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CIESC Multi-paper Session

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Beyond a revenue source: Exploring International student experiences in Canada

Session 20.13

14 h 30 - 15 h 45 PT

Towards subjectification:  
International students as emerging adults  
*A mixed methods study*

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<https://students.ubc.ca/ubclife/welcome-musqueam-territory>

# Land Acknowledgement

The research project that we will be discussing in this presentation was conducted at UBC's Vancouver campus which is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xwməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam) People.



# Introduction

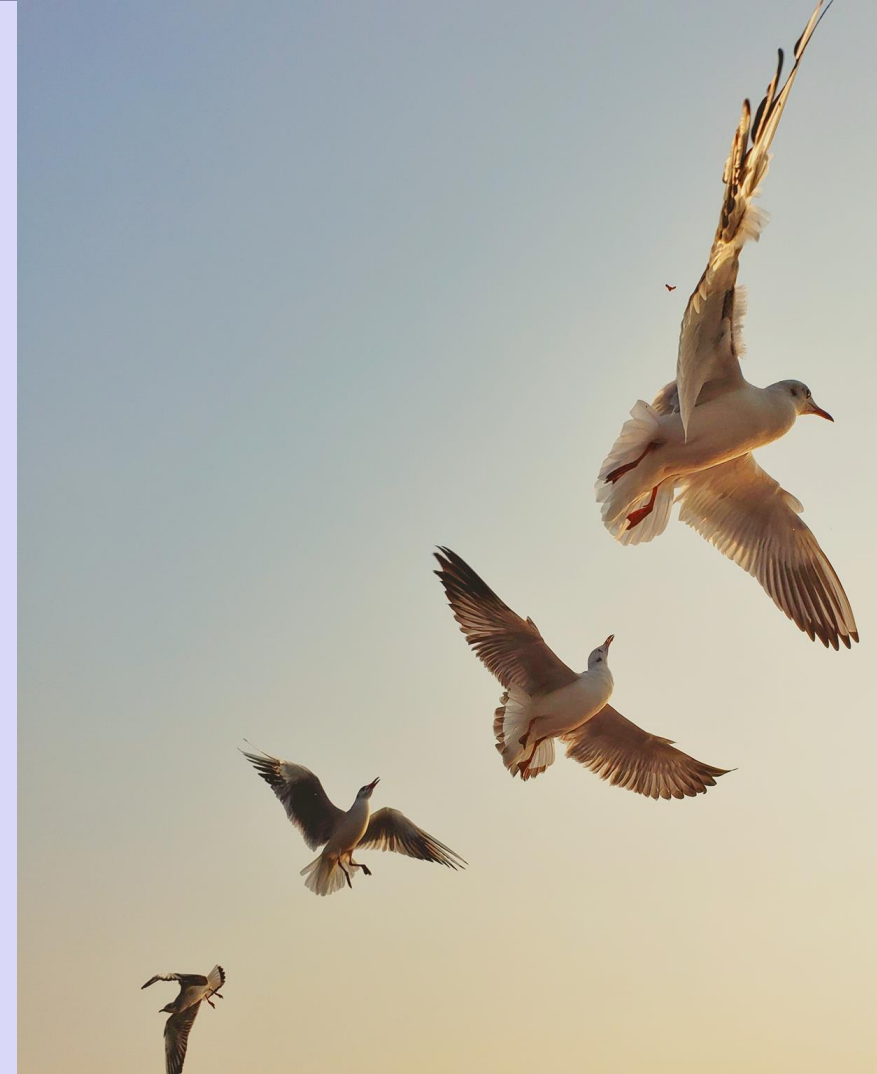
Work experience is increasingly seen as ‘a necessary part of the overseas study ‘package’” (Gribble, Rahimi & Blackmore, 2016, p. 15).

International students treated as subjects engaged in work-integrated learning, school to work transitions, or cultural transitions (Vu, Ferns, Ananthram, 2021).



# Emerging adulthood

- A distinct phase in the life course between adolescence and adulthood
  - Accepting responsibility for the self;
  - Making independent decisions, and
  - Achieving financial independence (Arnett, 1997, 1998; Greene et al., 1992; Scheer et al., 1994).
- Limitations of emerging adulthood:
  - Premised on a normative understanding of adulthood;
  - Socializing individuals into their places in terms of life course, and social and cultural order.



