

# TEACHERS' BIO-GEOGRAPHICAL EXPERIENCES OF SOCIAL (IN)JUSTICE WITHIN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

Juliet Christine Perumal

University of Johannesburg (SOUTH AFRICA)

## Abstract

Teachers from various countries on the African continent are being employed in the South African education system. The bio-geographical identities, ideologies and pedagogies that this diverse teacher cohort brings to the educational landscape warrants exploration into the varying experiences, interpretations and enactments of social justice that they experience within the South African context. This paper draws on the personal and professional experiences of teachers from South Africa, India, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe and Cameroon, to denaturalizes the unproblematic way in which teachers are linked to school contexts. It draws on Buell's (in Raill) [1] contention that place gestures in three directions, namely: (i) towards environmental materiality; (ii) towards social perceptions or constructions of identity; and (iii) towards affect or bond. It explores teachers' personal and professional experiences in relation to Fraser's [2] conceptions of social justice. This qualitative study contributes to research on critical pedagogies of place, which view education as a contextualized social process that shape teachers' identities, and behaviors. This paper aims to:

- (i) sketch the biographical-geographical, and socio-cultural impulses that frame the participants' personal and professional identities; and
- (ii) examine the techniques that these teachers employ in order to navigate their current situatedness presents them.

Keywords: critical pedagogies of place, teacher identities, social justice, South Africa.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

People across time and cultures organically share examples of important places or safe places or foreign places with one another and offer riveting descriptions of favorite places, or strange places [1]. Place is often the starting point for articulating cultural meaning and awareness and is central to human emotional attachment. Rhetorical connotations of place also permeate our language – we may have experienced being 'put in place' or 'feeling out of place'. One of the migrant participants in this study, repeated mentioned: 'not being given pride of place. It is therefore necessary that a definition of place capture its multiple nature and multidisciplinary connotations while still being responsive to the specific context of its use in education.

### 1.1 Literature review

Buell (in Raill) [1] contends that the concept of place gestures in at least three directions at once:

(i) *toward environmental materiality*: which often encompasses the ecology and the built and social environments of a given location; but also the specific continuity of the surroundings with a person's own active tendencies - that is - the things that are noticeable to; or important to a person. The environmental materiality of a place - the foods in season, the availability or absence of water, etc. contribute to adapting to an ecologically sound life. Critical pedagogies of place, however, address issues of absence: what is missing from this environment? What has been lost? What cannot be experienced here?

(ii) *toward social perception or construction*: Dewey's [3] description of experience proceeds from the social context of sharing and passing on group knowledge and identity. The iterative process and the inevitable connection between individual and social experience - that is – the social constructivist dimension of experience aligns with the gesture of place towards social perception or construction. The social environment, the expectations, experiences, approvals and condemnations of others, also shape the behavior of an individual. Dewey [3] describes democracy as —a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. It unites the individual and social aspects of education: Dewey refers to a democracy that is created, constructed; it includes the belief in the right of individual desire

and purpose to take part in readapting even the fundamental constitution of society. Dewey [3] grounds democracy in environmental materiality: Democracy must begin at home. Its home is the neighbourly community

(iii) *toward individual affect or bond*: place does not only refer to physical landscapes, landmarks, buildings, towns, cities, and ecologies; place also signifies for people (positive and negative individual emotional bonds) and societies (positive and negative social constructions). The differentiation of individual and social roles in shaping place in Buell's (in Raill) [1] definition acknowledges the tensions inherent in ideas of place. For example, Bannister and Fyfe [4] who have written about the role of fear in shaping place. Fear influences the locations people do and do not go, and therefore the environments and experiences they are open to.

The connection between place and pedagogy can be divided into roughly two branches, namely, placed-based education and a critical pedagogy of place. Place based education has become synonymous with environmental/eco-justice education; the intention being to help learners foster relations in communities and connect with the land through curriculum integration.

Critical pedagogy of place foregrounds the role of power in defining and creating place and preparing the disenfranchised to seek, create, and use place as a site for resistance. This pedagogy encompasses mental and physical decolonization. McLaren [5] contends that it involves creating and supporting spaces for minorities in civil society to enact a politics of representation, including meanings of the disenfranchised body in place and space.

