

Chapter 2

It's Not That Simple Anymore: Engaging the Politics of Culture and Identity Within Environmental Education/Education for Sustainable Development (EE/ESD)

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Introduction

In the introduction to this book of perspectives on education for sustainability across countries of the Pacific, Lee and Efirid are searching for the kinds of societies that may provide educational transition points toward more ecologically sustainable futures. They are searching for new pathways, new ways to think about the complexities of shifting learning environments in directions long since contemplated by environmental educators. Recognizing that environmental education (EE) has always advocated for fundamental change in educational thinking and practice, in this chapter we (re)conceptualize the principle that once defined this change in behavioral terms. We do this by interrogating the more recent focus on *values* and ethics using concepts of culture and identity. In this refocusing, we posit a counter-narrative to discourses of EE/ESD as a way to rethink the *participation gap* within education relative to environment and sustainability.

While acknowledging the complex evolution of ideas that have impacted the field of education in recent decades and how many of these ideas have worked to keep EE/ESD on the margins, we also recognize the power of cultural discourses (sacred stories) that persist. Our interest is in thinking about deeper connections among people, education and environment, that is, about different ideologies, about how we are hailed by different discourses, and about how subjectivities are differentially formed. Thus, we have chosen to return to fundamentals internal to human thinking, the onto-epistemic roots of our subjectivities and identities, as preconditional to

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educational change. As Carr and Kemmis (1986) said in *Becoming Critical*, changing thinking is prerequisite to changing action.

As Lee and Efrid indicate, fields of EE/ESD have themselves become more complex and contested, as manifested in interpretations of theory and practice across cultural boundaries. Against a backdrop of knowledge economies, technological innovation, and increasingly uncertain environmental change, it is not surprising that many societies recognize the place of EE or ESD in the school curriculum. As education systems within different cultural contexts learn how to address environment as more than a “little added frill” (see Hart 2010, p. 155), that is, as legitimate means to address sociopolitical issues, different pedagogies will be required to explore natural tensions between economic, social, and environmental issues in terms of socio-political cultural discourses (see Bell 2004; Bonnett 2007; Stevenson 1987, 2007). Over the last 40 years, these tensions have been addressed or avoided in many ways. For example, EE/ESD has been embedded within existing educational provision or featured in many ‘pull out’ programs, aligned with outdoor and/or experiential education associated with nature centers and science centers. Indeed, depending upon political-cultural interests, there are many ways to lose sight of environment in the curriculum or in society, (e.g., refocusing on ‘the basics’ or removal of expendable non-core programs).

The problem with EE/ESD, despite the conceptual debates, is not with the rhetoric itself but in the rhetoric-reality gap between its socially critical charter and the dominant educational paradigm, submerged within neoliberal or neoconservative ideologies, and associated educational ideals of individualism, economic privilege, social network theory, and globalization (Peters 2012). As Sauvé et al. (2005) have said, sweeping cultural goals of EE/ESD discourse remain as troubling paradoxes to educational systems reframed within a tidal wave of globalized economic priorities that demand particular kinds of educational accountability. Arguments for change within educational systems such as for inclusive, Aboriginal, disabled, or culturally diverse programs, render EE/ESD as simply one demand amongst many.

In this chapter, we position ourselves within a Canadian context, immersed in debates about social-environmental issues in need of educational space. We argue that just as it is important to continue to press for principled implementation of change, it is also crucial to search through deeper assumptions concerning what is wrong with current processes of educational change. We argue that these assumptions implicate questions of the structure-agency and theory-practice kind that serve to frame and to control thinking. One assumption concerns changing concepts of knowing (and learning) that have evolved over several decades. Another concerns evolving thinking about inquiry. A third emerges from these as connections between *subjects* and educational theory-praxis. We argue that it is only in thinking at the intersection of philosophies, pedagogies and subjectivities that deeper assumptions can begin to inform rhetoric-reality gaps within societies and within educational systems governed by them.

‘Living in These Troubled Times’: Diverse Contexts—One Country

There is no Canadian ‘story.’ No matter how hard we have tried to construct ‘Pan-Canadian’ frames for EE/ESD, provincial governments, not federal, control the goals of education. We have it in the constitution. We critique futile American educational reform initiatives and accountability failures, then follow similar pathways. If we have, as McKeown and Nolet (2012) suggest, been more successful in embracing a sustainability agenda than elsewhere in North America, it is because we have been fortunate enough to avoid conservative political agendas. That is, until now; we are rapidly losing ground. In many ways, what was said over 20 years ago about EE/ESD within American contexts applies in Canada today.

Given the provincial/territorial mandate for education and despite a Pan-Canadian Science curriculum framed as ‘Science-Technology-Society-Environment’ (STSE), current practices reveal traditional subject-centered provision. Existing curriculum resources are regarded as sufficient to implement EE within standards-based frames of accountability (see Hart 1990, 2010). Within such frames, ideas for change are managed and constrained in outcomes-based policy models within a dominant social paradigm that maintains a kind of “dynamic stability in the face of change” (Robottom and Hart 1993, p. 51).

