# *Curriculum Spaces: Situating Educational Research, Theory, and Practice*

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ABSTRACT: This paper provides a rationale for attending to the spatial dimension in curriculum inquiry, theory, and practice. I first describe the dual constructs of space and place in order to show why the spatial dimension tends to be disregarded in curriculum studies. Next I present research demonstrating the diverse processes through which students construct spatial meanings, the multiple senses of place that result, and how spatial meaning contributes to individual and group identity formation and sense of belonging in schools. I explore also the pedagogical nature of space and place. As powerful cultural and political constructions, school spaces and places teach: they shape and are shaped by curriculum processes. This pedagogical dimension reveals the important role schools play in educating place-makers. I conclude by conceptualizing an ecological and relational approach to curriculum understanding that is situated in the unique spaces and places in which we teach and learn.

RÉSUMÉ: Cet article apporte un raisonnement sur la dimension spatiale face à la pratique, la théorie et les recherches dans le programme d'études. Tout d'abord, je décris les doubles concepts d'espace et de lieux afin de montrer la raison pour laquelle on tend à ne pas tenir compte de la dimension spatiale dans le cursus des études. Ensuite, je présente la recherche en démontrant les processus variés à travers lesquels les étudiants apportent une valeur à l'espace, aux multiples valeurs liées à l'endroit et comment la signification spatiale contribue à la formation de l'identité de groupe et de l'individu et au sentiment d'appartenance à une école. Je fouille aussi la nature pédagogique de la notion spatiale et de l'endroit. En tant que représentations influentes sur le plan politique et culturel, les espaces et les lieux d'enseignement des écoles se créent et sont créés par les processus des programmes scolaires. Cette dimension pédagogique révèle l'importance que le rôle des écoles joue chez les concepteurs de lieux dans le système

*Journal of Educational Thought*
Vol. 40, No. 3, 2006, 229-245.

scolaire. Dans ma conclusion, je conçois l'interprétation du programme d'études qui est situé dans des endroits et des espaces particuliers dans lesquels nous enseignons et nous apprenons, avec une approche relationnelle et écologique.

Students' educational experiences are inescapably situated. They are placed in a multitude of school spaces and places that shape and are shaped by curricular, social, and political processes. In this paper I use *space* to refer to physical spatial dimensions and attributes. An example of space is the physical structure of a *house*. In contrast, *place* applies to those spaces which are meaningful to individuals and to which they attach a sense of belonging. One's *home*, the meaningful space to which one attaches different emotions and memories, is an example of place. Both space and place are dynamic, reflecting multiple realities and resulting from social and political processes. Moreover, they are existentially significant.

The locations of daily life through which human beings actively experience the world are centres of meanings; they are places that are fundamentally important to existence (see Berry, 1970; Gruenewald, 2003; Relph, 1976). "Personhood," for example, is constructed socially as well as "ecologically in dialectical relation to one's geographical space" (Berry, cited in Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2000, p. 288). We are situated beings that dwell in relationship to the human and more-than-human world. Graham (1992) argues, similarly, that the "situated particularity" of individuals is important for the self as "our self-knowledge develops not primarily by means of introspection but in the dialectical interplay involved when an embodied subject acts in the world" (p. 35). In effect, as embodied subjects defined in relation to space and place, we, too, are spaces situated *in* spaces and places that reflect diverse meanings. Situating curriculum inquiry, theory, and practice supports place-based understanding and the possibility of educating for ecological consciousness or awareness of our interrelatedness in the world. Despite the existential importance of space and place and the educational significance of school space stemming from the ways in which students' spatial interactions and meaning constructions influence their lived educational experiences, school spaces and places have been overlooked in curriculum studies.

This paper demonstrates why space and place are constructs worthy of consideration in curriculum studies. I will show that attending to the spatial dimension can deepen our understanding of educational

experience. Part one focuses on the dual constructs of space and place. This discussion serves to highlight why the spatial dimension tends to be disregarded in educational research, theory, and practice. Part two presents research demonstrating the diverse processes through which students construct spatial meanings, the multiple senses of place that result, and how spatial meaning contributes to individual and group identity formation and sense of belonging in schools. Additional reasons for attending to space and place in curriculum inquiry, theory, and practice constitute Part three of the paper. Part three outlines the pedagogical nature of space and place. As cultural and political constructions, spaces teach. They shape the curriculum as much as they are shaped by curriculum processes. Schools have an important role to play in educating students to be conscious of their roles as place-makers.

