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Article

## Later-Life Learning Among Latin Americans in Canada: Toward a Critical Pedagogy of Place

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### Abstract

This article examines interconnections between place-based education and the Latin American Canadian migratory life course. It presents findings of a grounded theory study that utilized in-depth interviews of 15 Latin American Canadian immigrant older adults (55 years and older) who participate in a mobile adult day support programme in northwest Toronto. The study explored the experiences of service-users of place-based education aimed at developing or strengthening their livelihood strategies. Findings revealed that many ageing immigrants view place-based education as a vital resource that supports their ability to access culturally specific and mainstream services, expands their social networks, and can boost their life chances at successive life course stages. However, findings also indicated that immigrants also view place-based education as inadequate and ill-timed and would have preferred greater access to education when they first settled in Canada. The article contributes to emergent scholarship on ageing, transnational migration, and localized education for settlement and integration. Conceptually, it advances a life course justice approach to racialized immigrants' later-life learning by underscoring the utility of integrating a critical pedagogy of place into community education.

### Keywords

ageing; migration; community education; critical pedagogy of place; life course justice; place-based learning

### Issue

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### 1. Introduction

Community education, a key element of Canada's migration regime, is used consistently to support immigrants' (formal and informal) learning and settlement. A related component, place-based education, advances localized and self-sustaining knowledge that is meaningful for the spaces and places learners occupy. At the level of the community, the approach supports processes of education, enculturation, and resilience using learners' real-world experiences. The expectation is that learners will adapt to their communities and become engaged Canadian citizens. The intensification of transnational processes guarantees that migrants will enter a dizzying world of cross-cultural experiences when they arrive in Canada. Over time, they interact with other migrants and create local transcultural communities. These communities are

defined as places in which inhabitants with diffuse, fluid, and multidimensional identities routinely cross cultural and ethnic boundaries and strive toward greater integration, or even disintegration (Epstein, 2012). In transcultural communities, immigrants constantly require new learnings and adaptations to support their long-term integration locally and in the wider Canadian society (Reid, 2019). This is true despite their educational backgrounds, learning styles, and capabilities.

For the past six decades, policies and practices flowing from the ideology of multiculturalism aim to manage difference or cultural diversity within the Canadian population by highlighting the salience of racial and religious ethnic differences among members of minority groups, thereby allowing them to maintain distinctive identities and practices. Such policies have also been central to the development of competencies and the delivery of

education that migrant populations are thought to need to integrate into Canada.

The aim of clause 31(b) of Canada's 1988 Multiculturalism Act is, *inter alia*, "to convey a strong sense of legitimacy to those individuals and communities who feel and/or understand that either their culture or their race has limited their role and acceptance in Canadian society" (Government of Canada, 1988). Central to this aim is the building of a Canadian national identity that is supported by education programmes that offer basic language, literacy, skills training, and professional education to adult newcomers (Guo, 2015). However, as communities build social capital, they are able to push against the normative legislative framework of society-building and national identity that multiculturalism and multicultural education demarcate, toward greater flexibility, cooperation, and openness between ethnic groups in local communities (Guo & Maitra, 2020; Jurkova & Guo, 2022). This pushing back has increased opportunities for the delivery of place-based education to support migrants within a transcultural framework. Sobel (2004, p. 7) explains that place-based education is "the process of using the local community and environment as a starting point to teach concepts." Localized education thus uses the community as "text" to develop the competencies required to live and thrive in a diverse globalized society such as Canada and in local communities that immigrants and their collectivities inhabit.

This article presents findings of a grounded theory study that utilized in-depth interviews of 15 Latin American older adults (55 years and older) who participate in Unity in Diversity: Ageing at Home—a community-based mobile adult day programme in northwest Toronto. The programme draws on place-based education strategies to develop or strengthen the livelihood strategies of ageing migrants. This study is the first to explore the utilization of place-based education among community-dwelling ageing Latin American immigrants in Canada. The study's central question was: What are the experiences of ageing Latin American immigrants who participate in place-based learning activities in Toronto? Drawing on the insights of education scholars such as Langran and DeWitt (2020) and Freire (2011), as well as those of sociologist Teelucksingh (2006), which focuses on visible minorities within racialized urban spaces in Toronto, the article advances a life course justice perspective to explore the merits, limitations and contradictions evident in the delivery and use of place-based educational supports for racialized immigrants. In so doing, it advocates for the incorporation of a critical pedagogy of place framework into community education in order to develop or strengthen learners' and educators' capacity for critical thinking, social action and transformation.