Articulating a critical pedagogy of place is thus a response against educational reform policies and practices that disregard places (Gruenewald) [6]. Places are social constructions filled with ideologies, and the experience of places, such as the informal housing on the Cape Flats or the leafy affluent suburbs of Sandton, Johannesburg, and shapes cultural identities. Expressions of critical pedagogy focus on the importance of people articulating their own stories in a place where people may be both affirmed and challenged to see how individual stories are connected in communities to larger patterns of domination and resistance in a multicultural, global society – and is consistent with Fraser's [2] exposition about the discourse on social justice being cognizant of micro and macro level processes.

Two central concepts that emerge from placed based pedagogy and critical pedagogy of place are: reinhabitation and decolonization. (i) reinhabitation involves affirming, and creating cultural knowledge that protect people and place; and (ii) decolonization involves recognizing ways of thinking that injure and exploit people and place (Gruenewald) [6]. For the purposes of this paper I have recruited and extended the concept of reinhabitation to also mean de-territorializing place. In the context of Apartheid South Africa where racial segregation - by virtue of the Group Areas Act restricted and excluded marginalized racial groups from entering and living in certain areas; reinhabitation/de-territorialization thus means making physical entry into and living in previously forbidden places. - taking back the land. The concept decolonization would also be extended to beyond a mere critical recognizing and thinking about ways that injure and exploit people and place – but would highlight tangible enactments of decolonizing through personal, professional and pedagogical incursions; interruptions, interventions and revolutions.

Crucial to this paper is unpacking the prevailing conceptions of resistance; Miller [7] argues that most studies of resistance are problematic because "they bifurcate the population into the powerful and the powerless. Dichotomizing resisters and dominators ignores the fact that there are multiple systems of hierarchy, and that individuals can be simultaneously powerful and powerless within different systems. The often-ignored complexity of resistance, the tension between resistance and accommodation, and the social and interactional nature of resistance are profoundly sociological issues, joining debates about power and control and the relationship between individuals and social context. Studying resistance may therefore help restore the balance between oppression and agency.

A critical pedagogy of place is inextricably nested within broader discourses on social and ecological justice. In making explicit and expanding the connection of pedagogy of place with social justice, the work of Fraser [2] is instructive and insightful because it provides useful sensitizing conceptual markers which I have recruited to explore the personal and professional experiences of teachers as it is shaped by place. Fraser contends that:

Many actors appear to be moving away from a socialist political imaginary, in which the central problem of justice is redistribution, to a postsocialist political imaginary, in which the central problem of justice is recognition. With this shift, the most salient social movements are no longer economically defined classes who are struggling to defend their interests, end

exploitation and win redistribution. Instead, they are culturally defined groups or communities of value who are struggling to defend their identities, end cultural domination and win recognition. The result is the decoupling of cultural politics from social politics, and the relative eclipse of the latter by the former ... This, then, is the postsocialist condition: an absence of any credible overarching emancipatory project despite the proliferation of fronts of struggle; a general decoupling of the cultural politics of recognition from the social politics of redistribution ...

Fraser's [2] model of social justice speaks explicitly to the tensions in social theory between issues of distribution, redistribution, contribution recognition and misrecognition. Embedded within her discussion of justice, however, are additional frictions. The first involves different emphases on equality as difference and equality as sameness. The second entails varying attention to macro-level processes, such as educational policymaking and social movement organizing, and micro-level processes, such as individual behaviors and daily social interactions.

## 1.2 Background and research sample

This qualitative study draws on data from individual interviews conducted with participants. It was sensitive to *voice*, *difference*, and *narrative enquiry* - motifs associated with critical feminist research methodologies that agitate for the redistribution of the narrative field so that the silenced and marginalized voices of the disenfranchised Other becomes part of the mainstream conversation about teachers (Perumal) [8]. The study denaturalizes the unproblematic way in which teachers are linked to school contexts; and it contributes to research on critical pedagogies of place, which view education as a contextualized social process that shape teachers' identities and ideologies.

