

PODIUM 3.2 - 1:15-1:30 [10-min presentation followed by 5-min Q&A]

Translating Between Cultural and Professional Selves: International Pharmacy Graduates and Professional Identity Formation

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Introduction: There are gaps in professional identity formation (PIF) research as the experiences of international professionals are left out of the analysis. This research addresses this gap as I pose the question, “How do International Pharmacy Graduates (IPGs) navigate the relationship between their cultural identity and their emerging Canadian professional identity?”

Methods: I employed a bricolage approach in which I theorized PIF through the lenses of Foucault and post-colonial theorist, Stuart Hall. These related theorists helped facilitate the understanding of PIF through the adoption of professional discourses and the ‘translation’ experiences of IPGs. Translation is the process of transitioning between the continuity of the past (holding onto aspects of cultural identity), and the discontinuity of the present (rejecting or submerging parts of original cultural identity).

Results: IPGs readily adopt retraining and the lifelong learning discourse as part of PIF. However, it was noted that IPGs experience ‘discontinuity’ of their cultural identity during retraining. Canadian pharmacists are considered the regulatory ‘ideal’ and IPGs who retrain within ‘official’ programs construct their identity as being closer to this ideal and have higher status compared to those who retrain within their cultural diaspora.

Discussion: Training within ‘official’ programs allows IPGs to construct their identity as being more ‘professional’ than those who train outside of regulatory practices. This research contributes to the critique of mainstream PIF research which positions it as being a universal experience. Specifically, for international professionals, this study demonstrates that ‘translation’ between cultures is an important part of the process.