Foundations of Place: A Multidisciplinary Framework for Place-Conscious Education

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This article provides educators at all levels with a theoretical rationale for place-conscious education; it also discusses pedagogical pathways, and institutional challenges, to place-consciousness. Drawing on insights from phenomenology, critical geography, bioregionalism, ecofeminism, and other place-conscious traditions, the author gathers diverse perspectives on "place" to demonstrate the profoundly pedagogical nature of human experience with places. Five "dimensions of place" are described that can shape the development of a socio-ecological, place-conscious education: (a) the perceptual, (b) the sociological, (c) the ideological, (d) the political, and (e) the ecological. After discussing these, the author reframes several place-conscious educational traditions. The article concludes with an analysis of the possibilities for place-conscious education in an era that defines institutional accountability by standards and testing.

KEYWORDS: accountability, ecological education, pedagogy, place, place-based education, school reform.

> "The world is places." (Snyder, 1990, p. 25)

The purpose of this inquiry is to contribute to a theory of *place* as a multidisciplinary construct for cultural analysis and to unearth, transplant, and cross-fertilize perspectives on place that can advance theory, research, and practice in education.[1] Place is a construct of growing interest in many fields outside education (see Casey, 1997). Geertz (1996), for example, writes that the anthropological consideration of place has "a sort of preludial quality, as if it marked the beginning of something that will reach far beyond the matters under immediate consideration" and that the study of place "can be

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brought to bear on the grand complexities that plague the world" (p. 262). The treatment of place in the present article, similarly, is preludial and aims to address, through place-conscious educational thinking, some of the complexities that plague the world and our institutions of education.

Contemporary school reform takes little notice of place. The emphasis on state-mandated standards for teachers and students tends to work toward uniform, if sometimes segregated, skills and outcomes that schools are expected to promote. The pressure of "accountability" and the publication of standardized test scores in the news media reinforce the assumption that student, teacher, and school achievement can be measured by classroom routines alone and that the only kind of achievement that really matters is individualistic, quantifiable, and statistically comparable. Such an assumption is misleading because it distracts attention from the larger cultural contexts of living, of which formal education is just a part (Apple, 2001; McNeil, 2000, 2002; Spring, 1998). And from the perspective of place, conventional notions of accountability are problematic because they fail to recognize the mediating role that schools play in the production of space (or social context) through the education of place makers (or citizens). Place-based educators often question reforms based on standards and testing because of their tendency to cut off the process of teaching and learning from community life, where students and teachers are "learning all the time" (Holt, 1989). Some even posit that pursuing locally focused pedagogies might boost achievement in relation to traditional standardized measures (Gibbs & Howley, 2000; Lieberman & Hoody, 1998; Theobald & Curtiss, 2000). But this is not the central point of place-conscious education. The point of becoming more conscious of places in education is to extend our notions of pedagogy and accountability outward toward places. Thus extended, pedagogy becomes more relevant to the lived experience of students and teachers, and accountability is reconceptualized so that places matter to educators, students, and citizens in tangible ways. Place-conscious education, therefore, aims to work against the isolation of schooling's discourses and practices from the living world outside the increasingly placeless institution of schooling. Furthermore, it aims to enlist teachers and students in the firsthand experience of local life and in the political process of understanding and shaping what happens there.

To acknowledge that the trajectory of the last two decades of state-mandated school reform policy has, to a certain extent, riveted the attention of policymakers, citizens, administrators, teachers, and students on classroom tasks and tests is not to claim that no examples of place-conscious education exist within formal schooling. Several educational traditions, as well as innovations in pedagogy and school structures, keep alive a connection between teachers, learners, and "real life" outside schools. Experiential learning, context-based learning, problem-posing education, outdoor education, environmental/ecological education, bioregional education, natural history, critical pedagogy, service learning, community-based education, Native American education—all of these approaches to education tend to include engagement with local settings. Community schools, small schools, rural schools,

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charter schools, and other structures that promote local participation and control can help connect schools to communities and, potentially, foster place-conscious teaching and learning.[2] However, with the passage of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, these approaches to education will continue to be eclipsed by the tripartite banner of education reform: standards, testing, and accountability. Where place-conscious traditions continue, they will be under constant pressure to prove their worth by conventional measures in national, state, and local systems of education that remain disengaged from and unaccountable to the connections between people, education, and places. However, taken together, these examples of place-conscious education signal a vibrant counterpoint to the dominant system of education, which fails to connect meaningfully to the lives of learners and the communities from which they come. This article aims to strengthen the connections between education and the places where we, and others, live.

The article is divided into three main sections. In the first section, five "dimensions of place" are discussed through a broad, multidisciplinary analysis of the term. The focus here is on (a) revealing the relevance of place as a unit of cultural and ecological analysis, (b) demonstrating the many ways that places are pedagogical, and (c) supporting the claim that educational research, theory, and practice need to pay more attention to places. The second section, "Pedagogies of Place," revives three educational traditions that, deepened with an analysis of the diverse dimensions of places, can guide place-conscious education "on the ground" where it matters most for students, teachers, and places. The third section, "Becoming Accountable to Places," argues that consciousness of place fundamentally challenges assumptions and conventions associated with schooling, specifically, assumptions about the purposes of education reform, the possibilities for democracy, and the meaning of accountability and achievement.

Dimensions of Place: A Multidisciplinary Analysis

Invoking the import of place, Geertz (1996) comments, "[N]o one lives in the world in general" (p. 259). A multidisciplinary analysis of place reveals the many ways that places are profoundly pedagogical. That is, as centers of experience, places *teach* us about how the world works and how our lives fit into the spaces we occupy. Further, places *make* us: As occupants of particular places with particular attributes, our identity and our possibilities are shaped. Thus Snyder's (1990) cogent assertion "The world is places" (p. 25) can be extended: It is also true that people make places and that places make people. The kind of teaching and shaping that places accomplish, of course, depends on what kinds of attention we give to them and on how we respond to them. Although culture and place are deeply intertwined (Basso, 1996; Casey, 1997; Feld & Basso, 1996), our relationship with places has been obscured by an educational system that currently neglects them. That is, schooling often distracts our attention from, and distorts our response to, the actual contexts of our own lives (places).

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To appreciate "place" as a productive educational construct, one must first explore its meanings. Place has recently become a focus for inquiry across a variety of disciplines, from architecture, ecology, geography, and anthropology, to philosophy, sociology, literary theory, psychology, and cultural studies. No single, axiomatic theory of place exists that might inform educational studies, although most scholars who study place would agree that an understanding of it is key to understanding the nature of our relationships with each other and the world. In two masterly philosophical treatments, Casey (1993, 1997) traces a phenomenology of place from primeval cosmology, through the origins and development of Western philosophy and literature, to the reappearance of place in postmodern cultural theory. Evoking Aristotle's compact pronouncement "The power of place will be remarkable" (quoted in Casey, 1997, p. ix), Casey uncovers the long history of interest in place in philosophical inquiry. He writes:

> To be at all—to exist in any way—is to be somewhere, and to be somewhere is to be in some kind of place. Place is as requisite as the air we breathe, the ground on which we stand, the bodies we have. We are surrounded by places. We walk over and though them. We live in places, relate to others in them, die in them. Nothing we do is unplaced. How could it be otherwise? How could we fail to recognize this primal fact? (p. ix)

Casey posits that the philosophy of place remains obscure just because our experience of it is so . . . commonplace. Casey (1993, 1997) also shows that in the history of Western thought, place has been undermined by and subordinated to space and time, so that place has become synonymous with location and thus disappears from view.

A fundamental paradox of place, then, is that although we can experience it everywhere, everywhere it recedes from consciousness as we become engrossed in our routines in space and time. When Casey and other philosophers (e.g., Foucault, 1980, pp. 146–165) speak of the dominance of space and time over the idea of place, they invoke a battery of geographical terms to distinguish the meaning of place. The most basic of these distinctions is that made between place and Euclidian or geometric space, which can be charted with mathematical precision as a series of sites or locations. Such a mathematically charted site stands apart from human relationship, and, because of the variety of human experience, can give rise to many different places: My experience of a site might be very different from yours and thus produce a significantly different place. The language of geography, however, has become complex as theorists from various traditions with divergent agendas use the vocabulary. Just as place cannot be reduced to a point on a grid, neither can space, which has taken on metaphorical and cultural meanings that describe geographical relationships of power, contested territories of identity and difference, and aesthetic or even cybernetic experience. Rather than attempt to strictly define space and place amid the multitude of mean-

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ings that scholars attribute to them (e.g., Abram, 1996; Basso, 1996; Casey, 1997; Keith & Pile, 1993; Soja, 1996), I rely on the basic distinction between place and mathematical space, just as I conflate the meaning of place with that of cultural space, as well as with other geographical concepts such as landscape and region. My intent is not to minimize the usefulness of refining geographical and philosophical terms for inquiry in specific disciplines, but rather to demonstrate the appropriateness of geographical thinking generally to a philosophy of education.[3]

The following analysis gathers insights from phenomenology, critical geography, bioregionalism, ecofeminism, and other place-conscious traditions such as imaginative literature and Native American thought, to demonstrate the power, range, and immediacy of place. Sociological, ecological, and socio-ecological perspectives on place are juxtaposed and overlaid to emphasize the diversity of perspectives on place and to highlight the need to elaborate both cultural and ecological analyses as place-based education is developed. The sheer volume of writing about place from across disciplines means that the perspectives discussed here cannot be said to be exhaustive or complete, but instead are suggestive of a rich and badly needed conversation about the relationship between the places we call schools and the places where we live our lives.[4] Each of the dimensions discussed is interrelated with the others, and each is in its own way an expression of the fundamental idea that *places are pedagogical*. These dimensions include: (a) the perceptual, (b) the sociological, (c) the ideological, (d) the political, and (e) the ecological.

