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Homework and fieldwork: investigations into the rhetoric–reality gap in environmental education research and pedagogy

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For years, environmental educators have been arguing that the culture of schooling (mostly focused on cultural reproduction) is antithetical to environmental education. Within this context, it is often suggested that environmental education occurs when there is a particularly passionate and motivated teacher who, despite frequent barriers, maintains environmental education as a priority. Yet the author's doctoral research suggests that even strong beliefs, significant skills, and an ideal program structure do not lead to the implementation of effective environmental education. Drawing on narrative inquiry, arts-based research and poststructural analysis, this study examines ways in which the privileging of the intellect in research and pedagogy may be making effective environmental education almost impossible.

> … we have reached the stage in the narrative where we have received the iceberg warning, and have made the remarkable decision to double the engine speed to Full Speed Ahead and go below to get a good night's rest. A change of course might be bad for business, we might have to slow down, lose time. Nothing, not even the ultimate risk of the death of nature, can be allowed to hold back the triumphant progress of the ship of rational fools. (Plumwood, 2002, p. 1)

Since Stevenson (1987) made the claim over twenty years ago that the culture of schooling (mostly focused on cultural reproduction) was antithetical to environmental education, little seems to have changed (see Robottom, 1991; Weston, 1996, 2004; Hart, 2003). Structural barriers such as too much curriculum material to cover, difficulty working across disciplines, lack of resources, time, or the ability to take students outside continue to be cited as problems (e.g. Palmer, 1998; Thompson, 2004). So is an ever-increasing disconnect between humans and the more-than-human world (Abram, 1996; Louv, 2005). Given these constraints,

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environmental education often occurs when there is a particularly passionate and motivated teacher who, despite these frequent barriers, maintains environmental education as a priority. Poststructural understandings, however, trouble this idea.

Teacher beliefs and agency

Contrary to the arguments of many (e.g. Schweisfurth, 2006), I suggest that beliefs, values, accessible examples and material resources are not always enough for teachers to engage in their work in ways that prioritize the health of the planet. The power of dominant discourses to disrupt the transfer of beliefs to practice needs to be accounted for. This is particularly the case in the context of what gets to count as legitimate scholarly and educational work.

In her analysis of teachers working within the Ontario curriculum, Schweisfurth (2006) suggests that 'teachers who are determined to make global education a priority have found that the new Ontario curriculum guidelines have given them plenty of opportunities to do so', but then comments that while an emphasis on critical engagement with global issues in the curriculum may not be explicit, 'the curriculum creates the space for teachers to control this process themselves—without actually encouraging them to do so' (p. 44).

Schweisfurth (2006) notes that those who took advantage of that space 'were unusual among their colleagues' (p. 41) and concludes that where teachers are highly motivated and supported they have the agency to engage in issues they feel are important. This work, I suggest, would be much more useful with a more complicated understanding of agency and an analysis of ways in which discourse and contradictory subjectivities can keep teachers from doing what they vehemently believe in, and in some cases, appear to be fully supported to do. This does not mean that teachers cannot have any agency, but that their ability to act is constrained by discourse and contradictory subjectivities (Davies, 2000; St. Pierre, 2000; Weedon, 2004). These assumptions suggest different questions to be asked of research data in order to produce more nuanced readings of the rhetoric–reality gap in environmental education: questions that require paying attention to how particular 'truths' and practices are produced and maintained as dominant.

'Unusual among their colleagues'

'they were unusual among their colleagues'
the researcher claimed,[1]
those who cared.
those who acted.
Those who
were not [tightened] by
'the tightening of curricular expectations'. [2]
the 'heroes' who
'found' opportunities
within the guides called
curriculum.

