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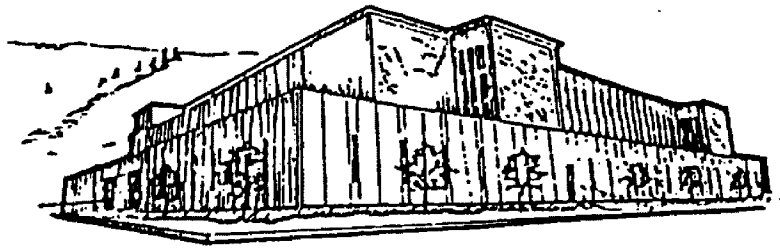
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5/17/94

Sense Of Place: Its Meaning And Its Implications
For Education

by

Matt Sanger

B.S. The University of Puget Sound, 1990

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Science

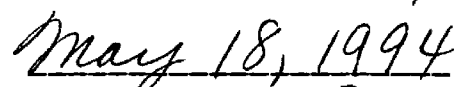
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Introduction

Lately, I have noticed the increasing popularity of the term 'sense of place' (SOP) on the shelves of the bookstores I frequent. I know this is partly a factor of sampling effort (the harder I look for it, the more I find it). But its occurrence seems to exceed any sampling anomaly, both in frequency and breadth of use.

I seek information on SOP for the same reason as its rising use--because our society has lost its SOP, or it now derives that sense from something other than the land. (I use 'land' here in the sense that Gary Snyder describes in *The Old Ways* (1977) as 'the totality of the local bio-region system, from cirrus clouds to leaf mold.') We Americans have divorced our lives and our livelihoods from the land in which we dwell, leaving unheeded Mary Austin's words in *The Land of Little Rain*(1983): 'the manner of the country makes the usage of life there, and the land will not be lived in except in its own fashion.' Unlike the Shoshone who Austin wrote so vividly about and who 'live like their trees' we, with our seductive high speed information and transportation, live our lives in an internal landscape of the individual mind. We are not based in place, but in ideas.

We have made this shift to an internal landscape for manifold reasons, well documented by social critics Jerry Mander, Wendell Berry, Kirkpatrick Sale, and others. Their collective work shows how consumer markets, television, transportation, and the rise of technology have brought modern society from the initial philosophical-human/land separation of Descartes and Bacon, to its more recent manifestation in a society that predominantly lives isolated from natural processes--physically, intellectually, and spiritually. For example, even though many of our ancestors used to live and die within walking distance of where they were born (and many people in other parts of the world still do), modern Americans move an average of fourteen times in their lifetime, with twenty to thirty percent of the population moving each year (Zelinsky in Tall 1993).

Numerous examples of what Frederick Turner calls an American 'estrangement from the land' exist all around us (1992). Even in the commonplace story that Deborah Tall (1993) relays of growing up in 'the New Jersey suburb of Cherry Hill, which was flat as a pancake and home to no cherry trees.' Discussing modern America's SOP she makes the point that 'we hardly know what to look for (in the land), our vision is so atrophied.' Jerry Mander gives another example citing the computerization of our nation's forests that now enables the Forest Service to do their forestry on the basis of models from their desks (1991). Our mayor in Missoula, Dan Kemmis supports this idea that we have lost our connection to place and people in stating that

our individualistic frame of mind has led us to forget this root sense of the concept of 'inhabitation.'...We have largely lost the sense that our capacity to live well in a place might depend upon our ability to relate to neighbors...on the basis of shared habits of behavior (1990).

Our modern, transient, individualistic, and estranged lifestyle and philosophy creates what Bill Bevis (1993) describes as 'a kind of no-place center, compared to which all 'places'...are marginal.'

Believing that we (let alone our progeny) can maintain such a life of the mind, independent of the place in which we live, with any health and longevity, is an act of ignorance, arrogance, and self endangerment. And this delusion allows what Wendell Berry describes as 'a class of itinerant vandals' (1987) to support the current unsustainable losses of topsoil and forests, the poisoning of our water, air, and food, the unprecedented rate of species extinctions, and the alteration of the only hospitable climate we know of in this universe. It is a matter of connections. And breaking our connections with the land veils the results of our highly consumptive lifestyles, and allows us to commit such acts of destruction.

But the loss of our SOP has implications beyond, or perhaps before, our environmental ills, that reflect on how we function as a society. Living the

internal landscape, without a collective land experience, we have become an atomized society of individuals. We no longer center ourselves in the community, school, neighborhood, or many times, even the family. We focus on the self, because the self forms the basis of choice that American consumerism both serves and engenders. Americans exercise this new form of rugged individualism in their lifestyle decisions based on national or global marketing that do not represent the local land or community, as opposed to a basis of participation first hand, individually and collectively, in the processes of land in which we live.

To understand the implications of our loss of SOP, we must first see what we have lost, and the term 'sense of place' captures the essence of our missing connection to the land. By exploring the emerging portrait of SOP in the literature, I wish to give this term some much needed clarity and definition, to make explicit its elusive and wandering, meaning and scope. Then, losing our place can also take meaning, and with a sense of sense of place I can suggest ways for us to reweave ourselves into the fabric of our unique place in this topsy turvy world through SOP education.

'Sense of Place'

The social geographer Yi-Fu Tuan gives the earliest use of the term 'sense of place' I have found in his book Space and Place (1977), in which he uses it to describe how individuals respond to their surroundings physically, emotionally, spiritually, and psychologically. Shortly there after, or possibly before, literary critics began using SOP in referring to writing deeply rooted in, and artistically reflective of, a particular area of land. SOP has become a popular characterization of a great deal of western writing, with critics often holding up the works of Mary Austin and Wallace Stegner as gifted examples.

Today, in addition to geographers and literary critics, environmentalists, nature writers, social critics, and politicians use SOP to describe a connection to the land that combines complimentary threads of bioregionalism, environmental literacy, ecological theory, cultural history, community based living, and a physical and spiritual connection with the land, that informs the way people live.

Although this collection of people have used 'sense of place' for less than two decades, it describes a part of us that dates back to the origins of our species. Our own evolution required a connectedness with the landscape. Being vulnerable, hairless, upright, yet sapient *Homo sapiens*, early humans used their newly enlarged brains to finesse a living from the land. Their connection to place made survival possible: what roots were good to eat--where and in what season, what fibers made durable baskets and clothes, what the forces of nature would allow and even encourage. We existed as part of the land just as the land was part of ourselves and our culture, and should therefore be defended as we defend our own well being, so that it may flourish as we have known it. The territoriality that came from existing 'as one' with the land enculturated a mutualistic relationship between early human societies and the land, in effect,

ingraining a SOP as part of not only physical survival, but also cultural and spiritual survival as well.