# Subjectification – Biesta

- What emerging adulthood may not stress enough is the possibility to prepare students to be “political” subjects, subjects who are endowed with the capacity to “challenge their uncontested insertion to the existing order of the world” (Ora, 2016).
- “Education as subjectification ... is therefore clearly oriented toward grown-up ways of existing, grown-up ways of trying to lead one’s life.” (Biesta, 2020, p. 97).
- Subjectification: assume “self-authorship”, and play an active role in defining identity, beliefs, and relationships (Baxter Magolda, 2008; Creamer & Laughlin, 2005; Kegan, 1995).



# Hard-Working Student (HWS) Research Project

**A SSHRC-funded longitudinal mixed methods study taking place at UBC and the University of Toronto**

Grant Number 435-2018-0078



<https://blogs.ubc.ca/hardwork/>

The study explores undergraduate students’:

- term-time work patterns
- paid and unpaid work experiences in relation to academic and other outcomes
- experiences of work-integrated learning
- work-study transition experiences over time



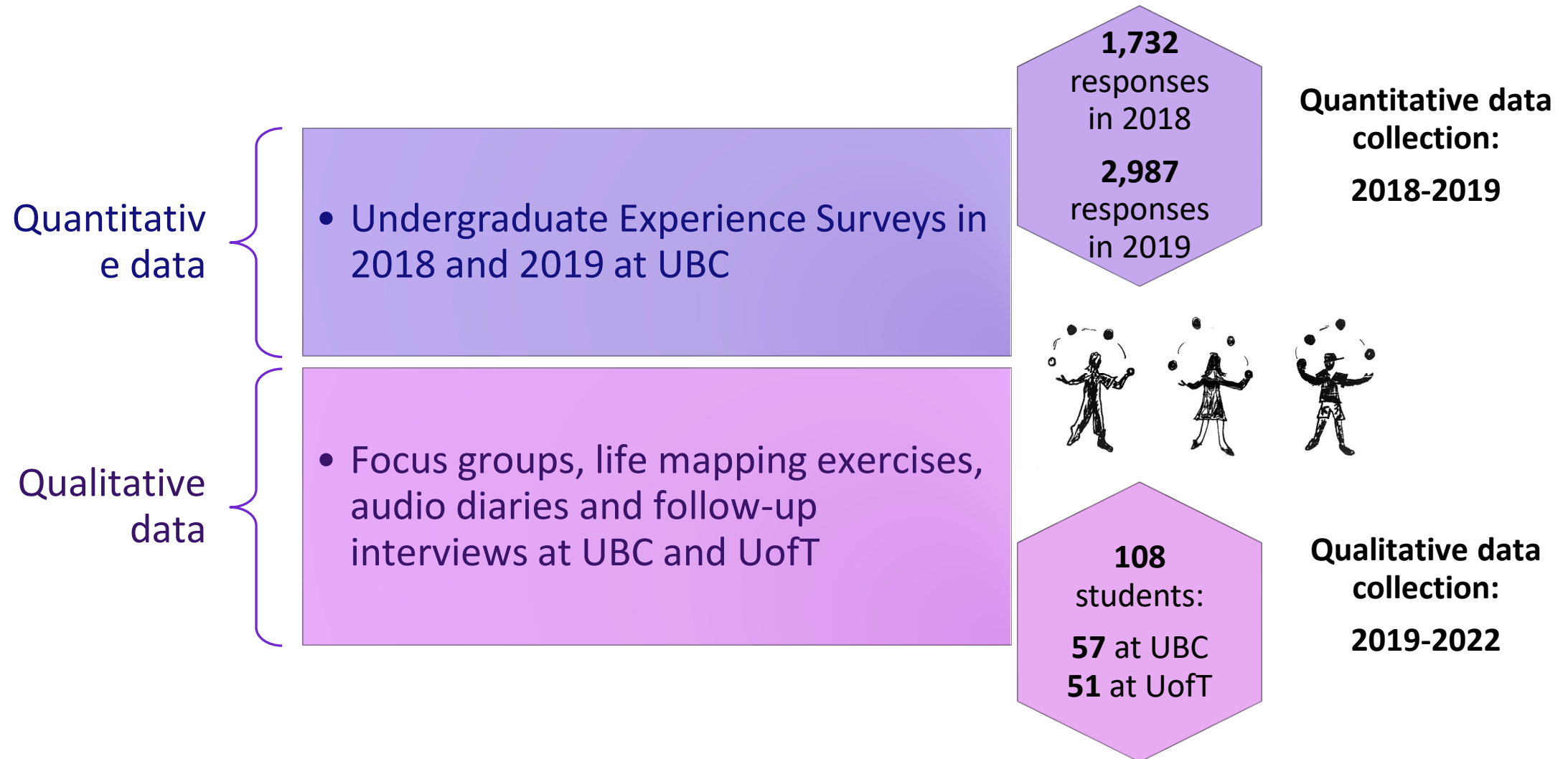
# HWS Research Team

## PI: Dr Alison Taylor (UBC)



# Methodology

<https://blogs.ubc.ca/hardwork/>





In this presentation:

