

# Constructions of Punjabi international students in Canadian news media

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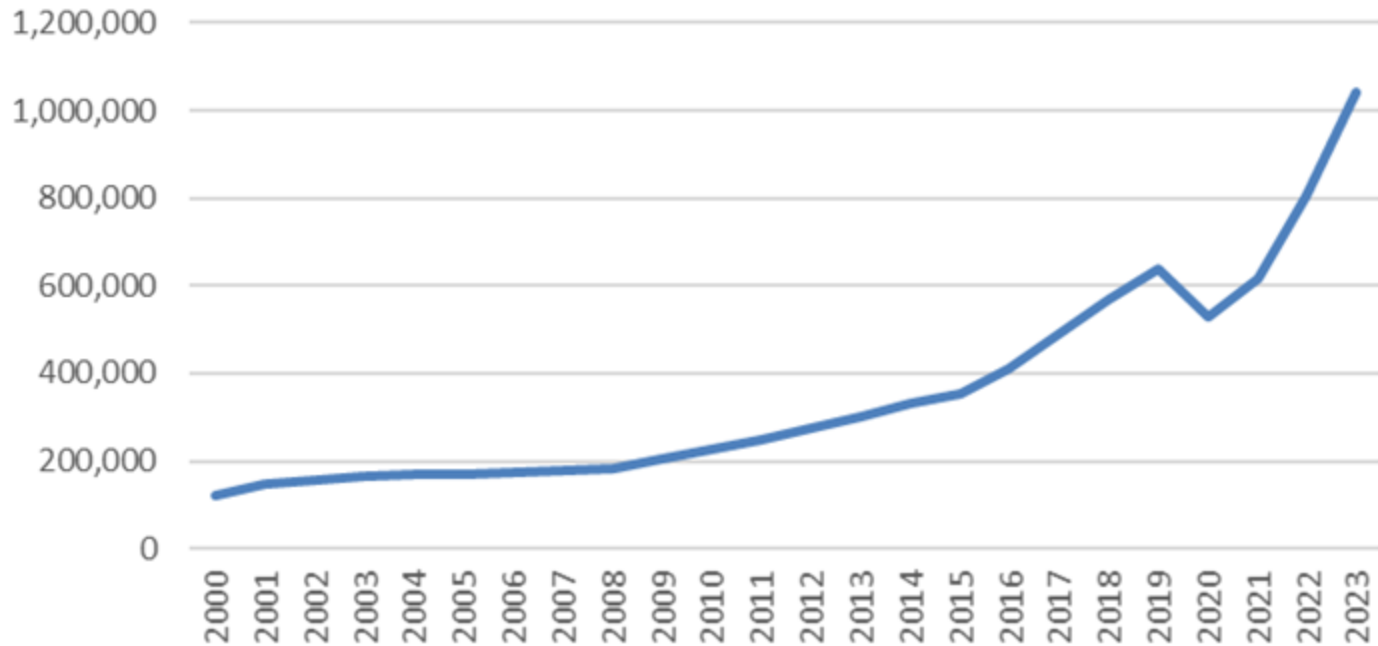
# Background: International student framings

- From early 2000s to COVID-19 pandemic, international post-secondary students in Canada framed as economically valuable (tuition, labour, immigrant source)
- Framing shifted in post-COVID-19 recovery period
  - Diminished “quality”
  - Exerting “demands” on Canada (IRCC, 2023b)
- Why?

