

RESEARCH CONNECTION

Exploring the intercultural and holistic transformative learning experiences of professional Colombian immigrants in Canada

By Lili Jardine, EdD



Professional Colombian Immigrants' Journeys to Success ([Jardine, 2023](#)).

Why this research is important

Previous Canadian studies that included participants from Latin America tended to focus only on refugees who were facing barriers; these participants were situated in one location or were female. Other studies did not capture the journeys of professional Colombian immigrants with respect to ICC and holistic TL since these two theoretical lenses are usually explored in isolation. Therefore, this research addresses the gap in bridging the connection between ICC and holistic TL. Additionally, the findings of this study can inform immigrants and stakeholders that are involved in their journeys to not only help them enhance their ICC to integrate into their host community, but also foster holistic TL, as they pursue professional success.

What you need to know

Many professional Colombian immigrants who choose to immigrate to Canada (*host country*) may find that having a professional career and speaking the *target language* may not be enough to succeed professionally in their *host community* (community of settlement). Additionally, Colombians are one of the Latin American groups that face the most discrimination, poverty, and unemployment in Canada ([Armony, 2014](#)). Thus, the purpose of this study was to explore the journeys of eight professional Colombian immigrants who felt successful in Canada, specifically,

to what extent did ... [they] experience holistic *Transformative Learning* (TL), changes in their frames of reference, and enhance *Intercultural Communicative Competence* (ICC), to communicate appropriately in the target language, after living in Canada for two or more years, in their path to professional success? ([Jardine, 2023](#), p. ii)

How this research was conducted

This qualitative study, located in narrative inquiry, consisted of two rounds of semi-structured interviews and one demographic survey. The participants were gathered through snowball sampling by using a criterion matrix to choose the eight participants that presented the most variability. Purposely, the participants were located in different provinces and spoke the target language.

What the researcher found

During the participants' journey in Canada, they were able to enhance their ICC through different learning strategies that allowed them to build connections and integrate into their host communities. Thus, participants learned through relationships experiencing relational learning. For this reason, making connections became instrumental in their journeys. While they enhanced their ICC, they displayed positive attributes, becoming more confident, open-minded, flexible, strong, and humble. The connections also fostered self-reflection, impacting the way they were communicating with the host culture. Through their changes in attitudes and interactions, the participants experienced different levels of holistic TL, displaying changes in their personality identity.

How this research can be used

The findings of this research serve many stakeholders. While the complete document offers more strategies for all the stakeholders, this document only shares a few. Immigrants or prospective immigrants could take advantage of volunteering opportunities in Canada to enhance their ICC and obtain a Canadian experience. Post-secondary institutions could consider strategies like relational pedagogy to amplify the voices of their international students and immigrants and to foster relational learning.

Community organizations could create partnerships with post-secondary institutions and other organizations, such as the Chamber of Commerce, to offer opportunities that could enhance the ICC of their employees, including immigrants, such as mentoring, volunteering, and intercultural dialogues.

About the researcher

Dr. Jardine is a sessional instructor at Brandon University and the University of Calgary, and also an entrepreneur. Some of her research areas include intercultural competence and transformative learning around immigrants.

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Publication based on this research

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