

# CROSSING BORDERS TO TEACH: A LITERATURE REVIEW OF (DIS)LOCATION, INTERCONNECTEDNESS, AND PEDAGOGY<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

*Using post-foundationalism as a theoretical guide, the author by way of a literature review examines the notion of (dis)location with educators who cross borders for work. The author primarily uses sexuality, citizenship, and racial perspectives to compare and analyze competing bodies of work that deal with crossing borders. The author highlights a gap in the literature when it comes to understanding overlapping marginalizations and complex experiences in a foreign workplace. This paper doubles as a call for further inquiry into understanding different pedagogies that emerge among globalized groups who are excluded in research and practice.*

## Résumé

*Au travers de l'utilisation d'un cadre théorique post-fondamentaliste, l'auteur examine, par le biais d'une revue de la littérature, la notion de (dé)localisation des éducateurs qui traversent les frontières pour le travail. L'auteur utilise principalement la sexualité, la citoyenneté et les perspectives raciales pour comparer et analyser les instances concurrentes de travail qui s'occupent du franchissement des frontières. L'auteur souligne une lacune dans la littérature concernant la compréhension de la marginalisation et des expériences complexes intervenant dans un milieu étranger. Cet article est aussi un appel pour de plus amples enquêtes portant sur les différentes pédagogies émergeant dans des groupes du monde entier qui sont souvent exclus de la recherche et de la pratique.*

Recent literature focusing on globalization, culture, and education has given increased attention to the experiences of persons who cross borders for their work. Questions of and concerns surrounding, for example, origins and belonging (Freire & Faundez, 2001), pedagogy and borders (Giroux, 1992), marginality and hybridity (Bhabha, 1994), and

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mobility, consumption, and technology (Elliott & Urry, 2010) have been some of the major themes in the literature. With the diversity of these themes in mind and in light of the expanding nature of globalization, it is becoming increasingly recognized as an over-simplification of human experience to apply studies of social mobility through one theoretical lens. A narrow focus marginalizes the process of analyzing the complex nature of human experience. Broadening an analysis of social mobility to include multiple theoretical perspectives brings to light (1) overlapping marginalizations and identity, (2) the role that culture and language play in constructing the subject, and (3) a “multiplicity of voices” and “creative responses” in day-to-day experiences (English, 2006). Post-foundationalism is one such theoretical framework that operates on the principles of multiplicity and dialogue and could be useful in facilitating a complex analysis of human experiences with mobility. Post-foundationalism examines various “post” discourses such as postmodernism, post-feminism, and post-colonialism to reveal “a complex analysis of domination, marginalization, and identity from multiple cultural and gender perspectives” (Hemphill, 2001, p. 19).

Although not specifically referred to as such, post-foundationalism can be arguably situated within Edwards and Usher's (2008) most recent work regarding globalization, pedagogy, and (dis)location. In this work, distinctive representations of identity become viewed as “embodied, situated, historical subjects” for which “social orientations are important not only for pedagogies of experience within social movements, but to experience learning more generally” (Edwards & Usher, p. 137). Put differently, the expansion of globalization creates an opportunity to re-conceptualize notions of space, time, identity, and difference and their impact on human agency.

Edwards and Usher's (2008) notion of (dis)location is a useful resource to promote analysis and development of changes in pedagogy given the shifting and expanding nature of globalization. According to Edwards and Usher, this resource identifies new kinds of pedagogies that emerge as “questions of space, place, and identity … [which] is a condition for their emergence as problematics to be addressed” (p. 11). For example, analyzing the relationship between workplaces and between workplaces and consumers reveals complex processes across vast distances. Edwards and Usher further explain that (dis)location then calls into question pedagogies that emerge through new patterns of interconnectedness, and they examine the experiences of certain globalized groups, such as people who cross borders for their work, that might have otherwise been voiceless in theory and practice.

