Environmental Education and Academic Border Crossings: Addressing (Educational) Imperialism in Aotearoa New Zealand

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Abstract

The increasing use of environmental education as a vehicle for directing people's behaviours and attitudes towards "sustainable" living confronts a number of challenges when implemented across national and cultural borders. The extent to which it is possible to reconcile culturally inscribed pedagogical pursuits across boundaries—whether physically, geographically, or socio-culturally constructed—demands special attention to whether such pursuits genuinely reflect a "sustainable future" or whether they merely reflect a new form of (educational) imperialism. The combined realities of the trans-boundary nature of many environmental problems and the increased use of boundary blurring technologies, such as the internet, require environmental educators to consider the relevance and challenges of such borders and boundaries. This is no less true for "nomadic academics" who are educated within one set of cultural norms, e.g., in the Western, modern paradigm, and ultimately teach in alternative settings where the modern, Western paradigm is not the only, or the "best," set of values which exist. In order to address these issues, I provide a narrative concerning my experiences as an American-trained political scientist teaching socio-cultural issues and environmental management in Aotearoa New Zealand. Due to the significance of Maori, Aotearoa's First People, the expression of partnership conveyed in *Te Tiriti o Waitangi/Treaty of Waitangi* and the recognition of Maori resource management practices in New Zealand's primary piece of environmental legislation, the *Resource Management Act 1991*, it is vital that environmental educators learn to use pedagogical techniques which enhance cross-cultural communication and thereby attempt to minimise imperialising effects. In my paper, I not only reflect upon these challenges, but I discuss four princi-

ples useful in mediating continued (educational) imperialism: reflexivity, respect, dignity, and reciprocity.

Résumé

Le recours croissant à l'éducation relative à l'environnement comme véhicule pour orienter les comportements et les attitudes des gens vers une vie " durable " soulève nombre de défis outre les frontières nationales et culturelles. La réconciliation possible des poursuites pédagogiques inscrites dans les cultures entre les frontières—qu'elles soient physiques, géographiques ou socio-culturelles—exige une attention spéciale pour que ces pour-suites reflètent véritablement un " développement durable " et non simplement une nouvelle forme d'impérialisme (édu-cationnel). Les réalités combinées de la nature transfrontalière de plusieurs problèmes environnementaux et l'utilisation accrue de technologies qui brouillent les frontières, telles qu'Internet, font en sorte que les éducateurs en environnement doivent considérer la pertinence et les défis de telles limites ou frontières. Cela est tout aussi vrai pour les " universitaires nomades " dont l'éducation s'inspire d'un ensemble de normes culturelles, par exemple selon le paradigme occidental moderne, et qui finissent par enseigner dans d'autres situations où ce paradigme n'est pas le seul ou le " meilleur " ensemble de valeurs existantes. Pour aborder ces questions, je donne un exposé de faits sur mes expériences à titre de scientifique politique formé aux États-Unis et enseignant des enjeux socioculturels et la gestion de l'environnement à Aotearoa, en Nouvelle-Zélande. Étant donné l'importance des Maoris, la Première Nation d'Aotearoa, l'expression de partenariat rendue dans le traité de Waitangi et la recon-naissance des pratiques de gestion des ressources des Maoris dans le principal document de législation environnementale de la Nouvelle-Zélande, le *Resource Management Act de 1991*, il est vital que les éducateurs en environnement apprennent à utiliser des techniques pédago-giques qui favorisent la communication interculturelle et, par conséquent, tentent de réduire au minimum les effets impérialis-ants. Les réflexions dans mon exposé portent non seulement sur ces défis, mais aussi sur quatre principes qui sont utiles pour modifier l'impérialisme (éducationnel) continu: réflexivité, respect, dignité et réciprocité.

This article is a narrative of my experiences and thoughts about the subtle and not-so-subtle acts of cross-cultural and multi-cultural teaching about the environment. It is one person's attempt to be reflexive, i.e., self-aware and self-critical, about the powers vested in me as a U.S.-trained political scientist, teaching sociocultural studies in a professional resource management graduate program, residing within a bicultural context. Although I do not suggest that each person's experiences will be like my own, I do argue that my experiences highlight some of the challenges related to academic border crossings which all environmental educators must consider if they wish to avoid or mitigate imperialistic educational practices. Such challenges are especially relevant in the current rhetorical context in which environmental education is directly linked with the construction of a healthier and more "sustainable" planet. The extent to which "sustainability" can be achieved amidst fluid, multi-faceted cultural dynamics remains to be seen. However, I contend that "sustainability," if defined as the health and integrity of ecological and sociocultural planetary systems, cannot be accomplished using current practices and assumptions which pervade environmental education because the majority of practitioners have not learned to examine their own identities, roles, and knowledge sources.