Qualitative data from  
16 international  
students at UBC

Quantitative data  
from the 2018 survey  
at UBC: 1,732  
responses



## Emerging findings

Data analysis is currently underway

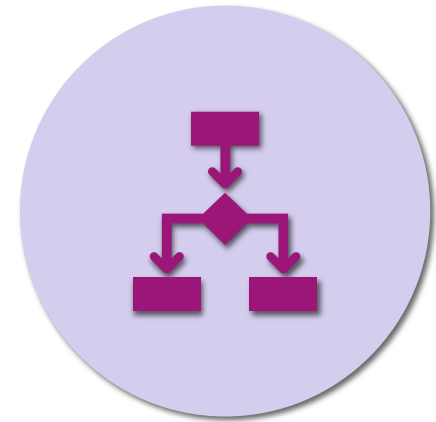
# Emerging findings



PATTERNS OF WORK



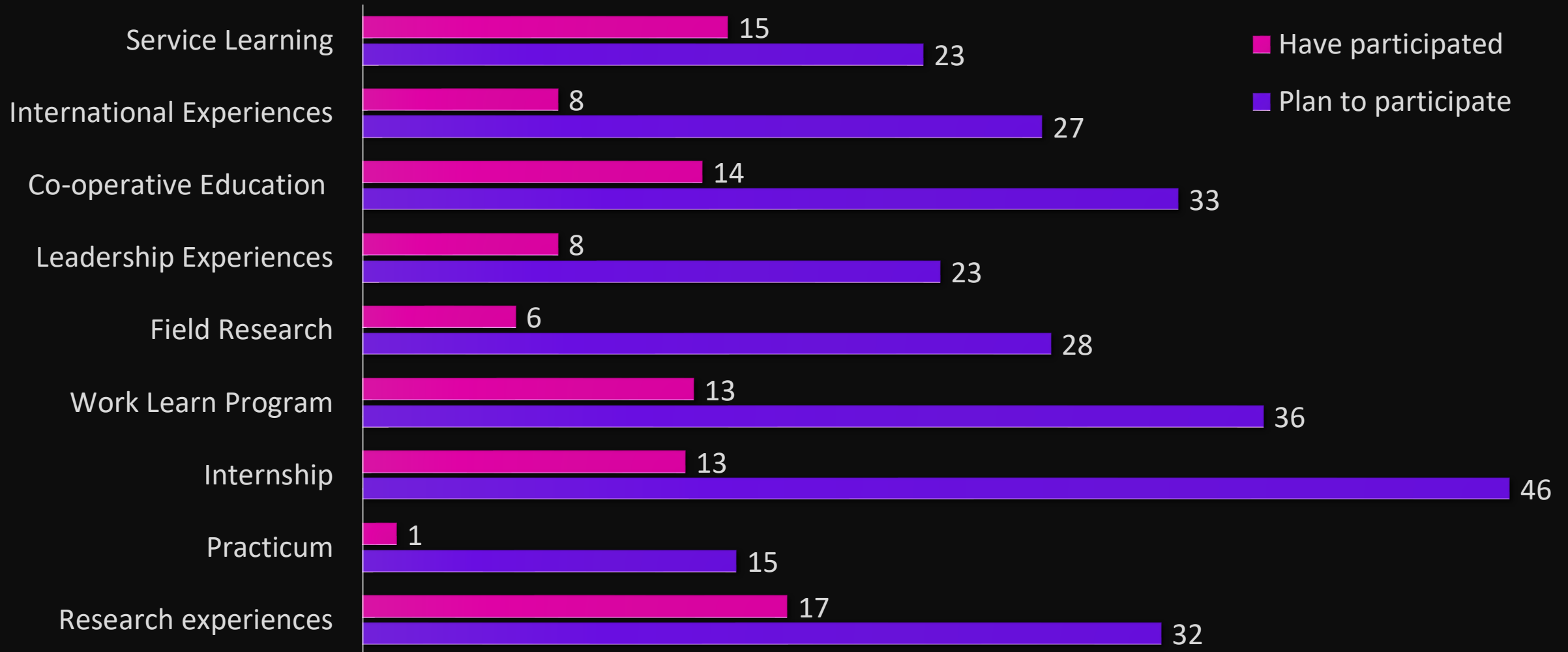
MOTIVATIONS FOR  
WORK



IMPACTS OF WORK

# Patterns of work: HWS 2018 survey

## International students' participation in high-impact activities





# Barriers to participation and to subjectification

*“by restricting capacities and capabilities” (Biesta, 2020, p. 92)*

- Lack of prior work experience
- GPA for research positions
- Time for applications
- High rejection rates
- Limited co-op opportunities for international students
- Cost of co-op and impact on length of degree program
- Lack of (timely) information on opportunities available
- Lack of social networks



# Motivation for work: Financial responsibility

*“grown-up ways of existing” (Biesta, 2020, p. 97)*

“In 2020/21, international undergraduate students paid an **average annual tuition of \$32,041**, almost five times the average for domestic students (\$6,610).”

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/201008/dq201008b-eng.htm>

Plus **living expenses** which, for some, amount to about **\$2,000 per month** (C1Y2-Y2F-8-16M).



“... when I am not at my job, I think quite often about my paid job ... **the stress of paying all of the bills is constantly in my mind.** And that is why I keep on thinking about the paid job and how to get more shifts and make more money”  
(C1Y1-AD-16M-April 2019).



# Motivation for work: Financial responsibility towards family

*“grown-up ways of existing” (Biesta, 2020, p. 97)*

**“... I am able to send money home now, which for me matters a lot, especially knowing that my [five year old] sister is now starting primary school.”**  
(C1Y1-LM3-19F).

**“My savings are my parents’ savings and those are my sister's savings as well ... for us, it's everybody's money, it's the family's money”**  
(C1Y1-FG11-35M).