Our original connections to the land developed through practice, and later were reflected in the thoughts and the languages of diverse cultures, engendered by equally (if not more) diverse landscapes. Barry Lopez describes one example in his essay, *The Rediscovery of North America*. (1991): 'In Spanish, *la querencia* refers to a place on the ground where one feels secure, a place from which one's strength of character is drawn... a place in which we know exactly who we are.' *Querencia*, as Lopez goes on to say, also conveys a challenge--a challenge for survival which hearkens back to our original need to know our place to eke out a living on this earth. Looking toward our present survival needs, Lopez says that today, 'The discovery of a *querencia*...hinges on the perfection of a sense of place.'

Our own language provides more details for developing a portrait of 'sense of place.' Plowing through the Oxford English Dictionary (Simpson & Weiner, 1989), I find that the word 'sense' comes from the Latin *sensus* meaning 'feeling', or 'perception', from which we get our own five 'senses'. But our senses function contextually, providing the means to perceive things in relation to others, so that we may interpret our environment. Guided by our senses, it should be no surprise that we have given the term 'sense' such contextual meanings as 'the intuitive knowledge or appreciation of what action or judgment is appropriate to a given situation or sphere of activity,' or, as I would add, 'place.'

'Place' derives from the Latin *platea* meaning an open space, and the French *place* --an extension of space in three directions. From these roots, it also refers to 'a plot of land', or 'a portion of space in which people dwell together'. And, as with the word *sense*, our ancestors have given 'place' contextual meanings relating dwellers to where they dwell, from which we get 'a proper or

natural position for a given person to occupy’, ‘the duties of any office of position’, as well as the expression ‘to know one’s place.’

Putting these words together in SOP we create a phrase that embodies the collected knowledge, experience, and connectivity an individual or group has with (and the duty felt toward) the land in which they dwell. Also, both ‘sense’ and ‘place’ imply value by emphasizing the knowledge of what actions are ‘appropriate’—knowledge that comes from a direct connection and experience with a place.

This should provide a background for my portrait of SOP. But I believe that we can see and appreciate the detail and meaning of this portrait, only by exploring further some of the essential elements that it consists of.

Connections

I can describe the most basic element of SOP as a connection with the land-- nothing new, radical, or profound. To have a 'healthy' SOP, based in the natural processes of the land, this connection must go beyond either a book knowledge or personal affection for a place. We must have a shared life with the land, one in which we can gain an intimacy of roots and soil. As Simon Weil (1952) professes, 'To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul' and I think, of our SOP. Ivan Illich describes this rootedness as being what constitutes 'vernacular.' Not vernacular in the sense of locally formed speech (the way Varro, Caesar's librarian, lastingly defined it, and the way it has come into English usage) but from *its* roots:

Vernacular comes from an Indo-Germanic root that implies 'rootedness' and 'abode.' *Vernaculum* as a Latin word was used for whatever was homebred, homespun, homegrown, homemade, as opposed to what was obtained in formal exchange (1981, p. 57).

Similarly the ancient Romans took on its meaning as 'sustenance derived from reciprocity patterns imbedded in every aspect of life.' Connections are forms of reciprocity, one thread entwined with another, becoming a greater whole.

'Vernacular' just gives a connection a context, a place.

In describing the vernacular however, I don't want to portray rootedness or SOP as constricted, limited in view, or parochial. These qualities suggest ills just as modern placelessness does, as Scott Sanders says in *Staying Put* :

local knowledge is the grounding for global knowledge. Those who care about nothing beyond the confines of their parish are in truth parochial, and are at least mildly dangerous to their parish; on the other hand , those who *have* no parish,...those for whom the world is only a smear of highways and bank accounts and stores, are a danger not just to their parish but to the planet. (1993, p.114)

SOP means place based, not place limited.

Through our connections with place, and a cooperative, symbiotic relationship with it, we can gain that 'intuitive knowledge or appreciation of

what action or judgment is appropriate' (a sense) where we live. This seems simple enough--knowledge gained through experience--but a true connection and SOP implies that we not only acquire knowledge and use it as a resource to determine appropriate action, but that it permeates our lives and so that we reflect it in our character, habits, homes, our dance. In this relationship, we act as if participating in good conversation, as David Orr explains:

...we define ourselves, but in relation to another. The quality of conversation does not rest on the brilliance of one or the other person. It is more like a dance in which the artistry is mutual.' (1992, p.90)

Surely if we develop a healthy SOP, it will not rest on the brilliance of *Homo sapiens*, but our ability to listen while we dance.

Orr goes on to describe place knowledge as 'ecological literacy,' joining John Dewey, Alfred North Whitehead, Lewis Mumford, and Gary Snyder, in professing that literacy, and learning, comes from experience--our most effective and meaningful teacher. Snyder says:

Our relation to the natural world takes place in a *place*, and it must be grounded in information and experience. For example: 'real people' have an easy familiarity with the local plants. This is so unexceptional a kind of knowledge that everyone in Europe, Asia, and Africa used to take it for granted. Many contemporary Americans don't even *know* that they don't 'know the plants,' which is indeed a measure of alienation. (1990, p39)

--a measure of our alienation, and a measure of our loss of SOP.

When we have connection and understanding, David Orr claims, we have a life practice characterized by 'prudence, stewardship, and the celebration of Creation,' echoing the thoughts that Aldo Leopold, father of conservation and prophet of the environmental movement, professed half a century ago. But just as the vernacular is not parochial, neither is SOP merely another brand of environmentalism. I believe that environmental protection will grow out of lives lived with a healthy SOP, but I am not describing mere stewardship and protection here but something much more basic in the nature of our lives. With regards to

'environmentalism', when we use that language and the metaphors of 'stewardship', 'resources', and 'management', we reinforce the otherness or separation between ourselves and the land that currently drives the ecological crisis. Wendell Berry makes this point clear:

The concept of country, homeland, dwelling place becomes simplified as 'the environment'--that is, what surrounds us. Once we see our place, our part of the world, as *surrounding* us, we have already made a profound division between it and ourselves. We have given up the understanding--dropped it out of our language and so out of our thought--that we and our country create one another, depend on one another, are literally part of one another; that our land passes in and out of our bodies just as our bodies pass in and out of our land; that as neighbors here, human and plant and animal, are part of one another, and so cannot possibly flourish alone; that, therefore, our culture must be our response to our place, our culture and our place are images of each other and inseparable from each other, and so neither can be better than the other. (1977, p.32)

These ideas--connectedness, ecological literacy and a vernacular existence--should provide a base upon which additional layers can be added in this portrait of what SOP can be.

Stories

Stories form a more subtle, yet meaningful layer of a healthy SOP because they, also, play a vital role in good conversation. Good stories are not only fun to hear ('All the world stops when a good story is told' says Arthur Parker (Tall, 1993)) but come from experience, and can transmit the wisdom that experience gives in a rich and lasting way. Further, the form of a story, or narrative, can organize our lives in a way that incorporates elements of the land and society in a more interrelated and organic fashion.