I also describe how attending to space and place in curriculum studies supports both understanding the ecological nature of curriculum and educating for ecological awareness. Processes of teaching and learning are inescapably situated. It is time we examined curriculum within the interconnected web of social, cultural, political, and ecological contexts in which we teach and learn.

## *Part One – Space Versus Place*

Space and place are two constructs that, while closely interrelated, remain distinct. Place emerges from the construct of space, as space endowed with meanings. Seamon and Mugerauer (2000) consider places to be "set apart in time and space because they have distinctive meanings for us" (p. 27). Relph (2000) associates sense of place with a sense of belonging: "place ... [is] an origin ... where one knows others and is known to others" (p. 27). Places are thus important as they represent sources of security and identity for individuals and for groups. Place contributes to individual and collective identity formation insofar as individuals identify with places and, in turn, places reciprocally identify individuals. *Place-making* or spatial meaning construction is a process in which we are all actively engaged. We are all place-makers as we construct spatial meaning and thus create place through our interactions within and encounters with the terrain of our daily lives. Students spend a significant amount of time in diverse school spaces. The research I present in Part two of this paper shows how place-making in school spaces is important for students' senses of comfort and security. These are feelings they identify as important for positive educational experiences. Understanding students' spatial experiences is a dimension

of curriculum inquiry with rich potential for deepening understanding of learning. Schools are terrains of multiplicity and relations contributing to educational experience in diverse ways.

If subjective meaning is what differentiates space and place, their dynamic, relational, diverse, and social dimensions connect them. School spaces are not inert containers or backdrops to curriculum processes, but are active processes *in* process that are understood and experienced in a multiplicity of ways (Crang & Thrift, 1999, p. 3). Because time and space exist together in so far as space as *process* emerges *through* time, the meanings of different spaces change as these spaces evolve. Massey articulates how space is a process of interlocked and interrelated relationships: "because relations are active practices, material and embedded, practices which have to be carried out ... space is always in process of becoming. It is always being made" (Massey, Allen, & Sarre, 1999, p. 283). Moreover, school spaces – as diverse as spatial experience itself – are processes of social construction actively formed from the interaction between individuals and their environments. Ley (1983) identifies how the social dimensions of locations contribute to identity formation as "places that the resident experiences as a group member and where interaction contributes to a sense of personal and collective identity" (p. 130). The contributions of spatial meaning to individual and collective identity formation are valuable for students in schools. Students' subjective experiences of diverse school spaces *in process*, the meanings constructed in these spaces at certain times, and how these meanings influence identity formation are the focus of the research presented in Part two. Beyond physical school space, however, consideration of abstract curriculum spaces can open up further possibilities for deeper understanding.

Consider, for example, the abstract curriculum spaces of theory, idea, and imagination. Dialogue across curricular discourses and engagement with the multiple perspectives these abstract spaces allow facilitate deeper educational understandings. Theory is a space of and for dialogue, a space in which to engage with the other and generate new understandings. Theoretical spaces provide individuals with sites from which they have freedom to see in new ways and in which they may engage with difference. Understanding theory in curriculum inquiry as space for self-exploration, as well as for engagement with an *other* that is theoretical, textual, human, and more-than-human, renders theory common ground for greater curricular understanding. Consider, moreover, how ideational space is a space of freedom for students,

teachers, and curricular theorists as they "navigate passages" between themselves and the other that is the text, the teacher, and the friend (Doll, 1993). Furthermore, where imagination is conceived of as flexibility of mind, multiple spaces of imagination equip students with the intellectual capacities to exceed the actual and enter into the realm of possibility, to experience intellectual freedoms and deeper engagement with the world around them (see Egan 1992, 2005). Considering abstract as well as physical spaces increases the potential value of spatial discourse for curriculum understanding.

If, as I am suggesting, issues of space and place are worthy of attention in curriculum studies, why have they been overlooked? Three possible reasons include the misconceived understanding of space as container or backdrop, the wide diversity of learning spaces, and the elusive nature of space.

First, as long as space is understood as a container or static backdrop to experience it will be disregarded in educational research. Conceived of as existing without consequences for human existence, space adds nothing to existential experience. As previously described and as illustrated in my research, however, space and place are neither containers of experience nor are they static voids. They are active processes that shape and are shaped by human interaction.