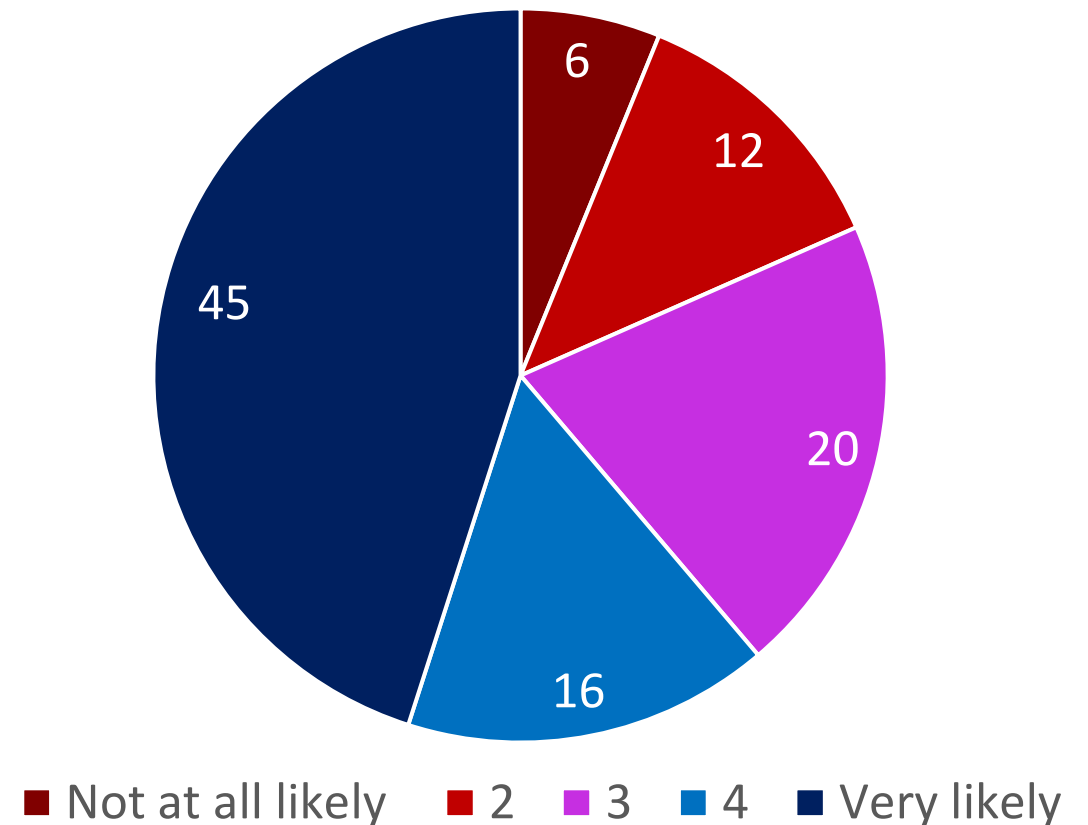
# Motivation for work: Immigration

According to the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE, 2021), **60%** of international students intend to apply for permanent residence in Canada.

The HWS 2018 survey yielded similar findings.

In qualitative data, participants expressed their intention to transition from part-time work to full-time work after graduation (with some hoping to obtain full-time work with their current employer), which would enable them to pursue PR.

How likely are you to pursue Canadian permanent residency?



# Immigration and subjectification

*When a student “is ‘allowed’ to be an author” (Biesta, 2020, p. 104)*

Reasons that participants shared for wanting to immigrate

- ☐ Safety and security
- ☐ Instability in home country