Poststructural understandings

To me, the value in poststructuralism is in its ability to help make visible the processes which (re)inscribe dominant discourses and subjectivities. More specifically, post-structuralism opens up the possibility of attending to *how* everyday actions, speech and physical spaces work through micropractices of power to constrain both environmental educators and researchers within the very discourses they are often working to change. Shifting the focus of analysis 'from individualism to subjectivity, from text to discursive practices, and from signifier to signifying practices … focus[ing] … on how language works, in whose and what interests, on what cultural sites and why' (Kelly, 1997, p. 19) offers readings which can help trouble normative binaries and imagine different possibilities for pedagogy (see Kumashiro, 2004).

Foucault's insights are particularly useful, and add significantly to understandings of limited agency of the subject. Foucault (1977/1995) talks of how, in eighteenth-century England, it was proposed that external forms of prison punishment should be replaced by a multi-sided structure encircling a central watchtower that housed an invisible 'inspector' whose presence or absence was unknown at any moment. This panoptical apparatus, Foucault argues, fosters an oppressive self-regulatory form of control and constraint among inmates through both isolation and the possibility of constant surveillance. Foucault suggests that far from being just a physical structure, the 'panoptic schema' became a 'generalizable model of functioning' that can be, and has been, applied in prisons, hospitals, schools and other institutions (see Barrett, 2006). These ideas have a significant influence on issues of agency.

Foucault also argues that a process of codification of language created 'new rules of propriety [which] screened out some words' and had significant material effects in framing understandings and possible experiences of sexuality. Thus, 'areas were thus established, if not of utter silence, at least of tact and discretion: between parents and children, for instance, or teachers and pupils, or masters and domestic servants' (Foucault, 1976/1998, pp. 17–18). I suggest that some similar processes may be going on vis-à-vis environment and environmental education.

Within Foucaldian and poststructural analyses, power is understood not to be held by particular individuals or institutions, but as fluid, moving in webs, and constantly shifting (Foucault, 1977/1995). It works through discourse, inscribed in both the personal and contextual, given that discourses act on particular bodies in specific contexts. What this means is that subjects are always already inscribed with some discourses, and that previous reinscription is constantly at play as an individual encounters both new and old stories (see Barrett, 2006). Poststructural theory, together with Foucault's notions of language production, power and disciplinary practices, demands that different kinds of questions be asked of research data, and of environmental education itself.

The study

My doctoral research, which began as a focused study examining the motivations and practices of outdoor education teachers, suggests to me that even among the most

motivated, a significant gap may still exist between teachers' expressions of concern, and environmental education practice. While the structural barriers such as those mentioned above are certainly significant, a different reading of the rhetoric–reality gap suggests that the disciplining power of dominant discourse may be making it difficult, and sometimes impossible, for teachers to engage in environmental education. To illustrate this power, I draw on an in-depth narrative inquiry with Jeff, an outdoor/ environmental educator, followed by analysis of my experiences writing my doctoral dissertation.

While the study covered two different research sites, the focus of this article is on Jeff, who team-teaches an interdisciplinary outdoor education programme in a public high school. The five-credit programme offers courses in Grade 11 English, physical education, biology, mathematics and, more recently, multi-media. My interaction with Jeff spanned four years in a range of contexts—during my in-school visits to his class, on extended hiking and canoe trips with his students, at a provincial sustainability Youth Conference, and at numerous coffee house 'interviews'. Through our many conversations, he and I struggled together to make some 'sense' of this gap between his explicitly expressed distress about the state of the environment, the lack of structural constraints on his teaching, and his limited focus on environmental concerns in his teaching, particularly given the incredible flexibility in his programme structure.

During this time, Jeff vehemently spoke of his concerns about the environment and belief that the environment should be the major focus of education. He did not face many of the typically named barriers to doing environmental education, including subject area boundaries, inability to take students outside, or limited access to community resources. Jeff had access to resources, support and numerous examples of ways to engage students in action-oriented environmental projects. Yet despite his concern about the environment as expressed in our conversations and demonstrated in many of his lifestyle choices, he concurred when I suggested that environmental topics and concerns seemed to remain on the fringe in his teaching. For instance, when in a position to re-structure the programme after three years, Jeff chose to spend his time developing a new technology-based multi-media component rather than develop what could have been a very holistic environmental education programme that addressed education in, about and for the environment.