Second, Pinar (2004) connects the absence from curriculum scholarship of place and of spatial considerations in general with the influence of Tyler's rationale for curriculum development that is "applicable anytime and anywhere" (p. 94). By ignoring the vital contextual dependencies of educational research, standardization in curriculum design and inquiry decreases the possibilities for understanding educational experience. Kincheloe and Pinar (1991) identify the limitations of "placeless" theory for curriculum understanding, stating, "curriculum theory can not advance if it abstracts itself from time, history, place and human intention" (p. 20). Similarly, Crang and Thrift (1999) argue that because "no social process exists without geographical extent and historical duration ... we need to consider the embeddedness of action in the world" (p. 3). Educational experience is embedded in the spaces and places we call schools. Consideration of the spatial dimension in educational theory and research means attending to the multiplicity of placed, interconnected, and interrelated people and processes in which pedagogy lives. Deeper curriculum understanding can emerge by situating educational theory

and practice in schools and in curriculum spaces of inquiry, theory, and practice.

Finally, neglect of the spatial dimension in educational research is due in part to its 'invisibility': "the 'everyday', by its very nature, is difficult to grasp. Its very "normality', its very 'taken-for-grantedness', 'all-around-us-ness', makes it elusive to pin down, to take stock of" (Valentine, cited in Massey, Allen, & Sarrre, 1999, p. 48). Gruenewald (2003) describes how we may take for granted the spaces and places of our daily lives: "A fundamental paradox of place ... is that although we can experience it everywhere, everywhere it recedes from consciousness as we become engrossed in our routines in space and time" (p. 622).

In the next section, I begin to delineate why attending to space and place is important for curriculum studies by presenting research on the implications of spatial meaning construction in schools.

## *Part Two – Research*

> While trying to improve the quality of education with new curriculums, technologies, and strategies, educators and policymakers must not forget the structures and spaces where our children go to school. (Taylor, cited in Meek, 1995, p. 68)

> We give far too little attention today to encouraging (or even recognizing) a sense of place and the role it plays in learning and awareness. (Noddings, 2001, p. 104)

The research presented here focuses on a neglected aspect of education: the significance of students' spatial experiences. Three research questions guided the investigation:

1. How do students experience and construct meanings in relation to the physical spaces of schools?
2. How do students experience and express collective and individual autonomies within school spaces?
3. How do students form collective and individual identities in relation to school spaces?

These questions allowed me to investigate students' subjective spatial meanings including the relationships between sense of place, learning, individual and collective identity development, and sense of belonging.

Thirty-eight Grade 12 students (19 male and 19 female) participated in the study at a high school in urban British Columbia, Canada. I employed a constructivist qualitative research methodology. Consistent with a constructivist paradigm and a phenomenological and hermeneutic

approach, this research involved open-ended interviews (single and paired) as well as formal and informal participant observation. Interviews averaging 30-40 minutes were recorded and transcribed. Student voices (pseudonyms identify different speakers) illustrate the ways in which students' conceptualizations and uses of school space create senses of belonging in schools. My intention here is to present a selection of student voices (transcribed verbatim from recorded interviews) in order to highlight the multiple ways in which school spaces and places matter to students.

I examine students' spatial meanings from three perspectives: instrumental, territorial, and sentimental/emotional. These perspectives capture the main themes that emerged in relation to spatial meaning construction: territoriality and ownership, agency, identity, and sense of belonging. The *Instrumental Perspective* includes students' views on *access and exclusion* as well as *appropriation and use* of school space. Issues of access and exclusion reflect students' understandings of public and private terrain at both collective and individual levels. What is striking in the data is the universal acknowledgement by participants of teacher and student spaces corresponding with private and public terrain. Teacher spaces are those areas that participants associate with control, authority, and restriction while student spaces are sources of freedom and comfort. Student spaces are those areas that participants appropriate and use that have limited teacher control and are easily accessible.

The largest, most talked about student space in this study is the cafeteria. Jayson identifies how norms of behaviour are different in student space:

> Cafeteria ... It's totally different. What we say in class is like the complete opposite to what we say – like our language in the cafeteria.

Marco identifies how in student spaces they may act in ways potentially contrary to behavioural norms in teacher spaces:

> We sit down, we talk, start fooling around, throw stuff – we're *loud*.

Student space is thus a source of comfort, a break from control. This symbolic sense of ownership through identifying student space is valuable to Krista:

> We are not going to come to school all day and be in 'teacher space' *all day* in school.

This sense of ownership or territoriality is a predominant theme in relation to students' spatial meanings.