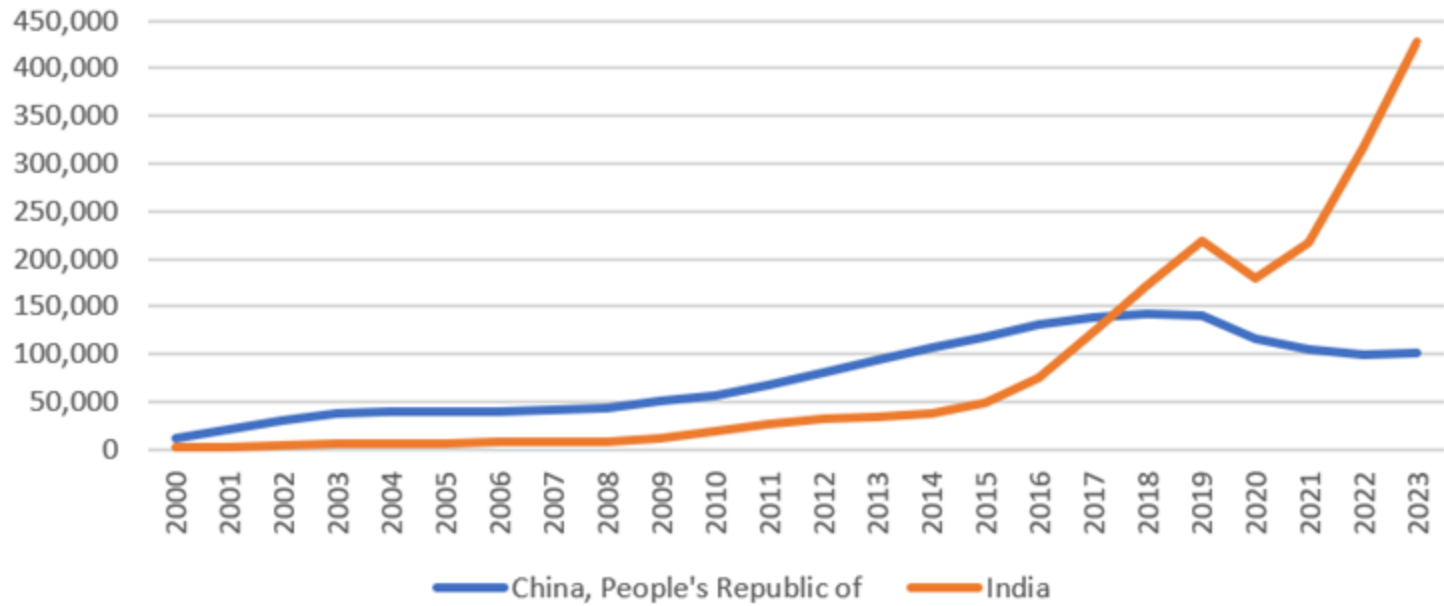
# Background: International student growth

- Dependency on international students across the Global North
  - Differential tuition
  - Labour (before and after studies)
  - Pool of potential 'ideal immigrants'
- Growth in Canadian study permit holder #s
  - 2000: 122,620
  - 2023: 1,040,985 (IRCC, 2024)
- In recent years, specifically:
  - Colleges
  - Indian international students
    - 2015: 48,755
    - 2023: 427,085

## Canada – Study permit holders with a valid permit on December 31st, 2000 - 2023



## Canada - Study permit holders with a valid permit on December 31, 2000-2023 (Chinese and Indian citizens only)



## Background: Focus on Punjabi international students

- Indian international students typically discussed as a homogenous group (in Canada); no disaggregated data
- Many international students are Punjabi; e.g., among non-permanent residents:
  - Punjabi most common mother tongue after English
  - Sikhism most common religion (Statistics Canada, 2022; 2023)
- Significant migration flows from Punjab to Canada
  - Decline/instability of agriculture sector
  - Aggressive recruitment
- Economic, academic, social, and psychological challenges (Apna Health; Baughan & Minhas, 2018; Kahlon, 2021; Marom, 2022b; Marom & Kahlon, 2023)



**Stuart Hall (1974; 1993a, 1993b)**

**Identity created through hegemonic discursive practices;**

**allows dominant groups to maintain power**

**Race = a discursive system situated in everyday social and economic relations**

**Societies regularly subject to periods of moral panic**

**“Othering” protects dominant group’s sense of national and cultural identity**

**Colonial framings of international students**

**Cash, competition, charity (Stein & Andreotti, 2016)**

**Labour (Coustere et al., 2024)**

**Are Punjabi international students framed differently?**

SPORTS FINAL  
**DAILY NEWS**

NEW YORK'S HOMEOWNERS NEWS  
**Trump throws rubber nose**

**CLOWN  
RUNS  
FOR  
PREZ**



- **Insults Mexicans**
- **'I'll be**
- **Vows border wall**
- **Rips Bernie**

AD-LIBS CIRCUS SPEECH TO FORMALLY ANNOUNCE — SEE PAGES 4-5

EXCLUSIVE: LET'S GO TO THE DNA, SAYS DOLEZAL DAD PAGES 16-17

News Full coverage of Trump's astounding victory pages 2-15 Business What it means for the world economy pages 1-4

# THAT SHOOK THE WORLD ★

## The Daily Telegraph

NATIONAL NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

### Trump's American revolution

Reagan Democrats' confound polls and hand Republican candidate keys to the White House

By Ruth Skelton in Mexico

DONALD TRUMP pulled off his shock election victory by reviving support among white working class voters who had deserted the Republican party for two decades.