Clearly, I do not regard "sustainability" as the most useful concept within environmental education because it is often simplified and used as short-hand for maintaining (human) life without consideration for the cycles of birth, death, and (sometimes) rebirth. The simplified framing of sustainability carries a notion of perpetual life and in doing so can be used to justify a variety of ethically fraught and imperialistic activities, for example, extending human life using invasive medical practices such as fetal surgery and conserving endangered species using genetic technologies. Despite my reservations about and discomfort with the term, it must be acknowledged that sustainability remains a fundamental component in the environmental (education) lexicon. Thus, when I use the term here, it refers to a process rather than an end-state, and I recognize that it is an ideal towards which many have chosen to strive. In striving towards such a goal, we are constantly negotiating and learning from the interactions and feedback received from the various systems which make up planet Earth, be they ecological or sociocultural systems. Environmental education is one mechanism for channeling and receiving such feedback. Overall, I argue that the degree to which environmental education practitioners are reflexive, and considerate of the potential for educational imperialism, can make a direct contribution to the health and integrity of social and ecological systems, if not the actual achievement of "sustainability" itself.

In order to highlight some of the complexities and ongoing contradictions within environmental education, I offer a self-review and critique. Such an approach has merit because "self-reflexive autobiographical accounts often provide critical insights into political ramifications of border crossings across multiple positioning" (Brah, 1996, p. 205). As such, I use autobiography and reflexivity as one means of enabling learning for myself, and I hope it facilitates others' learning through the process of sharing and reflecting upon experiences and beliefs. In order to achieve this within the space constraints here, I review the settings in which I teach, both the academic and sociocultural contexts, the major educational issues related to such teaching, and finally I provide some suggestions for improving academic border crossings when they are undertaken.

The M.Sc. in Resource Management & Sociocultural Studies

The focus of this discussion delves into my experiences teaching in a graduate-level environmental education program called the Master of Science in Resource Management (MSc-RM). It is a two year, heavily prescribed program intended to create professional resource managers. The majority of graduates from the program ultimately move into positions in local and regional councils, central government ministries (e.g., the Department of Conservation, Ministry for the Environment) or non-governmental organizations. Thus, they move into positions where their knowledge and actions affect policy and decision-making throughout Aotearoa New Zealand.

Approximately eight to thirteen students enter the program each year, and each cohort is selected based upon their grades, previous experiences (e.g., work and / or travel), and their responses in the personal interview; it is regarded as a relatively elite program within the country. The program is premised upon inter-disciplinarity, and each cohort is selected based upon a *diversity* of disciplinary backgrounds. Thus, each intake includes a mixture of people trained in the sciences, social sciences, and humanities. The program is based upon an explicit pedagogical position: environmental education, and resource management more specifically, necessitates disciplinary cross-fertilization. As such, the program is premised upon the assumption that the environmental problematique, i.e., the constellation of problems which make up current environmental degradation (Bührs & Bartlett, 1993), cannot be adequately addressed or assessed without an understanding of various assumptions, languages, and worldviews which exist in the larger realm of "environmentalism." In order to build upon this premise, we begin the program with an intensive three-unit subject entitled

"Preparatory Disciplines for Resource Management" which includes four streams: ecology, economics, policy, and sociocultural studies. I am responsible for teaching the sociocultural studies stream.

The sociocultural stream's primary intention is to foster the students' abilities to understand, assess, and reflect upon the diversity of approaches to living in, learning about, and improving "the environment." The process begins with questions concerning definitions and their construction: what is the environment?; what is nature?; what are natural resources?; who defines these terms?; which definitions predominate?; and why do these definitions predominate? Having raised such questions, we then embark upon other topics to investigate the questions further. Some of the topics include:

- a history of ideas, including differences between Eastern, Western, and First Peoples' philosophies (for examples, see Howitt & Hirsch, 1996; Love, 1996; Needham, 1993; Smith, 1997; Suzuki & Knudtson, 1992; Tau,1992; Tikao, 1939);
- the construction of identities, e.g., race, class, gender, ability, sexuality, and science (for examples, see Anzaldua, 1987; Bernal, 1987; Brah, 1996; Thomashow,1995);
- the globalization of ideas and practices, e.g., development projects, economic patterns and effects, educational training programs (for examples, see Sandilands, 1995; Shiva, 1993); and
- practices for effecting change, e.g., activism, education, regulation, and economic incentives (for examples, see Bishop, 1996; Caldwell, 1990; Gray, 1996; Orr, 1992; Welford, 1996).