In modern American culture, we seem to have lost the personal, oral tradition of storytelling. We learn to think and operate in ways based on abstract knowledge--knowledge based on print and linear, rational reasoning. We study history, the shared stories we maintain, through print, but in absence of the context and act of storytelling. In doing so, we deny the oral traditions, ways of thinking and knowing, and ecologically sustainable lifestyles of many traditional, storytelling cultures. Luckily, remnants of these traditional cultures, and their stories, survive today, and I think we might learn from their example of how stories, and storytelling can help develop and enrich a SOP.

Keith Basso (1986) relays a wonderful example of storytelling culture in an essay about the Western Apache around Cibecue, Arizona. Basso primarily speaks through the eyes of Nick Thompson, his friend and teacher, who says that to inhabit his native land, one needs to first 'learn the names' of all the places and things in the landscape. Apache, and many other native cultures, densely pack the landscape with place names, using them as they are frequently called upon to describe their journeys to and from home. Each name carries with it an image of its place in the minds of those who speak or hear it, a spring, a grove of willow, a rocky butte. When Nick and those others that know the names repeat them, they bring those places alive in their mind, making them feel comfortable, at home.

Basso tells of putting up fences with a local Apache who would mumble a long series of names to himself as they strung barbed wire. When asked why he did this, the cowboy said that 'I like to...I ride that way in my mind.' Other Apache felt 'those names are good to say,' because they allow them to 'see that place like it really is.'

The Apache bring these names and places even deeper into their lives through telling stories centered around them. Stories, in Western Apache culture, serve as historical narratives, relaying moral lessons and the consequences of inappropriate action, much like European fables. But for the Apache like Nick Thompson, stories live as a part of their particular landscape, deeply imbedded in their lives, like the story 'It happened at 'big cottonwood trees stand spreading here and there,' in which 'long ago' events are described in which a woman who ignored traditions of marriage and courtship was killed because of her actions. As Nick and others tell stories like this, again and again, they blend with names and places to create a landscape that teaches people inhabiting it of a proper life, and the 'big cottonwood trees' carry that lesson in the lives of those who live with them and know their story.

Sadly, what little remains of the cultures like Nick's are disappearing, as Jerry Mander documents in In The Absence of the Sacred (1991). In it, he illustrates the relationship between the advance of modern lifestyles, especially television, and the degeneration of storytelling, the atomization of communities, and estrangement of people from the land.

I see little traditional story-telling today in our culture, though some areas (like the South) appear to have held on to some traditions of celebration of place with stories. But even the remnants of traditional storytelling are losing ground to the generic, national, no-place images, of television and other mass media. In his paper 'The Nurture of Narrative,' Harold Rosen (1987) says that the

happenings of modern culture, our T.V. shows, magazines, and comic strips, present the stories of our day, told through new forms of media. He makes this statement in countering Walter Benjamin's argument in his '1970' 'The Storyteller' that 'the art of storytelling is coming to an end.' I would have to agree with both men, because our television shows, and modern culture does contain stories, but we are losing the art of telling them in a connected, personal, traditional manner, as Tappan and Brown state-

There is a long, diverse, and well-respected history of storytelling across a wide variety of cultures, but by and large, given social, cultural, and technological changes, the power of these oral narrative traditions has been lost to the modern Western world. (1989)

Further, those modern story forms that Rosen describes take place in the generic, no-place, or global context of mass media, and lack a connection to or representation of the local place in which people take them in.

Certainly, my father tells stories *ad nauseam* at the dinner table. I can picture him now, sitting back in his chair, a slow grin pulling at the corners of his mouth, then raising his right hand, tilting his head, and saying, 'did I ever tell you about the time your mother and I were back in the Ochoco, and the dog ate mother's bread dough and it rose in his stomach...' Truly, I have enjoyed listening to my father, but his stories are anecdotes about unrelated incidents in places I have never been or can't remember. The Ochoco blended with stories of Cincinnati and the Philippines that I can only imagine. They do give me a valuable sense of my past, my heritage, but they do not inform me of my place. Instead, they seem like movies about things only vaguely tied to my own life and the place I live. Therefore, they have become muddled with the memories of books and films and dreams, all of which I enjoy, but few of which have connected me to the land where I have lived.

Returning to what Mander and Basso tell us, we can visualize storytelling as a barometer for the integrity and health of a community, at least in native cultures. And it is in these communities that we must watch the barometer with great attentiveness, because they harbor the centuries of place-based knowledge and experience that more recent communities could use to gain a healthier SOP of their own--community being the final element of SOP I wish to explore.

Community

Donald Worster, in Dustbowl (1979) his history of a troubled relationship of land and community, gives this explanation of community and SOP:

When both the identity of self and of community become indistinguishable from that of the land and its fabric of life, adaptation follows almost instinctively, like a pronghorn moving through sagebrush... This is genuine adaptation, and it implies much more than shallow managerial skill. It comes from having a sense of place, which is at once a perception of what makes a piece of land function as it does and a feeling of belonging to and sharing in its uniqueness. Because man is a social animal, that sense is a group faculty as well as an individual one--indeed, it is the community that is the principal adaptive unit. (p.164)

With communities as the principal adaptive unit to the land, Worster implies that just as geographic boundaries define a place, like a watershed or a bioregion, social boundaries also exist within which inhabitants can incorporate a true SOP. The members of a community, the teachers, farmers, carpenters, and business people, contain a breadth of experience and practical knowledge needed to perpetuate the lessons of the land. They can also apply that knowledge in a manner in which both the land and the human community can prosper--small enough to be sensitive to subtle changes in species richness and local soil characteristics, large enough to carry out the tasks of barn raising, harvesting one's own land, as well as the land of those that may be ill.

The dust bowl communities apparently did not have a strong and healthy SOP. But they did live close to the land in tight communities that served as a principal adaptive unit. So what went wrong? I believe the dust bowl communities of the thirties lacked the time and experience with the place they inhabited, and therefore, 'had not achieved that sense of place and the environmental adaptation it produces.' They had not learned the limits of the use of the plow, nor the range of the climate. Further, the forces of a growing political-economic system, and the technology used to fuel its growth, subverted the local, experience-based knowledge that these communities brought together

by encouraging overtillage and other practices that created the disaster of that time and place.