- ☐ Wage differences
- ☐ Healthcare
- ☐ Options (e.g., dual citizenship)





# Motivation for work: Exploring interests

*“encouraging an ‘appetite’ for trying to live one’s life in the world” (Biesta, 2020, p. 97)*



“Co-op programs is something that **gives the exposure to the outside world**, you can also **know what you like to do and what you don’t like to do**”

(C1Y2-Y2F-20-13M).



# Impact of work: Appreciating the value of money

*“grown-up ways of existing” (Biesta, 2020, p. 97)*

**“... I used to just get everything from my parents, I didn’t work.**

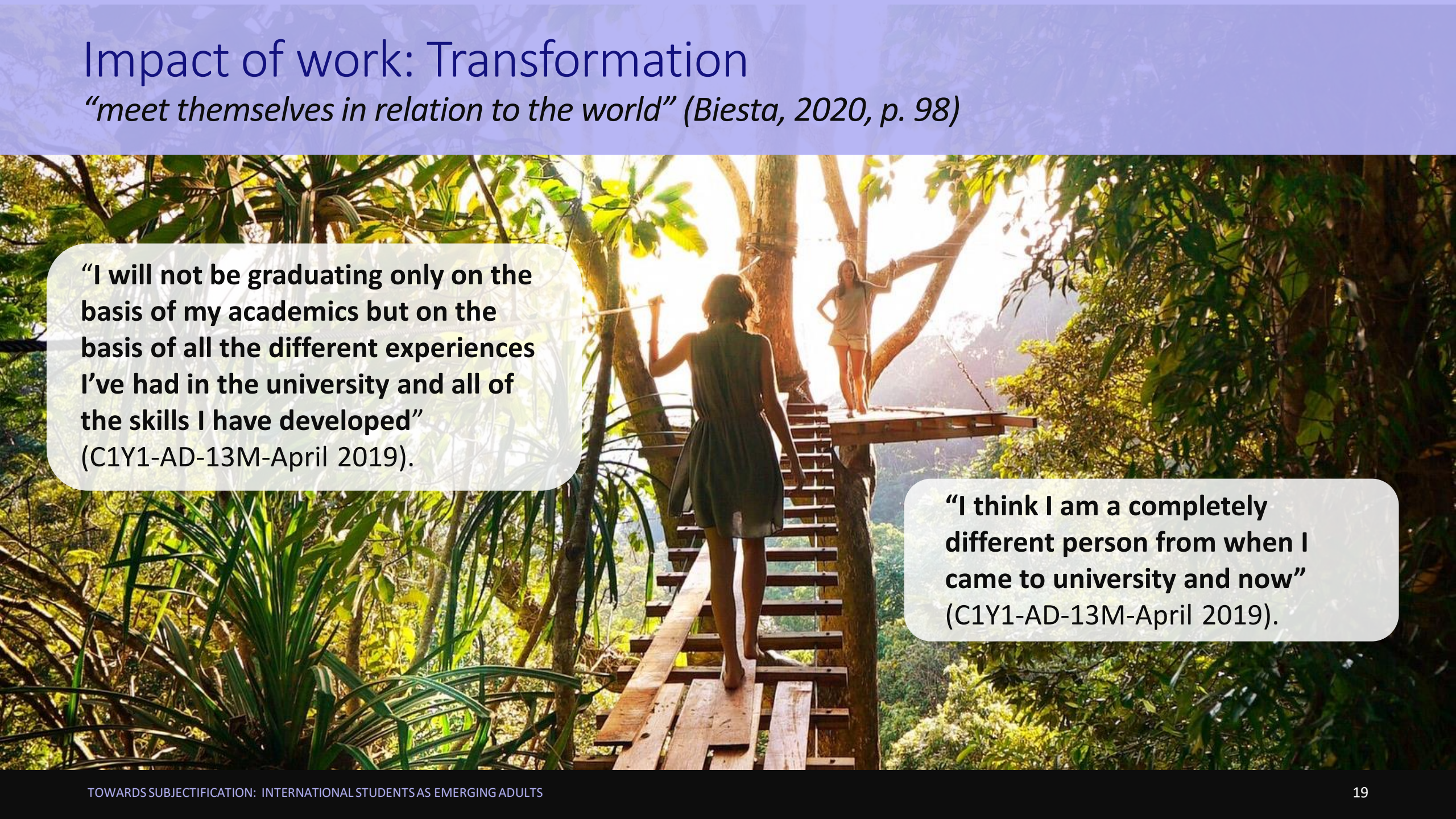
**And so right now ... it’s like,  
there is a balance,  
like you want to spend but you  
don’t want to spend because  
you feel like I worked so hard  
to earn it”  
(C2Y1-FG21-55F)**