The Perceptual Dimension of Place

Phenomenologically, places are the ground of direct human experience. In his book *The Spell of the Sensuous,* Abram (1996) uses phenomenological inquiry to explore the profound modernist disconnection of the human body from the natural world that makes possible any human identity or cultural formation. Beginning with Husserl and extending the work of Merleau-Ponty (1962, 1968), Abram's phenomenology aims to reawaken human sensual perception of the animate and inanimate world of human environments. For Merleau-Ponty, as interpreted by Abram,[5] all objects or things are "alive" and capable of entering into a relationship with a human perceiver. Abram writes:

> [T]hroughout Merleau-Ponty's [1962] major work, *Phenomenology of Perception,* the sensible thing, commonly considered by our philosophical tradition to be passive and inert, is consistently described in the active voice: the sensible "beckons to me," "sets a problem for my body to solve," "responds" to my summons and "takes possession of my senses," and even "thinks itself within me." The sensible world, in other words, is described as active, animate, and in some curious manner, alive. . . . so that we may ultimately describe perception as a mutual interaction, an intercourse, "a coition, so to speak, of my body with things." (p. 55)

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Abram describes Merleau-Ponty's theory of perception as "inherently partic-
ipatory," always involving "the experience of an active interplay, or coupling,
between the perceiving body and that which it perceives" (p. 57). Human
beings enter into a participatory relationship with other phenomena through
the multisensory perception of direct experience: "[T]he presence of the
world is precisely the presence of its flesh to my flesh" (Merleau-Ponty, 1968,
cited in Abram, 1996, p. 69).

Abram's (and Merleau-Ponty's) notion of "the flesh of the world" as par-
ticipating in "a vast, interpenetrating webwork of perceptions and sensations
borne by countless other bodies" (Abram, 1996, p. 65) leads the way to a
description of places as an ecology of reciprocal, interdependent relation-
ships between bodies and forms. Such a phenomenological move helps
build a theory of place that is responsive to the nonhuman world and the
perspectives of bioregionalism and ecofeminsism.[6] Indeed, Abram attends to
a phenomenology of perception as a necessary step toward caring for the
cultural and ecological lives of places and understanding how one place is
connected to others. As Abram suggests, an ecological ethic might emerge
"not primarily through the logical elucidation of new philosophic principles
and legislative strictures, but through a renewed attentiveness to this per-
ceptual dimension that underlies all our logics, through a rejuvenation of our
carnal, sensorial empathy with the living land that sustains us" (p. 69).

A theory of place that is concerned with the quality of human–world
relationships must first acknowledge that places themselves have something
to say. Human beings, in other words, must learn to listen (and otherwise
perceive). Ecological theologian Thomas Berry (1988) observes that, as a
species, we have gradually become "autistic" and have forgotten how to hear,
communicate, and participate in meaning making with our places on the liv-
ing earth. Likewise, through an enlivened phenomenology, Abram (1996)
shows how the character of thought and language in the "developed" world
"den[ies] reciprocity with nature—by defining the rest of nature as inert,
mechanical, and determinate"—and how, "in consequence, our sensorial par-
ticipation with the land around us must remain mute, inchoate, and in most
cases wholly unconscious" (p. 71). That places are alive may seem obvious
to ecological thinkers and others disposed to perceive and appreciate the lives
that places hold. The problem is that human institutions, such as schools, gov-
ernments, and corporations, have not demonstrated an orientation of care and
consciousness toward the places that they manipulate, neglect, and destroy.
Part of the reason for our collective carelessness can, according to Abram and
others (e.g., Bowers, 1993), be traced to ways of perceiving and ways of using
language that deny our connection to earthly phenomena, that construct
places as objects or sites on a map to be economically exploited. Abram's phe-
nomenology of place corrects this anthropocentric mistake in the Western
philosophical tradition's own terms and urges human beings to open their
senses to the life that places make possible.

Moving from philosophy to education, Abram's (1996) phenomenology
of perception suggests that schools must develop strategies that better enable

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students and teachers to perceive places that are alive in the human and more-than-human world. In the context of formal education, calling for such renewed attentiveness and rejuvenation of carnal empathy with place can be read as a challenge to the way that schools, through their regimes of bodily control (Foucault, 1977), currently blunt our ability to perceive. A spatial analysis of schooling reveals that its most striking structural characteristic is the enforced isolation of children and youth from culture and ecosystem. Dewey, Freire, and other educational philosophers often warn against cutting schooling off from the pulse of cultural life and experience; yet our schools, it can be argued, continue to do just that. In *Nature and Madness,* Shepard (1982) claims that human history can be read as the gradual "ontogenetic crippling" of the human life cycle, or as the "mutilations of personal maturity" caused by the increasing separation of children, youth, and adults from the complex ecosystems in which humankind evolved. Similarly, in his 1996 essay "How My Schooling Taught Me Contempt for the Earth," Bigelow describes how his education condemned him to 12 years inside a building and made him careless and ignorant of his own surroundings. The point here is twofold. First, people are capable of perceiving places and learning from that direct experience. Second, our ability to perceive places can be either thwarted or fostered by educational experience. Because the structures and processes of schooling are based on institutional patterns of isolating teachers and students from places outside school, one can claim that schools limit experience and perception; in other words, by regulating our geographical experience, schools potentially stunt human development as they help construct our lack of awareness of, our lack of connection to, and our lack of appreciation for places.[7]

The Sociological Dimension of Place

Place is where the world manifests itself to human beings; it is where what Heidegger (1962) called "being-in-the-world" takes place.[8] As centers of experience, places can also be said to hold our culture and even our identity. In his classic study, *The Poetics of Space,* Bachelard (1964) asks his readers to remember a house in which they used to live—its details and nuances, what life was lived there—as an example of how places, memory, experience, and identity are woven together over time. We live our lives in places, and our relationship to them colors who we are. Bachelard writes, "At times we think we know ourselves in time, when all we know is a sequence of fixations in the spaces of a being's stability" (p. 8).

Philosophers, of course, are not alone in recognizing the connection between place, identity, and cultural experience. All genres of creative literature clearly evoke the person–place relationship: Character, mood, theme, and whatever happens all depend largely on setting. It is hard to imagine Thoreau, for example, apart from Concord and Walden Pond. Thoreau knew where he was; and like the entire tradition of natural history writing that he virtually founded, his writing is thoroughly integrated with his place. In the essay "The Sense of Place," Irish poet Seamus Heaney (1980) warns of a loss

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of connection with our places. He speaks of a marriage between the geography of mind and geographical places. Like Thoreau, he seeks to re-sanctify that marriage with attention to "the ordinary, the actual, the known, the unimportant. . . . The least Irish place name can net a world with its associations" (pp. 139, 140). Places and place names, writes Heaney, can represent a "personal drama" or a "communal situation" (p. 148); attending to places is "a mode of communion with . . . something to which we ourselves still feel we might belong" (p. 132). Anthropologist Keith Basso (1996) beautifully evokes the marriage of geography, mind, and culture in his ethnography *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache.* For the Western Apache, the interior landscape of mind, spirit, and morality is composed of places, place names, and stories that teach about the relationships between people and between people and places. Basso writes: "[P]lace roots individuals in the social and cultural soils from which they have sprung together, holding them there in the grip of a shared identity, a localized version of selfhood. . . . [S]elfhood and placehood are completely intertwined" (p. 146).[9]

Casey (1996) posits that our experience of places is never precultural or presocial. This is true in two ways: Not only is our experience of places mediated by culture, education, and personal experience, but places themselves are products of culture. The assertion that places are social constructions may seem heretical to some thinkers who maintain an ecocentric view of reality. One could argue that to designate an ecosystem or an oak tree a social construction is the ultimate expression of anthropocentric hubris. However, it is people and cultures that invest places—ecosystems, oak trees, nature itself—with meaning. Ecological philosophers Swimme and Berry (1992) observe that, although as human beings we cannot make a blade of grass, we might not have any grass at all unless it is acknowledged and cared for by us. Thus, for example, it is only by means of laws and social codes (see Wilderness Act of 1964) that we can designate a place as "wilderness" and protect it as a remnant of nature in its "primeval," "natural," and "untrammeled" state. The idea of wilderness is itself a social construction with a long history of shifting cultural meanings (Nash, 1982). Acknowledging that places are social constructions does not negate the idea that places such as ecosystems, oak trees, and wilderness have other qualities that transcend the often place-destructive purposes of human beings. It simply allows that human beings are responsible for place making.

It is understandable when people object to the idea that human beings in some way construct natural places (if only by choosing to leave them alone). Perhaps the idea that social space is socially constructed will prove less controversial. But even our perception of obviously socially constructed places such as interstate highways, giant shopping malls, suburban neighborhoods, urban streets—and schools—often occurs as if these places were a natural part of our social landscape. In other words, we tend to take our social space for granted and do not often think of it as a cultural product. Becoming aware of social places as cultural products requires that we bring

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them into our awareness for conscious reflection and unpack their particular cultural meanings. Such is the educative potential of place-conscious education. However, to say that we do not often reflect on social space as cultural product is not to say that we do not invest it with meaning. Rather, through repeated experience of familiar cultural surroundings, we tend to develop an unreflective, unconscious attitude toward place (Casey, 1997).