Historically, many well known initiatives have emerged locally and achieved national and international attention. For example, the UNESCO-based Man [sic] and the Biosphere Network (MABnet) initiated by Chuck Hopkins, current UNESCO Chair at York University, evolved into EECOM, a Canadian affiliate of the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE). Recently, a network of regional centers of expertise (RCEs) has provided some coherence for EE activity. A focus on ‘greening’ university/college campuses, reorienting teacher education, and supporting local community initiatives are illustrations of RCE activity. Key individuals in many provincial university education faculties have been supported through federal research grants. Ann Jarret, formerly with Environment Canada, generated support for many NGOs and publications such as *Green Teacher* magazine as well as initiatives such as *A Framework for Environmental Learning and Sustainability in Canada* (Environment Canada 2002). The latter comprised a part of the federal Ministry of Environment’s presentation to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa in 2002. As many Canadian environmental educators are aware, a complex of international, national, and regional programs and initiatives, over many years, have resulted in variable uptake of environment in school curricula.

It is difficult to estimate the value of local and global contributions to ‘the Canadian worldview,’ if such a thing exists. It is equally hard to see the value of national consultations in the framing of goals and guidelines for educational programs that involve jurisdictions representing separate government ministries of environment and education. Survival of EE/ESD within education systems seems less a result of government leadership than testimony to the grassroots spirit of EE/ESD

movements across diverse regions and competing interests. A significant accomplishment for these grassroots efforts, however fleeting, was the federal sanctioning (at the time) of the section of the Johannesburg framework on ‘values,’ as representative of Canadians advocating environmental learning that accommodated knowledge and values. It is the sentiment that we as Canadians, rather than the governing institutions, must find our own ways of working toward ecological sustainability and find balance in social, economic and environmental systems that have and will continue to sustain work to transform policy and practice in this country.

A New Regional Landscape of EE/ESD in Canada

In the ‘decade’ or so since the World Summit in Johannesburg, there is evidence that certain significant provincial and regional engagements with STSE (from the Pan-Canadian Science curriculum) have resulted in the incorporation of EE/ESD resources in school curriculum and pedagogy. There is also evidence that the Canadian government endorses the STSE dimension of the science curriculum as a means for accommodating ESD as cross-curricular within existing school programs (CMEC 1997, 2008). While uptake of curriculum policy or even actual curriculum material obviously varies in practice, the contested nature of ESD means that what appears in schools is more familiar EE materials and resources. Significant in this country is the prominence of Canadian scholars who have been active in debates about the value of ESD (e.g., Bob Jickling (1992) and Lucie Sauvé et al. (2005)). In Canada, we believe that ESD is less likely to be used uncritically by a new wave of ESD theorists and practitioners. Thus, we see mixed uptake of ESD rhetoric by provincial curricula (e.g., Ontario’s mandate for EE, Manitoba’s for ESD (International Institute for Sustainable Development and Manitoba Education 2011)).

John Fien’s (2012) case studies of EE/ESD governance and policy frameworks included Ontario, Canada and, although he reported strong programs of community/local advocacy and goals applied from ESD Canada to promote a culture of ESD through partnership, his cautions included the need for a core philosophical perspective and increased focus on social living. As Fien (2012) says, as a result of parallel studies in several countries, we need to move beyond narrow behaviorist conceptions of learning, lack of awareness of recent research on new learning theory, and traditional assumptions about school governance for real change to occur in schools. Change in pedagogical practices that begin in teacher education programs as well as a changed research base and evaluation strategies seem more congruent with the proposed changes.

In this chapter we argue that, however well meaning, policy, curriculum and practical suggestions for change are in themselves insufficient. We suggest that unless internal, subjective work on how young people construct themselves as social (and environmental) beings is also addressed as part of a culture’s core values, change will be short-lived. Peters (2012) and Hargreaves (2003), in advocating new philosophical

groundings for curriculum progression with new views of society in mind, argue that educators must engage educational issues at deeper levels. Changes implicated by 'current' research on learning, in terms of how young people learn how to connect (or disconnect) within learning communities and social networks, are really about creating conditions to challenge what we take for granted. Old orthodoxies, as many on-the-ground educational practitioners recognize, simply will not do.

Given major shifts in thinking about key educational issues of policy, governance, research and learning with new bases in sociocultural, sociopolitical and socio-environmental theory of curriculum and pedagogy, the time for EE/ESD as something other than mainstream requires serious philosophical work at a different level of consciousness than the level that created it. As St. Pierre (2011) says, I expect educators to have studied several bodies of high-level theory because it is these theories that underpin curriculum in science or social education. Probyn (2003) views this theory work as preparation for contestations (about education and teaching) which compel us to rethink ourselves, to explore ways of reconfiguring ourselves and the philosophical ground we have decided to stand upon. We need to explore how interplay between knowledge and identity provides grounds for troubling what it means to educate and, in particular, what it means to educate environmentally (Godón 2004). As foreshadowed in the introduction, EE and subsequently EE/ESD call for fundamental changes in educational systems as part of change within larger social systems. It is only at the most fundamental levels of thinking about knowledge and knowing, about meaning and values, that we can acknowledge the warrants of different worldviews—that is, different onto-epistemic promises for action.