The data were drawn from 90 minute long individual interviews that were conducted with a combination of teachers and principals at schools in Johannesburg. Their ages ranged between 30 and 55. The sample comprised teachers from countries ravaged by civil unrest and economic meltdown. They included seven refugee teachers (two males and five females) who had escaped from Rwanda; the Democratic Republic of Congo; and Zimbabwe. These refugee teachers narrated harrowing pre-flight, flight and settlement experiences; as well as the xenophobic harassment that they endure within the South African public schooling system and broader society. (See Perumal [9] for an extended analysis of the refugee teacher experience within the South African educational context). The rest of the sample comprised one female teacher from India, and one male teacher from Cameroon who had come to South Africa voluntarily. The sample also included four male principals and seven female South African teachers. All the South African participants are people of color who grew up, were schooled and graduated from higher education under the Apartheid regime. These participants recounted first hand experiences of race, class and gender discrimination.

To protect the identities of the participants they are referred to by pseudonyms. The schools are referred to by the names of the suburbs in which they are located. Ethical clearance for this study was granted by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education, University of Johannesburg; the Gauteng Department of Education and through informed, signed consent of individual participants.

## 2 DISCUSSION

### 2.1 Place as Environmental Materiality: Sketching the Research Contexts

The research was conducted in the suburbs of Yeoville, Berea, Eldorado Park and Laudium, in Johannesburg. Yeoville was proclaimed a suburb in 1890 (four years after the discovery of gold led to the founding of Johannesburg). The area was designated as a sanitarium for the affluent in which the air was purer because it was on a ridge overlooking the polluted mining town that had sprung out of the highveld. However, the rich did not buy into the suburb. Instead, it became a multiclass area, in which many poorer people living below the ridge in Doornfontein aspired to live. As in the past, today Yeoville continues to attract many waves of immigrants that come to South Africa seeking a new life. In the hey-day of Apartheid Berea, in downtown Johannesburg, was an affluent city that boasted the economic wealth of the *city of gold*. However, over the years inner city Johannesburg has fallen into deterioration and squalor, and the attendant maladies of – crime, domestic, sexual and gender violence, poverty, housing scarcity, HIV/AIDS - plague the community. Many of the learners attending the schools in Yeoville and Berea are refugees and illegal immigrants from across the African continent (Perumal) [10] and (Perumal) [9]. The refugee teachers in this study are employed predominantly at the schools in these areas.

Soweto is the abbreviation for South Western Townships. It refers to the urban settlement, which was earmarked for the marginalized African migrant workers. The spatial order was reinforced in both racial and class terms. The Apartheid government forcibly relocated most Black residents from inner-city areas in the north and west to suburbs in the south. Low-cost state housing, rental tenure and commuting by bus and rail characterized these suburbs. The withdrawal of state housing provision for the poor contributed to residents in the southern suburbs such as Soweto and Eldorado Park becoming poorer as unemployment rose and increasing numbers of people were forced to live in shacks. Today, large sections of the townships of Soweto and Eldorado Park struggle to divest themselves of this socio-economic legacy. Despite the dismantling of the Group Areas Act the schools in the study, with a few exceptions, are still largely racially segregated; and bear the structural impact of Apartheid spatial and socio-economic engineering.

Leslie provided the following description of the material environment that informs the way he enacts his pedagogic role:

Our school is situated in Eldorado Park between Extensions 1 and 3. If you go to the police station and ask them to arrest somebody in Extension 1 they will tell you we first need backup before we go in there... Socio-economically, lots of fathers because of unemployment have nothing else to do but *spin*. *Spin* means you do whatever you need to do to get some bread on the table. So it is drug infested. There is a lot of gambling and alcohol abuse. You can see it in the neglect of the learners. Five weeks ago a Grade One learner's mother was brutally murdered by the father. Stabbed with a knife. He also tried to kill himself but was unsuccessful. He was arrested; and was in ICU in hospital under police guard. This past Saturday, we went to another funeral, also a mother of one of my learners. The father choked her to death. He was arrested in the week. So can you see more or less the domestic violence in the community ... We don't know the specifics but that is the kind of domestic situation that learners find themselves in. Look at the scenario: The mother was killed; the father is in jail ... what happens to the children? Our work is much more than just education at school.