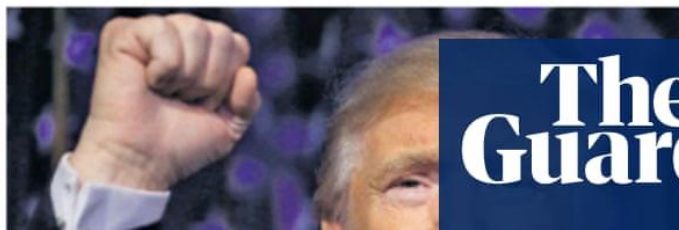
The so-called "Reagan Democrats" returned to the party in numbers not seen since the 1960s.

as one called people." Less than a day after landing chants of "lock her up", Mr Trump said that Mrs Clinton was owed "a major debt of gratitude for her service to our country".

In the aftermath of one of the most dramatic elections in US history:

● Mrs Clinton delivered a frank concession speech, holding back tears as she apologized to supporters and admitted that defeat was "staggerating and painful".

● The Republican party retained control of both the Senate and the House of Representatives, giving Mr Trump a green light to implement policies he has promised.



The people rise up in this nation's latest seismic shift

The Guardian



PRESIDENT TRUMP: 13 PAGES OF UNRIVALLED COVERAGE



# Representation

Rather than “Why”?

Who created the representation?

How is “reality” represented?

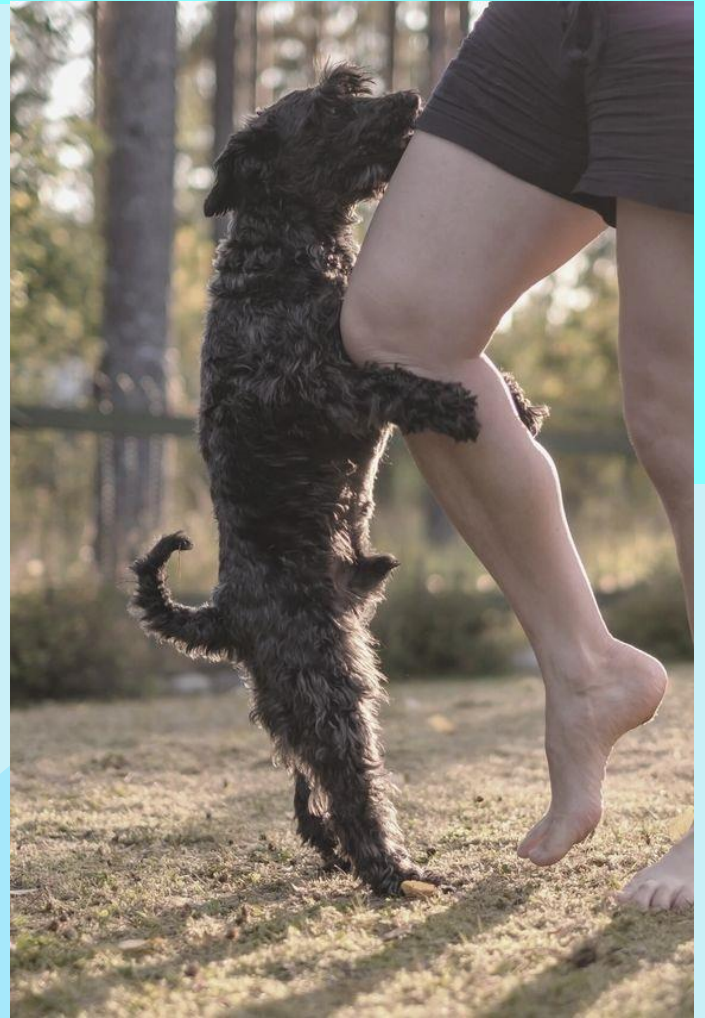






**Those in power create  
meaning**

## Asserting dominance



# Othering



# Methodology: Corpus

- ProQuest Canada Newstream database search
- English-language newspapers (*Toronto Star*, *Vancouver Sun*, *Globe and Mail*, *National Post*, *Brampton Guardian*, and *Abbotsford News*)
- January 31, 2020 to January 31, 2024
- ("foreign students" OR "international students") AND ("India?" OR "Punjab?" OR "South Asian")
- Initial search: 291 articles
  - Removals:
    - 41 duplicates
    - 98 out-of-scope
- Final corpus: 152 articles