As Wendell Berry has documented for the last two decades in his numerous books and essays (including his classic The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture (1977)), modern agricultural communities still haven't learned those lessons, which tells me that a SOP can require communities of place, sharing their experiences both within and between many generations. The temporal synergy that successive communities form is a history of place, which Wallace Stegner describes in Wolf Willow (1955) as 'a pontoon bridge,' which we travel over from the past, filling in our present as we move into the future. Stegner saw a history of place as a key element which connects us to land and society so that we actually place ourselves physically, temporally, culturally, philosophically, spiritually. The Teton Lakota articulate this idea eloquently in their proverb: 'A people without a history is like wind on the buffalo grass (Turner, 1992).'

We modern Americans have blown across this country ever since our recent arrival to this land, first taming the frontier, and now pursuing business, trade, adventure and entertainment. So many of our community histories play themselves out like my father's stories--abstractions in an internal landscape, broken and piecemeal, like the phantasmagorical television shows that play an average of 50 hours each week in our homes (Mander, 1991). Our sense of community reflects our SOP as we estrange ourselves from each other and the land.

Thinking about our situation, I wonder not only about the broken histories of our communities through generations, but what affect our own individual scuttling across the earth does to our personal SOP. Or, can we develop something resembling a healthy, land based SOP, living a modern, transient life?

Transience and SOP

Commuting to school, I listen to a collection of readings by Wallace Stegner (1989), who begins by stating that he developed an 'overweening sense of place,' growing up and moving all across the arid West. Is this possible? SOP means living rooted in a place, staying put there long enough to 'learn the names and the stories' of the land.

I believe Stegner's words because his SOP reflects a lifestyle that overcame much of his western transience. That lifestyle, as he goes on to describe, put him intimately close to the land, resulting in the 'almost pathological sensitivity to the colors, smells, light, and life and land forms of the segments of the Earth on which I lived'--Stegner's overweening SOP. Much of his writing focuses on the daily conversations he, and others had with the land--intense, direct, intimate conversations. He had no easy, abstract outs, no Shopko's and mini-marts to provide for his whims and desires, no television to escape from the reality of the land, and few paved roads to escape the particular piece of land he might happen to live in. Stegner lived in place. And as he moved through the region in this direct lifestyle, consciously adopting the entire region as his place, he diminished his attachment to any particular spot, as he himself admits, but added complementary knowledge to his sense of the West by which we know him so well.

Yi-Fu Tuan articulates this relationship between time, experience, and SOP in his second book: Space and Place (1977). There, he points out that although it takes time to develop a SOP, its strength and character come from a combination of both the intensity and quality of our experience with a place. Stegner apparently developed his SOP by experiencing the land with great intensity and quality, while at the same time limiting it by his transience. I do not wish to hold him up

as a model of SOP, but as a case that introduces this part of the answer to the question of transience and SOP.

To choose an exemplar of SOP in transient life, I would look toward traditional, native cultures. Australian Aborigines, long thought of as aimless wanderers of the Outback, travel with well defined purpose through the land, as Bruce Chatwin describes in The Songlines (1987). Chatwin says that in Aboriginal culture, people participate in 'renewing the land' as they travel, by singing the land into existence, as the creator did when the world began. Their particular paths, which each Aborigine inherits as an adult, live as songlines, and as they travel that path (or 'gone walkabout'), they sing everything they come across: plants, animals, topography. As Chatwin puts it, 'the melodic contour of the song describes the nature of the land over which the song passes.' They sing not only to bring themselves into harmony with the land, but as a duty to the world. They must properly maintain their songlines to fulfill this duty or suffer the consequence: death. In maintaining their songlines, the Aborigines develop a tremendous knowledge of and reverence for the land. Doing so they live a nomadic life, which means 'without a fixed *abode*.' It is not that they don't have a home, but that their home is spread across a region with scarce resources, in a culture that is at home across a large portion of it. Aborigines travel to hunt and trade for survival, as well as to participate in 'renewing the land,' and, as Chatwin describes, show an acute SOP because of it..

I can provide one more contrasting example of transience and SOP from the experiences of my own life as I have moved throughout the Pacific Northwest over the last twenty years. Unlike Stegner, I grew up in the seventies and eighties, with the conveniences of paved roads, drive-through everything, and an exponentially growing number of TV channels to assist me in escaping the land around me. I cannot say that I have a strong SOP for the region I am from.

The connections were not deep enough, broad enough, long enough to make such a claim. I knew few place names and wasn't interested in hearing their stories. I had movies, records and tapes, classrooms with computers, and the almighty television to occupy my time. Thus I am left with few strong notions about those places I grew up, or even the region.

Only at six years old and pushing four feet in height did I get to know a part of the landscape intimately, in the oak trees around Aumsville, Oregon. That is what I know, or knew then. I recognized the name 'oak' and could associate it with the deeply lobed leaves and the acorns with beret caps. But I *knew* those trees as the ones you had to climb with your eyes closed. This was what our conversations had told me, through daily trials that left me with lichens, rubbed off by my hands, or my brothers feet ahead of me, floating into my eyes without fail. The big leaf maples didn't have them, nor did any of the conifers around our five acres of pasture and woodland. The lichens were there regardless of the time of year, and they and their oak tree companions taught me this small story well. But again, that doesn't give me a strong sense of that place, in all its many facets. That would have taken many years of conversations like I had had with the oak trees.

We must have time and we must have intimacy to develop and strengthen a SOP. It requires both, although more of one can make up for a lack of the other (Tuan 1977), forming a continuum of 'health' and 'strength' of SOP, with an infinite variety of outcomes, much like the health and strength of any individual or ecosystem. I don't know of an ultimate, or strongest SOP, but looking at native cultures may well suggest that a lifetime, many lifetimes in a place, living the land, can bring about an exceptionally strong and healthy one.

An Urban SOP?

I now wish to explore another troubling question: if SOP requires a relationship with the land, what implications does inhabiting a paved land have? Or, can urban dwellers have what I'm defining here as a healthy, land based SOP? If SOP truly requires an ecological literacy derived from conversations with the land, the answer would seem to be no. In my conversations with cities, they tell me that concrete forms their lifeblood, that food comes from stores, weather primarily affects one's choice of clothing, and animals live in zoos and parks. For strictly urban dwellers, the city eclipses their potential conversations with the earth's natural processes, only allowing to show through the manicured grasses and designed landscapes of parks, the beaten and polluted life of urban waterways--I heard a woman tell a story once about an experiential education course she led into the desert, full of high school kids from cities. On a clear, moonlit, Southwestern night, a young woman from L.A. looked up at the bright white light and earnestly exclaimed, 'No way! Is that the same moon that we have? I mean--its so white, ours is always yellow.' (Ryan, 1993)--I don't relate this story to poke fun at this young woman, but to make a point about what cities tell us, or allow us to learn.