### 1.1. Place-Based Education and Ageing Immigrants

While transnational migration is pervasive and creates the need for older adults to learn and adapt to new

circumstances, the literature examining the nexus of ageing, transnational migration, and lifelong learning is emergent (Hepburn & Coloma, 2020; Zhu & Zhang, 2019). Immigrants' learning is often framed within resettlement programmes delivered by ethnocultural community-based organizations that provide housing, employment, and second-language education. As immigrants age, these services become less available and are replaced by services that focus primarily on recreation, health system navigation, skills training such as basic computer skill development, and psychogeriatric educational programming support within the context of healthcare.

The Unity in Diversity: Ageing at Home mobile adult day support programme was launched in 2009 and provides services to more than 300 participants from 10 ethnocultural communities in northwest Toronto (Jane and Finch Community and Family Centre, 2017). The programme is positioned within a continuum of support services for older adult immigrants and refugees and seeks to foster later-life learning and individual and collective resilience among community-dwelling older adults (Hepburn, 2020).

The adult day support programme provides informal education to service users with diverse educational backgrounds and learning capacities. Many service users often have low literacy levels in their native or home language and English and French, Canada's official languages. Therefore, informal learning strategies can combine place-based learning to convey health information, teach new skills, or develop existing ones. Gruenewald and Smith (2008, p. xvi) explain that "place-based education can be understood as a community-based effort to reconnect the process of education, enculturation, and human development to the well-being of community life." This explanation builds on Sobel's (2004, p. 7) work that outlines a foundational understanding of place-based education which emphasizes "hands-on, real-world learning experiences." As Sobel (2004, p. 7) notes:

This approach to education...helps students develop stronger ties to their community, enhances students' appreciation for the natural world, and creates a heightened commitment to serving as active, contributing citizens. Community vitality and environmental quality are improved through the active engagement of local citizens, community organizations, and environmental resources.

In considering the goals of place-based education, Casto (2016, p. 143) notes that it aims to ground "the educational experience in a local geography, including the history, politics, culture, and practices of a physical space." Therefore, it binds "[learners] to their place, including their social, cultural, and geographic community, through educational practice" (p. 143). Arguably, place-based education can assist in the development of community-level social capital and the strengthening of collective resilience among community-dwelling ageing

immigrants who participate in lifelong and place-based learning. Given that place-based education appears to be delivered in largely piecemeal and informal contexts, its strategies, modes of instruction, evaluation, efficacy and contradictions require in-depth research which is absent in scholarship focused on community-based ageing migrant populations in Canada.

### 1.2. Latin American Canadians

Canada's Department of Citizenship and Immigration identifies individuals from South and Central America as Latin Americans. There are approximately 447,325 Latin Americans in Canada, with the majority numbering 195,950 and living primarily in the province of Ontario (Statistics Canada, 2016). The region's top five immigrant source countries include Mexico (80,585), Colombia (70,035), El Salvador (48,075), Peru (29,620), and Brazil (29,315). Ontario's capital, Toronto, is among the province's top three cities with Latin American populations higher than the national average. Its Latin American population is 2.9% higher than the national average. The other two cities are Bradford (3.4%) and Leamington (3%; Statistics Canada, 2016).

The majority of Latin American Canadians (238,930) are between the ages of 25 to 54. However, significant portions of the population are ageing. Approximately 21,285 Latin Americans aged 55 to 64 years live in Ontario. Approximately 14,630 individuals in the same demographic live in Toronto. In the age range of 65 and over, 15,760 individuals live in Ontario. Correspondingly, 11,445 individuals in this cohort live in Toronto (Statistics Canada, 2016).

There is limited research on Latin Americans' social and economic integration, specifically their settlement outcomes and labour force participation in Canada. However, Hernandez (2021) explains that those participating in the labour market earn incomes that lag behind the Canadian total mean income of \$68,100. The population's settlement patterns highlight a preference for urban centres with a majority working in service industries, light manufacturing and health care. The age group 15 to 24 shows steady increases in enrolment in educational programmes. However, there are no statistics on enrolment among later-life learners in educational programmes.