In this literature review I examine the movement of professionals mediating new cultures and work between their home and foreign locations. Since various types of professionals have unique work experiences, to narrow my focus I examine those professionals that cross borders for the purpose of teaching adults. I approach this topic from a post-foundationalist perspective and use the Edwards and Usher (2008) notion of (dis)location as a reference point. I analyze how this experience of crossing borders can affect those educators generally silent in the literature and in practice. That is, I approach the topic of educators crossing borders from post-structural, postmodern, and post-colonial

perspectives, and I examine how the literature portrays and analyzes their experiences. I chose to examine educators with same-sex sexualities and majority-world origins who were living in a Western situation because they occupy a multiple-marginalized position of being both majority-world educators employed in Western contexts and persons with same-sex desires.<sup>2</sup> Yet this double-marginalization does not entirely mean powerlessness, because educators are indeed in positions of power. For example, in his study of gay male migrants, Guzmán (1997) refers to “sexiles” as being “the exile of those who have had to leave their nation of origin on account of their sexual orientation” (p. 227). He uses this term to characterize the experiences of middle- and upper-class gay male migrants to the US mainland from Puerto Rico. Guzmán states that these migrants considered themselves as “bourgeois”—superior and more successful than working-class queer immigrants. It is through analyzing human experience from this complex perspective of multi-layered positionalities that could uncover difficult encounters with power, how to negotiate these encounters, and some of the consequences. Of importance here is Michael Warner’s (1991) point that queer sexuality often conveys “a political form of embodiment that is defined as noise or interference in the disembodying frame of citizenship” (p. 12). Thus, a literary examination of how intersections between race, sexuality, and citizenship become articulated as “noise or interference” may explain the complexities that invariably shape the lives of educators that cross borders.

Educators may experience homophobia, racism, or xenophobia in their new work environment. These encounters deprive adult educators of learning diverse ways to think about and place value on knowledge and how to challenge structural and cultural processes that qualify and privilege only certain aspects of knowledge. Analyzing the experiences of educators through multiple lenses deconstructs normative notions of educator identity and difference and examines how (dis)location constructs a particular human experience.

Besides examining the added value that a post-foundational lens brings to this analysis, my additional goal here is grounded in social justice. That goal is to encourage adult educators and researchers in adult education to view encounters of homophobia and racism through multiple lenses in order to bring to light the intersectional nature of power and oppression. A post-foundational perspective enables other forms of inquiry, such as analyzing globalized forms of identity formation present in workplace learning (Mizzi & Rocco, in press) or exploring a pedagogy of depression in relation to women’s adult learning experiences (Cameron, 2012). Therefore, the purpose of this literature review is to summarize and analyze the experiences of this particular group of educators and to call for further empirical work that examines encounters with marginalization from a perspective of interconnectedness and (dis)location. The questions that focus my literary inquiry here are as follows:

1. What does the literature describe as being some of the challenges in the lives of educators who possess majority-world markers of citizenship and sexuality?

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2 By *majority-world*, I mean people who largely originate from economically poor countries and yet occupy the majority of the world’s population. By *Western*, I mean economically rich countries or regions such as Canada, the United States, and the European Union.

2. What kinds of literary gaps could be conceptualized based on a post-foundational analysis of these described challenges?

## **Method**

For this literature review, an integrative search method was operationalized primarily through three literary search engines relevant to transnational sexuality studies, immigration studies, and education. Databases included ERIC, Web of Science, and WorldCat. I began by creating three categories of search terms: (1) sexuality-themed terms: *queer, gay, lesbian, bisexual, same-sex sexuality, homosexuality, or sexual minority*; (2) immigrant-themed terms: *immigrant, newcomer, border crosser, migrant, or refugee*, and (c) adult educator-themed terms: *adult educator, community educator, facilitator, trainer, visiting professor, or faculty member*. I combed through and selected any relevant empirical or conceptual texts largely situated in social science literature.

After locating relevant articles or books, I grouped each text into a chart according to the thematic sub-headings of post-foundationalism, such as post-colonialism, post-structuralism, and postmodernism references. Reference information and an annotated description were part of each chart entry. This chart enabled better understanding of what the literature represented based on this study topic and some of the gaps. The following results section presents what was uncovered in the literature.

## **Reviewing the Literature**

In this section, I identify two thematic concerns that are based on the literature and that form my analysis: the prevalence of structural homophobia during a transition stage to the new country and encounters with racism and xenophobia at work. I explain each in turn.