Rethinking Our Ground: Educational Change with Ecological Sustainability in Mind

Twenty-five years ago, Bob Stevenson described contradictions between traditional purposes and structures of schooling and the rhetoric of EE. In fact, he raised the question of a rhetoric-reality gap in ways that EE materials were 'adapted' to fit the system. Notwithstanding ideological differences within the environmental movement, EE aspires to educate in ways that foster ecological harmony and social justice, whether or not this contrasts with existing educational programs whose traditional purpose is to preserve the existing social and economic order. In North America, Gruenewald and Manteaw (2007) refer to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 to illustrate how educational application of principles of A Nation at Risk (National Commission on Excellence in Education 1983), through measurable standards of accountability, can be linked to strengthening the economic advantage of an entire nation. Aligning these principles with purposes such as closing historic achievement gaps among racial, cultural and socio-economic groups has created an educational policy climate where selling EE philosophy to schools becomes a Faustian bargain, according to Gruenewald and Manteaw, where any innovation must closely align with this overarching discourse of schooling. Although research (for example,

Lieberman and Hoody 1998) attempts to demonstrate how EE may actually increase students' scores on universal measures of school achievement makes sense within discourses of schooling, it may be argued that using EE/ESD for instrumental economic ends contradicts EE/ESD's fundamental purposes of transforming schooling.

While forms of 'EE accounting' seems to be gaining some ground within parts of the North American EE community, significant challenges also sustain debates within the recent literature. Many of these challenges have taken the form of encouraging educators and students to engage social, economic and environmental issues, critically and responsibly, from thoughtful morals-and values-based positionings. Application of participatory forms of pedagogy, new (ecological) literacy strategies, and learning how to read and deconstruct arguments in popular media and specialized position papers have had the effect of changing school practices (see, for example, Bowers 1993, 1997; Fien 1993; Fien et al. 2002; Huckle and Sterling 1996; Orr 1992; O'Sullivan 1999; Smith and Williams 1999). As Gruenewald and Manteaw (2007) indicate, contradictions between EE and schooling, identified by Stevenson in 1987, are finally gaining ground within educational literatures on culturally-responsive schooling, community-focused and place-based education, as well as in participation-based critical pedagogies and critical action research.

However, another side to Stevenson's (1987) original argument warrants attention. Alongside curriculum and pedagogical pressures for change, and beyond structural arguments, lie deeper ideological issues. People's views about what knowledge is most valuable and what counts as knowing and learning can both permit and delimit our individual and collective performance of ourselves. Because teacher educators' and teachers' views about knowledge and teaching have been pre-structured by cultural discourses, forms of EE/ESD that challenge these taken-for-granted assumptions may be ignored or resisted. Despite international agreements that espouse fundamental change, what matters educationally is whether and how educators are prepared to engage these issues. We believe that there is a need to examine how ideology and cultural discourse have operated to constitute subjectivity in both educators and their students. If we choose to engage these issues, based in different conceptualizations of social and educational goals inclusive of wider ranges of interests across socio-cultural and ecological boundaries, and involving new arrangements of education and community, then serious investment in rethinking our most basic metaphors for what counts as education is required. We argue here that this is what EE (and perhaps some forms of ESD) is really about. This is a nuanced and much more pervasive view of EE than has been evident in ways that EE/ESD has been practiced.

Problems of Knowledge: (Re)conceptualizing Ourselves Within Education

If our focus in this chapter is to look into educators' views about knowledge and teaching/learning, that is, their onto-epistemic beliefs and how they came to construct the particular frames that predispose them to conduct education in certain

ways, then views of knowing that evolve from juxtaposing issues of EE with traditional schooling provide a useful entry point. Although teaching is about learning and knowing, curriculum theorists have engaged in questions of (re)conceptualizing what can count as knowing and learning for several decades without much practical effect. The problem, according to Peters (2012), is that philosophical analyses are the only real means we have for opening up educational discourse to consider anything other than the dominant onto-epistemic or conceptual frames.

While many educators, particularly those with post-graduate education, are to some extent familiar with the notion of forms of knowledge that underlie pedagogical processes, deeper understanding of the value of forms other than the objective, measureable kind, that is, subjective and critical, socially-constructed knowing from experience, may be limited. The technical way of knowing (and learning) is valued, whilst practical and critical ways of knowing have less status. Teachers' (often tacit) presuppositions are embedded within institutional frames designed to preserve the school's legitimate function of 'objectively' assessing and credentializing individuals. This provides powerful pressure within teacher socialization processes to accept the dominant epistemological position (Young 1971). When ideas for school change are reframed within certain educationally acceptable limits, for example, for inclusion of issues of race, gender, class and perhaps EE/ESD, they are often (re)-interpreted in ways that do not challenge existing theory and practice.

Looking at foundational EE rhetoric, we can see that much of this thinking already exists as part of a larger critique of the socio-political and educational status quo. If well argued, at deeper substantive levels, issues of EE/ESD can have value within the broad goals of education. We need to re-examine ways in which we represent knowing and being (i.e., onto-epistemic positioning) as well as the warrants we have for what counts as 'trusted' knowledge. Jaros (2009) addresses this challenge (see also, Goodson and Deakin Crick 2009; Haste 2009) in pointing to the value of knowledge networks as different ways of being (in time and space) and knowing/learning as emergent and adaptive rather than fully specifiable in advance. The agenda here, amongst each of these writers, is to bring curriculum and pedagogy closer to new ways of knowledge building. For us, the fact that attention in education is directed at onto-epistemic arguments provides a key link to the importance of the need for educators to become more sophisticated in understanding how they have come to construct themselves in respect of traditions of schooling and implications from EE/ESD.