TORONTO STAR

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

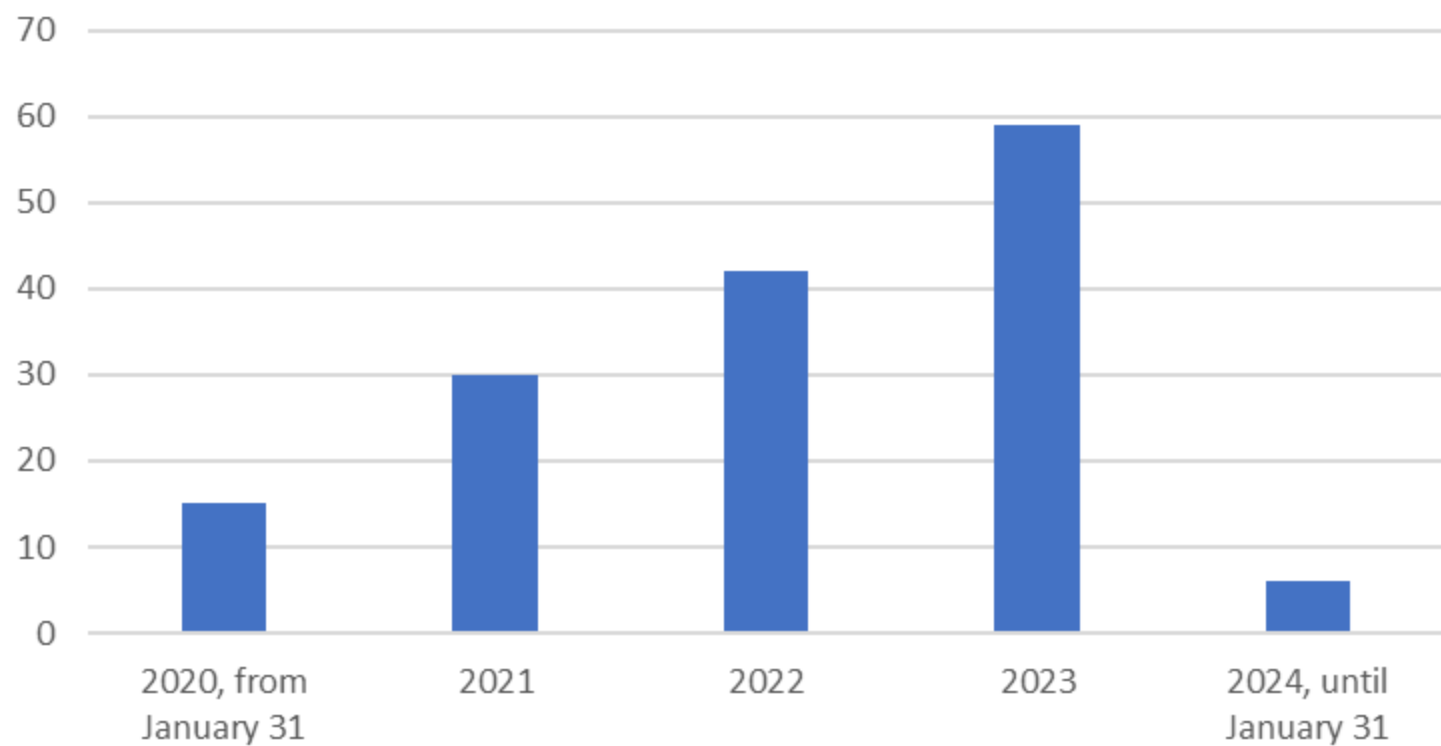
VANCOUVER  
SUN

NATIONAL  
POST

BRAMPTON  
Guardian.