Explicit in Leslie's excerpt is the reference to the socio-economic deprivation and deterioration that characterizes this community. While it impresses the urgency for material resource redistribution such as education, employment and income, as a social justice imperative - of equal importance is the need to recast the distributive model of social justice not just in terms of possessions but also in terms of relationships and non-material social goods, such as rights, self-respect, safety and security.

Having grown up in the community, Leslie has an affective bond to the people and the place. It highlights the things that are noticeable or important to him. This is captured in the sense of belonging and 'nativeness' that he experiences. He reflects on his insider status in this community, as follows:

I think the community sees me in twofold. The one is that they have this idea that there is a guy, he has got some knowledge and maybe also in our communities they see you in terms of your qualifications so he's well educated, you need to be careful. Then the others see me as this guy who's got all these qualifications but it's got nothing to do with who he is. He's one of us, and in our area it would be 'hy's een van die ouens.' (Afrikaans expression meaning - *he is one of the boys*). So all my friends when I take them home they see a different view because it's those guys sitting at the shops looking like skollies (local slang meaning - *gangsters*) and tsotsi's (local slang meaning - *mischief-makers*) who will greet and call me by my name and say 'hoe's dit' (Afrikaans expression meaning - *howzit?*) because those are the people that I grew up with. I can identify and relate to them. They greet me with a kind of familiarity. Yes, and there's one of us that made it... we are proud of you.

The recognition and respect that he enjoys renders it easy for the community to identify and relate to him. Leslie's code switching from English to Afrikaans to the local slang is illustrative of his immersion in, and connection to the community and his quest to uplift the lives of the people in this community. He explains:

As a school leader you're working for the community and you need to have a passion to take this community even two steps higher from where they are before I get out of here. You need to have that courage to say I'm gonna take on a project and it looks impossible but I can see that it can be done.

Having grown up in Apartheid South Africa, Leslie was weaned on the slogan: 'Education before Liberation' which became the mantra of the struggle against Apartheid. The Apartheid regime had predestined the Black majority to servitude and dehumanization. Thus, as a transformative intellectual,

he is driven by an emotional bond to this society to decolonize and eliminate through education the oppression, the institutional constraint on self-development, and domination that plagues this community. Leslie challenges the naturalized status quo that has patented a negative script for Black South Africans. He recruits education as a path out of the pathology of poverty within the school communities that they serve in.

## 2.2 The role of place in constructing social identities and perceptions

In contrast to Leslie who enjoys the respect of the community that he works in, of particular interest for me was the personal and professional experiences and recollections that the South African and foreign teachers narrated. South African teachers, by virtue of Apartheid - a divisive social engineering regime that sought to create hierarchies among different racial, cultural, linguistic and gender groups had to also negotiate the complexity and multiplicity of identity variables and the politics and principles entrenched through the tenets of Apartheid. The following excerpt from the interview with Regina, a Black, female South African teacher, captures the complexity and multiplicity of how growing up, living and working in Apartheid and post Apartheid South Africa shaped and continues to shape her personal and professional experiences.