Within the EE literature, we see obvious connections between general educational thinking about goals and processes, critical ecological ontology (see Payne 1999) and deeper assumptions concerning knowledge and wider worldview perspectives. Particularly at a time when the meaning of *knowing* and *learning* are changing, it seems necessary to rethink our relationship as educators to the theoretical rationale that drives educational practice. As Jaros (2009) says, rethinking our onto-epistemic groundings requires focusing beyond discrete traditional conceptions of knowledge, attitudes and values (as EE research has itself done in the past). We suggest that rethinking should be directed toward exploration of processes of educator/teacher identity, that is, toward subjectification processes that

may give agency to educate across existing boundaries. Within EE/ESD, critical and poststructural arguments have begun to articulate multi-onto-epistemic repositioning of what can count as knowledge and as knowledge building (see Barrett 2009; Lotz-Sisitka 2009; Payne 2010). The remainder of this chapter extends the argument for such re-positionings in terms of subjectification processes (i.e., identity formation with EE/ESD values in mind).

Problems of Subjectification: Conceptualizing Identity Within Cultures

We think that a promising way to look at identity, in respect of EE/ESD, is to think of how people, especially young people, come to construct themselves in relation to others; people, place(s) and environment(s). This is what Probyn (2003) and many others, including Butler (1997), refer to as processes of subjectification—how we construct our identities that give us agency to perform in certain, perhaps ecologically sustainable ways, or not. The fact that a recurring theme in pedagogical circles is the ‘teacher-self’ and associated concepts of subjectivity-identity and agency (Zembylas 2003), we are encouraged that EE/ESD, as a field, problematizes assumptions about the teacher-self by re-conceptualizing the self (i.e., identity) not as an autonomous individual but as a form of working subjectivity (i.e., the self in relation to the world). And, given the openings created by expanded notions of what counts as knowledge (i.e., narrative epistemologies) as well as recent developments in social theory that focus on the social construction of identity, we look at subjectification processes in terms of their narrative construction. This approach to identity/subjectivity is congruent with problematizing traditional assumptions of teacher-self as coherent, bounded, unitary, the origin of its own thoughts, beliefs and actions, in favor of notions of teacher-selves who become who they are (in EE/ESD) through discourses or bodies of meaning that frame and are framed by social contexts.

Subjectification processes acknowledge the complexities of how people (including teacher-selves) come to be who they are, how they become intelligible about their value position, despite the contradictions, and choose to perform EE/ESD in certain ways within their cultural contexts (i.e., discourses) and educational institutions (see Youdell 2006). It is important to note that, although our focus here is on narrative constitution of identity/subjectivity, as Lecourt (2004) says, language is only part of discourse, interpreted as an intricate web of practices, both discursive and material (see also, Henriques et al. 1984, p. 106). However in order to provide a base for looking critically into social and relational dimensions of subjectification/identity formation, we pursue the idea of narrative constitution to establish epistemological warrant. We can, in effect, use narrative means to explain issues of understanding how EE/ESD is construed and why it is implemented in certain ways as issues of teacher subjectivity/identity. Thus, narrative construal of identity enables (re)conceptualization of teacher-self concepts as concepts of social or relational

onto-epistemology. Indeed narrative inquiry is becoming a preferred way of pursuing identity work in EE/ESD.

This is not to say that notions of the social/cultural construction of identity or its study through the concept of narrative are not problematic. The complexities of role identification, the politics of EE/ESD and the demands of professional/institutional discourse, as well as historical baggage of the term *identity* all impose contradictions, limits and boundaries that confound identity work. As Probyn (2003) says, the term subjectivity (and rarely, identity) can be used to associate the concept of the subject with the idea of ideology (or discourse, or worldview). Recognizing *ideology* as central to cultural theory has taken form within concepts such as *discourse*, conceived in the Foucauldian sense of metadiscourses or systems of ideas. We think that understanding how educators construct environmental identities within cultural discourse is crucial to understanding the participation gap within EE/ESD. The point is that we can now approach cultural difference in terms of a discourse-identity gap and question both whether and how we might want to bridge it.

A growing body of research argues that we come to be who we are by being located within social/relational narratives rarely of our own making. If we think of subjectivity/identity as interrelational with culture, then we must question the power of cultural discourse and cultural knowledge in one's subjectification. Only by interrogating the discursive (i.e., cultural) spaces from which questions of identity are posed can we frame how culture has constituted identity—that is, how we become citizens with certain predispositions (i.e., values/ethics). As each of us struggles in the processes of coming to know, we struggle not as autonomous beings but as those who learn how to recognize themselves within the social structures of culture (Britzman 1993).

Within EE/ESD research, narrative-based inquiry can reveal how people construct identities by locating themselves within a repertoire of emplotted stories. This can happen in complex ways based in personal, social-relational projections, expectations, memories derived from multiple power-ridden and perhaps limited repertoires of available public and cultural *stories*. Social science inquiry has just begun to address this project of construing subjectivities in terms of narrative identity formation (see, for example, Lundegard and Wickman 2009). Research foci have shifted from an almost exclusive focus on observable social behaviour to explorations of expressions of social-environmental (well)being (an onto-epistemic shift). As Somers (1994) says, it is unlikely that we can interpret people's (social/environmental) positions in actions if we fail to get to the onto-epistemic roots of being and identity.