Why, then, the gap between his expressed concerns and his pedagogical practice? Did Jeff just lack the appropriate skills to follow through on what he believed in? Was he just not motivated enough, or perhaps did not have the appropriate support (see Schweisfurth, 2006)?

Teacher beliefs and agency

In the context of a poststructural reading, I am not convinced that more personal motivation, skill training, or examples would necessarily enable him to close the gap between his espoused beliefs about the importance of environmental education and his pedagogical practice which, given the type of programme he was teaching, placed surprisingly little emphasis on the environmental concerns. Elsewhere (Barrett,

2006), I have spoken at some length about how Jeff seemed unable to teach in a student-centred way, even though his programme, knowledge and skills placed him in a perfect position to do so. I have also explored how he struggled with discourses of educational neutrality as he contemplated supporting students in environmental action projects. In both cases, it seemed as if it was his notions of what it meant to be a proper teacher, rather than barriers related to programme, skills, resources, or his own beliefs in the value of student-centred pedagogy, that were the main deterrents making it difficult for Jeff to teach the way he wanted. In the context of this article, however, I turn to examine how 'cognitive imperialism' (Battiste & Henderson, 2000) may be intersecting with other dominant discourses, and limiting the ways Jeff could speak about his interaction with non-human others.[3]

As I began to recognize how my own speaking about 'Land'[4] had been silenced (see below), I recalled how Jeff seemed to speak of non-human others mainly in the context of recreational adventures, discussion of global environmental issues, and learning to identify species of plants, birds and other organisms. In our conversations, Jeff most often spoke of the non-human and outdoor environment using language of knowledge and knowing. There are a few instances where he talked about land in more personal terms, however. On one occasion, he spoke of wanting to buy up large sections of prairie to preserve native grasslands and on another, he wrote about the loneliness he often felt when taking students on a hiking trip.[5] During the fourth year of our conversations, Jeff and I had been talking at length, both in person and through email, about what kinds of things he could say when he talked about environment, the outdoors, or land. In one of our coffee-shop conversations I asked him about the school's annual hiking trip and his expressions of loneliness. The students, Jeff claimed, just didn't seem to get it. When I probed this idea further, he explained:

Jeff: …The loneliness comes from [students] getting it and not getting it. Me kind of thinking I'm understanding and other people not being able to see that and feeling like there are rifts there that you can't cross because they're not in that headspace.

Mary Jeanne: Is it a headspace?

J: Oh, it's probably more than that. But there's certainly a mental component to it, right, that I'm experiencing things in particular ways based on what I'm thinking about, so I'm looking at it. I always remember that one spot, that we walk through on our way out. You probably remember where we're walking along the road. The road isn't that thrilling, right. But you get to a point where there's obviously been some beaver dam activity and it's flooded an area and you have all these great big trembling aspen and it looks as though it was flooded out. And it's just that, it's kind of, it's almost spectral, you know, it's spooky. You're walking through and there's all these dead trees standing up there and /

MJ: Wow.

J: It's like a, it's an entire dead forest, you know and it's a kinda neat place. And it's a place where if you just, [momentary pause] like there's so much going on there, and every time I walk through there I just think, 'what does this say about the kind of biological evolution in the area and all the connections that are happening there that people aren't aware of, and I

> always thought of that as a special place, but / I think, so that's my mental processes, right, and I'm sure there's emotional things going on there too, but I think most of the kids walk by and say, 'Oh look at all the dead trees. Are we done yet?' So on a cognitive level, there is certainly something going on there, there's a rift. On an emotional level there's probably a rift too. On a psychological level there's probably a rift too. I think maybe I think more of the cognitive level than the other ones, but …

I find the shift in conversation from what seems to verge on an emotional, spiritual kind of description of the land to one based on the cognitive, on his knowledge of ecosystems, striking. Later in the conversation, I asked Jeff if he ever explicitly explained to the students why he liked to go hiking, and what he could say to them.