**Regina:** To tell you the honest truth, when I applied in this school, I didn't know that it is a mixed school. I saw the name and I thought it was a Black school. When I came in for an interview, then there were few Blacks, but I saw the Indians. When they phoned me telling me "Madam we are pleased to inform you that you have won the interviews", I was excited, because I thought it was the type of the school I come from. I didn't know that it was a different school. Then when the school opened in October, I said "My God, what, what have I done? This is a different school. This isn't what I expected. But I told myself, Regina, you applied and you came for an interview and you won the interview, you have to be here. You have to face the music you have landed yourself in". When I was introduced in the staff I saw some Black ladies. I said "Okay, these are my sisters at least they are here". Then I was frightened, I don't want to lie to you. I was frightened. I was afraid because these people are of a different race. The language was a problem, because we used to speak our language - Sotho, Zulu and Tsonga. So I was afraid with the language barrier. I said: "Am I going to be able to communicate with these people?" ... The students you can't handle them. Some of the Indian learners, they have a problem of being taught by a Black educator. They don't listen, they, create chaos in class but as an educator you have to keep order in class, whether they like it or not, they have to listen to you. ... I have to learn the cultural code of behavior. And I'm getting there. To tell you the honest truth, I'm not comfortable. I'm not because...I taught in the Black schools for maybe 15 years and I'm used to that culture so I have to learn a new culture and I'm old and it's hard. But I have to learn, there's nothing I can do because I found myself in this environment. There's a degree of being restricted because I don't do things I like most. Sometimes you feel like speaking your own language and you can't. When I enter the gate, I tell myself: "Oh, Madam you are now in another environment. You have to change. You have to change". And I have to. I'm no more in the location. I'm now in another environment. "Oh my God, you can't speak English from quarter past 7, up until quarter to 3". Then, when I go out, when I arrive at home, it's my own language. I am creating a different identity. That is why I feel restricted. But this is the new South Africa. What can you do? You have to learn my dear, even though they said we have eleven official languages but English is the most important one.

In this excerpt Regina highlights (sometimes by repeating certain points) the palpable discomfort and social dislocation that she has to endure. This shows that the social environment, the expectations, approvals and condemnations of others, also shape the learning and behavior of an individual. What emerges from Regina's narrative is her immediate focus on race capital. The preoccupation with racial composition, cultural congruity, and ethnic density may be thought of as the congruence or dissonance of an individual's culture, beliefs and expectations with the surrounding population also predominates when she arrives at the school on the first day to assume her post as Head of the Commerce Department. Here initial statements "... I saw some *Black ladies*. I said, "*Okay, these are my sisters at least they are here*". Her audit of the racial demographics of the school suggests that she was looking for a familiar environment/ cultural zone and racial similarity and familiarity this after exclaiming: "*My God, what have I done?*" on discovering that this was a 'mixed' race/multiracial school. Regina's reactions may be understood in light of her socialization in Apartheid South Africa where racial demarcations and spatial prescriptions legislated the restriction of movement imposed upon Black South Africans by the Natives Act in 1952, and the Group Areas Act. For Regina entering and working in an area that had been designated for Indians fills her with a sense of psycho-social

disequilibrium. Apart from the racial difference Regina also points to the language difference. Teaching in a school where none of her vernacular languages are present means, donning a linguistic identity that is foreign to her. Having to learn the '*cultural code*'; having to '*create a new identity*'; having '*to change*' when she enters this school environment is reminiscent of the emotional labour that translates into emotion management. Regina, like many of the other participants masks her physiological and emotional state in order to fulfill the role of critical transformative intellectual.

Of equal interest in Regina's excerpt is her idiosyncrasy to refer to herself in the third person abstract. It may be surmised that it helps her separate her multiple/heterogeneous selves from each other. Perhaps, Regina's concluding statements: "*But this is the new South Africa. What can you do? You have to learn my dear, even though they said we have eleven official languages but English is the most important one*", gestures towards the disjuncture between the functional and symbolic pronouncements of equality and redress in the Constitution on which South African democracy is founded. In a country that boast 11 official languages, English still wields dominant currency in the domains of education, commerce and business. The symbolic recognition of other languages means that the vast majority of South African's linguistic capital is unrecognized at a functional level. Apart from signaling her disenchantment with the variant of democracy that is unfolding in South Africa, Regina's self punitive declaration: *You have to face the music you have landed yourself in; ... But I have to learn, there's nothing I can do because I found myself in this environment; ... What can you do? You have to learn...* suggests a lack of agency by virtue of not having power to challenge the status quo. Instead she has to resort to a self-styling that denies/suppresses her cultural capital.