### 1.3. Latin American Canadians in Urban, Racialized Communities

The Latin American Canadians that are the focus of the study presented in this article live in the Jane-Finch community, which is located in Toronto's northwest quadrant. Seventy percent of the neighbourhood's residents are visible minorities and 61% are immigrants. The vast majority of residents live in low income—31% below the national average (Statistics Canada, 2016). The area's residents are served by numerous community-based agen-

cies that focus on enhancing community involvement, integration, and well-being. Latin American Canadians live alongside numerous other racialized immigrant populations in the community but have been under-researched in comparison to other populations such as African/Caribbean and Asian immigrants. At first glance, their seeming unproblematic integration and acceptance by local populations have led researchers to suggest that they are almost invisible (Armony, 2014). While they number only 8.2% of visible minorities in Jane-Finch, an exploration of Latin American Canadians' experience of settlement and integration is critical for understanding their settlement experiences in such racialized high-density, low-income communities as Jane-Finch (Statistics Canada, 2016).

Teelucksingh (2006, p. 1) observes that, in Canada, growing numbers of racial and ethnic minorities are being drawn into urban centres and notes that "this demographic fact enables various levels of government to point, reassuringly, to objective evidence of racial diversity and the dominant ideology of multiculturalism." Teelucksingh regards the trend as alarming and contends that a high concentration of racialized groups in urban centres is not evidence of racial diversity or harmony. It is instead evidence of "commodified versions of multiculturalism in the form of 'ethnic culture,' 'ethnic neighbourhoods,' and 'ethnic restaurants' that can be tolerated and/or consumed as cultural products within the global economy" (Teelucksingh, 2006, p. 1). The result, according to Teelucksingh, is that immigrants such as racialized Latin American Canadians are "relegated to the status of otherness" in urban centres (such as Jane-Finch) upon which race is spatially mapped. In these places, race operates as an organizing principle that structures ideas of desirability and undesirability of its residents, often relegating them to low-income occupations and limited opportunities to compete in the knowledge-based economy. Teelucksingh explains that the Jane-Finch community is a key example of the spatial extension of racial domination and resistance. The community "draws attention to the material and symbolic construction of racialized, undesirable bodies via the spatial workings of racialized power" (Teelucksingh, 2006, p. 2).

While Latin American Canadians are not a fixed racialized group and many have over time been able to move in and out of racialization, class discourses often accompany processes of racialization which result in their differential access to resources such as quality and sustained second language education and training within urban centres (Armony, 2014; Teelucksingh, 2006). Localized education typically seeks to address issues of access and differential incorporation into society. However, drawing on Teelucksingh's insights on urban racialized spaces, Jane-Finch can be positioned as a conceptual and methodological tool for understanding the patterns of social organization that are being reproduced through community education in such places. Jane-Finch is a racialized space that is inscribed in Latin

American Canadians' everyday experiences. Therefore, place-based education within this locale requires critical analysis of how it is experienced and utilized by learners in the community.

#### *1.4. Conceptual Framework: Immigrants' Later-Life Learning, Life Course Justice, and a Critical Pedagogy of Place*

Shibao Guo and Srabani Maitra are among the few Canadian scholars to have addressed the education, migration, and ageing nexus. They contend that in Canada, later-life learning is often underpinned by "colonial forms of knowledge formation and racial modalities" (Guo & Maitra, 2020, p. 6). They note that these modalities require examination, "particularly in the context of transnational migrants living and working in western countries" (p. 6). A critical exploration of this nexus can bring to the surface the extent to which racial modalities in ageing immigrants' learning entrench everyday bordering systems that devise and utilize processes and practices for sorting and excluding migrants (Morrice, 2019). For example, within the settlement process, limited and truncated literacy and language education are often positioned to manage and facilitate the liminal integration of racialized immigrants and refugees in Canada. Further, Guo and Maitra (2020) contend that there is a racialization and stratification of knowledge within the curricular and pedagogical approaches that frame later-life learning in Canada. Practices of later-life learning often project immigrants as lacking in skills, knowledge, and identity markers and also modulate them as immigrant-worker subjects. While race relations and racial modalities are not an explicit goal of multicultural education and policies, Johnson and Joshee (2007, p. 142) argue that they are by nature and scope "implicated through the goal of promoting better intergroup relations" in Canada.