Ultimately, I try to provide a context in which students can learn about their own heritage and sociocultural practices while placing this into a broader sociocultural context.

The Resource Management Act and *Maoritanga*

The need to place the ideas, concepts and theories into a wider context is particularly pertinent due to the sociocultural context in which the program is situated. The program provides environmental education in, for, and about Aotearoa New Zealand, a country described as bicultural, but which is also multi-cultural due to its multiple layers of migrations and settlement. However, Aotearoa New Zealand's depiction as bicultural is special and important because it acknowledges that an official relationship was estab-

lished between Maori, the First Peoples, and the British Crown through the signing of *Te Tiriti o Waitangi/Treaty of Waitangi* in 1840 (Belich, 1996; Durie, 1991; Gray, Hayward, de Ronde, & Shearer, 1988; Orange, 1987). *Te Tiriti* remains a living, breathing embodiment of this relationship, and it is recognized as a vital source of continued Maori/Crown relations; it is often referred to as the creation of a partnership. Even so, such relations remain intense and contentious, partly due to the existence of two treaties (one in *Te Reo* Maori and one in English) and the differing interpretations of *Te Tiriti*'s principles (Crengle, 1993). For example, one difficulty relates to what the Crown gained in signing *Te Tiriti*, namely *kawanatanga*[1] (often translated into English as governance) and what *iwi* (tribal) Maori retained in signing *Te Tiriti*, namely *rangatiratanga* (often translated into English as sovereignty). The terms used, the language chosen, and the definitions ascribed all depend upon interpretation and context, yet fine lines between governance and sovereignty are often drawn in contemporary, international relations. And, although this is not the context from which *Te Tiriti* arose, it is often the context in which it is currently interpreted and implemented. This creates continued political, cultural, and economic contests between Maori and the Crown, especially with regard to "natural resources."

Natural resources is a term with special sociocultural baggage which becomes problematic when truncated and placed into another culture, especially one with a considerably different worldview. This is the case of natural resource use and management in Aotearoa New Zealand. Although *Te Tiriti* gave the Crown the right to govern the nation, whereby the Crown established a colonial system mirroring many of the institutions, norms, and mores evident in Britain, it was not supposed to transfer Maori *rangatiratanga* of the land (McHugh, 1991). In terms of the Maori worldview, the land is very important because Maori trace their genealogy back to the land, embodied in *Papatuanuku*, the Earth Mother, and *Ranganui*, the Sky Father, who created progeny who protect and embody other ecological forces, such as the forests (Gray et al., 1988). Such relationships mean Maori perceive the land in a holistic, spiritual, and relational manner; it is not simply a resource to be used, extracted, and exploited for outputs which can be sold for currency (Kawharu, 1992, 1989). By contrast, natural resources are usually perceived as a *Pakeha* construction premised upon property rights and individual ownership; neither of which translate (easily) into the "traditional" Maori worldview.

However, it should also be remembered that all cultures, including Maori, are dynamic and undergo change based on learning, cross-fertilization, self-reflection, and a variety of other processes. This sociocultural

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reality makes it all the more difficult to speak of a singular culture, such as Maori or German, and this makes teaching and learning in a bi- or multi-cultural context more challenging because one can never assume that a singular reality exists for each individual across all temporal scales. For example, one of the most prominent *iwi* (or tribes) in Aotearoa New Zealand, known as *Ngai Tahu*, recently negotiated a settlement with the Crown in order to resolve *Ngai Tahu* grievances arising from unautho-rised and forceful land seizures during the course of colonization and settlement of Aotearoa New Zealand since the last century. The process culminated in the Crown: returning some of the disputed land, providing "cash" and alternative land/assets for the estimated value of *Ngai Tahu* land which was no longer in Crown ownership due to the ongoing processes of land sales legitimized through private property rights, and issuing an apology to *Ngai Tahu*.