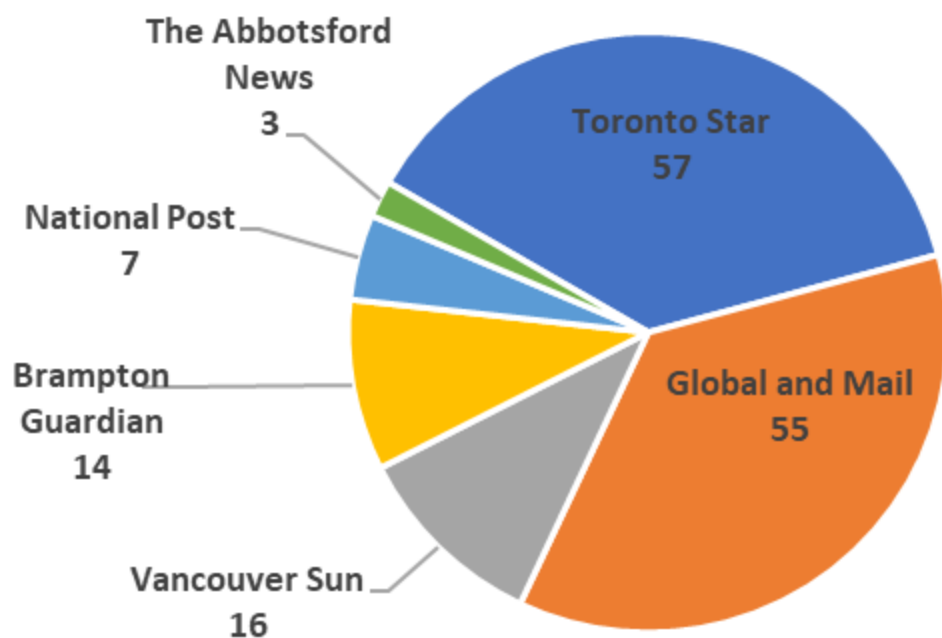
THE  
NEWS  
ABBOTSFORD

## Number of articles in corpus





## Newspaper distribution of articles in corpus



# Methodology: Analysis

- Framing analysis (Entman, 1993)
- Four key frames:
  1. Victims
  2. “System abusers” or linked to fraud/criminality
  3. Commodities
  4. Straining Canadian infrastructure

# Findings: “Victim” frame

- Different aspects of their lives (e.g., as students, workers, potential migrants, and in their personal lives)
- In multiple arenas (higher ed, the workforce, the migration process)
- COVID-19/travel ban; poor living conditions (housing, food insecurity); economic exploitation
- Different/contradictory notions of accountability:
  - victim blaming
  - blaming specific individuals or organizations (e.g., agents, private institutions)
  - more abstract systemic analyses
- Underlying deficient/naive “easy target” discourse

# Findings: “System abuser” frame

- Sometimes interwoven with victimhood/exploitation narratives
- Key foci:
  - Canada’s immigration system (backdoor entry, study permit as work permit)
  - Threat of asylum claims/overstaying
  - Fraudulent documents
- Punjabi international students connected to abuse/fraud in both explicit and subtle ways
- Class positionality evoked as “different” from other/previous/stereotypical international students

# Findings: “Commodity” frame

- Framed as commodities for dependent higher education institutions
- Also connected to frames of victimhood
- Focus on labour market participation/need to work

## Findings: “Straining Canadian infrastructure” frame

- Emerged post-COVID-19 pandemic
- Especially in areas with high concentrations of Punjabi international students (e.g., Surrey, BC and Brampton, ON) (Stats Can, 2024)
- Focus on rental housing

# Conclusion

- Media coverage reproduced hegemonic understandings of Punjabi international students' value to Canada as a so-called "host" country:
  - Those perceived to be of high economic value with low social costs are welcomed
  - Those who are not become figures upon which the "host" country's problems can be projected
- Fragmented picture
  - "Othered" victim clearly identifiable
  - Perpetrators largely obfuscated

# Questions?

Marom, L., Brunner, L. R., Chhina, G., & Fontaine, P. (Under review). Constructions of Punjabi international students in Canadian news media. In A. P. Kaur & I. S. Rajan (Eds.), *Punjabi diaspora: Socio-cultural, political and economic engagements*. Routledge.