But if we look at urban existence in terms of what *appropriate* actions we can take, as determined by the nature of that place, a life based on concrete seems entirely appropriate, a true reflection of the city: sky scrapers, traffic lights, mini-marts, and movie houses. However, in coming to such a conclusion, we ignore the land. Concrete is not the land, and in our cities we have buried the land with concrete. It is dead, laid to rest. If we could get under the pavement and experience the land underneath, we would likely learn of the inappropriate nature of the consumption and lifestyle that pavement supports. If we could listen to the buried urban landscape, it would tell us its stories of loss, destruction,

death, and worst of all, being forgotten. Without an intimate, mutualistic relationship with the land we miss its history, its present, its potential future. And, as the Aborigines say, ‘...an unsung land is a dead land: since, if the songs are forgotten, the land itself will die. To allow that to happen [is] the worst of all possible crimes.’

So, can urban dwellers have a healthy, land-based SOP? As with transience, an infinite number of degrees of SOP seem possible in an urban landscape, and the proof that urban dwellers can develop a SOP exists in those who have a greater knowledge and reverence for the land than their rural counterparts. But cities limit the opportunities for people to experience and know natural processes, and often makes getting into a natural environment impossible, leaving the experience in the abstract forms of books and video. Urban dwellers do not necessarily lack caring, intelligence, or ability, but experience with the land, and a community that has done the same, that makes a SOP difficult. But, people can work to do what they can, with what they have of the natural world.

San Francisco Bay Area inhabitant Nancy Morita, as well as members of the Wild Onion Alliance in Chicago, exemplify those working to reclaim the urban landscape by mapping their cities, as they existed prior to development (Mills, 1993). They’re redrawing natural waterways and wetlands, describing vegetation and natural processes, to recover a sense of that which they have lost. To remember and perhaps sing the land represents a tremendous beginning for building a knowledge and history of a place, even in an abstract form, because it serves as a connection of mind, and possibly of heart. With such a start, urban dwellers can then work at creating ways to experience those parts of the land they can converse with around their home, starting the process of rebuilding a SOP.

The process of rebuilding a SOP in our cities, and in every other type of place in which people dwell is what I want to turn to now. Knowing the land, learning the names and stories, ecological literacy, building a history, becoming a community—all these things have a ring to them that suggests a process of experience and learning, or education. And education presents not only a promising means of rebuilding a SOP in our society, but an essential one.

Rebuilding a SOP

Throughout this paper, I tried to infuse my reading of SOP with two messages. The first--that our society has indeed lost its SOP. The second--that as individuals, communities, and a society, we will benefit greatly if we rebuild a mutualistic relationship with each other, our history, and the land. I believe this for a very straightforward reason: practicing a life of the land, community, and history will result in fewer acts of destruction, arrogance, and neglect that currently threaten the land, and therefore threatens ourselves and our children.

In this respect, SOP can provide the foundation for building a more responsible, caring, meaningful, and safe world. Without a SOP, we can teach environmental and social responsibility, and train student activists to try to create change (two things that we must do regardless of SOP). But without a SOP, the products of these efforts will lack the visceral meaning necessary for society to take on such responsibility as deeply and lastingly as it must.

Again, a number of things must change in order for us to live a life informed by the land in which we live, including our political/economic system that encourages our estrangement from and abuse of the land. However, to get at the roots of this estrangement and how to rebuild our missing connection to the land, I will focus on education.

Education in Society

When speaking of 'education' in general terms, I refer to the predominant form of teaching and learning present in the public schools of this country, K-12, and in many cases, colleges and universities. I choose this focus because education serves as one of the primary factors that shapes young people's world views. In the thousand plus hours that most students spend each year in school (Jackson 1968), they receive not only facts, formulas, and fiction, but also conventions for thinking, speaking, and relating to the world in the ways we teach, the way we evaluate their actions and learning, the way we have them interact. They also receive a model of the world in the metaphors which their teachers and peers use to represent the world and their existence in it (Bowers 1993). The education system in this country acts as a force for shaping the upcoming society, playing what C. A. Bowers describes as 'a key role in passing on the cultural templates to the next generation.'

Gregory Smith presents a powerful review of how the non-place based 'modern/industrial worldview' has been propagated by our education system in his Education and the Environment (1992). In it, he suggests that modern schools indoctrinate students into a life theory and practice of detachment. He summarizes:

In a variety of ways, then, schools have acted to consolidate and extend among their students a number of fundamental principles of the modern industrial worldview. By removing children from their homes, neighborhoods, and the surrounding nonhuman physical environment, schools have often led children to become increasingly detached from their own experience of the world (p70).

Smith maintains that our schools accomplish this, in part, 'by supplanting the role family and neighbors once played in preparing the young for participation in adult society'--stressing the importance of independence supposedly necessary to succeed in our modern market society. In doing so, schools subvert what has traditionally served as the root means of creating a vision of connectedness in

members of society. They further detach students from their place by subverting local forms of knowledge and connection to place, using a system where an impersonal authority (a teacher or a book) places value on the general, national, abstract examples and facts, in favor of those derived from their experience of place, family, and community. Smith again:

In this situation, children are taught that the knowledge valued by their teachers is fundamentally different from that derived from their own relationship with the world, a relationship that is seen to possess little importance within the context of most classrooms (p62).

Further, our modern schools remove any lingering credence that might be given to the oral tradition in which personal connection plays an essential role. The valued information primarily comes from one of two sources: the ultimate authority, the text book, in a generic and impersonal form that fails to transmit any inherent connection to the lives of the students. The rest of valued information comes from the teacher, usually in lecture form that describes facts to be remembered only for the purpose of delivering it back on a test, as in the 'banking' model of traditional education, where teachers deposit information into the minds of students, who then 'store' the information and deliver it back upon request. These plays of power and knowledge devalue student's personal knowledge, hence their lives, their families, and their place. As Jack Goody describes--

When the bulk of knowledge, true knowledge, is defined as coming from some outside, impersonal source (a book) and acquired largely in the context of some outside, decontextualised institution such as the school, there is bound to be a difference in intrafamilial roles...than in societies where the bulk of knowledge is passed down orally, in face-to-face context.

The result [of mass literate cultures] is there is a generalization of the devaluation, including the devaluation of knowledge and tasks that are not gained through the book but by experience. (1982)

Also, and perhaps more importantly, the language of the modern/industrial worldview, and our schools, forms the basis for the detached

practices, values, and ideas that our schools create and perpetuate. C.A. Bowers, in his Education, Cultural Myths, and the Ecological Crisis (1993) synthesizes the role of language in education and the perpetuation of the modern worldview. He reviews the literature showing that language functions as more than a tool for the transmission of thoughts and information. Language, Bowers points out, creates 'important schemata or conceptual frameworks that guide the thought process of the individual' and in doing so effects how and what we think, actively in our thought and speech processes. Because of the active role language plays in how we think, the metaphors we create with it can significantly influence our view of ourselves and our relationships with our peers, families, communities, and the land. Our schools provide much of the basis for the language students use and thus influence how and what they think. Bowers goes on to make the case that our current educational metaphors instill a worldview in students in which they exist as independent individuals, thinking and living without being influenced by, connected to, or responsible for the land and the communities they inhabit.