The return of some of the land was based upon traditional uses of these lands, such as for as food sources, and thus they were deemed significant to the tribe based upon cultural, historical, and resource-based reasons. However, the negotiators for the tribe, an organization known as *Te Runanga O Ngai Tahu*, also accepted cash and other Crown assets as payment for the grievances because they saw these as the contemporary currency for attaining the continuation—and one might argue, the "sustainability"—of their tribe. Some Maori (and non-Maori) saw this process as a "sell-out" or cooptation, while others regarded the approach as a manifestation of cul-tural dynamism and survival in an economically driven and increasingly globalized world. My point here is not that any given perspective is the sole, correct one. Rather, I use this example to highlight two points, namely:

- universal, static identity labels lead to poor and inaccurate assumptions (and consequences), and
- interrogating the multiple layers of colonisation and imperialism pro-vides a means of understanding the seeming contradictions, ironies, and tensions arising from the first point.

Such worldview differences and complexities also create difficulties in defining who "owns" "natural resources" and who should "manage" these resources because the terminology may be used in a variety of ways, thereby attributing different meanings (for further discussions, see Kilvington & Rixecker, 1995; McHugh, 1996; Mead & Tomas, 1995).[2] Increasingly, issues of "ownership" are being raised by Maori due to processes of economic globalization and competition whereby Maori

knowledge, cultural symbols, and activities become commodities to be consumed by tourists, pharmaceutical companies, and other transnational corporations. Such concerns about commodification have led to various attempts to protect intellectual property (itself a manifestation of globalized and privatized resources), including a formal claim (WAI262) to the Waitangi Tribunal which seeks to maintain and protect Maori intellectual property over certain native flora, fauna, and cultural practices (Mead, 1994; Tipene, 1997).

Such an example strikes to the heart of the survival and sustainability of a peoples, and it illustrates the *de facto* reality of ongoing globalization and its cultural, economic, and political effects upon people within Aotearoa New Zealand. Without a doubt, globalization is a reality for New Zealanders, if only due to the consequences of governmental policies which are predisposed towards opening markets and removing trade barriers of all kinds. These concerns are relevant for Maori and non-Maori alike, and they demand the attention of current and future resource managers because current environmental management practices must negotiate the spectrum of worldviews which includes values found in the "traditional" Maori worldview and the worldview epitomised by a postmodern, hyper-commodified, globalized economy.

Such issues regarding natural resources are especially pertinent for the MSc (RM) students because as professional resource managers they will be required to implement the *Resource Management Act 1991* (RMA or the Act). The *Resource Management Act 1991* has a single purpose, namely "the sustainable management of natural and physical resources" (*Resource Management Act 1991*, section 5). In so doing, those charged with implementing the Act must also include certain values and approaches, including the relevance of *Kaitiakitanga* (commonly translated into English as guardianship or stewardship), *waahi tapu* (sacred Maori sites), and the *Principles of Te Tiriti*. Thus, at a minimum, resource managers must appreciate and work within the bicultural landscape of Aotearoa New Zealand if they are to achieve the purpose of the Act. However, how can they do this when the Act is premised upon *Pakeha* (non-Maori) structures and processes, couched within the English language and carrying the baggage of colonization, capitalism, and individualism? The broad answer: by learning to appreciate and differentiate the strengths and weaknesses of various cultural representations and practices, especially within the historical context of Aotearoa New Zealand. But, how can this be achieved when the primary educator of sociocultural studies is not from Aotearoa New Zealand and is trained in and by American universities? What are the

assumptions and challenges of allowing such academic border crossings? To what extent can such border crossings facilitate environmental education and "sustainability" in a postmodern age?

Imperialism and a Postsmodern World

Concerns regarding pedagogy and social justice when teaching environmental education are not specific to my musings and meditations here. For example, Thompson's (1997) edited work on *Environmental Education for the 21st Century* includes many articles which discuss environmental education and pedagogy in various national settings, for example, Germany, China, Greece, and Puerto Rico (see Gravanis, 1997; Piorkowsky, 1997; Qian & Huang, 1997; Wright, 1997). Similarly, it is a common occurrence to link environmental education with social justice and equity issues (for example, see Orr, 1994). Indeed, it is now so common that it is almost a truism that environmental education is part of, or leads to, increased democracy and empowerment, and by extension it is presumed that these lead to "sustainability." Presumably, such connections should highlight concerns about colonisation and imperialism since sociocultural processes and experiences of domination, struggle and conflict affect the degree to which individuals and communities can flourish.[3] However, the extent to which environmental education *practitioners* actually consider the sociocultural, geopolitical, spiritual, and (post)colonial settings in which they work—and which they influence through their work—is much less considered and debated.