James (1995, p. 35) argues that "insofar as these policies set out how governments will respond to and accommodate the diverse population, then they provide a framework which will inform [educational] practices." As a sociocultural phenomenon, later-life learning is circumscribed by unequal power distribution. Hepburn and Coloma (2020) explain that formal and informal education is critical for racialized and diasporic immigrant older adults as they move toward the distal end of the migratory life course. They explain: "As they age, life transitions may require that they acquire or lose social roles and identities and thus through lifelong learning, they mobilise new skills in order to adapt to new circumstances and to varying degrees" (Hepburn & Coloma, 2020, p. 51). Yet, despite its importance to this population, later-life learning "has not attracted the empirical attention it deserves, given that knowledge and skill acquisition throughout the life course have been found to promote well-being, resilience, interest in technology, health management, and social participation, including the maintenance of social ties" (p. 49).

As ageing immigrants, Latin American Canadians' ability to utilize the learning process to improve their position in social, cultural, and economic structures is incumbent on their ability to navigate power systems and restrictive educational practices and policies. This ability can be supported by a life course justice approach to later-life learning that promotes a decolonization of learning policies and practices so that there is a fulsome understanding of what knowledge, skills, and ways of learning immigrant older adults find meaningful, necessary, or beneficial as they advance through their life course stages (Hepburn & Coloma, 2020).

The process of decolonizing later-life learning can be framed within a humanistic and more progressive view of education and the life course of ageing, racialized immigrants. Such a view interrogates the multicultural ethos that stratifies identities and knowledges and creates a more inclusive framework for lifelong learning. Guo and Maitra (2020, p. 14) contend that decolonization "would lead to the need for planning and designing lifelong learning curricula as well as institutionalized pedagogy based on non-western knowledge systems and epistemic diversity." Drawing on the work of Smith (1999), decolonization as a sociopolitical process can support a reimagining of marginalized identities, cultural knowledges, and practices. Such a process would frame later-life learning within the contexts of the importance of transcultural and immigrant communities that "hold within them deeper resources and ways of being" and support the emergence of a critical episteme that is framed by their embodied, quotidian experiences of learning and living within their communities (Hepburn & Coloma, 2020; Patel, 2016, p. 16). This humanistic approach aligns with the insights of Freire (2011, p. 74) who argues that the goal of education should not be the "integration" of "marginals," nor decolonization per se but rather, the goal of education should be to foster critical awareness and transformation.

The integration of a critical pedagogy of place in the delivery of localized education to Latin American Canadians and other ageing community-dwelling immigrants is generative for this process of fostering critical awareness and transformation. It is within the context of receiving localized education that immigrants, as learners, can be supported to identify "the distinguishing features of the ground beneath [their] feet" (Templeman, 2012, as cited in Reid, 2019). According to Gruenewald (2003b, p. 9), place-based education aims to (a) identify, recover, and create material spaces and places that teach us how to live well in our total environments (rehabilitation) and to (b) identify and change ways of thinking that injure and exploit other people and places (decolonization).

A sense of place refers to "the meanings of an attachment to a place held by a person or group" (Semken, 2005, p. 149). These meanings are non-exhaustive and can take many forms:

Including, but not limited to, aesthetic, economic, recreational, or spiritual value; familial or kincentric

rootedness; and cultural, historical, political, or scientific significance—can be associated with the same place, as different individuals and communities will experience it and know it in different ways. (Semken et al., 2017, p. 544)

If all of our life experiences are circumscribed by the power of place, then it is prudent that ageing racialized community-dwelling immigrants should have access to education that integrates critical and transcultural understandings of the ways in their spatial narratives, communities, and learning experiences are defined by social, political, or economic power structures (de Blij, 2008; Langran & DeWitt, 2020).