The gradual process of taking our socially constructed places for granted is deeply pedagogical. We fail to recognize that a place is an expression of culture and that it represents the outcome of human choices and decisions, that its present state is one of many possible outcomes. When we fail to consider places as products of human decisions, we accept their existence as noncontroversial or inevitable, like the falling of rain or the fact of the sunrise. Moreover, when we accept the existence of places as unproblematic—places such as the farm, the bank, the landfill, the strip mall, the gated community, and the new car lot—we also become complicit in the political processes, however problematic, that stewarded these places into being and that continue to legitimize them. Thus places produce and teach particular ways of thinking about and being in the world. They tell us the way things are, even when they operate pedagogically beneath a conscious level.[10]

The relationships among place, identity, and culture are varied and complex (see Feld & Basso, 1996) and, as discussed later, emerge in the terrain of culture, ideology, and politics. For the moment, it is sufficient to remark that if human experience, identity, and culture are intimate with and inseparable from our relationship with places, places deserve much attention in discussions of education. Casey (1996) writes, "To live is to live locally, and to know is first of all to know the places one is in" (p. 18). Such an idea may seem obvious. But when considered against the background of standardized educational practices or the homogenizing culture of global capitalism, claims of the primacy of place are revolutionary: They suggest that fundamentally significant knowledge is knowledge of the unique places that our lives inhabit—and, conversely, that to fail to know those places is to remain in ignorance.

Recognizing that places are what people make of them—that people are place makers and that places are a primary artifact of human culture—suggests a more active role for schools in the study, care, and creation of places. If human beings are responsible for place making, then we must become conscious of ourselves as place makers and participants in the sociopolitical process of place making. Educationally, this means developing the connections with places that allow us to invest them with particular kinds of meaning. In other words, the range of perceptual experience of students and teachers must be expanded so that they may begin reflecting on how a diversity of places, and our ideas about them, became what they are. In addition, from the perspective of democratic education, schools must provide opportunities for students to participate meaningfully in the process of place making, that is, in the process of shaping what our places will become. Systems of education that do not take on this work can be said to reproduce the

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unconscious assumption that material cultural formations—places—are natural and inevitable parts of our social and geographical landscape. Such an assumption is dangerous because (a) it obscures the connections between education, culture, and place; (b) it releases people from their responsibility as place makers; and (c) it legitimizes the ideology that is embedded in the places we take for granted. Educational disregard for places, therefore, limits the possibilities for democracy (and for places) because it diverts the attention of citizens, educators, and students from the social, cultural, and political patterns involved in place making.

The Ideological Dimension of Place

Critical geography, or spatialized critical social theory, is concerned with examining how spatial relationships shape culture, identity, and social relationships (Foucault, 1977, 1980, 1986; Harvey, 1996; Keith & Pile, 1993; Lefebvre, 1974, 1976; Massey, 1994, 1995; Soja, 1989, 1996). For critical geographers, spaces and places are expressive of ideologies and relationships of power. Lefebvre (1976) writes: "Space has been shaped and molded from historical and natural elements, but this has been a political process. Space is political and ideological. It is a product literally filled with ideologies" (p. 31). In recognizing that space is a product filled with living politics and ideologies, critical geographers resuscitate space from its historical status as fixed and dead—as inert territory awaiting discovery and colonization—and draws the life of places into the dialectic of history. Now, space is alive, pulsing with the beliefs, thoughts, and actions that shape who we are as people.[11] From this viewpoint, space, or place—or, more precisely, the geographical relationship between people and places—becomes the focus of critical social analysis.

When social relationships are analyzed with respect to the material spaces that contain them, one discovers that these spaces are not just cultural products; they are, reciprocally, productive of particular social formations. Castells (1983) explains:

> Space in not a "reflection of society," it is society. . . . Therefore, spatial forms, at least on our planet, will be produced, as all other objects are, by human action. They will express and perform the interests of the dominant class according to a given mode of production and to a specific mode of development. They will express and implement the power relationships of the state in an historically defined society. (p. 4)

One function of space, in other words, is hegemonic: Domination is maintained not through material force but through material forms. Critical geographers are concerned with how geographical space, always inscribed with politics and ideologies, simultaneously reflects and reproduces social relationships of power and domination. The concept of social reproduction is not new to educators familiar with critical theory. However, a *spatialized* critical theory recognizes that it is largely the organization of space, together with the

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often-unconscious experience of places, that facilitates and legitimizes any cultural production. Space is the medium through which culture is reproduced; or in Lefebvre's (1974) phrasing, culture is "the production of space."

When applied to education, this insight raises the question of the role of education in the production of space and the reproduction of power relationships. The public or explicit agenda of schooling is to prepare citizens to participate in a basically just and equitable society, one that is becoming more just and equitable through the democratic process. However, the hidden or implicit agenda is that in its lack of attention to spatial forms, education functions to maintain geographical relations of domination.[12] Through lack of attention to space, an example of what Eisner (1985) calls the "null" curriculum, schooling conceals the production of space from view and obscures the role of citizens in the potentially democratic process of place making.

Moreover, because the purpose of education is often reduced to preparing workers to compete in the "global economy" (Apple, 2001; Burbules & Torres, 2000; Spring, 1998), it is essential that educators and students develop an analysis of how that economy functions through space, geography, and social institutions. On the largest scale, one can observe that the global economy is a contest of occupying, exploiting, and profiting from geographical space and the social and ecological relationships that take place there. Said (1994) equates global economics with imperialism, which he describes spatially as "an act of geographical violence through which every space in the world is explored, charted, and finally, brought under control" (p. 271). In addition, Soja (1989) posits that the growth and survival of the global economy depends on the geographical, political, and economic "practice" of uneven development. Uneven development can be defined as the dramatically disparate economic, social, and political conditions experienced in different geographical areas that are interdependent parts of the same economic system; its scale can range from differences within a household, neighborhood, or city to differences between distant countries. In modern economic theory, uneven development is taken for granted as the natural outcome of a meritocratic and basically just capitalist–industrialist system that is always progressing toward greater benefits for all (Korten, 1995). In spatialized economic critique, uneven development is a *necessary condition* for the acquisition of wealth and power. The spatialized economic equation is simple: The production of wealth depends on extracting surplus value (in terms of labor and resources) from one geographical region to benefit people in another. This equation describes not only the history of European colonialism, but also current economic policies of supposedly democratic governments (Burbules & Torres, 2000; Esteva & Prakash, 1998; Korten, 1995; Said, 1994; Soja, 1989; Spring, 1998).[13]

Foucault (e.g., 1977, 1980) is similarly concerned with how space functions as a technology of power, with consequences that benefit some and limit, or even harm, others. Briefly, the control of space by government and other social institutions, such as schools, tends to legitimize and reproduce the authority of those institutions. Perhaps the most widespread human

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experience of the ideologically functional role of spatial authority, one that rivals the spatial isolation of schooling, is the experience of private property. The functional role of private property is to grant and maintain exclusive access to space, along with related rights, for the privileged and to deny access and rights to the less fortunate. Haas and Nachtigal (1998) write that the top 5% of U.S. landowners own 75% of our land and the bottom 78% own only 3% (p. 14). This means that for most people, the experience of most places comes with some kind of "keep out" sign and a set of property laws to support it. Obeying the "keep out" sign familiar to many people in many places is a perfect example of what Foucault calls panopticonism. The purpose the panopticon is "so to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary" (Foucault, 1977, p. 201). Private property, in other words, is a spatial expression of power and surveillance that we have obediently internalized to make the actual exercise of power unnecessary.

Beyond the problem of conferring the responsibility of place making to the powerful few, the privatization of space and the attending loss of public space have other costs associated with control of bodily movements. Haymes (1995) argues that privatization and gentrification in urban neighborhoods means that the physical space needed for urban African Americans to develop political power sometimes simply does not exist; moreover, as gentrification continues, African American and other marginalized communities are divided, and members of the communities are displaced. The colonization and *displacement* of disenfranchised cultural groups (e.g., African Americans and Native Americans) are the epitome of how power has operated historically through the production of space, how power affects and controls people and places simultaneously. The message here is that power depends on, is facilitated by, and is reflected in the development and control of geographical space.

An analysis of the global economy and the privatization and control of space by elites suggests the need for a place-conscious education that is focused on political and economic relationships and that extends throughout localities, regions, states, nations, and the globe itself. Globalization is perhaps the chief (geographical) metaphor of our time, and it has an enormous impact on our thought, language, action, and the organization of social institutions such as schools. As competition in the global economy is repeatedly invoked as the dominant reason for high standards in education, educators and students have a responsibility to investigate the use of the term and its impact on people and places everywhere. Such investigations can begin with a concentrated scrutiny of the relationship between public and private spaces and inquiry into the interrelated local and global consequences of capitalism. In short, if educators and students are to understand culture in the places where they live, they must explore the interdependent economic, political, ideological, and ecological relationships between places near and far.