MJ: When you are trying to explain it to your students, what can you say? … What would you love to say to your students, about why you go backpacking, but never gets out of your mouth?

J: Probably that I love it. It seems so simple, right.

MJ: And what is it that you love?

J: Everything about it. By the end of it, more times than not, I probably hate it, because I'm tired /

MJ: When you're leading a group, too.

J: Well, yeah, but even when I go out on my own, even then I'm like, 'I'm glad this is going to be over.' But not very long before I feel like I want to do it again. But that's the thing, that language does exist, but I don't know if that's a language that goes both ways sometimes, you know.

MJ: Say more about that.

J: Well first of all, I don't hear a lot of people expressing that about anything. I don't hear a lot of athletes talking about loving their sport. *Between teachers and students.* I don't hear a lot of teachers saying they love their subjects and they love a particular class or they love an idea or they love their special, whatever it happens to be. I don't hear a lot of teachers talking about, 'I'm just *fascinated by* this particular aspect of a job,' or, you know. It's almost not talked about. But on the other hand, maybe it's, there's also a linguistic connection too, where besides saying that you love it, where do you go from there? Why? Elaborate on that.

MJ: And then what do you say?

J: Yeah you go, well, '*I love it.*' (goofy voice). [joint laughter]. Then where do you go from there? It's hard to articulate, and maybe all things come with practice right, and maybe it's just an unpractised, untouched, untapped idea there.

When I returned this section of transcript, along with the comment that the language of love does not seem to exist in his vocabulary, Jeff responded as follows in an email:

J: One factor in this 'language of love' not really being present in dialogue between myself and students or friends, is the emotional vulnerability it leaves you exposed to. I'm not sure how much of a factor it is but I have realized on a conscious level for some time that there are some conversations I avoid because I would be 'putting myself out there' in a way that I'm not necessarily comfortable with… . In my typical dealings with others, the idea of loving something doesn't often come up.

Although long acknowledged as a part of teaching (e.g. Fried, 1995), discourses of love have not been part of Jeff's language. This is not surprising, if one takes into account self-disciplining processes of professionalism, the ways in which language becomes codified (Foucault, 1976/1998), the emotional vulnerability Jeff mentioned, and Boler's (1999) genealogical work illustrating ways emotion has been produced and policed in schools. Boler states:

> In the typical revisionist account [of educational history] emotions are invisible because neither emotions nor women's and students' daily experiences have been foregrounded. Further, in Western cultures the absence rather than the presence of emotion signifies masculinity, the virtuous, and the good. Since the 'ideal moral citizen' or student is understood to be both 'rational' and 'masculine,' emotions generally fall through the cracks of history. (p. 36)

Many feminist scholars, including Boler, have worked to make visible ways in which emotion has been associated with things feminine, and placed, along with women, on the 'wrong' side of a rational/emotional binary. Furthermore, discourses of educational neutrality (see McKenzie, 2006/in press) and the objective evaluator (Barrett *et al.*, 2005), make it difficult to make love a central part of pedagogy, particularly for high school teachers. In the context of these broader discourses and the power of self-disciplining processes (Foucault, 1977/1995), Jeff's responses are not surprising.

The limitations of language were also evident in the way Jeff talked about the swamp. The slight pause in his description of the swampy area, followed by an abrupt shift to language of the cognitive, seemed to indicate Jeff had gone as far as he could in the language of attraction for the place he was describing. To express 'erotic sensibilities' about place (Martusewicz, 2005, p. 344) might mean traversing the boundaries of appropriate teacher, male and 'ideal moral citizen'. It might also, as Jeff suggested, make him personally vulnerable. The vacuous space left by an inability to speak of love (represented literally by the pause in Jeff's conversation) was quickly filled by the more 'legitimate' cultural narrative of biology. Jeff remained within the 'safe' discourses of the cognitive and expressed discomfort at the idea of telling his students that they were going hiking simply because he loved it.[6] This conversation resonates with other studies which have highlighted ways in which dominant discourses of rationality and masculinity place men above non-human others, making it difficult to simultaneously perform male *and* express intimate interconnectedness with these others (Davies & Whitehouse, 1997; Whitehouse, 2002; Allister, 2004).

