

Environmental Discourses in Science Education

Volume 6

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This series wrestles with the tensions situated between environmental and science education and addresses the scholarly efforts to bring confluence to these two projects with the help of ecojustice philosophy. As ecojustice is one of the fastest emerging trends for evaluating science education policy, the topics addressed in this series can help guide pedagogical trends such as critical media literacy, citizen science, and activism. The series emphasizes ideological analysis, curriculum studies and research in science educational policy, where there is a need for recognizing the tensions between cultural and natural systems, the way language is endorsed within communities and associated influence, and morals and ethics embedded in school science. Conversations and new perspectives on residual issues within science education are likely to be addressed in nuanced ways when considering the significance of ecojustice, defensible environmentalism, free-choice. Book proposals for this series may be submitted to the Publishing Editor: Claudia Acuna E-mail: Claudia.Acuna@springer.com

More information about this series at <http://www.springer.com/series/11800>

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Place-based Learning for the Plate

Hunting, Foraging and Fishing for Food

 Springer

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Preface

...when the food does not come from a flock in the sky, when you don't feel the warm feathers cool in your hand and know that a life has been given for yours, when there is no gratitude in return – that food may not satisfy. It may leave the spirit hungry while the belly is full.... A great longing is upon us, to live again in a world made of gifts. (Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013, p. 30–31))

Gifts

When I was 9, I received an incredible gift along the thunderstorm-flooded shoreline of a small reservoir in North Central Indiana. I had ridden my red bike, with a lime green 5-gallon bucket hanging on the handlebars, to this place I knew. As I walked across the dam, I noticed that the water level was high and hoped they had come up for air.

And they had. One after another, I carefully grasped the crayfish with my thumb and index finger, just behind their raised claws, and dropped them into the bucket. I had eaten lobster before and guessed that these creatures would share a common flavor. There were 3 dozens crawling over each other in the bucket as I peddled home.

I helped my dad cook them. As we lowered them into boiling water, the crayfish transformed instantly from dark brown with black gleaming eyes to pinkish red over their whole bodies. I thought the color was a good sign, as I knew lobsters changed color when they were cooked. With a steaming crayfish on a saucer next to the stovetop, I pulled the tail, which separated easily from the body, and removed the exoskeleton like I had with shrimp at Grandpa Verch's house. I took a cautious bite and chewed for a second. They tasted like lobster, but sweeter.

There was enough food for my whole family. My brother and I shelled the tails, piling them on a serving plate, and my dad worked the meat out of the claws with an old nutcracker. While my older sister would usually pass on fish I had caught or rabbit stew from hunts along the railroad tracks with dad, she dipped the plump white tails into lemon butter and went back for more. This was a different kind of

meal. I felt like I had been let in on something special, a miracle that would happen only once. This was one of the many childhood gathering experiences that encouraged me to continue paying close attention to the places around me and to approach them with curiosity and openness. Decades later, the learning continues to deepen, reveal, disrupt, and reorient.

Home

“They look like beautiful flowers, Papa!” my 6-year-old daughter, Emmy, yelled as she leapt into the air with an orange mushroom pinched between her fingers. When we walk slowly through the forest together along the ridge top path west of our house, it seems as though the land throws open its deep pockets. This past summer, we learned seven new varieties of edible mushrooms within a few hundred steps of our door, including cinnabar red chanterelles, the orange mushrooms we were gathering. These days, our homeplace in the headwaters of Lake Michigan is one of our most influential teachers. Through the long growing seasons, there is something to learn each day, and the discoveries – especially the ones that make their way to our table – blur the walls of our nylon-sided house with the colors and forms, textures, and flavors of the landscape.

The timing of these chanterelles was significant. They would become part of a place-themed welcome feast for my Sustainability Leadership Semester students who would arrive the next day and live for the fall semester at Goshen College’s Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center. Seared white-tailed deer chops were also on the menu, from a deer that lived and died here in the headwaters and was processed with the previous year’s students. The small portions of meat were accompanied by a medley of vegetables grown onsite and fresh salsa verde. During the semester, the students from Nepal, Canada, Germany, Indiana, and Oregon would have opportunities to learn about bioregional food sources through place studies and direct experience foraging for cattail roots, pawpaws, acorns, mulberries, hackberries, and autumn olive fruit. They would also skin, butcher, and prepare a white-tailed deer as food. These learning experiences combined with interdisciplinary texts by writers ranging from Rachel Carson to Wendell Berry to Robin Wall Kimmerer to Thich Nhat Hanh, would serve as pathways into discourse around place, food, spirituality, ethics, natural history, and other topics that move us closer to the source.

How do we integrate places more intentionally into our lives and our lives more consciously into places? This project began through the editors’ friendships and shared experiences around questions like this. We also came to this through mutual care for and commitment to the more-than-human world and involvement in the everyday processes and practices that keep us conscious and aware of the places we inhabit and the beings of all kinds that make our communities rich, particular, and fulfilling.

We are grateful to the many people, places, other-than-human animals, plants, fungi, and others who have contributed in their own unique ways to this book. Our hope is that through the following chapters, the readers will interact with meaningful stories, insightful questions, and authentic perspectives and that the text as a whole might encourage all of us to lean more deeply into our relationships with the more-than-human world. May this book, as Kimmerer suggests, remind us how to live again in a world made of gifts that leave both the spirit and the body full.

Reference

Kimmerer, R. (2013). *Braiding sweetgrass: Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge, and the teachings of plants*. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions.

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