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The Political Dimension of Place

Within the field of cultural studies, two related strands of thinking about place stand out: an analysis of the geographic distribution of capital and power (introduced earlier) and an examination of the politics of identity. In both strands, theorists have embraced place, space, and the language of geography to produce a richly spatialized vocabulary with which to describe cultural relationships. Feld and Basso (1996), in their review of the use of place as a construct for social analysis, write that this politicized approach to cultural geography "is centrally concerned with neo-Marxist cultural critique and with global postmodern theory. . . . Accordingly, many of its proponents position their writing in relation to geographies of struggle and resistance" (p. 4). Because of their concern with a political geography of place in a global context of power, struggle, and resistance, proponents of spatialized cultural study have much to offer a place-conscious education that is concerned with issues of identity and difference. Examining the many ways in which politics and place are entangled can inform educators with ideas about how people, places, and cultures take shape. Beyond that, entering politicized space suggests political roles for educators as mediators in the construction of culture, identity, and the places where they emerge.

Critical geographers (e.g., Keith & Pile, 1993; Massey, 1994, 1995; Soja, 1989, 1996) emphasize that, although capital is productive of spatial forms and plays a specific role in shaping landscape/culture/identity, other spatial relationships are significant. Geographical terms used to describe these relationships include *ethnic space, marginality, territoriality, movement, disruption, displacement, exile, annexation, division, segregation, absorption, diaspora,* and *panopticonism*. Cultural critics such as hooks (1990) and Soja (1996) speak of "spaces" of resistance, agency, and affiliation. Spatialized language has given identity politics rich new metaphors with which to understand and recast social positioning.[14] Exploring any single metaphor—such as territoriality, habitat, colonization, or marginality—can yield new insights on social relationships. Choosing depth over breadth, the following analysis focuses on the metaphorical/material concept of "marginality."

To appreciate the ways in which spatialized critical theory is simultaneously resisting and embracing marginality as a site for re-visioning, it is first necessary to acknowledge the link between marginality and oppression. Recalling the earlier discussion of uneven development, marginalization and oppression are linked through the exercise of power, economic exploitation, cultural imperialism, and violence.[15] "The margin," however, is both a metaphorical and a material space from which relationships of oppression might be reimagined and reshaped. In her preface to *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center,* hooks (1984) clearly evokes the pain and possibility of marginality with beautifully spatialized prose. I quote at length to recreate the complex spatial scene:

> To be in the margin is to be part of the whole but outside the main body. As black Americans living in a small Kentucky town, the railroad tracks were a daily reminder of our marginality. Across those

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tracks were paved streets, stores we could not enter, restaurants we
could not eat in, and people we could not look directly in the face.
Across those tracks was a world we could work in as maids, as jani-
tors, as prostitutes, as long as it was in a service capacity. We could
enter that world, but we could not live there. We had always to return
to the margin, to cross the tracks to shacks and abandoned houses
on the edge of town.

There were laws to ensure our return. Not to return was to risk
being punished. Living as we did—on the edge—we developed a
particular way of seeing reality. We looked both from the outside in
and from the inside out. We focused our attention on the center as
well as the margin. We understood both. . . .

This sense of wholeness, impressed upon our consciousness by the
structure of our daily lives, provided us with an oppositional world-
view—a mode of seeing unknown to most of our oppressors, that
sustained us, aided us in our struggle to transcend poverty and
despair, strengthened our sense of self and our solidarity. (p. ix)

The marginality that hooks describes is clearly an oppressive material
reality. But that is not all. Metaphorically and materially, it is also a standpoint,
a perspective, or a place from which an oppositional worldview is constructed.
What makes hooks's marginality different from the conventional notion of
being marginalized in an oppressor–oppressed relationship is her determina-
tion not to lose but to *choose* the margin. Rather than assimilate toward the
center, hooks (1990) prefers living on the edge:

[M]arginality [is] much more than a site of deprivation; in fact . . . it is
also the site of radical possibility, a space of resistance . . . a central
location for the production of a counter-hegemonic discourse that is
not found just in words but in habits of being and the way one lives.
As such, I was not speaking of a marginality one wishes to lose—
to give up or surrender as part of moving into the center—but rather
of a site one stays in, clings to even, because it nourishes one's capac-
ity to resist. It offers to one the possibility of a radical perspective
from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds.
(pp. 149–150)

For hooks, the margin is not to be seen only as a space of domination,
but as "that space of refusal, where one can say no to the colonizer . . . [and]
speak the voice of resistance, because there exists a counter-language" (p. 150).
Marginality becomes a place of hope where through "radical openness" to
other forms of marginality, communities of affiliation can emerge that oppose
multiple forms of domination.

Educational treatments of place must be attentive to the life of the mar-
gin. Conventional educational thinking and policy claim that enforcing uni-
form standards everywhere is a social justice issue, that it will empower
marginalized groups and individuals and move them into the center of main-
stream society.[16] Hooks and others interested in the politics of difference sug-

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gest that developing more just social relationships depends, rather, on iden-
tifying and learning from those diverse communities of resistance that have not
chosen to move toward the center but have been nurtured by the margins to
think and act in ways that counter social domination (see also Bowers, 2001;
Esteva & Prakash, 1998). From this perspective, the goal of closing the achieve-
ment gap (another rich geographical metaphor) can be interpreted as another
act of colonization, to the extent that it disregards the potentially counter-
hegemonic politics of the margin.

   To enter into these politics in the context of our places, regions, cities,
neighborhoods, and schools, one needs to become more conscious of the
spatial dimension of social relationships. Learners might ask, for example:
Where are the margins? How have they been constructed? How do they reveal
not only multiple forms of oppression, but possibilities for resistance to and
transformation of domination? What have they to teach us about an educa-
tion that can help move us toward more just societies and communities? Pur-
suing such an inquiry (both locally and globally) could inform a theory of
place with life on the edge, with positions of possibility that might otherwise
be marginalized. The political dimension of place-conscious education, there-
fore, demands a radical multiculturalism, a multiculturalism that continually
challenges the regimes of accountability that are designed to move every-
one toward the political center, a multiculturalism that embraces "the spaces
that difference makes" (Soja & Hooper, 1993; Haymes, 1995; hooks, 1994;
McLaren, 1997).

The Ecological Dimension of Place

Although the nonhuman world often exists beneath the level of human per-
ception and is treated mainly as a collection of natural resources in the global
economy, it has become increasingly obvious that modern economies func-
tion to damage and destroy the ecological[17] systems that support human and
nonhuman communities (Daly, 1996; Korten, 1995; Starke, 2002). Of course,
the explicit mission of contemporary school reform is to prepare students to
compete and succeed in these problematic economies. Therefore, despite the
widespread institutionalization of environmental education, schooling and an
ecological consciousness of places are fundamentally at odds (Gruenewald,
in press).

   Although ecological degradation is clearly a global problem, ecological
issues can easily become abstractions from the immediacy of the places where
we live. Wendell Berry's (1992) writing on the difference between global and
local thinking is helpful in determining what scale of ecological thought is
most appropriate for addressing environmental concerns:

> Properly speaking, global thinking is not possible. Those who have
> "thought globally" (and among them have been imperial governments
> and multinational corporations) have done so by means of simplifica-
> tions too extreme and oppressive to merit the name of thought. Global
> thinkers have been and will be dangerous people. . . .

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> Global thinking can only be statistical. Its shallowness is exposed by the least intention to do something. Unless one is willing to be destructive on a very large scale, one cannot do something except locally, in a small place. (pp. 19–20)

In focusing on a shift toward local knowledge and care, Berry advances a bioregional understanding of place. First articulated (that is, in the Euro-American literature) by Berg and Dasmond (1978) in the mid-1970s, bio-regionalism suggests the merging of ecological and cultural thinking. Bioregionalists seek to revive, preserve, and develop cultural patterns in specific bioregions that are suited to the climate, life zones, landforms, and resources of those regions. Connecting that goal to the economics of every-day life, Berry (e.g., 1987, 1992) insists that wherever and whenever possi-ble, people should produce, consume, and waste locally. That way, people are more likely to know where their products come from, how they are made, where they end up, and the impact of production, consumption, and waste on human and natural systems. Berry claims that such knowledge will lead people to care more for places that we share with others. Thus, for Berry (1992), bioregional practice is possible only through a shift from global to local economics whereby enough people "find the practical means and the strength of spirit to remove themselves from an economy that is exploiting them and destroying their homeland" (pp. 17–18). Although relying more on local economies would limit the variety of goods available to a consumer, such reliance represent the core of bioregional thinking: Cultural practices should be aligned with the ecological limits and features of places. Whether one finds this precept sensible or naive, it suggests that educators and citizens ought to pay attention to what those limits are (see Daly, 1996; Jackson, 1994; McGinnis, 1999; Sale, 1985; Schumacher, 1973; Traina & Darley-Hill, 1995).

Bioregionalists, by insisting that human cultures must learn to live within the natural limits of their bioregions, pose a huge challenge to educational insti-tutions that, aligned with global economic practices, refuse to acknowledge the existence of ecological limits and the significance of ecological well-being. Most schools, universities, governments, and corporations share the assumption that unlimited growth in the global economy is possible and desirable (Daly, 1996; Korten, 1995; Spring, 1998). Bowers (1997) calls that assumption a symptom of a culture in denial and explores the deeper assumptions—such as strident indi-vidualism, faith in progress, and anthropocentrism—that keep our institutions of education devoted to growth economics and generally unconcerned with the ecological realm. Still, ecological critiques of culture are sometimes dis-missed because of their lack of connection to social justice issues and their insensitivity to the people and places most marginalized in the current econ-omy (Bullard, 1993). The ecological dimension of place, therefore, must fore-ground the relationship between the exploitation of people and the exploitation of their environments (Bowers, 2001).