The *Territorial Perspective* of spatial meaning construction addresses the notion of ownership and reflects student responses to questions about domination and control in school terrain. The research addresses students' processes of collaborative and individual territoriality including claiming and defending territory, issues of personal space, crowding, and notions of privacy. The following selection of student voices highlights how territoriality contributes to identity formation. A sense of ownership begins through habitual and routine appropriation and use of school space:

> Yah, there are territories ... the cafeteria is claimed ... well they are always there. They go there regularly and you just know that that spot is taken. I mean you walk by and every single time that group is there. (Ella)

Similarly, Sam and Kristi clearly identify territories in the school:

> Oh yah!! We have the Grade 8's or Grade 9's or whatever they are now, they hang out right by the vending machines. (Sam)

> And then you've got the kinda 'smart' people over in Smith's hallway over above the library and you got that group kinda on top of the stairs and then those Grade 11's and 12's that are just too cool for everyone in the cafeteria. (Kristi)

Furthermore, student narratives indicate that territorial claims in schools are powered by popularity or status. For example, participants from different social groups and age levels frequently identify both the power and popularity of students who appropriate and use the cafeteria space. Interestingly, this space is doubly powered as *within* the cafeteria certain positions are associated with prestige. Ed describes how the space of most power and status in the whole school is the table located closest to the main hallway:

> Yah. We actually talk about [how] ... as Grade 12 students now it's just like this is *our* table so don't ... like we have *our* tables right there at the front of the cafeteria and you *don't* sit there.

Claire reveals that in addition to identity formation, school spaces contribute to students' feelings they belong:

> Yup, it's our little space [*indicating*] no one else's.

In addition to territoriality, students' senses of belonging are closely linked to emotional associations.

The *Sentimental/Emotional Perspective* addresses affective associations with school spaces. Students' spatial meanings are diverse. They include positive feelings of comfort, stimulation, and play, and

negative feelings of stress, fear, and boredom. More than physical attributes of space, students' relationships with the topic, teacher, and peers that they associate with in the space influence the spatial meaning they construct. The student spaces participants most associate with comfort are the familiar spaces they appropriate and use individually and collectively. Not surprisingly, spaces in which participants are socially included contribute to feelings of comfort, as indicated by Krista's response when asked to identify her comfort zone in school:

> Ah, since Grade 8 the cafeteria because most of my friends are there.

In addition to the role of friends, for Doug positive student-teacher relationships contribute to positive spatial attributions:

> It is because of the teacher, I have three of his classes and so that is why I feel more comfortable and familiar ... with him I learn lots of things.

Participants' diverse expressions of stress and fear can be categorized into interrelated dimensions of subject, time, and space. For example, Rob associates challenging academic curricula in which he struggles and feels frustrated with spaces of stress:

> I guess for me I've always felt uncomfortable with the hallway in the science wing because I am so dumb at science. I've failed it, like I don't even know how many times.

Other participants equate negative emotional attributes with spaces that are sources of anxiety or stress due to topic as well as teacher or peers. In short, students clarify how the typical encounters and experiences that occur in space define existential places that reflect multiple emotional attachments. These lived spaces have both individual and collective meanings that contribute to students' construction of place as a space of security. Regions of comfort and security and associated feelings of belonging are poignant counterpoints to regions of stress and fear.

Students describe the multiple ways in which comfort in space contributes to belonging and identity. Ella and Anne connect a sense of belonging and comfort with positive educational experiences:

> Belonging is important because, like, I feel like I fit in and so I want to come and learn and I have a reason for coming here. (Ella)

> I feel comfortable, and once I feel comfortable I want to learn. It's like I need that comfortable phase first. (Anne)

In response to whether he thinks sense of place is important Tom answers affirmatively:

> Yah, it has been 'the space' for me and my friends ... And it helps because I know that there I'm kind of like *welcome* and *wanted*.

Thus, a sense of belonging is grounded by students in a sense of familiarity with school spaces, processes, and people.

The senses of place (see Eyles, 1985) that develop from spatial interaction may facilitate learning insofar as they fulfill the fundamental security and belonging needs of students. Abraham Maslow's influential theory of human motivation toward self-actualization supports the view that meeting students' needs for safety and belonging supports their ability to work toward self-actualization. One implication stemming from the research data presented in this paper is the need to examine ways to facilitate the formation of a diversity of relationships between students and school spaces, teachers, and topics thereby allowing for the development of multiple senses of place in schools.