In discourse-identity work, subjectification processes are conceptualized in terms of what someone wants to be. These processes of 'becoming' have the potential to lead to participation and action, in other words to becoming agentive through onto-epistemic rich narratives or life stories—for example, autobiographical accounts of our journeys to make sense of ourselves in the world(game). So basic to agency is our worldview-inspired story that if we want to make sense or meaning of our inclinations to act, we look at our subjectivities, however partial, fragmented or contradictory. We look at our life histories and significant life experiences in relation to others, embodied and intellectual, in search of ourselves.

Narratives of place endow us with identities in time and space as intersubjective webs of relations that have the power to sustain and transform ours and others stories (McIntyre 1981). Applied to EE/ESD as part of local cultures, Taylor (1989) and Calhoun (1991) describe how worldview, as onto-epistemic narrative in relation to our communities of praxis, becomes the masternarrative that underwrites our agency and action (whether we know it or not). The challenge is in finding the language and concepts to become more conscious of, and then to deconstruct and reconstruct, our worldviews so that changes in our thinking and in our agency can be accommodated—not an easy matter but a worthy pursuit in search of a more critical thought and perhaps pedagogy.

Interrogating EE/ESD from the Perspective of Cultural Subjectivity/Identity

New theories of subjectification, identity and agency have shifted explanations for why people do or do not change from attempts to measure attitude to exploring narratives of identity formation, from studies of external ‘drivers and barriers’ to internal struggles of identity agency, and from behaviour change to how do we become predisposed to act/perform in certain ways. Grounding her ideas within a sociological frame that legitimates narrative as an onto-epistemic (versus representational) form for the study of the meanings that people attach to social agency and social action (and more recently in collective identity in social networking), Somers (1994) argues that the traditional separation of philosophical issues of social being, identity and ontology from practical research on action by studying observable social behaviour is untenable. This argument, we believe, applies directly to EE/ESD research where interest in changing behaviour is now viewed as a limited mode of analysis that deprives EE researchers of deeper analysis (possible only by linking concepts of identity/agency and action). Given a fundamental interest in changing worldviews, characteristic of many environmental educators, our interest in people’s and educators’ capacity to act depends, says Charles Taylor (1989), to a great extent, on having an evaluative framework (i.e., theoretical or onto-epistemic) shaped by fundamental principles and values.

Taking a Foucauldian approach to these ideas, Butler (1997) works out a notion of subjectification that denotes the *becoming* or the making of a subject as an effect of discourse (including power relations) enacted in performative politics, hence the subject is said to have discursive agency. As Youdell (2006) says, performative politics offer significant promise for poststructural politics of change. Through such practices, meanings might either re-inscribe or unsettle thinking and existing values. Notions of subjectivation, identity and agency may help researchers and participants (i.e., educators) see how we have been constituted through the discourses of society, education professionalism as well as our own histories. By understanding how these discursive practices operate, we can perhaps begin to see how we have been framed, or at least experience tensions, between our core values, new worldviews and

dominant discourses as a prerequisite to thinking about what to do (i.e., engage in performative politics).

Another way of considering these discourse practices is as *ontological narratives*, that is, the stories we use to make sense of and to decide what to do in our lives. Given that we must inescapably understand our lives in narrative form, our ontological narratives render identity and the self capable of agency. According to Somers (1994), so basic to agency (doing, changing) is ontological narrative that if we want to explain ourselves, to make sense of ourselves, or to account for or predict our actions, we must recognize the role of the intersubjective web of relations, experience and life history from which our ontological narratives arise. We must learn how to recognize this web in conjunction with or in opposition to traditions, structures, discourses or cultural narratives (e.g., governmentalities, canons, master or meta narratives, sacred stories). The challenge of these *conceptual* narratives is to find a language that we can use to become more conscious of how we were formed or constructed/constituted in time, space and place—that is, the identity politics (Aronowitz 1992) of our subjectification from the relational coordinates of onto-epistemic, public and cultural narratives.

In EE/ESD research, using a narrative identity approach to understand change assumes that social/environmental actions become intelligible in terms of people's structural and cultural histories and relationships and by the stories that give meaning to their identities. In other words, this approach assumes that people will choose to act in certain ways because not to do so would fundamentally violate their sense of *being* (i.e., their onto-epistemic position) at that particular time and place (Calhoun 1994; Somers 1994). If we conceive of environmental sustainability in terms of narrative identity, then the focus for EE research becomes more local and cultural, perhaps in search for masternarratives in which we are always embedded, or discourses that encode our perspectives, often beyond our awareness or consciousness. For instance, we might look for ways of investigating how social systems act to denarrativize our own stories within dominant discourses of *common-sense* and taken-for-granted cultural norms of market practices and institutional discourses. Or, we might look for ways to reconstruct or rethink our worldviews.

As EE researchers we presume that our thinking, once conscious of our constitutedness within cultural discourses, can transcend the stories we have lived by and taken as natural (Cahill 2007; McKenzie 2004; Nelson 1999). Pedagogically, as critical educators who operate within EE/ESD curriculum materials and pedagogy, we work to create conditions that enable our students to construct conceptual vocabularies that can locate and critically engage their developing socio-ecological narratives within local community and national and international cultural practices. For example, within Canadian schooling we have now to incorporate Indigenous epistemological perspectives in school subjects and practices. These concepts can be used to explore our own constitution of worldviews and onto-epistemic perspectives as possibilities that can inform and reconfigure our social actions. It is complex new pedagogy that can critically engage consciousness-raising of social forces that are more aware of cultural subtexts and how they work to construct identities within an increased range of social-environmental contexts.