# Impact of work: Transformation

*“meet themselves in relation to the world” (Biesta, 2020, p. 98)*

A photograph of a woman in a dark dress walking up a wooden staircase built into a large tree in a lush jungle. Another person is standing on a wooden platform higher up in the tree. The scene is bathed in warm, golden light, suggesting late afternoon or early morning. The background is filled with dense tropical foliage and trees.

**“I will not be graduating only on the basis of my academics but on the basis of all the different experiences I’ve had in the university and all of the skills I have developed”**  
(C1Y1-AD-13M-April 2019).

**“I think I am a completely different person from when I came to university and now”**  
(C1Y1-AD-13M-April 2019).



# (Negative) Impact of work: Lack of time for broader exploration and self-authorship

**“working has definitely made it harder to create more time for clubs and other extra-curricular events” (C1Y1-AD-32M-April 2019).**

**“I feel there are a lot of things I’ve missed out that I could get here. But I’m still missing out because I want to work. So, like simple things, like learning a musical instrument. A lot of people at university know at least one musical instrument. I’ve never learned any and I feel like this is the chance that I can pick it up.**

**I can always start, but I can’t because I’m committed to work.”  
(C1Y1-FG6-19F).**





# Concluding thoughts: Juxtaposing Biesta's and a participant's words

“education always also impacts on the student as individual, **either by enhancing or by restricting capacities and capabilities**” (Biesta, 2020, p. 92).

“education as subjectification needs to work with the principle of *“suspension”* — of slowing down, of giving time, so that students can meet the world, meet themselves in relation to the world” (Biesta, 2020, p. 98).

Freedom “is about how I exist as the subject of my own life, not as the object of what other people want from me.” (Biesta, 2020, p. 93).





# Concluding thoughts: Juxtaposing Biesta's and a participant's words

C1Y1-FG4-14M:

“... UBC maybe could look at **slowing things down**. I mean, you need to be fast paced to keep up with the top universities and the top businesses, but **it's ruining students lives** ... And they don't realize what kind of toll being a student can take on people.”



# Concluding thoughts: Juxtaposing Biesta's and a participant's words

C1Y1-FG4-14M:

“I shouldn't be studying on a Saturday. I should be doing everything that I want to do – whether it be going to the library to read about this topic that I'm interested in or doing my own research on something interesting.

But it's... not available **because in order to succeed at a big university like this you need to put all of your time and effort into succeeding the way that they want us to.**”





# Stay connected!

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## The Hard-Working Student Research Project

<https://blogs.ubc.ca/hardwork/>





# Thank You!

Find out more about the Hard-Working Student (HWS) Research Project:  
<https://blogs.ubc.ca/hardwork/>