### ***Border Exclusions***

The field of international queer activism and the presence of queer adult education and community development work have grown in Canada. Queer Peace International and the Iranian Railroad for Queer Refugees are two Canadian examples in which international and local actors socially organize to create better systems and societies that accept sexual diversity (see Mizzi, 2012; [www.irqr.ca](http://www.irqr.ca)). The works of these two agencies demonstrate that community-building initiatives take place in transnational contexts. Despite this recent development, little is known about how sexual-minority immigrants negotiate their personal and professional lives in Canadian contexts or about how a shift in a work and learning circumstance has reconstructed their social realities.

Understanding the experiences of sexual-minority immigrants has recently garnered some attention in social science literature, but mainly from a US perspective. In a Canadian context, it is generally understood that the immigration process to Canada is an uneasy one. For instance, the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) has been

critiqued as being an obstacle for sexual-minority refugees, with Fairbairn (2005) stating, “A number of IRB members clearly did not believe that documentation provided by LGBT groups was objective and therefore credible information” (p. 239). This requires refugee claimants in Canada to prove their sexual orientation and same-sex desires as well as to prove the truth of their related violent encounters.

In addition to an analysis of the life experiences of sexual-minority immigrants, a queer perspective on immigration informs how sexuality impacts and becomes implicated in the migratory processes (Naples & Vidal-Ortiz, 2009). Largely viewed through feminist and post-structuralist perspectives, the experiences of sexual-minority immigrants highlight heteronormative<sup>3</sup> systems that exclude queer realities in both home environments and new settings. Luibhéid (2004), who writes extensively on the experiences of sexual-minority immigrants to the United States, explains:

Heteronormative policies and practices—which subordinate immigrants not just on grounds of sexual orientation but also on grounds of gender, racial, class, and cultural identities that may result in “undesirable” sexual acts or outcomes (such as “too many” poor children)—are deployed by the state to select who may legally enter the United States and to incorporate immigrants into hegemonic nationalist identities and projects. Sexuality more generally also structures every aspect of immigrant experiences. (p. 227)

Part of the problem, as Luibhéid views it, is that immigration officials mislead the public by stating that sexuality is private and not an issue in cross-border situations.

In one example, housing and shelter providers should consider sexuality and gender identity as the cause of homelessness among young people. In addition, transgendered individuals are challenged when sponsoring partners, even after sex reassignment surgery and legal marriage in other countries (Chávez, 2011). Visible cues can betray queer applicants. Such cues could include the time of arrival to the port of entry (for example, just before pride parades), their belongings, third-party informants, organizational affiliations, and medical certificates that ask for a description of lifestyle practices (Luibhéid, 1998). In the case of obtaining such certificates, this procedure implies that medical practices provide a venue for homophobia to be “mobilized, channeled and legitimated” (Luibhéid, 1998, p. 489) in official medical discourse. Given the historical and controversial practice of medical professionals classifying, diagnosing, and treating homosexuality (Terry, 1999), the presence once again of screening out homosexuality is indeed troubling and eerily reflective of a dark past that traumatized queer people. (For historical and contemporary examples of the use of systems to identify and classify sexual minorities for the purposes of exclusion, see Bérubé [1989] and Mizzi [2011].) In response, just as Freire and Faundez (2001) warn about “denying your origins” (p. 190) when crossing borders, queer asylum seekers engage with this structure to denounce their home countries as being backward and unproductive in exchange for American beneficence (Cantú, Luibhéid & Stern, 2005; Solomon, 2005). To then obtain a position of power, such as the role of an educator, sexual

3 By *heteronormative*, I mean systems that directly and indirectly operate on the principle that heterosexuality is the only normal sexual orientation.

minorities can try to negotiate multiple forms of oppression, which may include a denial of origins.

Additional responses to structural violence are described in the literature. Resistance against hetero-privilege emerges as a way to assert agency and confront oppression. In the specific case of sexual-minority immigrants, resistance could involve a new form of pedagogy, such as ambiguity, trickery, wordplay, and non-truths, all of which characterize the lives of these immigrants (Eichler & Mizzi, *in press*; Fisher, 2003; Randazzo, 2005). For example, the strategy of introducing same-sex lovers as “best friends” at weddings blurs the boundaries of sexual categories (Fisher). As Randazzo points out, these strategies are similarly found in the immigrants’ home countries as survival skills gained from living in homophobic communities.