In the case of academics, for example, it remains rare for doctoral candidates trained in the United States to consider the impact their scholarship and day-to-day practices will have if (when) they become nomadic. By nomadic, I mean able to traverse boundaries and borders whether they are tangible, physical boundaries or boundaries constructed via sociocultural processes, beliefs, and practices. In this sense, environmental education practitioners are nomadic whether or not they leave the geographic location in which they were educated and trained. This is because almost every classroom includes people who are not from the geopolitical and sociocultural context in which the instruction/learning takes place. When constructed in this manner, environmental education per se incorporates crossing borders and (re)creating boundaries, irrespective of the physical location of the practitioner.

Addressing such concerns tends to be left to a relative minority who can be found in the margins of various disciplines or within the broader, often

inter-disciplinary field(s), more commonly referred to as cultural studies, postcolonial studies, feminist studies, and queer studies. A recent publication entitled *Dangerous Territories: Struggles for Difference and Equality in Education* (Roman & Eyre, 1997) offers an excellent example of the variety of issues, challenges, dilemmas, and paradoxes which one encounters amidst and through the process of (environmental) education. Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1997) provides an exceptional synthesis of many of the points I raise here when she states that:

> If the academy, classroom, and other educational contexts are not mere institutional sites, but are fundamentally political and cultural sites that represent accommodations and contestations over knowledge by differently empowered social constituencies, then the processes and practices of education lead to profoundly significant notions of self, identity, and community. (p. xvi)

However, in our current postmodern world of globalization, depicted in the previous section, border crossings are an ever-increasing phenomenon, and this makes the concept of self, identity, and community much more fluid than ever before. Again, Mohanty (1997) reminds us that:

> If economic and cultural globalization creates a context where material, economic and even psychic borders are porous, no longer neatly contained within the geographical boundaries of nation-states, then questions of democracy and citizenship also cannot be neatly charted within these boundaries. Thus, questions of difference and equality in education take on a certain urgency in a world where the fate of first world citizens is inextricably tied to the fate of the refugees, exiles, migrants, immigrants in the first world, and of similar constituencies in the rest of the world. The struggle over representation is always the struggle over knowledge. (p. xvi)

From my comments and Mohanty's analysis, it should be clear that *all* practitioners who wish to practice and "preach" the message of environmental education should consider:

- whether it is appropriate to teach,
- who should teach,
- what to teach, and
- how to teach.

None of these considerations can be made in a decontextualized setting, yet that is exactly what happens when nomadic practitioners share their views and stories about environmental education without considering these ethical, cultural, and pedagogical issues.

For the academic who physically crosses national borders, there is a definite process of travel involved. The body and mind are shifted into a new location with its attendant differences in such aspects as culture, geography, climate, economics, and politics. Remarkably enough, however, these physical, mental, and psychological changes do not necessarily translate into an intellectual awareness and pedagogy which questions such a border crossing and its possible effects in a classroom. Instead, most academics in this situation (myself included) would expect to be able to use their knowledge, training, and experiences as a legitimate form of education in the new setting. Indeed, such academics were hired with the tacit, if not explicit, understanding that their knowledge base was useful, appropriate, and held authority! Although all of this may be true, the possible negative consequences of such academic border crossings, for example the loss, denial, or displacement of local and/or indigenous knowledge, should not be underestimated. Indeed, the possible consequences must be explicitly addressed.

However, believing that "staying home" is a safe or appropriate response is also not an adequate response or alternative because the consequences of ever-increasing globalization, whether in the form of immigration, emigration, or virtual (technological) border crossings, manifest themselves within and outside the classroom irrespective of the practitioner's (trans)location. Processes of colonization and imperialism continue in these contexts specifically because environmental education practitioners ignore or deny the reality that their "safe home" may not be "safe" or "home" for their students. Brah (1996) discusses the difficulties of the term "home" in relation to a specific place when she addresses the complexities of diaspora, and she offers some useful questions and insights by writing:

> Where is home? On the one hand, "home" is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of "origin." On the other hand, home is also the lived experience of a locality. Its sounds and smells, its heat and dust, balmy summer evenings, or the excitement of the first snowfall, shivering winter evenings, sombre grey skies in the middle of the day . . . all this, as mediated by the historically specific everyday of relations. (p. 192)