## 2. Methodology

This article utilizes data from a qualitative study that engaged 15 Latin American female older adults (aged 55 years and older) who are weekly participants in the Unity in Diversity mobile adult day support programme at the Jane and Finch Community and Family Centre in Toronto. The participants are originally from Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Venezuela and, while some have lived in Canada for as long as 40 years, others migrated to Canada in just the last decade. As part of a larger group of participants from varying ethnic groups, they attended a series of summer workshops focused on communication technology skills and later received virtual education and social service support during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research protocol was approved by York University's Office of Research Ethics and was conducted between July 2019 and December 2020. The study utilized constructivist grounded theory to provide a rich and layered account of participants' experiences of place-based learning within their community setting. Grounded theory encompasses "a systematic, inductive and comparative approach for conducting inquiry for the purpose of constructing theory" and requires the researcher to constantly interact with the data such as narratives while also being open to emerging analyses (Hepburn, 2020, p. 439).

## 3. Data Collection and Analysis

Purposive sampling was used to recruit potential participants. The strategy was designed to engage with a diverse range of participants who could provide multiple perspectives or variations of meaning ascribed to place-based learning. While multiple perspectives emerged, the study's aim was not to seek to "generalize information but to elucidate the particular, the specific" (Creswell, 2007, p. 126). I engaged participants in individual interviews that were up to 90 minutes in length. Interview data was then transcribed and anonymized. Interviews followed a format of intensity interviewing, which is a "gently-guided, one-sided conversation that explores research participants' perspec-

tives on their personal experience with the research topic" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 56). Following this technique, I relied on open-ended questions and followed up on unanticipated and emergent areas of inquiry, intimations, and couched views. In grounded theory, interviews create and open interactional space that is emergent, yet direct (Charmaz, 2014). Five participants were selected from the larger group for theoretical sampling and intensity sampling. Charmaz (2014) recommends using theoretical sampling, which involves selecting a smaller representative sample from participants whose feedback can generate theory building. This recommendation is linked to the strategy of intensity sampling in which information-rich cases illustrate the phenomenon intensely, though not extremely (Patton, 2015, p. 279).

I used memos to record the study's analytic phases and to construct theoretical categories, as well as document methodological dilemmas, directions, and decisions. Memos were helpful in guiding my process of defining codes and categories, making comparisons between codes and categories, entering raw data such as empirical evidence to support category definitions and the identification of gaps and patterns in the analysis (Hepburn, 2020). Writing memos is an essential aspect of data collection and analysis that results in a grounded theory because it is the methodological link and distillation process that aids in the transformation of data into theory (Lempert, 2007). I utilized two coding strategies: initial coding, which attempts to identify actions in each segment; and focused coding, which sharpens and condenses initial codes into conceptual categories and advances theory-building. The project was supported by grounded theory's iterative process of moving back and forth between empirical data and emerging analyses (Charmaz, 2014). Both data collection and analysis proceeded simultaneously, each guiding the other.

## 4. Findings

Fifteen Latin American Canadians residing in Toronto participated in the study. An analysis of their narratives revealed descriptions of their experiences of place-based learning in a mobile adult day support programme and its role in supporting their integration in Canada. Two major categories of interrelated concepts about how they experience place-based education emerged: (a) place-based learning for system navigation and well-being and (b) place-based learning for ongoing integration.

### 4.1. Place-Based Learning for System Navigation and Well-Being

As participants age, they have increasingly relied on localized support to ensure that they can delay going into long-term care or retirement homes and maintain their independence within their communities. Many participants indicated that learning in the community has been beneficial to their efforts at self-directed care and

navigating the local health and social service system. One participant who was born in Ecuador in 1941 and who migrated to Canada in 1972 explained that she finds learning activities useful for health and social service system navigation. She stated:

I have been coming to this programme for many years and I use it to learn about taxes and what health services are available for people my age. I know what services to get and where. Sometimes it means I have to get help outside of the community, like at a bigger agency, but I know where to go.

A Guatemalan participant who was born in 1929 and arrived in Canada in 1994 reported that learning in a cooperative setting and with other community members keeps her mind active and engaged. The programme also mitigates the risk of isolation that often plagues unattached older adults in the community. She said:

I am with people I know. I learn a lot in the group and I keep my mind busy and this is good as I get older. I don't have any children so this group is like my family. They check on me if I don't come to the group.

In contemplating their perceptions and experiences of the process of learning new skills and gaining knowledge in a localized setting, some participants reported that their day programme learning activities focus on topics that are of practical importance. The topics include online safety, financial literacy, and healthy eating and meal preparation. Another participant who was born in Guatemala in 1950 and who came to Canada in 2001 spoke of the importance of learning activities for her and other service users. She stated:

We learn how to take care of our health and how to be safe in the community. We are getting older, so we need to pay attention to our food and how we treat our bodies. We learn about those things at the group every week.