## *Part Three – Pedagogical and Ecological Implications*

Neglect of space and place in educational research, theory, and practice constitutes a hidden curriculum which teaches that spaces and places are neutral backdrops to experience rather than power-full, contested, cultural, and political products of human decisions. By disregarding the spatial dimension in curriculum studies we ignore how spaces and places teach. We fail, moreover, "to recognize the mediating role that schools play in the production of space (or social context) through the education of place-makers (or citizens)" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 620). As Gruenewald notes, taking school space for granted ignores the processes that create and legitimize these places (p. 627); it also teaches that we live independently of the spaces and places that immerse us in the world. We can learn more about curriculum processes of teaching and learning if we focus on space and place as pedagogical, cultural, and political constructs. Moreover, we can take an ecological approach to curriculum understanding if we situate teaching and learning processes in place.

Gruenewald (2003) articulates the pedagogical implications of space and place. He identifies a reciprocal relationship between individuals as place-makers and their lived spaces and places:

> 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. (p. 621)

In effect, "people make places and places make people" (p. 621). As we exist in relationship with space and place, we learn of the cultural and political processes that make place: "not only is our experience of places mediated by culture, education, and personal experience, but places themselves are products of culture" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 626). Schools are also political spaces insofar as they result from human interests and decisions. In effect, all curricular decisions shape school spaces and are thus political decisions. Gruenewald's assertion that space is "filled with living politics and ideologies" that directly influence our lives reveals the influence of political decisions on school spaces and students' educational experiences (p. 628). School spaces are, moreover, powered and contested.

Kamler (2001) recognizes that space is never neutral; rather, it always enacts a "politics of location" (p. 9). Power is present in the creation, possession, and control of space. Space, similarly, is central to the possession, operation, and realization of power (Massey, Allen & Sarre, 1999, p. 171). Attending to space and place in curriculum inquiry addresses the role schools play in the re/production of power relationships in school space (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 629). While the prescribed curriculum may claim to support democracy and equity, ignoring spatial processes in schools can serve to perpetuate relations of power and dominance (p. 629). Given the cultural and political nature of space, it seems irresponsible to accept spaces uncritically. Gruenewald argues that we must be aware of "social places as cultural products [by] bring[ing] them into our awareness for conscious reflection and unpack[ing] their particular cultural meanings" (p. 626). Without conscious reflection and attention we interpret spaces as natural rather than ideological: "through repeated experience of familiar cultural surroundings we tend to develop an unreflective, unconscious attitude toward place" (p. 627). More than cultural and political spaces, schools also educate place-makers. Cultivation of critical thinking in schools should include developing awareness of spatial processes and the roles people play in constructing spaces and places.

What kind of place-makers are we educating in our schools? How does place-making shape curriculum and influence educational experience? These are important questions for curriculum inquiry. I agree with Gruenewald's (2003) assertion that:

> If human beings are responsible for place-making, then we must become conscious of ourselves as place-makers and as participants in the sociopolitical process of place-making ... school 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. (p. 627)

Accepting school spaces uncritically and unconsciously is dangerous as it "obscures the connections between education, culture, and place: it releases people from their responsibility as place makers; it legitimizes the ideology that is embedded in the places we take for granted" (p. 627). In effect, neglecting spatial issues in curriculum studies ignores the role of schools in alerting human beings to their active place-making. Place-making is, in essence, a democratic process. In line with democratic ideals of critical thinking, equality, and empowerment, schools can help increase awareness of the social, cultural, and political nature of school spaces as well as individuals' roles as place-makers.

To conclude this paper, I illustrate how issues of space and place are also foundational to understanding curriculum as ecological. Disregarding the spaces and places which encompass human existence perpetuates ecologically destructive misconceptions of the atomistic human being existing separate from and superior to the more-than-human world. A discourse for curriculum understanding that situates teaching and learning in context and in relation to larger social, political, and ecological processes supports the development of ecological consciousness and eco-literacy necessary for the well-being of the human and more-than-human world (Abram, 1996).

