omission: the lack of a robust antiracist, intersectional framework that validates the lived realities of racialized IS and actively dismantles institutional barriers. To move beyond surface-level gestures, Ontario University must embed a global understanding of intersectionality into its discursive equity policies, curricula, and practices, cultivating spaces where racialized IS can thrive without justifying their belonging.

This analysis reveals that institutional spaces inadequately recognize the complex intersectionality of racialized IS identities, often viewing them through a simplified, Eurocentric lens. Despite Ontario University's espoused commitment to EDID, actual experiences show that belonging remains a fragile privilege contingent on conformity to dominant norms, which burdens marginalized students and perpetuates exclusion through superficial multicultural gestures. Conversely, participants demonstrate resistance and resilience by creating their

own spaces and redefining belonging as active, relational practices. Addressing these issues requires moving beyond performative multiculturalism to genuine, structural engagement with race, caste, gender, and intersectionality. Only then can Ontario University realize true equity and inclusive belonging for all.

Ontario University operates within a Euro-Western understanding of EDID, inheriting a long-standing institutional worldview rooted in settler-colonial and enlightenment ideals that frame diversity as a static, surface-level category rather than a complex, intersectional, and global phenomenon. This worldview privileges dominant narratives and positions racialized IS as outsiders (Arumuhathas, 2022), forcing them to navigate a space that often ignores their layered identities and lived realities. The result is an institutional approach that treats difference as ornamental, sidelining deeper questions about belonging, justice, and belonging within the academy. In doing so, it obscures the richness of transnational subjectivities and legitimizes a singular, normative way of knowing and being. To redress this, Canadian universities must adopt a transnational lens to EDID that recognizes IS not as passive guests but as vital contributors with distinct histories, struggles, and epistemologies (Cutri, Bunnell, & Poole, 2024). Such a shift is not merely about expanding access or surface inclusion but about reshaping institutional ethics and practices, challenging the status quo, and cultivating spaces where all students can flourish within the plurality of their identities. Here lies an ethical obligation rooted in the belief that belonging is a relational and transformative endeavour that must be cocreated across borders, disciplines, and ways of knowing.

IMPLICATIONS

This heuristic case study underscores the urgent need for institutions to align their policies with the principles of EDID and global sustainability. Grounded in participants' accounts of institutional silence and invisibility, annual EDID reviews should include racialized ISs as coresearchers in the assessment process, ensuring that equity audits are not only technocratic but also informed by lived experience and intersectional realities. Gathering qualitative data through surveys and focus groups can uncover ISs' lived experiences of belonging, which must inform swift institutional responses. Second, establishing a robust, accessible, and trusted feedback system is crucial. An anonymous channel, managed by the International and EDID Offices, enables the safe reporting of racism, discrimination, and exclusion. With student consent, trained staff or peer mentors can follow up respectfully, prioritizing wellbeing and accountability (Arumuhathas, 2024).

Future research based on this study should explore the experiences of racialized IS through a global, intersectional, and transnational lens. While this heuristic case identified the gap between institutional EDID discourse and students' lived realities, it also raised critical questions that warrant further investigation. Forthcoming comparative studies should examine how institutions and nations can clarify how universities embed diversity within policies and how these policies evolve, or fail to evolve, in response to increasing transnational

mobility. Additionally, more detailed inquiries are needed into how caste, class, gender, and religion intersect within IS populations, especially as these identities complicate notions of belonging and access to institutional support.

For institutions such as Ontario University and others across Canada and around the world, such research is crucial because it reveals systemic blind spots and enhances our understanding of how equity and belonging function within increasingly diverse campus communities. The urgency lies in re-envisioning EDID as a collaborative, ongoing process shaped alongside the IS. This approach allows HEIs to move beyond superficial gestures of metric measurement diversity (Buckner et al., 2023) to practices that acknowledge and honor the many ways in which students experience their academic spaces.

Conclusion

Conclusively, at a greater level, international HEIs across Canada and North America must grapple with the paradox of global diversity and belonging. Rather than reinventing the wheel with new global frameworks for EDID, institutions can revisit, unlearn, and relearn in concert with IS themselves, employing a transnational lens that embraces intersectionality and global epistemologies of equity. This approach challenges dominant narratives rooted in a Euro-Western worldview, creating space for IS to redefine belonging as cocreation and mutual care. The findings from this study underscore that when institutional commitments to EDID are disconnected from the lived realities of racialized IS, policies risk remaining symbolic. For example, participants described "emotional fatigue" and "institutional silence" not as abstract phenomena but as daily obstacles shaped by unclear support mechanisms and inaccessible equity services.

To address these gaps, HEIs should implement recurring internal audits of their EDID strategies that actively include racialized IS in the design and evaluation process. This is not merely a procedural gesture but a concrete method to bridge discursive commitments with lived experience. Moreover, this study identified participants' reluctance to report discrimination due to a lack of trust and unclear follow-up processes, evidence that justifies establishing a student-informed, transparent feedback mechanism for equity issues. These platforms must be tied to institutional accountability protocols, ensuring that reporting leads to tangible cultural and policy change. In doing so, HEIs can evolve from passive holders of discursive diversity policies to active, collaborative spaces where equity-deserving ISs are seen and engaged as vital contributors.