This participant reported that programme staff are able to give instructions in both English and Spanish to support the learning process. She explained:

Some of the people who work with us are from our culture, and if we don't understand something, they can use Spanish and English.

A participant who was born in Colombia in 1951 and who moved to Canada in 2017 explained that local later-life learning was initially a challenge and she has had to adapt quickly. She stated:

I like inside and outside learning. I'm even learning a new language and about different cultures. I taught when I was in Colombia, so when I learn something,

I help other seniors, depending on what we are learning about.

While all participants spoke positively of how beneficial later-life learning activities are, some stated that their current learning is a continuation of their education after many decades away from formal learning. One participant who was born in 1941 in El Salvador and arrived in Canada in 1987 stated:

I did a technical degree in El Salvador. In Canada, I did ESL and a daycare assisting course for six months. My learning restarted as an old lady but I am happy it did. I wish I had a better chance to go to school in Canada, but these workshops are still helpful.

Another participant who was born in 1936 in Ecuador and arrived in Canada in 1974 shared similar sentiments about a truncated education since migrating:

I went to primary school in Ecuador. I did ESL and I was lucky to have a Cuban instructor. I stopped because I worked too much in the factory to go to school. I had to raise my three children. Now is the closest I have come to going back to school and doing something for myself. It's now that I have more time to focus on school.

Several participants stressed the need for meaningful and well-structured educational supports that are responsive to their needs as they age. Another participant who was born in Ecuador in 1949 and arrived in Canada in 1991 stated:

I go to five different community services but I prefer the ones that have us work on topics or have information sessions where we [are] learning something outside of arts and crafts. We need more than arts and crafts to know how to stay out of hospital.

Many participants, having been involved in place-based learning for several years, appear to be more discerning about which activities are beneficial and which ones are not. They compare programmes throughout the community and select those that are enjoyable and provide practical support, knowledge, and skills that can improve their well-being and independence. While participants in the study utilize place-based learning activities to gain new skills and knowledge, they also benefit from the social interaction among peers that aid in building and sustaining a sense of community.

#### *4.2. Place-Based Learning for Ongoing Integration*

Latin American Canadians in the study reported that their knowledge of the community, its resources, and its residents has improved since participating in adult day programming and localized learning activities.

Place-based learning activities also draw service users from a wide array of ethnocultural groups and many of the study's participants reported using weekly sessions and related recreational events as an opportunity to learn from or with different cultures.

One participant who was born in Venezuela in 1950 and arrived in Canada in 1993 explained that, since engaging in later-life learning activities, she has realized how much she has in common with learners from other cultures. She said:

When I started to come here I was so afraid to try new things or to let people know that I didn't know something. But then I realized that other people from different cultures were just like me, learning new things, and after a while I got more comfortable because I was learning in a group.

Communication technology, which has been integrated into place-based learning activities, boosts cross-cultural interactions among participants who routinely communicate on various social media platforms. A participant who was born in Guatemala in 1960 and moved to Canada in 1991 explained:

My English is not so good but [to survive] in Canada you have to learn new skills. It became a necessity. I think I am more Canadian now than before because I can understand more what people are saying and what is happening around me.

In stressing the importance of continuous learning and the importance of understanding how to use technology to maintain a transnational lifestyle, she continued:

I want to keep learning more to improve my knowledge, learn about my community and the world around me. This country and the world rely on technology and it changes all the time. That means I have to keep learning. Social media helps me to fit in here but I still get to know what is happening in Guatemala.

One participant who was born in El Salvador in 1953 and arrived in Canada in 1980 hinted at an awareness of positional differences in her reflection on place-based learning, her current life course stage, and her integration in Canada. She stated:

I went as far as secondary school in El Salvador. When I came to Canada I did ESL classes and I got a job as a machine operator. If I learned anything else it was through here at the centre. I think seniors like me need a little more education because we have missed out on a lot. It was good to get back to learning again but there is still so much to learn about *el sistema* [the system]. I feel I am starting to learn from the wrong end of my life in Canada.

Several other participants critically accounted for the social context of their earlier learning experience and current place-based learning in Canada. They questioned why they were not given greater access to learning opportunities or resources that could prepare them to get more stable employment earlier in their settlement process.