Over the last two decades, several "dissident" ecological traditions (Gruenewald, in press) have emerged that examine socio-ecological rela-

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tionships. Social ecology, human ecology, environmental justice, ecofeminism, and writings associated with indigenous experience all have contributed to a growing body of literature concerned with how places are the experiential center of patterns of both social and environmental domination. The discourse of ecofeminism is especially helpful in understanding the person–place relationship in a multicultural global society. Ecofeminists recognize that historical patterns of domination and control over women (and other marginalized groups) are connected to patterns of domination over the land (Mies & Shiva, 1993; Salleh, 1997; Warren, 2000). They contend that "nature" and "woman" are related social constructions that reflect relationships of power, and that patriarchal, capitalistic societies have constructed both nature and women as something "other" to have "power over." Thus ecofeminists are concerned with how dominant (male) culture affects people and nature in specific places and how, through regimes of social and ecological exploitation, it produces multiple sites of marginalization and oppression. Warren asserts that what is ecological about ecofeminism is that it values the diversity of places— both ecological and cultural diversity. Warren offers this insight into their interconnections:

> Typically, where biodiversity is preserved (e.g., where indigenous forests in India are kept intact, or rain forests in Brazil are not clear-cut), so is cultural diversity (there is a flourishing of diversity of native languages, rituals, art, and lifestyles); and where biodiversity is threatened or destroyed, so is cultural diversity (e.g., through loss of land, languages, tribal bonds, kinship communities, rituals, and sustainable relationships to the land). The health (flourishing, well-being) of the one tends to assist the health (flourishing, well-being) of the other. An ecofeminist commitment to diversity is a commitment to both cultural and biological diversity, without that ruling out considerations of similarities among humans or between humans and non-human animals and nature. (pp. 157–158)

One aim of ecofeminism, then, is to recognize how dominant cultural patterns destroy diversity in particular places and to take the political action needed to conserve diverse cultures and ecosystems (see also Bowers, 2001).

Ecofeminism offers perspectives on place that are responsive to a broad range of social and ecological issues, including local economic livelihood, equity and social justice, resource depletion, ecological limits, cultural and biological diversity, marginalization and resistance, phenomenological experience, and the importance of grassroots political action to renew damaged human and nonhuman communities (Salleh, 1997; Warren, 2000). Because of all this, ecofeminsim, and other socio-ecological traditions (e.g., Bowers, 2001), can help provide place-conscious education with a meta-framework that is responsive to the ecological, political, ideological, sociological, and perceptual dimensions of places. Institutions of education that take the insights of socio-ecological traditions seriously would be forced to expand their limited notions of diversity to include both biological diversity and the global

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cultural diversity that resists the very economic development patterns that contemporary schooling both implicitly and explicitly embraces (Esteva & Prakash, 1998). In rethinking the reason for caring about diversity in the first place, schools would need to acknowledge how the patterns of spatial organization in schooling, the fundamental structures and processes, (a) limit the diversity of experience and perception; (b) cut children, youth, and their teachers off from cultural and ecological life; (c) reproduce an unquestioning attitude about the legitimacy of problematic spatial forms; (d) deny and create marginality through regimes of standardization and control; and (e) through their allegiance to the global economy, function to exacerbate the very ecological problems that they deny. Place-conscious education aims to acknowledge and address the problems that the educational neglect of places helps to create.

Pedagogies of Place

The preceding discussion of five key dimensions of place does not come close to describing all the ways that place has inspired thinking across academic disciplines and across cultures. An expanded framework for analyzing the power of place might include more discussion of Native American and other indigenous traditions, natural history, psychology, anthropology, architecture, sociology, cybernetics, ecological science, and religious studies, as well as all genres of imaginative literature. Once one begins interrogating the power of place as a construct for analysis, one sees that it might be, and increasingly is, applied constructively to any realm of human experience or inquiry. Although not an exhaustive treatment of place, the dimensions of place that were discussed earlier challenge many current assumptions of educational theory, research, and practice by redirecting our attention to the places where we actually live our lives and by questioning the role that schools play in diverting our attention away from these places or distorting our view of them. No doubt, other investigations of traditions interested in place can similarly stimulate thinking about education. Such investigations would perhaps tell us more about how places are deeply pedagogical centers of experience and meaning making.

Taken together, phenomenologists, cultural critics, bioregionalists, ecofeminists, and others show that places teach us who, what, and where we are, as well as how we might live our lives. Phenomenologists such as Abram (1996) urge us to open our senses to the living world of places and, at the same time, anthropologists such as Basso (1996), cultural critics such as Foucault (1977, 1980), bioregionalists such as Berry (1992), and ecofeminists such as Warren (2000) suggest that human beings must (a) examine the impact of places on culture and identity, and (b) embrace our political roles as place makers. As human beings continue to enhance their power to manipulate and destroy ecosystems and cultures, it may not be too much of a stretch to claim that place making has become the ultimate human vocation (see Berry,

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1988; O'Sullivan, 1999). Ultimately, the kinds of places that we acknowledge and make possible will determine the kinds and the quality of human and nonhuman life in our communities, bioregions, and on our planet. This prospect suggests an active role for schools as centers of both inquiry and action in local, regional, and global space.

As place-conscious education develops further, it is important to remember and revive several traditions that can support its practice. In the following sections, I introduce three educational traditions—natural history, cultural journalism, and action research—that have shaped the field of place-based education, and I discuss them with reference to the five dimensions of place explored earlier. The constraints of space forbid a comprehensive review of these traditions here; however, I will suggest that, taken together and deepened with an analysis of the diverse meanings that places hold, these traditions can help to guide teachers and students toward exploring the perceptual, cultural, ideological, ecological, and political dimensions of places.[18]

Natural History

Once a vibrant academic discipline and standard curriculum in American schools, natural history today has become relevant mainly to those interested in field guides and nature writing. In his essay "The Rise and Fall of Natural History: How a Science Grew That Eclipsed Direct Experience," Pyle (2001) traces the history of nature study in schools and universities and suggests that schools without natural history conspire toward the "extinction of experience" for teachers and students. Pyle shows how, at the turn of the 20th century, the popularity of natural history among the general public supported its development in schools.[19] In 1911, Anna Botsford Comstock published the *Handbook of Nature Study,* a guide for teachers to introduce students to the natural history of their local environment. Over the next 28 years, the *Handbook* was published in 24 editions. According to Pyle, it "became one of the most universal texts in the American classroom, and it was not the only one of its kind" (p. 19).

No doubt, the mere existence of natural history texts in schools did not guarantee student and teacher immersion in the study of places. However, the former prevalence of nature-study curriculums suggests the once commonplace notion that students and teachers should have regular and direct contact with the plants, animals, and natural features of their local environments. Natural history can help build a framework for place-conscious education because it is predicated on the kind of learning that schools currently make so difficult: firsthand experience with the living world outside the classroom. Of course, the lack of perceptual contact with the ecological life of places is compounded by patterns of leisure, entertainment, and work that keep people shut indoors, and by deeper cultural patterns in thought and language that deny the relevance of nonhuman nature (see, e.g., Abram, 1996; Bowers, 1995; Warren, 2000). Pyle's (1993, 2001) phrase "the extinction

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of experience" is haunting because it portends the double jeopardy of our self-imposed isolation: Not only do we lose as human beings by cutting ourselves off from the rich perceptual and pedagogical possibilities of contact with nature (Abram, 1996; Shepard, 1996), but as our experience becomes less diverse, we are less able to see and appreciate the biotic and cultural diversity of our own space. Pyle (2001) calls this a "cycle" of extinctions and writes:

> As common elements of diversity disappear from our own nearby environs, we grow increasingly alienated, less caring, more apathetic. Such collective anomie allows further extinctions and deeper impoverishment of experience, round and round. What we know, we may choose to care for. What we fail to recognize, we certainly won't. (p. 18)

Regular pedagogical excursions "into the field" (e.g., Elder, Basnage, Caswell, Danish, Dankert, Kay, et al., 1998; Knapp, 1992, 1996, 1999; Sobel, 1996; Zwinger, Tallmadge, Leslie, & Wessels, 1999), perhaps especially in urban places, can both broaden our experience as human beings and help us to perceive what else is out there.

As Rachel Carson (1956) and Aldo Leopold (1949) have written, learning about places and caring for them may depend on nurturing a sense of wonder, appreciation, connection, and even love for nonhuman life. Natural history is an interdisciplinary educational tradition that can remind educators of the need to create the time and space for experiencing, exploring, and discovering a diversity of living places and the diversity within them. If, as educators, we continue to keep ourselves and our students from these experiences, we will remain complicit in constructing our own impoverishment by contributing to perceptual, cultural, and biological extinctions that we may already lack the observational skills to notice.

Cultural Journalism

One of the shortcomings of natural history, of ecology-focused place-based education, and of environmental education in general, is the tendency to neglect the cultural realm (Gruenewald, in press). If the purpose of natural history education is to put students and teachers in direct contact with nearby nonhuman life, the purpose of cultural journalism, or local history, is to create connections between teachers, students, and the cultural life of the communities that schools serve. The widely emulated Foxfire program (Wigginton, 1985, 1991) remains exemplary as a model for comprehensive local history projects that engage students in interviewing community members, gathering stories about local traditions, and producing knowledge about local cultural life by publishing articles, journals, and books. Much has been written about Foxfire as an approach to learning that connects life in school to out-of-school experiences while motivating students to produce high-quality work in all content areas.[20] From the perspective of place, the primary benefit of doing

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local histories is the process of learning and caring more deeply about one's home community and all the places beyond the classroom.