Indeed, "everyday relations" are fundamental to an understanding of home, identity, culture—and environmental education. However, the everyday relations are also complicated by the increased speed of communication and the insidious nature of technology which can now pervade

even the most remote sites, albeit with sufficient financial means. The on-line colloquium (The Future of Environmental Education in a Postmodern World, 1998) which initially accepted and transmitted this article via the internet is an excellent example of the technological mechanisms current-ly available for generating "virtual" academic nomads and continued educational imperialism. As such, technology becomes the tool by which current practices can be extended and spread—be they for "good" or "ill."

To be sure, some may suggest that I have only disparaged environ-mental education practitioners and ignored their good intentions and genuine attempts at addressing the issues raised here. I do not doubt that well meaning and a genuine belief in empowerment and social justice exists amongst environmental practitioners and theorists. Indeed, I know it does. However, this is not sufficient in the current postmodern world which not only prioritizes market forces, conformity, and consumerism, but which is also *premised* upon, and generates, its fundamental meaning from colonisation and imperialism. Unless practitioners constantly and consis-tently interrogate their own approaches and authority in whatever peda-gogical context(s) they reside, the chances are high that the rhetoric of empowerment, social justice, and a healthier, more sustainable environment will not manifest themselves in the material world.

Practices for Less (if not Non-) Imperialistic Pedagogy

Indeed, it is always easier to judge than to be judged, so it is now necessary for me to move beyond the previous criticisms and provide some sugges-tions from my own experiences and practices, despite their imperfections and contradictions. Considerable problems riddle my sociocultural teaching in Aotearoa New Zealand. In particular, my own location(s) and identities create challenges. I am a thirty-something American trained feminist, political scientist, and these attributes mean I was trained within a discipline and its antecedent assumptions. I am not trained as an inter-disciplinarian or in cross-cultural communication, although my policy focus in political science has helped.

As someone who lived in the United States for twenty years, I was acculturated and socialized as an "American," someone who perceives sociocultural issues in terms of race relations, economic relations, and the significance of American intervention, albeit tempered by my own predilection towards (socially inscribed) leftist critiques of "America the Great." My identity is further complicated by the fact that I resided in the United States as a permanent resident because I emigrated to the United

States, via Canada, from (West) Germany. I lived in Edmonton, Alberta for approximately five years prior to moving to the United States, and I learned English and German simultaneously since I grew up in a bilingual (and bicultural) household. I do not have a German accent, so I was often "spared" the obvious "othering" which occurs through noticeable differences, for example, based upon immediately perceivable differences such as skin color, language, and clothing. However, I was (thankfully) not "spared" the experiences of living in two worlds simultaneously; this experience of personal border crossings taught me much about academic border crossings. Most notably, I learned four principles: reflexivity, respect, dignity, and reciprocity.

Reflexivity is simply the ability to be self-reflective, including self-criticism. So, as a teacher, I ask questions about what I do not know and the best means of discovering and learning them, presuming they are appropriate for me to learn. This requires learning who to ask, what the proper protocol for communicating with various peoples are, and how such exchanges can be properly and appropriately reciprocated. For example, in teaching sociocultural studies, I nurtured a relationship with the Centre for Maori Studies and Research at Lincoln University. Luckily, I entered a department which already had a history of close associations with the Centre for Maori Studies and Research, and I was encouraged to build upon these ties. I sowed seeds in this fertile ground by fostering relationships based on mutual interests and benefits in the areas of cultural studies and resource management. For example, I support postgraduate students and studies which intersect Maori/*Pakeha* relations, and I was willing to relate my personal and academic cross-cultural experiences and teaching techniques.

Through my personal border crossings, I have learned that my cultural way of seeing the world is not the only way, and sometimes this has been learned painfully. For this reason, I remember the significance of respect and dignity. In learning about and from different peoples and their cultures, I advocate keeping an open mind, even in the most difficult of circumstances, and I do so by having parameters or boundaries based upon dignity. Dignity includes the physical, psychological, spiritual, cultural, and emotional embodiment of the participants in any exchange. Negotiating what these parameters are and how to recognize them becomes an essential component in my cross-cultural learning and in the sociocultural studies I teach. As such, it is not uncommon for me to seek guidance from the *Kaumatua* (elder) of our University. His ability to direct me, whether towards further exploration, patient waiting, or some other course, provides

me with the cultural bridge I often require in directing my own teaching and guidance giving. However, my role and functions are not solely premised, and dependent upon, being gifted information. Instead, I too am responsible for returning a gift; reciprocity becomes the fourth principle by which to share cross-culturally.