Contrary to arguments that if teachers believe in a particular pedagogical approach they will use it, or that those who are motivated and care will take up environmental education, I suggest that the power of dominant discourses, (re)inscribed through everyday language and social practices, may seriously constrain ways in which impassioned teachers like Jeff teach environmental education. In other words, dominant discourses and contradictory subjectivities (see Davies, 2000; St. Pierre, 2000; Weedon, 2004) that simultaneously produce teachers as gendered, professional and

human mean that they have little access to the subject positions that would enable them to enact a pedagogy of love vis-à-vis 'Land'.

Experiencing 'the gap' in research

According to Foucault, we are prisoners in self-perpetuating discursive regimes enacted through micropractices of power. These regimes function by valorising some statement forms while devaluing others (Fraser, 1997). In other words, some knowledge claims get to have authority while others are excluded, or deemed illegitimate. It is through doing 'homework' in the sense of paying attention to discourses available to me (see Richardson, 2002), ways in which they are producing my subjectivities, and how I may be (re)producing them, that I felt like I 'stumbled upon' both the above analysis, and perhaps, more significantly, insights regarding the self-policing processes of doing research itself.

A major intent of my doctoral work is to both theorise *and* illustrate the importance of acknowledging the porosity between humans and non-human others. To do this work has required drawing on ways of knowing that include the whole body, including cognitive, spiritual and aesthetics. Through both content and representation, my goal has been to produce a 'text' that does what it theorises. This includes challenging binaries, dominant discourses related to anthropocentrism, and the ways in which what has come to count as legitimate knowledge in the Academy often close down the possibility of embodied connections between humans and non-human others. To do this work, I immersed myself in theorising about, and examples of, non-linear forms of representation. Yet despite many powerful, *and published*, examples, I found myself stuck. The paint and collage boards remained mostly blank on my table, and my writing was still dominated by my well-trained 'academic' mind. For months, I just couldn't seem to 'go there'. I had the resources. I had lots of examples. I even had the skills (I had written poetry and worked with paint extensively in my journals in my years as a high school teacher and outdoor educator), but I could not seem to get myself to write non-linear, non-conventional academic prose. I was standing on the top of one side of a large gap, wondering how to cross the chasm that would allow me to embrace non-linear text.

In this moment of standing and looking across the gap, wondering what was wrong with me, why couldn't I do what I believed in, and what many others appeared able to do, I saw a potential connection. Was this place of hesitancy, of blockage, of fear, in any way similar to that experienced by Jeff, my research participant? Jeff had, for three years, spoken about wanting to take a more student-centred approach to his teaching. He had also spoken about his intense concern for the environment. Yet it seemed that he, too, was stalled. He had the skills, knew the theory, was in a setting where there were few of the typically named structural boundaries to teaching environmental education in a very student-centred way. Yet he just couldn't seem to get there (see Barrett, 2006). Perhaps I might find a key to the 'gap' by examining my own paralysis.[7] Why was it that I could not simply do what I believed in, particularly when I had all the support I needed? What would it take for me to be able to write differently? And in writing differently, how might I be able to know, and live, differently?

Policed

policed
(and very susceptible to the police)

a double bind
of the marginalized.

what (who) was holding me back?

To seek answers to these questions, I immersed myself in both a metaphorical and a physical journey that required an intense de-schooling process. It included dismantling and rewriting layers of discourse that inscribed artwork as marginalized, poetry as non-academic, human–nature boundaries as intact.[8]

As I painted, collaged, and listened to the music of Carolyn McDade (1996, 1999, 2003), trying to create a space to 'speak' without being censored by my overly active, academically trained mind (see Richardson, 2002), I moved back and forth between collage and computer. Yet words could only come in the form of poetry—a linking of ideas running down rather than across the page. Any of my attempts to write across were stymied, the well-inscribed rules of academic writing reaching in to thwart attempts to write my heart. *Not appropriate*, they screamed. So I wrote in the only way I could … down the page. I could not think of this work as 'academic', for the moment I did, the 'rules' began to invade and my writing and painting stalled.