Our education system predominately works to undo the very things I have described that create a strong and healthy SOP. Therefore, education provides not only a fertile medium for creating a SOP by its influential role in students lives, but desperately needs to change as we rebuild a SOP in our society.

SOP Education

I use the term SOP education to describe the process of rebuilding a SOP through our schools, not to create a new educational niche, which I avoid for two reasons. First, education professionals have already overburdened the field with various programs, each with their own terminology and structure, all vying for widespread acceptance in school practice. Second, 'good education' already contains strategies for building SOP, building connections and community in a unique area of land. But even much of the best education still lacks the depth and breadth of the strategies that we can use to form the explicit connection to place that I emphasize here. Therefore, SOP education does not create another subject to be taught, nor does it propose its own special curriculum, set of terminology, or generic, ten-step plan to substitute for the last one handed down to teachers and administrators. SOP education simply applies teaching methods and curriculum structure, in a way that reflects the meaning and importance of SOP. While continuing to look at our current education system in relation to SOP, I will present strategies to create an educational experience in a community that builds connections, both in thought and action, a sense of community that extends beyond the classroom and schoolyard, and a practice of life that is informed by the land.

I am far from the first to propose the idea of a place based education. Lewis Mumford has suggested it quite eloquently in his 'regional survey' in the 1940's. Mumford sought 'synthesis' in the way we think, learn, and act, so to acknowledge the interrelated nature of our existence, and education, he stated, was the most promising avenue for achieving that goal (1946). To do so, he proposed-

...a drastically revised method of study, in which every aspect of the sciences and the arts is ecologically related from the bottom up, in which they connect directly and constantly in the student's experience of his region and community. Regional survey must

begin with the infant's first exploration of his dooryard and his neighborhood; it must continue to expand and deepen, at every successive stage of growth, until the student is capable of seeing and experiencing, above all, of relating and integrating and directing the separate parts of his environment, hitherto unnoticed or dispersed. Social action, in a balanced society, rests upon this sort of balanced understanding. (p.151-2)

In turn, Mumford based his regional survey on the late nineteenth century work of Patrick Geddes, as well as Caroline Pratt, Lucy Sprague Mitchell, and John Gaus after him. Mumford summarizes their work in the regional survey, calling for education based on a knowledge and understanding of connections gained through experience, and, as Mumford states, 'such knowledge must begin at home.'

Building Connections

The first step in developing a connection to the land requires us to experience it. At the root of this belief lies in John Dewey's statement in his pedagogic creed that 'education must be conceived as a continuing reconstruction of experience (in McDermott 1973).' Numerous educators, from John Dewey to David Orr, repeatedly emphasize the central role experience plays in a student's education. A student's experience will determine both what she/he becomes connected to, and the nature of those connections. If we keep students in a classroom and ask them to learn facts and concepts from lectures and textbooks, using examples that are generic and abstract, we create a value for something other than that which their own lives contain, something other than their place, that lacks a true visceral connection. In forming these types of connections, we actually disconnect students from their place, and that must change. As Alfred North Whitehead states:

...ideas which are not utilized are positively harmful. By utilizing an idea, I mean relating it to that stream, compounded of sense perceptions, feelings, hopes, desires, and the mental activities adjusting thought to thought, which forms life. (p.4)

Those harmful ideas in education that do not apply to students' lives Whitehead called 'inert ideas' in his essay 'The Aims of Education' in which he calls for relevance and learning through experiential discovery as basic elements of a connected education.

By taking students outside to experience whatever accessible natural processes exist around them, a stream, a pond, a field, forest, or patch of grass, we provide a crucial element in good education and building a SOP. By having students experience the land, we give them the first hand, experiential knowledge of their place. We also give them some strong messages: that the land has value, that their experiences outside the classroom have value--thus what they bring to

school in the way of personal knowledge has value. All of these messages serve to connect the student's lives and experiences and break down the artificial barriers between school, home, teacher, student, textbook, and personal knowledge that hinder a student's investment in the education processes, and a connection to place.

For example, say a group of students and their teacher visit a local waterway. The teacher asks them what they know about the river or stream and to tell about their experiences with it. Next, they divide into small groups and the teacher asks them to do some exploration to learn something new, like counting and describing insects collected with screens and how they are similar to or different from each other and themselves. They finish with a discussion of how the stream relates to their lives--where does the water come from? where does it go? what is its name? do we drink from it? if not, where does our water come from? is it polluted? if so, what do we do to pollute it? how is the water related to our food? how is it related to the food the aquatic insects eat? For homework, the teacher asks the students to draw a map of the waterway, with the school, their home and neighborhoods included in it for each of them to present in class a few days later.

This exercise, or others similar to it, reflects a very simple theory of educational practice--do what you can with what you have, wherever you are. It also reflects Mumford's regional survey and the early nature study programs which he based it upon (1946) in that it uses whatever 'nature' that remains around the student's lives. A schoolyard patch of weeds and grass has enough material to provide countless hands-on educational experiences for students. Similarly, a neighborhood can provide endless lessons in history, culture, and social, political, and economic issues to study that give students a real learning experience that has great value in content alone. Experiencing their community

also builds the context for a meaningful existence in student's unique place in the land.

Using local information and materials works because they represent real things in student's mind. They have relevance and application in students lives which means that students do not need the coaxing and prodding to rationalize trying to learn about them, and when learned, students will give those lessons lasting value. The education literature is brimming with cries for relevance in what we teach and ask students to learn, again echoing the works of Dewey and Whitehead decades before, claiming that for learners to take a true interest in their learning, they must see a reason for what we ask them to do (Dewey 1915). What is more relevant than the place in which one lives? We must use local knowledge, issues, materials, and subjects, not only to build a SOP, but to have students that believe, and have a personal investment in their own learning.

To answer any cries of parochialism or separatism that might arise in objection to a local, land-based education, teachers need not, and should not teach about one place to the exclusion of all others. Nor do I propose a scope and sequence like that of the expanding horizons approach to teaching students about the world (Chapin 1992) in which first graders learn about nothing but the self, second graders--the family, and so on until older students finally learn global issues (but have quit studying the self and the family). Instead, we must use our place as a base and reference by which we learn about the rest of the world. How can we put knowledge of other places, people, and cultures, into perspective if we do not understand our own? To really have meaningful learning about remote or abstract ideas and information, students must have a solid context to build upon and an understanding of their place provides such a base. Therefore, instead of simply adding more information by reading a text or watching a video about wildlife of New Zealand, or the tribal societies of the Amazon, we can look at our

own place first, at what we have here, and how and why we do the things we do. Then we can better understand, appreciate, and make connections between what we have and where we live, and remote and foreign lands. This more closely reflects Hilda Taba's spiral concept of development in which students revisit subject areas through a spiraling of concepts and content as students progress through grade levels in school (1971). However, I suggest that the spiral pass through the level of the self, local land, and the community for each of the larger scale concepts and content areas that teachers cover.