Besides realizing that there will be homophobic and racist challenges in the new country, the literature reports that some immigrants do not anticipate difficulties. In these cases, sexual-minority immigrants looking for a society that is more inclusive of homosexuality are sometimes disappointed at the amount of violence that persists for queer people in their new environment (Kuntsman, 2009). In one research project on Russian-speaking sexual minorities who immigrated to Israel, the study participants shared how they became homesick when they uncovered the same forms of homophobic violence in Israel that they thought they had escaped by leaving Russia. In this specific case, the act of being excluded from privileges afforded to heterosexual people terrified these immigrants, considering that they also faced ethnocentric violence based on their foreign identity (Kuntsman). In another study, Eichler and Mizzi (*in press*) found that sexual-minority immigrants felt misled by a form of American pop culture that falsely depicts a “gay heaven” when they experienced homophobia internal and external to queer communities in Canada and the United States. This work indicates a level of complexity for queer border crossers and an uneasy balance between privilege, marginalization, and exclusion on a number of fronts. There is a scarcity of literature that situates queer immigrants at work, which raises the question of what types of narratives are being formed when sexuality and immigrant discourses are explored together. A post-foundational study of queer immigrants could include questions such as this one.

### ***Participation at Work***

Generally speaking, the literature on immigrant adult educators tends to point out challenges with structural racism and is largely silent on the topic of sexuality differences. Earlier work regarding adult education and queer concerns brings to light heteronormative discourses in learning and work and how queer knowledge is rendered subversive, unwelcomed, and “fugitive” (Grace, 2001; Hill, 2006). Besides this work, the literature indicates that there is some struggle for immigrant professionals when it comes to (1) employers recognizing prior learning and work experience (Andersson & Guo, 2009), (2) internal/personal and external factors that are key to a successful adaptation to change (Koert, Borgen, & Amundson, 2011), and (3) the return to training and education as a perceived means to improve employment prospects (Shan, 2009). For example, in the specific case of educators, the literature describes struggles in the classroom between students adjusting to their foreign

educator (Amobi, 2004) and the educator trying to navigate through classroom practices while adhering to immigration-related policy directives (Collins, 2008).

In several related empirical studies, students of immigrant adult educators stated that they were challenged by their educators' foreign accents and limited vocabularies. The sexuality of the immigrant educator was not considered a factor in these studies. A minority of students made adjusting to accents a part of the learning experience (Alberts, 2008; Liang, 2006; Marvasti, 2005). As Marvasti writes, "Language, even accent, may be used as a proxy for an individual's level of skills and lead to prejudice and discriminatory behavior in the work environment" (p. 154). Although Marvasti's point here highlights student resistance in the classroom, other types of marginalization are described in similar studies. In particular, in her study on the experiences of immigrant teacher candidates in the faculty of education of an American university, Schmidt (2010) found evidence of discrimination, contradictory hiring and salary standards, intolerance of dress, hostility toward certain pronunciation patterns of ESL teachers, and anti-immigrant discourses in classes (see also Cho, 2010).

A post-foundational reading of the literature indicates a binary largely created by the educators' responses to being "othered" in their own classrooms. On one hand, there is some indication of change in established structures so that adult educators receive institutional support, such as workshops and other forms of training, to help acculturate them to their classrooms (Manrique & Manrique, 1993). On the other hand, some immigrant educators engage their educator status to marginalize students in order to reaffirm their dominant power in the classroom (Li, 2006). Both act as pedagogies of resistance to change situations that threaten job success so there is a more balanced work situation. For example, in her study on immigrant female scholars in higher education, Li found that her study participants influenced the power relationships that "perpetuate the positioning" (p. 119) of immigrant female educators poorly treated by their minority students. Perhaps this continued distancing and the pedagogy that takes place are results of difficult immigration processes that have caused immigrants to feel undervalued, marginalized, and unwelcomed in their new environment (Collins, 2008).

