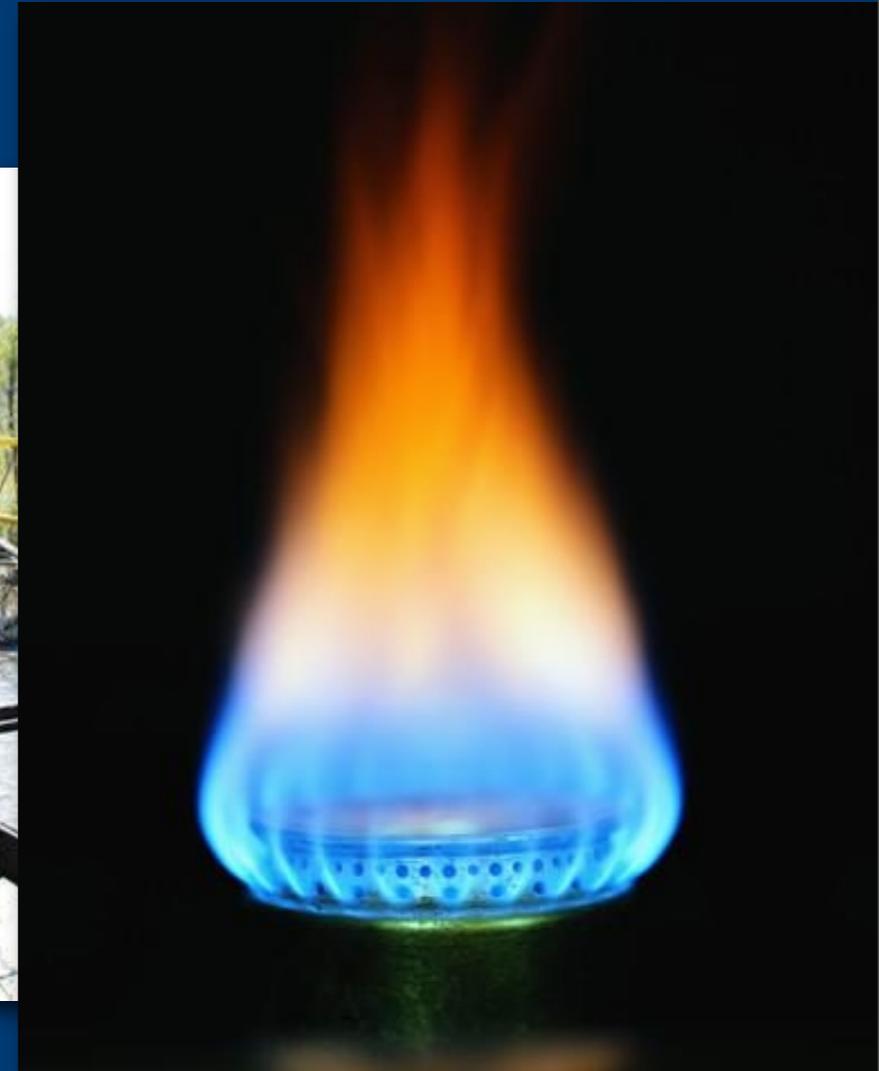


Environmental Identity and its Implications for Educators



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Before We Start

Identity Labels

Systems



Locating Myself

- Former Environmental Educator
 - NYS Department of Environmental Conversation
 - WNY and the Adirondack Mountains
- Former NYS 8th Grade Earth Science Teacher
 - Diverse suburban district near Rochester, NY
- Now Doctoral Candidate @ U. of Rochester
 - Research sustainability education, among other things



Locating Myself



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Why I'm Here



Natural Gas Drilling

Wind Development



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Environmental Identity



(EpochTimes.com)



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(IPAA.org)



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(HBO.com)



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(WGXC.com)



(NBCNews.com)



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(museumoftheearth.org)



(rochester.edu)



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Identity

- *Identity is socially constituted*, that is, one is recognized by self and others as a kind of person because of the interactions one has with others.
- *Identity is constantly being formed and reformed*, though the change process for one's core identities is long term and labor intensive.
- *Identity is considered by most to be multifarious*, that is, consisting of a number of interrelated ways one is recognized as a certain kind of person, participating in social communities.

(April Luehmann, 2007, p. 827)



Discourse Communities

A Discourse is a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or ‘social network’ or to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful ‘role’. (James Gee, 1990, p. 143)



Identity Labels

Systems



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The Anthropocene & Sociomaterial Systems

(NPR/NASA)



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Individuals w/in Systems

- Our knowledge of the world is always partial.
- Many of the systems within which we exist are “hidden.”
 - Systems of normalization (Michel Foucault, 1977)
 - Allan Johnson calls this the “luxury of obliviousness,” where one has “the freedom to live unaware of what you’re participating in and how and with what effect” (2008, p. 180)
- **Status Quo Bias**
 - Humans tend to prefer that which is familiar and “normal.” Change is scary.
- **Confirmation Bias**
 - Humans tend to favor information that confirms previously held convictions/worldview.
 - Actively challenging with fact may cause people to reinforce their prior stances (*motivated reasoning*).
 - Cherry-picking information can lead to *epistemic closure*.



Environmental Identity



At a basic level, start by interrogating the social and material dynamics that shape the people and places of our modern life

(Flickr.com)



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Think. Pair. Share.

- **What identity groups (discourse communities) do you work with?**
- **What would learning as “identity development” look like?**
- **How might you best educate within the Marcellus Shale system?**



Educational Implications

- **Traditional educational institutions are often not geared toward interdisciplinarity.** Work to transcend disciplinary boundaries, remain true to your own expertise and humble toward others.
- **Be aware of the limits of your own worldview when communicating.** Work to complexify your own understanding.
- **Learners come to all educational contexts with preconceived notions of how the world works.** These must be identified, respected and wrestled with over time if an educational experience is going to work toward greater understanding. Allow people to protect identity so that you do not unnecessarily stifle conversation.
- **Use one's place in the world as a starting point** to engage in critical inquiry of the systems that shape that place (geology, ecology, capital flows, energy, climate, governance, law, etc.)

(Henderson & Duggan-Haas, *in review*)





Ohio Interfaith
Power and Light

A Religious Response to Climate Change

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(ohipl.com)



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Questions? Comments? Discussion!



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