Another important strategy that educators have started turning to, to make their teaching reflect the real world of the students, and its inherently connected quality, is the use of thematics. Instead of compartmentalizing subjects, like reading, social studies, algebra, biology, and earth science, thematic teaching reflects an interdisciplinary approach that incorporates all of the disciplines to reflect real life. Thematics seem to have especially caught hold in the sciences, which have suffered from the most extensive and artificial of subject divisions. Even the National Science Foundation supports the effort to unite subjects, being that 'Coordination of the sciences is a first step toward science curriculums that explore interconnections.' (Bunkhorst 1991). Students may study energy and learn from all the scientific disciplines. But they also need the connections to non-science subjects as well. Creating completely integrated thematic units to be taught seem most easily incorporated into the primary grades where one or a few teachers have an entire group throughout the day. In doing so, the use of place will be of great benefits to those teachers, for what better subjects to build a unit around than something real, like a local stream or field. As in the exercise above they can cover history, biology, geography, social studies, writing, and chemistry while making a physical connection to the land. As a local elementary teacher

here in Missoula put it, 'it only makes sense, the information is all around you, its fun and its easy.' (STEP 1993).

Beyond taking the knowledge and experience of our current place, we must also draw connections from it to both the past and the future. A history of place (natural, cultural, and personal) fortifies the context and strengthens the relevance of what students experience today. And, if we can get them to see themselves as part of a continuous line out of the past to the present, the ability to visualize and value their role in the future may follow. In this way, we create potential citizens, and responsible citizenship remains as one of the primary aims of education and the logical result of a strong SOP.

But to take potential responsible citizens and have them grow into people that not only can but do act in their community, we must take a connected, relevant, experiential education one step further. We must ensure that we give students both the opportunity as well as the ability and desire to participate in the events that shape their place. According to Harold Hungerford and Trudi Volk (1990), this means giving students practice, not just investigating the world around them, but in taking action to become a part of the processes of that world. In their article Changing Learner Behavior Through Environmental Education, they discuss the variables that affect behavioral actions. They state that most educators believe that imparting knowledge will result in the desired behavioral change, but that knowledge and awareness represents only part of a much larger puzzle. Educators must also give students the skills to act, a perceived skill at acting, reinforcement for acting (an internal locus of control), and an ownership in the process that imparts an intent to act. What Hungerford and Volk suggest to accomplish this falls directly in line with building a SOP: knowledge, practice, empowerment, ownership in the learning process, the community, and the land, and taking action in the community. Through such an active, connected

approach, we can empower students with skills as well as knowledge, and perhaps more important, a life practice that tells them that what they feel, what they know, and how they act, have a great deal of meaning and can make a difference in their education, their lives, as well as the life of their community.

Building Community

Certainly, teaching both the content and processes of connectedness, interdependence, and participation constitutes an essential first step in building both SOP and community. But I want to take this practice further to complement the vision of a strong, functioning community. To accomplish this we need to fold in all the members and processes of the community within the process of education: parents, crafts and business people, administrators, politicians, community professionals, and all the things people do. If we have these people, especially parents, coming into the classroom, or classes visiting them in their workplace, and get them to participate in education while students participate in what they do in the community, we can create a strong and functional community. By doing so we also move toward what William Glasser terms the 'quality school' in having 'students, teachers, parents and community members believe that what goes on in school increases the quality of their lives' which he sees as 'the purpose of Quality Schools.' (1993). When we invite community mentors into our classes to learn from and with them, we also reinforce the value of local, and individual knowledge. Seeing and being a part of real lives and work in a community cuts through the abstractions of generalized textbook information and teaches students that the elusive 'it' is not necessarily 'happening somewhere else' as television commercials makes it seem.

In this process of community interaction, we must pay close attention to the nature of our interaction. Teachers must guide the explicit recognition of the knowledge and beliefs that they, their students, and other community members bring to the group, showing openness, caring, and respect. If we can do this, we will further strengthen students understanding and valuation of their own knowledge and beliefs, and create a means for understanding and respecting those of others. This point cannot be made too strongly, because our celebrated

diversity breeds conflict if we do not have mutual respect and understanding. Further, even within communities or social groups, conflict resolution remains grounded in communication and respect of alternative viewpoints. By fostering an open dialogue within a community, we can lay the groundwork for stronger, more peaceful and productive schools and communities.

Creating real, personal, community interactions within, amongst, and outside of classrooms, schools can start to provide worthwhile (though not equivalent) substitutes for the primary social groups that they replace. As I discussed earlier, taking students away from their families robs them of personal cooperative social interactions, and creating an educational community may help to alleviate this deprivation. We can further this process by taking additional measures in our schools such as utilizing cooperative learning, in which students problem solve through their collective abilities and knowledge in small group interactions. This not only strengthens their social skills but in many cases improves learning by forcing them to explain their thoughts and teach their fellow students. As David and Frank Johnson have demonstrated-

Group skills and knowledge are vital for creating effective groups, which in turn are vital for developing a high quality of life and psychological health...groups are of incalculable importance in the life of every person and skill in group membership are absolutely essential for effective functioning within any society, family, organization, or relationship. (1982)

Cooperative learning perfectly complements another educational strategy in noncompetitive/alternative assessment which places value on the contribution of each individual to the learning process and the education community, based on an individual, ongoing exchange of information between teachers and students about their own learning (Angelo and Cross 1993). Instead of pitting students against each other on assignments and exams that may not accurately assess a student's learning (Aschbacher 1991), individuals are given both ownership and responsibility for their own learning. Teachers guide this process by

establishing personal, individual lines of communication with students through conversation, student journals, and work portfolios. These assessment strategies paint a more accurate, personal picture of each student's learning progress than a collection of scores on tests that may not account for each student's learning style or expressive abilities, and serves as a positive reinforcement without limits in the pursuit of learning, unlike traditional grading systems.

We can also alter school structure to honor the personal ties between students and between students and teachers instead of marginalizing them. We can have classes spend more time with the same teacher, within and even between school years. Doing this, we say that our relationships have meaning and value, as do all relationships we form throughout our lives. It also can reduce discipline problems, increase learning, decrease dropout rates, and again, build community (Glasser 1993).

But we must not limit the effort to build community to those activities directly involving students. Relationships between teachers and between teachers, administrators, parents, and other community members must also be cultivated and valued by the education system. This means we must collaborate in designing and carrying out curricula so that we not only build a stronger education community first hand, but also model positive and effective community interactions consistently throughout the range of experiences students have or have knowledge about.