In fields of feminist, cultural, race-based, Aboriginal and gender studies, we see how methodological diversity, directed away from instrumental notions of fixed agency and toward narrative and participatory/relational analyses of identity formation, has given social-ecological meaning to people's lives. And we continue to wonder why so few EE researchers have associated these perspectives with struggles to overcome the participation gap within EE/ESD. Researchers in these other fields have explored notions of agency-action continua that ground themselves theoretically/philosophically in relational analyses of identity formation. It is complex inquiry with potential to engage authentic explorations of eco-social action that encompass the complexities of historical and contemporary analyses of social relational epistemologies (e.g., collective memory work, auto-bio-ethnographic studies, critical phenomenology and action research). In many of these explorations, identities are foregrounded and we are beginning to see deeper analyses of how people come to construct worldviews, constitutive of self, identity-agency-action, or of cultural-historical activity theory amongst many other possibilities that may be found within expanding arrays of emergent methodologies and methods.

Infusing EE/ESD with Social/Cultural Meaning

The conceptual shift from older psychological conceptions of instrumental agency to narrative analyses of subjectification processes provides another view of social participation. Actions are interpreted not exclusively a product of external 'factors' to be discovered but as relationally constituted, that is, through participation. It is on these grounds that identity/agency are historically and socially constituted within people and can be made accessible in autobiographical accounts of significant experiences. Within EE/ESD it is apparent that UNESCO-based discourse has been influential in the construction of environmental subjectivities. Counter-narratives such as the declaration of the NGO forum at Rio have also been important for critical environmental educators in the re-interpretation of Agenda 21. It is why EE itself persists in the face the newer ESD discourse favored by governments. It makes us skeptical of those with interests in maintaining the inequality between economy and environment in the representations of ESD (see, for example Hegarty 2008). In ways similar to those working in gender studies, Indigenous, endarkened and critical race theories, environmental educators have argued that difficulties experienced by teachers and academic educators in constructing and enacting their environmental identities within educational institutions are manifestations of representational silences tantamount in maintaining inequalities between environment and economics. These are silences that favor the sacred stories or cultural discourses that replicate the metanarratives of classical educational discourse.

There is a powerful argument, more familiar within feminist poststructural accounts (Britzman 1995; Davies 2003), for the significance of alternative public narratives in countering young people's educational assimilation into the dominant social paradigm. Exposing how the stories/discourses that young people have

available to them as children privileges certain perspectives can challenge the silences and provide groundwork for rethinking how subjectification works. The idea that struggles over such narrations are in fact struggles over identity provides a rationale for different thinking about what should count as basic education. Writing counter-narratives becomes a crucial pedagogical strategy when embracing notions of multiple consciousness and multiple subjectivities. That these counter-narratives reveal alternative values and worldviews deepens the argument for onto-epistemic-based narratives in the construction of social-environmental identities. Provision for socio-cultural variations in school children's narratives thus becomes a more meaningful focus than environmental attitudes in EE research as these variations direct researchers to investigate the *habitus*, the socio-cultural, relational settings from which identity-agencies arise. This focus for inquiry allows researchers to work collaboratively across cultures to make sense of situations where people may share environmental sensitivities but vary in their choice of political/social/environmental activities. We become less concerned about generalizable findings and more interested in cultural variation and difference.

Studies of subjectification or processes of identity formation have the potential to make a major contribution to our understandings of why change is so difficult and why change in EE/ESD is about worldview and about culture. At one level we must learn how to resist tendencies to conflate identities into fixed essentialist categories aggregated from variables (e.g., age, race, class). We do this by bringing rich dimensions of ontological narrativity to new identity approaches to social agency and social action. At other levels, this work asks critical questions of social and institutional practices mediated by discourses of political power, hence the *politics* of identity. We learn how to view agency constituted socially within cultural networks, specifically those *other* agents such as cultural others or as EE/ESD people in terms of more particularistic identities. This new sociology of identity endows previously marginalized others with a new sense of subjectivity grounded in the legitimacy of multiple worldviews. On the other hand, this work suggests that, for EE/ESD, socio-cultural identities can be re-constituted beyond dominant cultural and institutional discourses in the interweaving of a person's history, narrativity, social knowledge and relational experiences. These complex notions of social identity-agency permit the possibility of resistance (i.e., willful contradiction) to the dominant social paradigm.

Viewing subjectification in terms of onto-epistemic narrativity reminds us that we do not have to refer to cultural others to recognize hardening-of-the-categories problems within new narrative sociologies of identity. As Somers (1994) indicates, the difference between fixed taxonomic categories and narrative accounts is that, in the latter, the actual category *is* the narrative position and not the person. Thus the classification of the narrative itself can still be abstracted from context with the person's ontological integrity intact. For example, in a study of EE/ESD, it is not difficult to classify certain participants' narratives as falling into a category of nature-oriented or outdoor adventurer (in some cases the two may coincide); it is the narrative and not the person that is categorized. So, while there remains a place for the sociological use of categories—people with shared interests or attributes—such

a position should remain critical; it can vary in time and space. Following Brint (1992), there is no reason to assume that people with similar interests or attributes will be moved to common social action unless they share similar onto-epistemic identities and perhaps cultural or relational settings. Bringing narrativity to identity provides conceptual sinews for tighter couplings of social identity and agency, whilst opening the categories of choice (Somers 1994).