Seems that you and I both are engaged, whether implicitly or explicitly, in trying to nudge the collective language—to loosen it up, perhaps, in hopes of making room for various other non-human voices to enter and influence the general conversation. No matter that these other voices do not speak in words (but rather in honks, or trills, or croaks, or whispering rattles)—what's important … is that our own words be awake to these other styles of expression, these other bodies, these other shapes of sentience and sensitivity. ***But to let my works and my thoughts stay awake and responsive to these other voices entails, it seems, that I speak more as a body than as a mind***—that I identify more with this breathing flesh (this skin and these hands an this ache in the gut) than my culture generally allows, and that I let my words and my thoughts blossom out of my limbs. That I acknowledge and honor my own animal presence, this curiously muscled form and its various affinities and cringes, and its apparent ability to echo, or reverberate off of, any other body it encounters—a sandstone cliff, or a water strider, or a wolf howling out in the forested distance. For me, the whole reason and worth of reclaiming the body—or rather, or letting the body reclaim us—is so that we may find ourselves back inside this delicious world from which schooling had exiled us, rediscovering our embedment in the thick of things …"(Abram in Abram & Jardine, 2001, pp. 315–316 [bold italics mine])

Inscribed

why
such a struggle, this
writing
this work
this speaking
my Love of Land?

after all,
I am not
subject to
the violence
of
homophobia,
the exclusions
of racism.

I am white.
most often middle class,
educated.
privileged.

then I remember,

Stories:

shaman pushed
  underground
  aboriginal knowledge
  negated

millions killed
under the name
of witch
(and I am female).

Science celebrated.
Funding given.
Jobs offered.

Memories
encoded in my body

experiences
lived today

remind me
how
it has come to be
such a struggle
to speak.

As I moved from one side of my room to the other, working on my collage pieces and trying to get some of the process into words that I might use in my dissertation, I paid attention—close attention—to what I could speak and what got stuck on my tongue. I could not, for instance, speak of staying up all night to work, if I had been engaged with paint, fabric and paper. Yet had I sat in front of my computer for hours, I would have easily spoken of working all night. I also tripped over the word skiing, but was more comfortable telling others I was going for a workout. I began, tentatively, to talk of the wisdom I gained from trees, and practised speaking of my dissertation as emotional work, and my art as a legitimate part of that.

I watched for the 'unsustainable fictions' (Gough, 1991) subtly but powerfully expressed in words, images, places and practices that made it difficult for me to take time for walks, immerse my body in Land, write poetry, and consider my art as legitimate work. I named discourses, many embedded in binaries that were part of my own speech, writing and daily actions: work/play; human/nature; rational/emotional; prose/poetry; writing/art. And in that attending, I began to disrupt them.

I also paid attention to conversations and social interactions: how a fellow graduate student commented that it seemed okay to collage on a Saturday night, since 'that was not real work after all'. To a committee member who congratulated me on my 'intellectual work' after having explained the embodied nature of my processes of coming to know. To how the fast walk of a senior faculty member seemed to suggest that the rush of movement, the suggestion of busy-ness, rather than stillness, was the mark of a legitimate academic. I had to 'leave' the Academy for a time to nourish ways of knowing that were not privileged there, and was only able to 'return' to the university when my more creative, intuitive ways of knowing gained enough space in my body so they would not be as threatened by the power held by the privileging of the intellect in the Academy.[9] Framed as a dichotomy in my original metaphor, I was eventually able to integrate knowing that came from a self that included my body, spirit and heart, as well as my intellect. Writing the doctoral dissertation has been about this integration, a process that has been particularly difficult given the strength of discourses that maintain the intellect as superior way of knowing.