Just as Abram's (1996) phenomenology of perception can open natural history to fuller possibilities of being with the more-than-human world, so can anthropology and critical geography provide direction for a deeper approach to cultural journalism. Ethnographic treatments of place (Basso, 1996; Feld & Basso, 1996) suggest that much can be learned from the focused study of any place, on any scale, that holds meaning for people. Just as teachers can guide students into experience with their natural environment, they can also guide them into paying attention to the meanings that we attribute to particular places, the ways that places shape our beliefs about cultural and identity, and our roles as place makers (see, e.g., Hart, 1997; Knapp, 1992, 1996, 1999; Sobel, 1993, 1996, 1998). In addition, as the physical (and psychological) landscape becomes increasingly privatized and reflective of problematic ideological commitments (i.e., global capitalism), paying attention to the presence of public and private places can help raise consciousness about the political process that works to shape cultural space. Teachers and students might ask: What is the function of private and public space in our community? How has it changed over time? What political commitments guide the use of space? Who or what benefits from the way our community uses space, and who or what does not? The title of Basso's (1996) ethnography of the Western Apache, *Wisdom Sits in Places,* suggests a profound question for people anywhere: What qualities or attributes sit in our cultural places? In other words, how are our places and the names we give them expressive of, and reproductive of, our local ways of being in the world? Places in all cultures, even those that have been thoroughly commodified, "McDonald's-ized," and "Walmartized," are just as full of moral, cultural, and ontological meaning as an Apache landscape marked by creation stories and moral tales. What are our places telling us and teaching us about our possibilities?

Critical investigations of place and space can also teach the correspondence between the diversity of places and the diversity of cultural experience, as well as the interrelationships that exist between people and places in the global economy. Hooks's (1990) discussion of the margin as a space of resistance and her perspective on the discourse of ecofeminism help to clarify how "othered" space is constructed to naturalize and legitimize power relationships that are reflected in geography. Take, for example, several commonplace signifiers of marginal geographical space in contemporary economic discourse: "inner city" and "Third World," or "underdeveloped nations." Such pejorative designations carry assumptions about the backwardness of these marginal spaces and the positive value of Western modes of development; such assumptions reinforce an ideology that allows Western nations to exploit, or abandon, these "othered" spaces in the name of progress (Esteva & Prakash, 1998; Haymes, 1995; Korten, 1995; Said, 1994; Salleh, 1997; Warren, 2000). Hooks's (1990) theory of the margin insists that these spaces of oppression hold alternative ways of being in the world that can counter domination.

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Indeed, communities in so-called Third World nations are resisting dominant development patterns and giving us new language to analyze our own culture. Instead of taking our Western patterns of uneven development for granted, as do our schools, many observers are problematizing them by referring to our "overdeveloped" and "hyper-developed" cultures (Bigelow & Peterson, 2002; Esteva & Prakash, 1998). As current educational practices are legitimated by proclaiming that they prepare students for the global economy, cultural journalism can help teachers and students analyze that economy from the perspective of all of the people and places that it, inequitably, affects. To teach cultural journalism in this way means finding ways to connect the study of culture in our nearby places with the study of culture in distant places. Bigelow and Peterson's (2002) recently published *Rethinking Globalization* offers teachers and students a comprehensive guide to expanding the boundaries of cultural journalism outward to places around the globe with which, through global economics, we are undeniably connected.

Action Research

Natural history and cultural journalism are two pathways to greater experience with and understanding of the ecological and cultural life of the places that we and others inhabit, but the significance of action research for place-based education is its potential to engage teachers and students as problem solvers and place makers.[21] Action research takes teachers and students beyond the experience and study of places to engage them in the political process that determines what these places are and what they will become. In his remarkable book *Children's Participation: The Theory and Practice of Involving Young Citizens in Community Development and Environmental Care* (1997), Hart outlines a theory and describes the practice of place-based, democratic education in various locations throughout the globe. Democratic action research begins when children and youth start investigating their own familiar places, identifying issues, analyzing them, and then planning and implementing some sort of action. As in the Freirean tradition of critical praxis (see Freire, 1993), the teacher's role is one of facilitating the process of reflection and action so that it is owned as much as possible by children and youth. They are not *taught* the process but *learn* its complexity through experiencing it. Researching places familiar to students and planning action (whether the action aims at change or conservation) communicates to all involved that places are social constructions and that a political process, infused with the dynamics of ideologically laden power relationships, determines what they are.

　　Hart's model of children's participation in this process (see also Hungerford, Litherland, Peyton, Ramsey, & Volk, 1990) is especially relevant to a pedagogy of place because of its emphasis on the need for teachers and students to connect with citizens from places outside schools. Building alliances with community development organizations and children and youth organizations, as well as with government and nongovernmental organizations that

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work on development and environmental issues, can help bring teachers and students into contact with the larger, more diverse community. Hart (1997) writes:

> While community participation has long been recognized as an effective strategy for development, there have been remarkably few attempts by nations to foster community participation for children or youth through their public school systems. Most public school systems in most nations remain completely isolated from their surrounding communities and their environmental [and cultural] problems. It is difficult to imagine how a citizenry can become interested in democratic participation except by experiencing its benefits. . . . [I]t is critical that we stress the need for a genuine involvement of children in the environmental [and development] issues of their own surrounding communities. (pp. 57–58)

In *Children's Participation,* Hart (1997) provides numerous case studies from around the globe to demonstrate how action research works. None of these cases looks anything like conventional schooling; many take place outside formal schools. From reforestation programs in the Peruvian Andes, to fish farming in Columbia, to environmental monitoring projects from Vermont to Ecuador, all of the illustrations of place-based action research imply dramatically rethinking the spatially constraining technology of the school and classroom and dramatically rethinking the role of teacher. Hart does not offer a strategy to transform the spatialized institutional barriers to democratic, place-based education (i.e., the isolating nature of classroom-based instruction), but his many examples of exemplary projects and his careful explanation of student-centered action research offer practical models for teachers and useful tools to start creating the space for children and youth to experience and contribute to community life. And as students are led to investigate their local surroundings, they can be introduced to the perceptual, cultural, ecological, and political dimensions of these places by combining action research methods with natural history and cultural journalism. Through action research methodology, students learn about, and become participants in, the political process of place making.

Becoming Accountable to Places

Once one begins to appreciate the pedagogical power of places, it is difficult to accept institutional discourses, structures, pedagogies, and curriculums that neglect them. As education reform continues to emphasize national, state, and local standards aligned with high-stakes testing and national economic objectives, educational discourse and practice are increasingly removed from the places where we live and the places that our living affects. The result is that we live in a world where human-human, and human-world relationships are poorly understood and increasingly strained. It is in "places" that these relationships are experienced and where they can, potentially, be examined and shaped through the process of education.

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Place and the Institutional Discourse of Accountability

In her introduction to a special issue of the *American Educational Research Journal* ("Special Issue on Education and Democracy") Linda McNeil (2002) asks, "If the language of accountability comes to dominate public school policy, then will it eliminate democratic discussion about the purposes of schooling?" (p. 245). McNeil's attention to the role of language in forming educational policy is crucial. The current dominance of the language of accountability, based on accounting practices in business and rooted in the metaphor of economism,[22] has indeed risen to eclipse other ways of thinking about education as it has "remove[d] discussions about schooling far from communities" (McNeil, p. 246), that is, far from the places that schools are supposed to serve. If there is a link between democracy and the language of standards and testing, it resides in the assumption that equalizing educational opportunity for student achievement will, at last, fulfill the long-broken democratic promise of more equitable educational outcomes. Attending to the role of place and place making in democratic education does not negate the significance of reform measures aimed at more equity in student achievement and the social and developmental opportunities that such reform can provide. However, place-consciousness complicates the single-minded pursuit of accountability, equity, and achievement by insisting on a connection between schooling and places. Creating a more democratic experience of place—that is, more democracy—will require more than closing the achievement gap. It will require conscious engagement with places and guided participation in the democratic responsibility for shaping what they will become.

With its focus on "accountability," the discourse—the language, or what Tyack and Cuban (1995) call the "grammar"—of school reform lacks a vocabulary for place. Just as this grammar distracts our attention from democracy as a valued educational goal, it distracts us from places and their power to shape experiential, cultural, ideological, political, and ecological orientations toward "being-in-the-world." Although educational research and practice often suggest the benefits of building "learning communities" and connecting learning to "real life," the significance of the relationship between education and local space remains undertheorized and underdeveloped.[23] When the link between schooling and community life is articulated, taken-for-granted assumptions about educational objectives and assessment targets (e.g., measurable, classroom-based student achievement) are often at play (e.g., Epstein, 2001). Thus the lack of development of place-conscious schooling can, in part, be attributed to the strength of the dominant paradigm for institutional accountability. The standards-and-testing model of accountability is not an instrument designed to assess the relationship between schools and the places they serve. Not only does it lack the capacity to evaluate the quality of the relationship between schools and places, it lacks the capacity to acknowledge or foster that relationship.