An ecological perspective begins in place. Ecological curriculum understanding situated in specific localities and through interconnections of place, people, and processes acknowledges curriculum as a process occurring within the world. In this way discourse becomes "contextualist – bound always by the localness of ourselves, our histories, our language, our place, but also expanding into an ever-broadening global and ecological network" (Cheney, cited in Doll, 1993, p. 180). An ecological discourse is place-conscious insofar as it attends to the spaces and places experienced within and without school walls. It adds the human-world relation to relational pedagogical discourse – a dimension missing from relational discourse that privileges inter-human relation (see Bingham & Sidorkin, 2004; Sidorkin, 2002). Omission of the ecological relation from curriculum understanding is significant as it serves to reinforce hegemonic conceptions of human

separation from and superiority over the earth, thereby perpetuating monological, atomistic thinking and being in the world. Many theorists connect contemporary educational practices with serious global ecological degradation (see Bowers, 1999, 2003; Capra, 1996; Doll, 1993; Gruenewald, 2003; Orr, 1992, 1994; O'Sullivan, 1999; O'Sullivan & Taylor, 2004; Suzuki, 1997). Given the influence of education on how we live with/in the world, an ecological approach to curriculum understanding merits attention. In addition to global consequences, abstracting curriculum from the realm of existential spaces, and from the relational world of which it is part, disregards the power of spatial particularities to influence teaching, learning, and curriculum understanding. Based on ecological principles of interconnection and interdependence, ecological curriculum understanding recognizes that educational experiences cannot be understood in isolation from the spaces and places in which they occur. Placing curriculum studies into the situated, highly particular nature of lived educational experience, results in an understanding of curriculum *in* the world rather than curriculum *and* the world.

Gruenewald (2003) argues that "schooling and an ecological consciousness are fundamentally at odds" insofar as schools aim to prepare students to compete in unsustainable economic and political processes that are causing massive environmental degradation (p. 633). While I am not suggesting that an ecological discourse can easily resolve this ideological conflict, I believe it may be a productive theoretic space from which to examine the educational implications of social, cultural, and ecological issues threatening the health of the human and more-than-human world. It is a space, moreover, from which to investigate how we may teach towards ecological consciousness – an understanding of self as inextricably linked to larger communities including the more-than-human world. In order for curriculum to change how we know to *be* in the world from anthropocentric awareness toward an eco-infused relational awareness, it is necessary to situate processes of teaching and learning in unique places and to attend to human relationship with and in these contexts. By nurturing students' awareness of ecological relation and the ways in which they are connected to their surroundings, we may be able to develop students' sense of ecological consciousness. From ecological consciousness may grow a sense of eco-literacy or understanding of the interconnectedness of all people and societies within the earth's ecosystems that orients the way in which we act upon, think about, and discuss the earth and how we live in relation to it (see

Orr, 1992). We may be more effective in teaching ecological principles for developing eco-literacy if we do not first educate in ways that engage students with the ecological relation; that is to say, with the multiple relationships connecting them to the world. In this decade which UNESCO has declared the United Nations Decade for Education for Sustainable Development, an ecological approach to curriculum research, theory, and practice may enable ecological consciousness, something essential to living in a well world.

## *Conclusion*

This paper outlines the valuable insights issues of space and place provide for deepening curriculum understanding. It illustrates why school spaces and places that shape and are shaped by curriculum processes are a curricular concern. Why attend to space and place in curriculum inquiry, theory, and practice?

First, conceptualization of space as dynamic and multiple supports diverse ways of knowing. It illustrates the active role we play in constructing the spaces and places in which we dwell. An enlarged understanding of space allows, moreover, dialogue and engagement across difference in the field of curriculum studies. Diverse spaces represent forums of and for multiplicity. Deeper curriculum understanding may emerge by attending to the spatial perspective insofar as addressing the particularities of situated people and processes provides a richer representation of the nature of curricular processes and how they are experienced.

Second, as indicated by research, school spaces matter to students as they contribute to identity formation and sense of belonging in schools. Sense of place represents a source of solace and security for students that should be nurtured.

Third, spaces and places are pedagogical, social, and political constructions that are powered and contested. Schools have a responsibility to make individuals conscious of the interplay between humans and their lived spaces and how we are all actively engaged in making the places that influence our lives. Place-making is a democratic process. Finally, questions of space and place represent fertile soil from which ecological understanding of curriculum and, possibly, ecological consciousness may grow. Ecological understanding firmly situates curriculum in unique particularities. Based in place, the meaningful spaces in which all people are embedded, ecological understanding

reveals human interconnection with the earth. If, as Henderson and Kesson (1999) argue, "the way we think is to a great extent the product of the way we are educated," then educating in a way that attends to the spatial dimension of lived experience and human interrelatedness within the world may promote ecological consciousness (p. 87). I recommend that we embrace issues of space and place in curriculum inquiry, theory, and practice.

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