REFERENCES

Ahmed, S. (2012). *On being included: racism and diversity in institutional life*. Duke University Press.

Appia, V. (2021). Timeline: This is Canada's history of anti-Asian racism that COVID-19 has amplified. *Toronto.com*. Retrieved June 15, 2022, from https://www.toronto.com/newsstory/10349793-timeline-this-is-canada-s-history-of-anti-asian-racism-that-covid-19-has-amplified/

Arumuhathas, S. S. (2022). The Dislocated "Outsiders" within International Canadian Higher Education. *Canadian Journal for New Scholars in Education*, 13(1), pp. 1-7.

Arumuhathas, S. S. (2023). Navigating perspectives: Unpacking the discourse surrounding international student experiences in Canadian higher education. *Canadian Journal for New Scholars in Education*, 14(3), pp. 46-54.

Arumuhathas, S. S. (2024). *Is there adversity in diversity? Racialized international students' experiences at a Southwestern Ontario university* (Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository No. 10651). Western University. https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd/10651

Arumuhathas, S.S., Stroud, R., & Butler, A. (2024, October 3). *Why are fingers being pointed at racialized international students? University Affairs*. Retrieved from https://universityaffairs.ca/career-advice/why-are-fingers-being-pointed-at-racialized-international-students/

Battiste, M. (2013). *Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit*. Saskatoon: Purich

Bloomberg, L., & Volpe, M. (2019). *Completing Your Qualitative Dissertation: A Road Map From Beginning to End* (Fourth Edition.). SAGE Publications, Inc.

Brinkman, S., & Kvale, S. (2015). *Interviews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Buckner, E., Lumb, P., Jafarova, Z., Kang, P., Marroquin, A., & Zhang, Y. (2021). Diversity without Race: How University Internationalization Strategies Discuss International Students. *Journal of International Students*, *11*(S1), 32–49. https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v11iS1.3842

Buckner, E., Knight-Grofe, J., & Eden, C. (2023). For Students, Look East: For Partners, Look West: How Canadian Internationalization Strategies Portray Asia and Europe. Kim, H. A., Buckner, E., & Montison, J. M (Eds) In *International Students from Asia in Canadian Universities: Institutional Challenges at the Intersection Internationalization, Inclusions, and Racialization* (pp. 30-43) Routledge: New York.

Calder, M. J., Solina Richter, Yuping Mao, Katharina Kovacs Burns, Ramadimetja S Mogale, & Margaret Danko. (2016). International Students Attending Canadian Universities: Their Experiences with Housing, Finances, and Other Issues. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education* (1975), *46*(2), 92–110.

Cameron, J. D. (2006). International student integration into the Canadian university: A post–World War Two historical case study. *History of Intellectual Culture*, *6*(1).

Campbell, A. (2021). Equity education initiatives within Canadian universities: promise and limits. Perspectives: *Policy and Practice in Higher Education*, *25*(2), 51– 61. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603108.2019.1631226

Canadian Bureau for International Education. (2024). International students in Canada. Retrieved June 24, 2025, from https://cbie.ca/media/facts-and-figures/international-students/

Chen, L.H. (2006). Attracting East Asian Students to Canadian Graduate Schools. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, *36*(2), 77–105.

Crenshaw, K. W. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, *43*, 1241-1299.

Creswell, J., & Poth, C. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: choosing among five Approaches* (Fourth edition.). SAGE.

Cutri, J., Bunnell, T., & Poole, A. (2024). International education in transition: Perceptions of expatriate leadership at a Chinese school delivering an Australian curriculum. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2024.2393115

Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2017). *Critical race theory: An introduction* (3rd ed.). NYU Press.

Fine, M. (2002). Working the hyphens: Reinventing self and other in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 130–155). Sage Publications.

Firang, & Mensah, J. (2021). Exploring the Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on International Students and Universities in Canada. *Journal of International Students*, *12*(1). https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v12i1.2881

Fricker, M. (2007). *Epistemic injustice: Power and the ethics of knowing*. Oxford University Press.

Glass, C. R., & Westmont, C. M. (2014). Comparative Effects of Belongingness on the Academic Success and Cross-Cultural Interactions of Domestic and International Students. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *38*, 106-119. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2013.04.004

Guo, Y., & Guo, S. (2017). Internationalization of Canadian higher education: Discrepancies between policies and international student experiences. *Studies in Higher Education*, *42*(5), 851-868.