While the deeply rooted accountability movement, epitomized by the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, neglects and thwarts place-consciousness among teachers, students, and citizens, a parallel movement

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for school reform has emerged that emphasizes strong community ties both in and outside schools. Although this "movement" lacks the specific focus and institutional backing of the accountability movement, aspects of it are congruent with place-based philosophy and practice. Movements for charter schools, community-based schools, neighborhood schools, small schools, alternative schools, and rural schools often name community building among their goals while stressing the significance of local control and community relevance and participation. Within more conventional schools, site-based management has long been touted as a means for sharing decision making with community members, and community collaboration is increasingly urged as an essential component of school effectiveness (Epstein, 2001; Honig, Kahne, & McLaughlin, 2001). With their frequent focus on cultural responsiveness and on learning communities that reach beyond the classroom, these institutional structures can potentially direct school policy and curriculum toward community needs and facilitate place-conscious teaching and learning.[24]

However, there is nothing inherently place-conscious about institutional structures and rhetoric that emphasize community collaboration. Indeed, as Anderson (1998) demonstrates, there is nothing inherently collaborative about them. Anderson shows how calls for participation with communities outside the school are often inauthentic in that they become public relations ploys seeking to create greater institutional legitimacy. In fact, Anderson cautions, these participatory structures may actually "create a tighter iron cage of control for participants" (p. 572), "increas[e] self-regulation rather than empowerment" (p. 578), and even be used to promote private over public interests (see also Anderson & Grinberg, 1998). At issue here is the range of issues that are subject to negotiation with the community and what taken-for-granted assumptions about institutional policy and practice remain unspoken, nonnegotiable, and entrenched. As long as the discourse of accountability dominates educational policy and practice and the purpose of education is implicitly and explicitly linked to preparing students for competition in the global economy, structural reforms that advocate participation, smallness, or local control can become a means of pursuing the same problematic ends. For example, Haas and Nachtigal (1998) argue that, in spite of the promise of some small, rural schools to focus on rural community renewal, students educated in rural America are often encouraged by schooling to reject their own communities if they want to succeed. In addition, Wells, Slayton, and Scott (2002) show that although charter schools are perceived to be democratic, the notion of democracy that is assumed has more to do with personal liberty and success than with the public good. The problem is that although the educational discourse of collaboration and community is significant, it is often subsumed by the discourse of accountability. According to Lipman (2002),

> [a]ccountability policies not only regulate educational practice but also are a form of symbolic politics. . . . They shape the public definition of education, explain educational failure, and organize consciousness around shared understandings of what constitutes classroom knowledge, educational practice, and valorized social identities. (p. 394)

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This is not to suggest that structural reform efforts based on community participation should be abandoned or that all of them are contrived and inauthentic, but rather to acknowledge that authentic participation is rare, difficult to sustain, and usually subject to the regulatory power of the discourse of accountability. In other words, structural reforms that on the surface show the potential for facilitating place-conscious education are often bound to institutionalized educational objectives that do not take place into account.[25]

Toward Place-Conscious Accountability

Whatever structural configurations might help to facilitate place-conscious education, the locus of administrative control is ultimately less significant than the locus of teacher and student attention. Local governance does not guarantee local pedagogy. Just as constructivist pedagogy can be treated mainly as a classroom technique divorced from social context, so community-based structural reforms can become just another tool for institutional regulation. Place-consciousness depends on what teachers and students are actually expected and empowered to do. Rather than focus narrowly on student and school achievement, a place-conscious framework of accountability must begin to assess the places in which we (and others) live in relation to the kind of education that we provide and the pedagogical impact of places in and outside school. Widespread adoption of place-conscious education may thus demand a new set of educational objectives and a new set of indicators by which educational achievement is measured and by which schools are held accountable. Further research in place-conscious education must begin to develop these objectives and indicators in ways that make sense to educational policymakers, administrators, families, teachers, and students themselves. The movement for the development of community sustainability or livability "indicators" (Korten, 1999; Sustainable Communities Network, 2002; Sustainable Seattle, 1998) may offer some initial direction. The indicators movement began to assess local progress on social goals (in areas of youth, economic, environmental, and heath policy) as a vehicle for influencing social policy. For example, what are the capital assets of a neighborhood, the wealth distribution, and the rate of home ownership? What are the rates of crime, employment, energy use, resource depletion, teen pregnancy, and access to health care? What opportunities exist for the enjoyment of visual arts, music, and other cultural expressions, as well as for outdoor recreation? What is the water and air quality? If educational goals are related to social goals, then indicators of social and environmental well-being, as they are experienced in particular places, can be appropriate measures of educational outcome. As assessment specialists are fond of pointing out, we are unlikely to value what we do not bother to assess, and assessment should drive instruction.[26]

Of course, standardizing the goals and scripting the outcomes of place-conscious education would defeat much of its purpose; practices must emerge from the particular attributes of a place (Smith, 2002; Woodhouse & Knapp, 2000). However, the dimensions of place discussed above provide an initial framework for assessing whether schools foster or thwart

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place-consciousness. In the common parlance of educational assessment, what opportunities are provided for students and teachers to experience places perceptually, to investigate them culturally and ecologically, to interrogate them ideologically, and to shape them politically? What opportunities are provided for students and teachers to engage in natural history, cultural journalism, and action research? Thus for place-conscious education, accountability can be framed both in terms of access to the methodologies that foster it and in terms of the kinds of outcomes and purposes that schools explicitly and implicitly promote. Other treatments of place-based education (Gruenewald, 2003; Haas & Nachtigal, 1998; Smith, 2002) are similarly helpful in establishing goals and objectives for place-conscious education. Progress toward these goals and objectives cannot be measured by conventional tests, yet one can quickly assess whether the discourse and practice of schooling accounts for them at all.[27]

Smith (2002) writes, "The primary value of place-based education lies in the way that it serves to strengthen children's connections to others and to the regions in which they live" (p. 594). Place-conscious education aims to reframe the discourse of democracy and accountability so that the character and quality of places, and our relationship to them, figure significantly in the purpose, process, and assessment of education. To what are we really accountable, now and in the long run? If places are to matter to schooling, then accountability and purpose must be conceived in a way that appreciates the value of places as a primary context for experience, as a pathway to authentic democratic participation, and as the living legacy of human engagement with the world.

Conclusion

In his essay "The Ethics of 'Place,'" philosopher Berthold-Bond (2000) writes, "What is called for is a radical change of perceptual habits: place must be *experienced* differently" (p. 21). Learning to listen to what places are telling us—and to respond as informed, engaged citizens—this is the pedagogical challenge of place-conscious education. Places are fundamentally pedagogical because they are contexts for human perception and for participation with the phenomenal, ecological, and cultural world. What we know is, in large part, shaped by the kinds of places we experience and the quality of attention we give them. Scholars from across disciplines suggest a profound question for educators: To what aspects of our places will we pay attention? Pedagogically, the kind of attention that we cultivate has significant consequences. Either we can awaken to the significance of places, or we can teach each other, through neglect, a lack of attention. This lack of attention is disturbing because it impoverishes human experience, conceals from view the correspondence between ideology, politics, and place, and potentially leads to biological and cultural extinctions that we may regret.

The aim of place-conscious education is ambitious: nothing less than an educational revolution of reengagement with the cultural and ecological contexts of human and nonhuman existence, what theologian Thomas Berry

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(1988) calls "re-enchantment" with the world. No doubt there are places where teachers and students are involved in this work. No doubt some educational structures, such as community-based schools, charter schools, and other educational alternatives, are potentially more responsive to places than others. But as human ecologist Paul Shepard (1982) writes, "The problem may be more difficult to understand than it is to solve" (p. 129). The solution to unconsciousness toward places in schooling, in other words, is not simply to increase access to place-based methodologies through less inhibiting school structures. Although increased access would be a big improvement in institutions that now are literally walled and fenced off from their communities, access to place-based education must be linked to purposes that schools currently neglect: increasing the range of opportunities for human perception and experience, examining the interrelationships between culture and place, understanding how spatial forms are embedded with ideologies and reproduce relationships of power, appreciating the diversity of life on the margins, attending to the health of nonhuman beings and ecosystems, and participating in the process of place making for living well.

The immediate challenge that place-conscious education poses to educators is requiring us to reflect on the consequences of a school-centric curriculum that ignores the pedagogical significance of experience with familiar and forgotten places outside schools. Critics of place-based approaches to education might claim that they could lead to a narrow sort of provincialism. But as Noddings (2002) points out, "the risk runs in exactly the other direction" (p. 170). In other words, current trends (i.e., standards and testing aligned with global economic objectives) promote a kind of generic education for "anywhere." Noddings argues such an education "might easily deteriorate to an education for 'nowhere'—that is, to an unhappy habituation to places and objects that have lost their uniqueness and their connection to natural life" (p. 171; see also Kunstler, 1993). Finally, whatever the potential of a movement toward more place-conscious education, exploring the perceptual, cultural, ecological, and political dimensions of places remains fertile ground for inquiry into educational, research, theory, and practice. The question is worth asking: Without focused attention to places, what will become of them—and of us?

Notes

The author thanks the editors, reviewers, and Gary Anderson for their helpful feedback in revising this article.

[1] I deliberately use the term *place-conscious education* to refer to what is more generally called *place-based education* (Haas & Nachtigal, 1998; Smith, 2002; Woodhouse & Knapp, 2000). "Place-conscious" suggests not only a methodology for teaching and learning but also an orientation that refuses to abstract learning and the purpose of schooling from the places where people actually live. However, throughout the text I use the terms *place-based* and *place-conscious* interchangeably.