## 5. Discussion

Themes emerging from Latin American Canadians' narratives in this study have indicated the varied ways in which they utilize place-based learning to construct sustainable lifeways. Also, they have reported that their later-life learning activities are focused on the acquisition of new skills and knowledge as they age. While these narratives highlight the benefits of receiving localized education, they are also indicative of Latin American Canadians' awareness of the inadequacy of the education they have received since migrating to Canada. These contradictions point to the need for a close and critical exploration of the spatial contexts in which they live and learn. In racialized immigrant communities such as Jane-Finch, Latin American Canadians can access cost-effective and informal place-based education that is integrated in the weekly day programmes they attend. However, observations of sessions and strategies used to teach Latin American Canadians and other ageing immigrant cohorts typically reflected the banking model of education of which Freire (2011) was highly critical. In this model, the instructor imparts or narrates information to students with hardly any consideration for the development of critical reflection or social action.

Following Teelucksingh's (2006) observations of the Jane-Finch community as a dense urban space in which race is inscribed into the everyday life experience of its residents, it is prudent to examine the ways in which community-based social service agencies deliver localized education there. This is important given that most agencies that support immigrant populations have settlement and integration as their primary goals. Their programmes are framed primarily within the context of multiculturalism, the Canadian government's official approach to acculturation. These policies seek to promote racial harmony and manage the integration of racial groups but also discriminate against them (Henry et al., 2000).

An exploration of place-based learning among racialized migrants "draws together the dynamic interaction of processes of racialization and of space. Racialized spaces are fundamental to how individuals, the state and institutional practices make sense of and manage 'race'" (Teelucksingh, 2006, p. 9). It is thus reasonable to consider what a critical pedagogy of place model could look like in practice with ageing immigrant populations such as Latin American Canadians living in racialized spaces such as Jane-Finch. Freire (2011) has provided some foundational concepts that can frame a critical approach to community-based education. These concepts have



also influenced the work of Langran and DeWitt (2020) and that of Gruenewald and Smith (2008) whose insights have contributed to the development of a critical pedagogy of place as a multi-disciplinary practice. These concepts include: (a) reading the world, (b) situationality, (c) place-conscious education, (d) stories, and (e) critical consciousness of race.

Freire explains that reading the world refers to a process by which learners make sense of their surroundings through lived experience. The process occurs before they enter the classroom and is closely connected to their cultural identity and their sense of place in the world or their social class. Community educators should seek to integrate Latin American Canadians' lived experiences (for example, pre- and post-migration experiences, cultural practices, language, etc.) into their instructional activities in order to create an optimal learning environment (Langran & DeWitt, 2020). The foregrounding of Latin American Canadians' cultural identity in the classroom is fundamental to supporting their practices of representation and visibility (Hall, 1990). In fostering a culturally responsive place-based learning, Freire and Campos (1990, p. 5) contend that:

[Educators should value and engage with the] differing levels of knowledge that [learners] bring with them....This intellectual baggage is an expression of what might be called their cultural identity...[which has been] fashioned within the setting of [their] home, locality, town and is strongly influenced by social origins.

Hall (1990) contends that the valuing of cultural identity and local epistemologies is necessary in post-colonial societies. The integration of cultural practices in critical place-based education activities can humanize and rehabilitate communities, functioning as a counterweight to colonial processes that dehumanize racialized groups and devalue their knowledge.

Closely connected to learners' lived experience, the concept of situationality refers to how learners' social location in respect to other members within their community shapes what they do or what they believe is possible (Langran & DeWitt, 2020). Gruenewald (2003a, p. 627) explains that place-based educators should take learners' social location into account given "that places are what people make them—that people are place makers and places are the primary artifact of human culture." A critical pedagogy of place, therefore, demands that educators and learners acknowledge and explore the history of colonization in Canada. They ought to critically reflect on the role of migrant groups such as Latin American Canadians as part of the larger colonial project and on their presence in places that are unceded territories traditionally occupied and used by First Nations people and/or their ancestors.