The literature reveals that adjustment remains an ongoing challenge. There was no easy path to immigrating to the United States, and many of the narratives showed how identity of being an outsider, a racialized person, and a perceived imposter remained static. Two studies were of note: Collins (2008) indicated that some of the problems confronting faculty members immigrating to the United States include obtaining green cards, handling cultural differences, and coping with loneliness. Institutions were not adjusted to meet the needs of immigrant educators and there was an underlying expectation to sink or swim in the new job. Further, Elbaz-Luwisch (2004) noted in her study of Russian teachers immigrating to Israel that the experience of crossing borders has led to an increased institutional dependency, feeling like an imposter in the classroom, and self-regulating behaviours in accordance with the new socio-cultural environment. There is a certain degree of complexity in both cases as immigrant educators faced adjustment difficulties and strained relationships with students. At times, the strained relationship meant greater distances from students and co-workers as study participants attempted to find balance.

### Literary Analysis

Three key observations can be made by analyzing the literature. First, it can be significant to learn about the experiences of persons who cross borders as a means of critically understanding and interrogating complex human experiences. Through an examination of (dis)location, there is an opportunity to identify new pedagogies related to the conditions of globalization (Edwards & Usher, 2008). Multiple-marginalized educators represent one group of people who may not weather this transition so well and who could require assistance that is highly specific to their learning and social needs. For instance, by reflecting on and engaging in her experiences and deliberately reaching out to others, Amobi (2004) turned her “otherness and difference into uniqueness and self-affirmation” (p. 177). She eventually learned and gained acceptance as an instructor. In response to the pressure to conform to the new socio-cultural environment, Amobi comments that playing safe does not serve an immigrant and, in fact, limits one’s growth.

Second, it becomes clear in the literature that gaps occur in researching encounters with mobility for multiple-marginalized people and the related adjustment processes at work. Conducting an empirical study on the life experience before, during, and after the transition of educators may reveal different forms of marginalization and normativity that shape life experience. A study on transition could bring to light the notion of (dis) location and analyze the new pedagogies that surface as a result of globalizing forces and their interaction with specific groups. It is these transitory periods that could reveal, more broadly, the intensity and complexity of human experience as people cross multiple borders. It could also mean that educators (1) become aware of new social challenges, such as language differences in their classrooms; (2) gain further insight into the professional attitudes among colleagues and students; and (3) learn how to create a more inclusive society through an exploration of different socio-cultural backgrounds and experiences (Ezer, 2006). To be inclusive in this way means to view human experience through complex gender, sexuality, and related perspectives.

Third, reconstructing a new identity can produce a heightened set of skills and knowledges. In one autoethnography, Li (2006) describes her adaptation to the new environment as an opportunity to develop a new sense of self and gender identity. Li also reaffirms a social responsibility to educate and equip students on how to understand the various deployments of power and mutuality, so that students and faculty share an increased connection and are able to support each other. For persons who are different, this means creating opportunities to engage in a dialogue at work that involves considering how difference in identity, culture, and context may be appreciated and supported. This point resonates with much of the literature presented in this paper, but sexual minorities may have a difficult time facilitating dialogue if systems are constructed along heteronormative lines. Institutions need to be open to changing systems and structures to take into account plural identities and realities. For instance, a reconstructed immigrant identity that contains a silenced sexuality does not meet the goals of a safe and inclusive workplace.

## Conclusion

A post-foundational analysis may serve as a useful approach in analyzing the complex experiences of people who cross borders and have problems adjusting to the new situation. (Dis)location examines the pedagogies that emerge within globalized groups who might have otherwise been silent. In the literature, it has been suggested that certain structural and social challenges exist in this process. Crossing borders often results in people re-experiencing difference (in language, expression, and so forth) and reproducing difficult reflections on home and identity. In part, these experiences occur as a result of marginalization discourses in work situations. Equity discourses in the workplace create very little change if they do not consider the various socio-cultural realities that shape transnational lives. Significantly, the literature suggests that an analysis of human experience through intersecting perspectives may reveal new gaps, trends, pedagogies, and differences that may be useful considerations in the expanding field of adult education.

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