All of my teaching in sociocultural studies requires my own learning, either of the textual material, the group work, the music, the poetry, or the cultural experiences. I try to reciprocate these learning experiences by giving thanks for these treasures. This sometimes takes the form of currency, but usually it manifests in an exchange of services or in a symbolic expression of thanks, such as a shared meal, or gifting of appropriate items such as plants, poems, and music. It is important to bear in mind that the learning experiences are not one's own creation, but the expression of a process and relationships. In this sense, they are unique and cannot recur; however, in the process of sharing and gifting, further *incentives* to recreate lasting and mutually satisfying relationships are born. This then is the cross-cultural learning which can lead to less, if not non-, imperialistic forms of border crossing, and in turn it is a stepping stone to creating healthy relationships through which we might generate healthier—or more "sustainable"—social and ecological systems.

A Warning for Conclusion

Be forewarned, though, there are no easy, simple solutions. Being a U.S.-trained academic engaged in cultural border crossings entails heightened responsibilities. It is a major presumption that an academic trained in one field, based upon values and worldviews derived from a particular culture, can or should be allowed to move between cultures or nation-states and teach anywhere in the world. Knowledge and its dissemination is not easily codified into one form of universal pedagogy, and the paths to learning the appropriate forms are riddled with mistakes, embarrassment, complexity, and irreconcilable differences. Environ-mental education, especially with its inevitable link with multiple disciplines and trans-boundary environmental issues, necessitates special attention to the practices and ramifications of cross-cultural learning. And, since the nomadic habits of academics are not the only focus for attention, for example, current information technologies such as the internet increase the dissemination of knowledge and assumptions across cultural boundaries, staying "at home" is no longer the easy option for minimizing imperialistic intervention in environmental education. Increased learning in cross-cultural

communication needs to be a fundamental pillar in environmental education no matter what its mode of dissemination. This is necessary if multiple and diverse futures are to be generated in a postmodern world.

Notes

[1] Although I provide English translations for the Maori terms, this is not satisfactory. Understanding *Te Reo* Maori (the Maori language) requires more than seemingly direct translation; it requires a cultural experience through which one understands the complexity of *whanau* (family), *hapu* (sub-tribal), and *iwi* (tribal) affiliations. Those who actually have such experiences are relatively few, and those who have access to the multiple layers of Maori knowledge, or *Maoritanga*, are even fewer. Thus, my use of these terms and their translations is limited by my own and (most likely) the reader's lack of such experiences. Even so, these terms are routinely used in English news items, texts, and the like which means they are significant concepts with which all people living within or learning about Aotearoa New Zealand must grapple. The extent to which one does so depends upon the relationships fostered and the trust which emanates from such bonds.

[2] It is important to emphasize that these concepts are not easily placed into simple, dichotomous distinctions, although they often are. Maori culture is as dynamic as any other, and I do not wish to suggest here that Maori cannot, or do not, conceive of "natural resources" in different ways. Instead, I wish to highlight some of the practices and beliefs established by a variety of Maori speakers and representatives as being part of a Maori worldview and disposition which contrasts with the *Pakeha* coloniser's approach and worldview. The variety of viewpoints, the contrasts they manifest, and the challenges which must be addressed are the threads which resource management students must understand and internalize.

[3] As environmental education practitioners, we should consider what these terms mean in our teaching and scholarship. Indeed, we should also be willing to ask *whether* and *how* empowerment and democracy, as we use the terms, are appropriate and adequate in the particular context(s) in which we teach and work.

Notes on Contributor

Stefanie Rixecker teaches amidst the intersections of cultural, gender, and environmental studies on the undergraduate and graduate levels at Lincoln University. She received Lincoln University's Award for Excellence in Teaching in 1997. Her research articles and conference papers have covered such topics as: cross-cultural communication and environmental education; biodiversity policy and governance in Aotearoa New Zealand; feminist epistemology in policy design; and biotechnology and its impacts upon queer body politics. She is currently working on a book which addresses the connections between autobiography, genetic engineering, and biodiversity using feminist and queer studies as theoretical guides.

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