Gurin, P., Dey, E., Hurtado, S., & Gurin, G. (2002). Diversity and higher education: Theory and impact on educational outcomes. *Harvard Educational Review*, *72*(3), 330–367. https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.72.3.01151786u134n051

Healey, N. (2008). Is higher education truly 'internationalizing'? *Higher Education*, *55*(3), 333–355. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-007-9058-4

Hou, M., Cruz, N. I., Ichikawa, A., & Glass, C. R. (2024). Self-formation across borders: transnational students' identity reconstruction while transitioning from international schools to higher education. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, *34*(2), 156–176. https://doi.org/10.1080/09620214.2024.2336452

Houshmand, S., Spanierman, L., & Tafarodi, R. (2014). Excluded and Avoided: Racial Microaggressions Targeting Asian International Students in Canada. *Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology*, *20*(3), 377–388. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0035404

Kim, A. H., Buckner, E., & Montison, J. M (2023). Introduction: The Federalization of Education Migration Redefining Success. Kim, H. A., Buckner, E., & Montison, J. M (Eds) In *International Students from Asia in Canadian Universities: Institutional Challenges at the Intersection Internationalization, Inclusions, and Racialization* (pp. 1-15) Routledge: New York.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1998). Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field like education? *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *11*(1), 7–24. https://doi.org/10.1080/095183998236863

Ladson-Billings, G. (2013). Critical race theory — What it is not! In M. Lynn & A. D. Dixson (Eds.), *Handbook of critical race theory in education* (pp. 34–47). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203155721.ch3

Lee, J. J. (2007). Neo-Racism toward International Students: A critical need for change. *About Campus*, *11*(6), 28-30. https://doi.org/10.1002/abc.194

Ordonez-Ponce, E., Khare, A. & Khare, K. (2024), "Canadian HEIs' contribution to the SDGs: what do the times higher education impact rankings unveil?", *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSHE-03-2024-0188

Patton, L. (2016). Disrupting Postsecondary Prose: Toward a Critical Race Theory of Higher Education. *Urban Education* (Beverly Hills, Calif.), *51*(3), 315–342 https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085915602542

Popadiuk, N., & Arthur, N. (2004). Counseling International Students in Canadian Schools. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counseling*, *26*(2), 125–145. https://doi.org/10.1023/B:ADCO.0000027426.05819.44

Rezai-Rashti G, Arumuhathas S.S, Zhao C F, & Leung V. (2024). Racialized International Students and Their Experiences in a Canadian University During COVID-19 Pandemic. *Journal of Higher Education Policy & Leadership Studies*, *5*(1), 8-24. https://doi.org/10.1023/B:ADCO.0000027426.05819.44

Statistics Canada. (2023). Economic and Social Reports: International students as a source of labor supply: A summary of recent trends. Statistics Canada. https://doi.org/10.25318/36280001202200300001-eng

Solorzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2001). Critical race and LatCrit theory and method: Counter' storytelling. Chicana and Chicano graduate school experiences. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, *14*(4), 471–495.

Stein, S., & Andreotti, V. O. de. (2016). Cash, competition, or charity: international students and the global imaginary. *Higher Education*, *72*(2), 225–239. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-015-9949-8

Sue, D. W., & Spanierman, L. B. (2020). *Microaggressions in everyday life* (2nd ed.). John Wiley & Sons.

Tamtik, M. & Guenter, M. (2019). Policy Analysis of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategies. In Canadian Universities – How Far Have We Come? *Canadian Journal of Higher Education* (1975), *49*(3), 41–56.

Trilokekar, R. D., Jones, G. A., & Tamtik, M. (2020). The Emergence of International Education as Public Policy. Jones, G. A., Trilokekar, R. D., & Tamtik, M. (Eds). *International education as public policy in Canada* (pp. 3-25). McGill-Queen's University Press.

Van der Wende, M.C. (2001). "Internationalization Policies: About New Trends and Contrasting Paradigms." *Higher Education Policy*, *14* (3), 249-259.

Yao, C. W., George Mwangi, C. A., & Malaney Brown, V. K. (2019). Exploring the intersection of transnationalism and critical race theory: a critical race analysis of international student experiences in the United States. *Race, Ethnicity, and Education*, *22*(1), 38–58. https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2018.1497968

Yin, R. (2018). *Case study research and applications: design and methods* (Sixth edition). SAGE Publications, Inc.

Yuan, X., Okonufua, O., & Kiani, M. (2025). International student motivations and experiences of studying in small to mid-sized universities in remote Canada: A scoping review. *Journal of International Students*, *15*(9), 179-204. https://doi.org/10.32674/2w641h08

Author bio

Shamiga Shamy Arumuhathas, PhD, is an Academic Associate and Teaching Scholar at Ontario Tech University within the Faculty of Education. Her research interrogates the intersections of race, internationalization, and educational policy through critical frameworks such as critical race theory, intersectionality, and decolonial thought. A former secondary teacher and a recipient of the Inclusive Education Research Award from the Canadian Research Centre on Inclusive Education, her scholarship is grounded in equity-focused praxis and transnational justice. Dr. Arumuhathas' current work critically examines how racialized international students navigate within Canadian postsecondary institutions amid global neoliberal shifts and institutional EDID discourse.
Email: shamiga.arumuhathas@ontariotechu.ca