Gruenewald (2003b) also contends that educators should promote a place-conscious education by critically

examining their assumptions about learning spaces and communities they use or occupy—for example, through *reinhabitation*, whereby learners and educators consider how to live well in their communities, and through *decolonizing learning*, whereby educators and learners consider the people and places that are injured and exploited. These tasks should lead to an expansion of Latin American Canadians' knowledge about the communities in which they live (Gruenewald, 2003b). This suggestion can be further elaborated through the use of problem-posing education strategies advocated by Freire (2011). He explains that "problem-posing education involves a constant unveiling of reality" and a continuous striving for the development of critical consciousness (Freire, 2011, p. 81).

In commenting on the value of stories, Hall (1990) explains that the narratives and hidden histories of racialized communities have played a critical role in the emergence of important social movements, for example feminist, anti-colonial, and anti-racist. He notes that narratives provide resources of identity, meaning and resistance. They foster the imaginative rediscovery of dehumanized, fragmented and pathological identities within the dominant regimes of the West. According to Langran and DeWitt (2020), educators should expose learners to multiple perspectives and stories that exist within communities. Moreover, a critical pedagogy of place recognizes that an understanding of a "multiplicity of perspectives, including our own, and how our own story telling can both give voice to and silence perspectives" is essential (Langran & DeWitt, 2020, p. 46). Critical place-based activities can encourage learners to share narratives about the community in which they live. According to Langran and DeWitt (2020), by sharing stories, learners have an opportunity to add to or revise their existing knowledge as they develop a deeper understanding of the place or the world around them and question why some narratives are missing.

Another important consideration is the application of a critical consciousness of race framework to place-based learning. Educators should provide space for an exploration of race, power structures and the stratification of knowledge and identities. Such a framework can support an examination of how "the social construction of race has reinforced dominant spatial narratives that often produce negative outcomes for students" (Langran & DeWitt, 2020, p. 47). Teelucksingh (2006) explains that racialized spaces are connected to systems of power, which mediate the social relations between racialized and dominant groups and institutions. These hegemonic social relations contribute to the uneven development of racialized communities. Critical place-based education can support Latin American Canadians' critical reflection on how social categories materially and symbolically structure their agency and difference. This is a challenging task because marginalization operates at the level of everyday experience and may not be obvious to educators and learners (Teelucksingh, 2006). Despite this

challenge to the development of learners' critical awareness, Freire (2011, p. 83) suggests that educators can support learners to "develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality; but as a reality in process, in transformation."

The integration of a critical pedagogy of place into community education is generative for community-based research and practice with ageing immigrant populations. The framework is multi-disciplinary and can stimulate the development of "new forms of representation" among racialized migrant communities (Hall, 1990, p. 224) by fostering problem-posing education which "bases itself on creativity and stimulates true reflection and action upon reality, thereby responding to the vocation of persons as beings who are authentic...when engaged in inquiry and creative transformation" (Freire, 2011, p. 84). A critical pedagogy of place can generate learning activities that account for historical and contemporary power structures as well as Latin American Canadians' spatial narratives, and create possibilities for their reflection on and engagement with later-life learning for social inclusion, critical inquiry, social action, and transformation.

## 6. Conclusion

Scholarship focused on ageing immigrants' later-life learning experiences in Canada is emergent. This article presents findings from the first qualitative study to explore ageing Latin American immigrants' place-based learning experiences in Toronto. Centring a critical pedagogy of place and a life course justice approach to community-based education, the article highlights the spatial narratives and embodied experiences of racialized immigrants who strive to simultaneously maintain their independence within their communities and deepen their integration into Canadian society. While there are merits to place-based education, ageing Latin American Canadians are increasingly aware of those aspects of localized education that are inadequate. Moreover, the informal place-based education activities in which these ageing immigrants participate are focused mainly on health and social service system navigation. Future research is required on place-based education for ageing immigrants with an emphasis on curriculum design and content, modes of delivery, learning outcomes, and accessibility. Place-based education in the context of the study is framed within multicultural ethos; notably, it is delivered primarily to racialized older adults. This fact raises questions about the quality and outcomes of community education, especially when it is delivered in communities with significant racialized immigrant populations and without a focus on critical inquiry. A life course justice approach and a critical pedagogy of place can assist researchers and community-based practitioners to be aware of these issues and of the social and

politically complex world that ageing immigrant learners occupy. The approaches constitute a generative conceptual and practice framework that presses for humanistic approaches to community education.

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## Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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