Regina's narrative does not show an overt or classical demonstration of a politics of resistance to the structural and cultural misrecognition of her identity. It does however, show her making incursions into a place that she would under Apartheid not been able to enter. During the Apartheid dispensation, a Black woman would typically enter an area that was designated for Indians to work as a 'servant/maid'. That Regina enters this place as an educated women who holds the post of the Head of Department of Commerce –despite the cultural dislocation that leaves her uncomfortable – her presence is an act of de-territorialization. She claims a space and a professional position that scorns the minoritizing destiny that Apartheid had scripted for her.

In recounting her experiences of being a teacher at a South African school, Surie, an Indian national who teaches Physics and Chemistry echoed similar experiences to those by South African teachers, like Regina. The similarity of the personal and professional experiences of foreign teachers and that of South African Black teachers reconfirms the denial of citizenship status that South African Blacks endured under Apartheid. This effectively relegated South Africans, like Regina – to feeling dispossessed and being strangers in their homeland. Surie's excerpt encapsulates the complexity and deep rootedness of the pathology of Apartheid. She recalls:

I came during Apartheid South Africa. I found it difficult to understand why can't my children study at any school, which I like? Another thing is work appointment ... you can't move to a particular school where you like to teach. ... It was a bit difficult because we couldn't stay in Laudium. We wanted to be with the Indian community but the distance was very far...so we had to stay in Rosslyn... it was difficult for cultural groupings but we had a prayer group there ... where the teachers like us used to go weekends, pray and associate. ...

It is here in the school because they don't want you to be part of management. You must be at the lower level...there are so many other tricks. You won't be given information so that you will be in the dark about meetings, workshops. They consider you as a foreigner. It doesn't upset me, because I know there is a problem. That is one of the reasons I did research because I know this is part of all the humiliation the community suffered, whether it is Black, White, Asian or Chinese. They were going through an inhuman system. It has affected the people so much. In India in a school, we are a family. We never bickered each other; backbite, stab one person. It is not only against me, it is prevalent amongst the members of the staff also. It is not only in this school, it is in other schools also. I noticed that it is from that experience in the past because they were going through suspicious circumstances the trust is not between person and person and that affects the institutions also. The students and teachers talk...that she's a foreigner. I won't show it in front of the students ...even though they ask: "Madam, where are we coming from?" I say I'm coming from my home. If you want to know much about that you must come and talk to me personally. If they want to know, I can explain to them. It is not a secret... the people can't accept another person. I strongly feel that it is because of the situation the generations went through...

Apart from being perplexed by the restriction of freedom, Surie highlights the importance of social connections for feeling connected to a place. Two social variables are of particular interest in characterizing social relationships: social networks and social support. *Social networks* are defined as the web of person-centered social ties and includes the structural aspects of social relationships, such as size (the number of network members), density (the extent to which members are connected to one another), boundedness (the degree to which ties are based on group structures such as work and neighborhood), and homogeneity (the extent to which individuals are similar to one another). Its assessment also may extend to aspects including frequency of contact, extent of reciprocity, and duration. *Social support* refers to the various types of assistance that people receive from their social networks and can be further differentiated into three types: instrumental, emotional, and informational support. *Instrumental support* refers to the tangible resources (such as cash loans, labor in kind) that people receive from their social networks, while *emotional support* includes less tangible forms of assistance that make people feel cared for and loved (such as sharing confidences, talking over problems); *informational support* refers to the social support that people receive in the form of valuable information, such as advice. Surie addresses the withholding of information within the school context; and management practices that prevent upward job mobility. The concept of *social capital* has been defined as the resources that are available to members of communities and other social contexts (e.g., workplaces) by virtue of the existence of a rich network of social interactions. Measures of social capital typically include structural and cognitive components. The *structural* component of social capital includes the extent and intensity of associational links and activity in society (e.g., density of civic associations; measures of informal sociability; indicators of civic engagement). The *cognitive* component assesses people's perceptions of trust, sharing, and reciprocity. Social capital and social cohesion are therefore potentially important characteristics of the "social and cultural environment" that ultimately influence patterns of health achievement (Hernandez and Blazer) [11]. Surie's resistance helps her navigate her non- acceptance; upward career mobility and exclusion manifests in her forming social networks and in conducting sociological research to help her understand the psychological and political repercussions of Apartheid both on South African nationals and foreigners.