(Re)conceptualizing Identity Politics Within EE/ESD Across Cultures

Recently, within the EE/ESD field, there has been much soul searching about whether and how to engage concepts of culture in discussions of direction and purpose for this field. We think that an interesting and critical part of this task involves exploring how people produce themselves as subjectivities within and across cultural boundaries. That is, we think it valuable to define subject positions in strategic difference to dominant socio-cultural paradigms. Just as critical ethnographers have deconstructed objectivist and essential notions of culture, and have challenged their own methodological authority to define authentic culture, their subjects have found dominant discourses to be focal in their attempts to show their uniqueness and difference from it.

Such issues implicate a politics of identity and positionality as an important aspect of problematizing culture. Studies of subjectivity are necessarily complex as embedded within productive contexts of interaction and experience and discursive fields of subject formations that consider contingencies of history, social relations and ideology. The focus of such politics is intended to direct attention to questions of identity within their (cultural) contexts discursive production. Questions are directed at awareness, in identity work, of who controls the discourse of cultural settings and authenticity, in whose interest, and for what purpose? Here, politics is taken as processes by which plays of power and knowledge constitute cultural/contextual identities. Questions for EE/ESD concern how not only (young) people come to construct their environmental/ecologically oriented selves but how this happens within cultural fields of discourse. In other words, what are the processes, complex and ambiguous, that work to establish certain meanings as embodied and intersubjective?

If we move away from thinking of the environment as a cultural object or the environmentalist or environmental educator as a cultural subject, might we position EE/ESD discourses in term of how they were produced? In other words, as researchers we tell stories by following environmental educators' talk and then follow their stories in terms of the meanings they produce in the young people who experience the products of these stories in the educational activities they create. Here the ideas and meanings of environmental/ecological identity exist within the narratives as described in dialogue or written autobiographically. Thus, meanings are intertextually negotiated where researcher and participants both speak in ways

that interrupt each other, attempting to recognize the power that inevitably contaminates.

Thinking about narrative this way means having to consider, reflexively, the stories *in relation* rather than looking past them to some kind of external determination. Each narrative becomes a performative act where meanings are emergent in what we do. The meanings of how we came to construct and enact our environmental selves are heterogeneous and accommodate difference as much as themes in common. They are located in personal histories as significant in our socio-cultural lives. Recognizing that such meanings may be partial, contradictory or interpreted from memory is the nature of the process of learning about what is, or perceived to be, important and should be reflected in the research approaches undertaken.

Narrative processes of coming to know are more about the person than the *real* nature of environment. As such it is discursive work that interrupts the realist project of outlining similarities and differences amongst distinctly bounded cultures or countries. In the traditional sense, there may be a legitimization problem with stories that do not end in explanatory categories that can speak of cultural difference/distinctiveness or of similarities across cultures. However, *talking environment*, as a narrative form, is a style of identity/subjectivity construction that gives voice to *being/knowing environment* in ways that do not simply reproduce the logic of *UNESCO discourse* or dominant cultural discourses. Indeed, talking environment is rather messy work because *environment* is not understandable to many who have not ventured outside or away from the mimicry of films and industry discourse about environment. There is no pure space or pristine image of environment—the perceptual spaces are already inscribed in cultural discourse and so there are many flight lines, hybrid formations and emergent positions. In eliciting such perceptions researchers encourage participants to get beyond the simple enactment of narrative conventions (i.e., poetry is rare) in reference to environment talk, almost universally influenced subliminally by the globalized mass media culture industry.

At issue is the nature of power in marginalized voices, as signs of cultural accommodations and resistances, popular voicings, old childhood stories, social categories and shifting allegiances (as in the EE/ESD debates) as well as the histories that produce them. The result is shifting and contingent positions—a heterogeneous collection of voices whose stories may be compelling and powerful for those who take the time to read and listen, but having no fixed essences or responses to the hegemonic systems—mobile positions within fields of power relations. The focus is not so much the popular, coherent, generalizable attitude or voice of environmentalist or environmental educator but how those voices were produced in the first place. Our interests for the time being are in the meanings and the politics of production—within education in particular, but within culture—in how people subjectively come to create figures (figurations) of identification and to situate themselves within their stories of themselves and of the world.

Adopting approaches to environmental sustainability based in narrative identity assumes that the intelligibility in environmental action, while guided by structural-cultural discourses and relations, may be found in the processes of subjectification. We also require approaches to inquiry that provide tracings of actions that transcend

culturally constructed stories. We need approaches to education that facilitate this work. As researchers and educators we look for meaningful experiences that have worked to reconstitute identities which may cause students to become critical or skeptical of what seems to be common sense in institutions and in economic life in general. We look for ways to *see* how people's narratives are incorporated within *becoming* processes of subjectification, how people are *mediated* through a wide spectrum of socio-cultural and political practices as well as larger matrices of relations that shape our lives.

Within EE/ESD curriculum and pedagogy, the idea is to create conditions for young people to construct ideas and concepts as socio-ecological narratives that are open to critical scrutiny and discursive analytic processes. In other words, we look for educational programs whose subtexts involve exploring worldview positions that have been constituted culturally and yet can be reconstituted in relation to socio-ecological conditions. It is complex pedagogy that considers how social-cultural processes operate to create certain kinds of thought and practice and that is onto-epistemically aware of how identity formations can take place within relational-community settings. Arguably, this is the kind of critical pedagogy, rather than the tacking on of environment-related activities to existing curriculum materials, that EE has always been intended to perform.