[2] Many examples of pedagogy, curriculum, and institutional arrangements can be cited that are congruent with the goal of fostering place-conscious education. See, for example, Cajete (1994) and McCarty (2002) on Native American education; Smith (2002), Smith and Williams (1999), and Knapp (1999) on outdoor/ecological/environmental/place-based edu-

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cation; Traina and Darley-Hill (1995) on bioregional education; and Shirley (1997) on urban education. See Mawhinney (2002) for an example of community connectedness through educational leadership. However, my intent is not to chronicle these and other exemplars from the educational literature but, rather, to develop a multidisciplinary framework for place-consciousness that both challenges the dominant thrust of education reform and deepens existing place-based practices.

[3] Throughout this article, the meaning of place will shift and blend, from cultural formation, to personal experience, to ecosystem. No matter what terms we use, human experience of geographical contexts is fluid. Relph (1985) describes a continuum of geographic modalities: "Geographical experience begins in places and reaches out across spaces to landscapes and the regions of existence. . . . Understood from an experiential perspective, landscape, region, space, and place appear as overlapping aspects of the fundamental unity of human beings with their total, indivisible, and mundane environments. They are geographic modes of existence" (p. 28).

[4] My discussion of the "dimensions of place" is less an attempt to advance place theory in any single discipline than to articulate an emerging multidisciplinary framework for place-conscious education that is attuned to both ecology and culture (see Casey, 1993, 1997, for an anthropocentric history of place through the ages). Although each of the dimensions of place that I explore (along with others that I do not) has been developed by one or more theoretical traditions (e.g., philosophy), these dimensions are rarely, if ever, considered together in the literature. Thus my broad discussion of the socio-ecological meanings of place challenges theorists interested in geographical experience to embrace both culture and ecology. No doubt, future considerations of other place-rich traditions can contribute to a socio-ecological, place-conscious education.

[5] Abram (1996) writes: "I will be intertwining Merleau-Ponty's conclusions with my own experiential illustrations of those conclusions. I am less interested in merely repeating Merleau-Ponty's insights thirty years after his death than I am in demonstrating the remarkable usefulness of those insights for a deeply philosophical (and psychological) ecology. While my explications will at times move beyond the exact content of Merleau-Ponty's writings, they are nonetheless inspired by a close and long-standing acquaintance with those writings, and they remain faithful, I trust, to the unfinished and open-ended character of his thinking" (p. 277). Similarly, I use Abram's interpretations of Merleau-Ponty not for the purpose of analyzing Merleau-Ponty, but for the purpose of articulating, through Abram's insights, a deeply philosophical ecology of perception.

[6] Describing places as experiential relationships and all phenomenon as capable of intercourse with others allows places to exist in the absence of a human perceiver. In traditional phenomenology, this is not the case. Casey's phenomenological history of place, for example, deals only with anthropocentric philosophers. Although he mentions bioregionalists Gary Snyder and Wendell Berry, he does so only in passing, on his way to exploring pre-ecological postmodernists such as Foucault and Derrida (Casey, 1997, p. 286).

[7] The same can be said of patterns of work, leisure, family life, and other modern and postmodern institutions.

[8] For an introduction to phenomenological treatments of place in philosophy, see Abram (1996), Bachelard (1964), Casey (1993, 1997), Heidegger (1962), and Merleau-Ponty (1962). In anthropology, see Feld and Basso (1996); in geography, see Relph (1976, 1985, 1997) and Tuan (1977).

[9] Basso's (1996) ethnography points to the role of place in Native American experience in general. Deloria (2001) writes: "The key to understanding Indian knowledge of the world is to remember that the emphasis was on the particular, not on general laws and explanations of how things work. . . . Keeping the particular in mind as the ultimate reference point of Indian knowledge, we can pass into a discussion of some of the principles of the Indian forms of knowledge. Here power and place are dominant concepts. . . . Power and place produce personality" (pp. 22–23).

[10] This is not to say that all people take their places for granted. Farmers, many Native Americans, and many ecological thinkers are highly conscious of their connection to their place. So are many rural and urban dwellers. However, the pedagogical effect of place tends to legitimate its form. For example, although a farmer may be connected to the land, his or her experience of it may legitimate patterns of land use that are highly problematic,

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such as the application of pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides; promotion of erosion; compaction of the soil; and use of genetically modified organisms. Urban dwellers learn through experience the legitimacy of other forms, such as the ubiquitous pavement and all the extraction, consumption, and waste that it facilitates.

[11] Reflecting on the consequences of the "devaluation of space that has prevailed for generations," Foucault (1980) contends that "[s]pace was treated as dead, the fixed, the un-dialectical. Time, on the contrary was richness, fecundity, life, dialectic" (p. 70). Foucault's notion that space is "alive" bears interesting parallels to Merleau-Ponty's (1968) conception of "the flesh of the world" and Abram's (1996) suggestion that places are living, reciprocal relationships between the perceiver and the perceived.

[12] See Scott (1990) for an analysis of the "public" and "hidden" agendas.

[13] Through a spatialized lens, an international division of labor stands out as perhaps the most taken-for-granted condition of contemporary economic life; it is the epitome of uneven development and demonstrates the interdependent, if unequal, relationships between people and places from disparate geographical regions (see Korten, 1995). Domestically, this division of labor is mirrored in what Galbraith calls the "contented class" and the "functional underclass." Galbraith, like other social critics, recasts the story of the meritocratic "American Dream" as a system that depends on a functional underclass. A spatialized critique, however, recognizes that geography—or, more precisely, the distribution of relations of production through geographical space—works to conceal that reality.

[14] In their essay "Grounding Metaphor: Toward a Spatialized Politics," Smith and Katz (1993) write: "In social theory and literary criticism, spatial metaphors have become a predominant means by which social life is understood. 'Theoretical spaces' have been 'explored,' 'mapped,' 'charted,' 'contested,' 'colonized,' 'decolonized,' and everyone seems to be 'traveling' " (p. 68). Although social theorists using spatialized language often do so metaphorically, Smith and Katz emphasize the usefulness of such metaphors to convey experiential and material cultural conditions.

[15] See Young's (1990) *Justice and the Politics of Difference* for a discussion of the five "faces of oppression": exploitation, marginalization, cultural imperialism, powerlessness, and violence.

[16] Such a strategy may have appeal for transforming the experience of those who are subject to "substandard" education, but the effect of high-stakes standards and testing often is further marginalization. See, e.g., Apple, 2001; Lipman, 2002; McNeil, 2000.

[17] Woodhouse and Knapp (2000) observe that many current approaches to place-based education emphasize the ecological dimension and lack a cultural studies perspective. Of course, one of the meanings of ecology is that, ultimately, everything is connected. Place-conscious education must connect conventional ecological approaches to place with complex cultural issues such as the pedagogical power of spatial forms; the reciprocal relationships between ideology, social relationships, and place; and the geographical dimension of identity politics.

[18] As stated in the introduction, many other educational traditions can contribute to an evolving place-based education. I have chosen to limit the discussion to these three traditions because of their clear connections to the perceptual, ecological, cultural, ideological, and political dimensions of places.

[19] Natural history rose to distinction around the turn of the 20th century when naturalists such as John Burroughs and Asa Gray were "among the most respected people in society, and natural history was considered a high and worthy calling. The notion that an educated person would have a basic acquaintance with local flora and fauna was widely held, and broadly practiced" (Pyle, 2001, p. 17).

[20] See Puckett (1989, pp. 306–326) for a comprehensive bibliography of scholarship on Foxfire and related analyses. To date, more than 8 million Foxfire books have been sold (see *The Foxfire Magazine* website at *http://www.foxfiremag.org*).

[21] See Stringer (1999) for a supporting discussion of community-based action research across disciplines and professions. Stringer defines action research as research that "seeks to engage people directly in formulating solutions to problems they confront in their community and organizational lives" (p. 38). Unfortunately, most of the voluminous literature on action research does not seek to fully engage children and youth in the process as researchers. Hart (1997) and Hungerford et al. (1990) are two notable exceptions.

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[22] See Bowers (1993, 1997, 2001) for a discussion of the problematic "root metaphors" of modernism that institutions of education reinforce through their discourses and practices.

[23] Some notable exceptions include researchers interested in social capital formation (Coleman, 1990) in and outside school, thus linking schooling with community development (Driscoll & Kerchner, 1999; Furman, 2002). However, just as the discourse of community participation is often inauthentic (Anderson, 1998), some treatments of social capital theory focus mainly on individual educational outcomes and give slight attention to places outside schools (see Dika & Singh, 2002).

[24] The history of community-focused schools in American education began in the late 19th century with the American Settlement Movement, exemplified by Jane Addams's Hull House. This history affords many past and current models of schools connected with communities in tangible ways (see Furman, 2002). However, the key point here is that the discourse of accountability continues to make these exemplars notable as exceptions to a dominant system of education that remains disconnected from communities.

[25] The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 offers an apt illustration. Although the principles of "increased flexibility and local control" and "expanded options for parents" are embedded in the act, its dominant agenda is set by the principles of "stronger accountability for results" and "an emphasis on teaching methods that have been proven to work." Here, "results" and "proven to work" refer to standardized, comparable forms of individual achievement, not the well-being of people and places (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001).

[26] In May 2003, the Rural School and Community Trust published on-line the Place-Based Learning Portfolio (see *http://www.ruraledu.org/rtportfolio/index.htm*). This assessment tool gives educators a practical means to demonstrate the value of place-conscious education to students, teachers, administrators, policymakers, and community members.

[27] Haas and Nachtigal (1998) offer a five-part framework for "living well" in place—ecologically, economically, politically, spiritually, and in community. Smith (2002) adds internships and entrepreneurial opportunities to a place-based agenda for immersion and participation in the cultural and ecological aspects of community life.

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