Traversing the gap

This experience of 'traversing the gap' provided valuable insights into the challenges of change, suggesting that I should not be too quick to point to lack of resources, support, skills, or even my own beliefs as the most significant barriers. It also suggests to me that that while barriers such as these certainly hinder the practice of environmental education, it is important to examine how dominant discourses of what gets to count as legitimate knowledge may be working in very insidious ways to undermine the very possibility of even a motivated teacher teaching environmental education. This does not mean that teachers cannot have any agency, but that their ability to act is constrained by discourse and contradictory subjectivities. These assumptions suggest different questions to be asked of research data in order to produce more nuanced readings of the rhetoric–reality gap in environmental education: questions

that require paying attention to how particular 'truths' and practices are produced and maintained as dominant.

So what might this all mean for research? Boler (1999) suggests that 'an account of how Western discourses of emotion shape our scholarly work, as well as pedagogical recognition of how emotions shape our classroom interactions' is needed (p. xv). One of many readings possible, the combination of homework and fieldwork in this study has provided some possible insights into that shaping. How, I wonder, might the performance of research itself be an imperial and civilisational project (Scheurich, 1997) that shuts down the possibility of speaking about love for Land—particularly given that ways of knowing which most enable communication with and connection to non-human others remain marginalised within most academic (con)texts?

Thomas Berry (1988) suggests that 'his generation has been autistic in its inability to establish any intimate rapport with the natural world'. Just over ten years later, he goes on to suggest that universities, through their insight, freedom, critical capacity, contact with the younger generation and 'influence over the professions and the other activities of society', have special capacities to 'reorient the human community towards a greater awareness that the human exists, survives, and becomes whole only within the single great community of the planet Earth' (Berry, 1999 , pp. 79–80). Yet universities generally support knowledge 'associated with the modern individualistic and technologically oriented culture of change' (Bowers, 1997, p. 1; see also O'Sullivan, 1999) and in doing so play a powerful role in privileging the intellect and marginalizing emotion. This situation creates a paradox which, I believe, has significant implications in the production of the rhetoric–reality gap in environmental education. In a world where everyday speech, actions and writing are understood to reinscribe particular discourses and define what is thinkable and unthinkable, possible and impossible, I wonder what I, and we as a collective of environmental education researchers, might be reproducing in the very texts we create.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. Schweisfurth (2006), abstract.
2. *Ibid*.
3. The ways in which human dominance has been created and maintained through discourses of human intellectual superiority have been well documented, and many have spoken about the privileging of cognitive knowing producing a socially constructed divide between humans and non-human others (e.g. Evernden, 1985/1993 ; Plumwood, 1993; Abram, 1996; Bowers, 1997; O'Sullivan, 1999; Battiste & Henderson, 2000).
4. In the midst of no adequate words with which to reference the organic, mineral and other bodies with which I share my existence, I find the word 'Land' a helpful term to use.

5. My questions were prompted by a self-study essay Jeff wrote the previous summer where he talked about loneliness vis-à-vis school hiking trips.

6. Jeff offered two possibilities in response to this analysis. The first was that it made a lot of sense to him, and could be actually what was happening. The other was that this shift was simply an instance of his tendency to go off in many different directions in the context of conversation.

7. I am in no way assuming that my experience is the same as Jeff's. Yet as this article suggests, our two intertwined stories did have some resonance with each other.

8. I acknowledge the irony that in much of this text, I reinscribe that which I criticize: the privileging of the intellect. Limitations of the possible forms of representation (i.e. the academic journal), together with the rules of legitimacy of research and the power of discourses with which I am inscribed create what feels, at least at the moment, like an inescapable paradox.

9. See Richardson (2002) and Lipsett (2001) for discussions of the struggle to make space for, and hold on to, creative or intuitive ways of knowing when one has been trained to privilege the intellect.

Notes on Contributor

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