Taking Culture Seriously: Locating the Politics of Identity Within Socio-cultural Contexts—A Partial View from Canadian Experience

In this chapter we have argued that work directed toward understanding environmental identity, conceptualized within cultural discourses, has potential to counter-narrativize generalized accounts of environmental behavior studies as rather singular, acultural dominant discourse concerning change. We have proposed that challenging silences within EE/ESD research involves learning how to express and represent diverse subjectivities beyond the one true story, the “good oil” (Robottom 1988, p. 116). We believe that creating conditions that give voice to the centrality of values and ontological positionings, in the personal-relational construction of social identities, can do cultural work. We argue that socio-environmental theory-action (i.e., the participation gap) thus loses its categorical stability and purchase as a dominant education perspective and research masternarrative (where action is distinct from of knowledge and attitude). Emerging from this perspective, the tendency to think of identity work as individualist has given way to renderings of narratives that place ‘actions’ as onto-epistemic possibilities. To think (and act) outside taken-for-granted procedures involves thinking critically and politically about socio-cultural narratives and actions within participatory action frames.

Social theorists seem reluctant to accommodate the idea that identity/subjectivity might be a focus of political interest. Newer research on social movements is

beginning to recognize that social and cultural ideologies operate as discourses with many voices. Thus, social and educational researchers are now pressed to make sense of 'difference' not only in the objective world but also within subjective worlds that operate within discourses of power. This means that new EE/ESD research and praxis must take culture seriously and engage post-critical research perspectives that challenge essentialized accounts of culture and cultural identity as unified or composed of certain obvious core features. Such perspectives can expose social complexities of decentered multiple subjectivities as well as the variety of ways social/cultural identities can be achieved as configurations of different or even incommensurable value spheres (i.e., as different onto-epistemic life narratives). As Butler (1992) indicated, traditional social theory has suffered from the lack of attention to the discursive work of socio-cultural constitution. We believe that it is no longer possible to defer questions of politics once the significance of subjectification is recognized. A final glimpse at identity politics within Canadian culture may illustrate how this can work.

Socio-cultural Identity Politics Within Canadian EE/ESD

International EE/ESD policies and practices have always played a role in the politics of environmental or sustainability education within Canadian contexts. What is interesting, however, is how the politics have evolved over several decades, from conceptual debates about quality, curriculum coherence and relative claims about categories of individuals (e.g., environmentally sensitive) to notions of personal and socio-cultural identity relations that are also more race, class and gender sensitive. These kinds of discussions are more attuned, it seems, to the current politics of cultural theory.

Framing EE/ESD discourses-practices in terms of their politics, particularly as a politics of identity, permits a view that may be familiar as we become more sensitive to aspects of a culture of Canadian identity. Within a cooperative atmosphere of contacts and support, we have raised sharp questions about worldview. We have engaged individuals to represent their identity (e.g., Burch 2000) consciously toward some kind of intelligibility of thought across what postcritical theorists such as Foucault (1982, 1988) might refer to as discursive formations (e.g., in the formation of EECOM). We might even venture that such discourses at least open the field to expose complexities of EE/ESD as applied regionally and locally, without general labels or categories. Our cautious approach to representing the politics of Canadian EE/ESD acknowledges the complexities of representation across a multicultural (now a contested concept) nation that we believe is not reducible to labels, categories or assumptions that one region or territory actually knows what another is doing. St. Pierre's (2000) question of how one becomes available to intelligibility in such circumstances encourages us to look deeper into people's narratives and practices in search of assumptions about what constitutes people's subjectivities within particular contexts in places where education has no national mandate (e.g., *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*, Volume 10). Her suggestion that

there is indeed no easy place to begin resonates here. Knowing that one must immerse oneself in the discourses-practices by doing the hard work—reading regional and local stories, not as representative of anything larger than that space and time—is a beginning. Recognizing that it is no longer acceptable to discuss and perhaps critique practice without having lived the experience is helpful but acknowledging our limits to represent is paramount.

The political struggle to achieve trump-card salience for identity categories, such as EE over ESD, is debatable in these circumstances, whether from environmentalist, feminist, Aboriginal or cultural movements. The question of whether or not a position is right, coherent or even interesting, says Butler (1995), is less informative than questions of why it is we have come to occupy the territory that we do. This is our place-based justification for the focus of this chapter—a focus in theory and praxis intended to get beyond cultural categories and to get inside people within cultures—across the participation gap. Every personal, social or cultural identity, as consciously conceived, is open to internal dialogue and to contestation. Tensions across these levels of identity, if they remain open, plural, flexible in actively seeking to know more and to become more aware of their core values, become a more natural part of what we expect from social-cultural collectives. These are not settled accomplishments fixed in time and space. Rather they are active, seeking to be more conscious of one's value positions on environmental issues amongst others, as well as politically engaged, interested but always skeptical of givens, critical of taken-for-granted assumptions about the way things have always been and actively working for change—as they say, wanting to have better wants. Weaknesses of will notwithstanding, the contradictions we live within, the internal tensions and the inconsistencies will evolve in time and place. Thus, politics, internal and external, of personal and socio-cultural identity work is more complex than we want it to be but it remains a key reason why we have concerns about cultural and cross-cultural work.

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