Apart from the emotional and psychological stress that being a foreigner placed upon foreign teachers, Lydia recalls the toll that being in a new environment took on her physical being. There is a silence about the psychosomatic impact that place can have on teachers. Lydia confided:

I think the first term when I taught here it was a bit difficult. I lost weight. What made it worse was that you are a foreigner and your country is in the headlines, everyday ... negative public image portrayed in the media. You lose respect. You are devalued.

It has been hypothesized that social adjustment and the prevalence of mental distress in migrants may be influenced by the duration of the relocation, the similarity or dissimilarity between the culture of origin and the culture of settlement, language and social support systems, acceptance by the 'majority' culture, access and acceptance by the expatriate community, employment, and housing. If the individual feels isolated from his or her culture, unaccepted by the 'majority culture' and has a lack of social support, a sense of rejection, alienation and poor self-esteem may occur. The loss of one's social structure and culture can cause a grief reaction, which Eisenbruch [12] refers to as cultural bereavement and has defined by as "the experience of the uprooted person - or group - resulting from loss of social structures, cultural values and self-identity.

### 2.3 Place and individual affect or bond

Place also signifies for people positive and negative individual emotional bonds, and positive and negative social constructions. In analyzing the narratives of the foreign teachers the following themes emerged. They expressed a romantic nostalgia for their home country; and the status that they enjoyed in their social communities and communities of professional practice. Being dislocated from their home and families ensconced them with a sense of alienation and left them feeling vulnerable; alone and the beneficiary of oppositional relations. They were overcome by a sense of fear and uncertainty about their employment status and in an effort not to offend their employers they subscribed to a politics of self-censorship; compliance and acquiescence. The following excerpt captures the psychological distress associated with being a refugee teacher:

**Milton:** ...that's why they say home is always best. Whenever you are in a foreign land things are not your way. They are not on your side. You always do things with that phobia. 'What will happen next?' You won't express yourself as you would, if you were in your home because if you say 'I express myself to this' what will be the impact, what will be the results? Won't I put myself in a situation that will affect me? I should do my best so that they will be impressed by

me...so that I remain in employment no matter how difficult or no matter how you are told, I will have to do. That's why we don't have a choice, that's why you have to accept whatever you get so that it's not for me only otherwise you think of what you left behind.

Both urban and rural critical pedagogies of place tend to assume that the members of the community are static and have roots in that community—or if not static, they are at risk of leaving the community rather than arriving. There is a silence around the presence of immigrant or migrant teachers moving into a big city or small town, foreign environments carrying with them stories and lessons from other places; teachers who are not from around here. Teachers' affect to place may be understood in terms of whether they are insiders/locales, or whether they are in transit. This was evident in the narratives of, for example, Leslie who has a positive affective bond with the educational contexts that he works in. However, many of the South African and foreign teachers shared negative affective bonds to their school communities. Many of the participants commuted long distances to the schools that they taught at. There was a sense of physical and psychological disconnect; a transient relationship with place by virtue of a socio-cultural dissonance; or because of their migratory citizenship status.

### 3 CONCLUSION

In this paper I will attempt developing a conceptual narrative of pedagogies of place, which sketch teachers' personal and professional identities and experiences. There is a tendency when working with teachers' narratives to focus on their teaching content, while contexts, which influence their personal and pedagogic identities, receive short shrift in studies. Thus, the discussion flagged the importance of recognizing the context in which teachers ply their trade. Furthermore, it gave credence to the contention that educationists carry particular social, ideological, cultural and geographical backgrounds. When brought into teaching/learning situations, the varying accents teachers place on their identities reassert the non-essentiality and provisionality of their subject positions. It highlights the particular and contextually embodied expressions of teachers' insertion into interpersonal relations, and challenges them to examine their own claims to centrality and marginality. As well as the important task of helping teachers how to be in the place they are, place-based education must include an element of meta-analysis: learning how to learn how to be in a place, even in the absence of social and institutional relationships support.

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