Finally, like the connections we make with our own past, our community history must be explored, to give context and meaning to that which we place value upon. As Gregory Smith states:

The aim of helping children understand the historical communities of which they are a part is to validate diversity and slow if not reverse the dissemination of a modern monoculture that, because of its ephemeral and nonlocal nature, has little power to win the allegiance of people who consume it, and little power to win a collective identity or commitment. (1992, p.96)

Even within diverse communities, members all share a common present in a place with a single past and a role in its common future to be shared amongst its members. For individuals, it may take some digging to find one's history, but that can be done in ways that build new and stronger connections: by talking to family members, neighbors, sharing in their experiences, and listening to their stories. Our stories form an elemental part of this last element of community, a sense of history. So to further understand and so hope to gain this sense, we must examine the use of language, and the telling of stories.

Language, Stories, and SOP Education

By discovering our history, individually and collectively, we discover our stories, because history exists as a story of stories, both ancient and recent, and they exist all around us -

They lie in the stone walls that lace our forests and the mills that dot our riverbanks. They lie in our town commons and the very placement of our towns in the landscape. They are in our water and sewer systems, power lines, factories, and parks. They are hidden in diaries, newspapers, and the biographies of the people around us. They are everywhere waiting for us and our students to give them a voice. (Lutts 1985, p.40)

Envisioning our history, even as it happens, as a story gives a rich educational experience to its observers, for stories, or narrative, create a personal connection with what we experience or observe and carries information in a connected way. As Ralph Lutts describes, '[Stories] join together the pieces of our experiences and the experiences of others in a way that gives order, significance and meaning to the chaos around us.' As Barry Lopez tells us in 'Landscape and Narrative,' (1978) stories represent the meeting place of our thoughts and experience (the inner landscape) and the events, objects, and character of those things around us (the external landscape). We each have a story which represents our own personal history, just as the land has a story of its own that includes us and our stories within it. Having a personal history based on the abstractions of textbooks, television, and the disjunct landscapes of high speed travel, we seem to suffer what has been called 'narrative dysfunction' or a loss of our story. As educators, we must help students to regain their personal narratives and the narrative of the land they inhabit, and the act of storytelling serves this purpose well.

Just for a moment, think about the strategies presented in the last few sections--having students explore their own lives and that of the land and their community, sharing their experiences and solving problems in small groups, communicating what they know to teachers and other students--we can view all

of these activities as layers of storytelling. As such they challenge each student to create an accurate narrative that they must share and which their teachers and peers must validate. To do so, each student must combine their own personal knowledge with what they take in with their experience, as Lopez explains-

The purpose of storytelling is to achieve harmony between the two landscapes, to use all the elements of story--syntax, mood, figures of speech--in a harmonious way to reproduce the harmony of the land in the individual's interior. Inherent in story is the power to reorder a state of psychological confusion through contact with the pervasive truth of those relationships we call 'the land.' (1978, p.68)

Educational research also supports the value of narrative in the learning process of students, as Donald Polkinghorne describes

Narrative is a scheme by means of which human beings give meaning to their experience of temporality and personal actions. Narrative meaning functions to give form to the understanding of a purpose to life and to join everyday actions and events in one's life and for planning future actions. It is the primary scheme by means of which human existence is rendered meaningful. (in Tappan & Brown 1989)

Students can use the value of narrative in creating meaning in their lives and their experience of place by having the opportunity and encouragement to be the author of their own narrative.

An individual achieves authorship by authoring his or her own moral story. Authoring, in this view, entails more than simply recounting a series of events in a temporal sequence; it entails telling a story; constructing a narrative... (ibid.)

Tappan and Brown, and the researchers they borrow from say that giving voice to these stories is an important final step so that students not only author stories, but also take ownership of them through sharing them with others.

Finally, to complement the challenge of the storyteller, storytelling challenges the listener as well. Jerry Mander argues that the images created by the listener can put both storyteller and listener in equally creative and challenging positions (1991). Therefore, the structure of stories and the practice

of storytelling is of great pedagogical importance, and a way gaining a connected vision of ourselves, our community, and the land. Because of this, we must give students an educational experience that allows and encourages authorship and sharing of personal narratives, in and out of class. Storytelling, or even dialogue in which people are trying to tell their own story, trying to make it ring true with the story of the land, represents a set of dynamic relationships within a community and between a community and the land. It represents cooperation, mutual respect, caring, and connection--all essential parts of a healthy SOP and good education.

The interrelationships embodied in storytelling, however, do not complete the portrait of SOP education, for all stories, whether they exist in the inner or the external landscape, consist of language. Language, as mentioned earlier, forms the schema by which we construct thoughts, and therefore the language we use has an enormous influence on how we think. The predominant language in use in today's classrooms carries the metaphors of the modern industrial worldview: humans are other than and above nature, change is inherently progressive and should always be welcomed, the possibilities for growth and consumption are limitless for the human race. We reinforce these images and literally train students to think in these terms when we use the metaphors of today. C.A. Bowers has produced an immensely insightful critique of how education and society ignores the metaphorical and codifying nature of language (1993). He suggests that we redefine these (and other) guiding metaphors to create working images and thought processes that foster social and environmental responsibility, instead of abuse and exploitation. He gives the following as examples:

Guiding metaphors of a culture of environmental exploitation

Change (innovation, experimentation). Belief that change is progressive. Being new is an expression of progress.

Freedom. Choice of ideas and values by the autonomous individual.

Community. A geographical area, a collection of common interests. Human only.

Knowledge. From rational thought and observation. Explicit. Basis of generalizations across cultures. Contributes to freeing the individual from the hold of tradition. Acquired mainly through books or scientific observation. Elevates 'man' over other forms of life. The basis of human progress. Secular.

Guiding metaphors of a connected, sustainable culture

Tradition. An awareness of continuities with the past. Valuing traditions (cultural patterns) that contribute to long-term sustainability. But redirecting or discarding traditions that threaten survival

Freedom. 'Restriction of self for the sake of others (Solzhenitsyn). Self as a cultural being whose individualized needs and forms of expression are part of a larger mental ecology. Interdependence.

Community. An ecology of life forms. Energy and information webs that include humans as dependent members.

Many forms of knowledge. Thought process influenced by epistemological orientation of cultural groups and individuals. Many forms: tacit, theoretical, critical, technical, folk, encoded, poetic, spiritual, bodily. Continuities with the past. Responsibility for not diminishing the future prospects.

(adapted from Bowers, 1993, pp.167-8)

We can no longer ignore the simple point that the medium carries a message. We must work to use language that creates metaphors of a different, responsible, connected, place-based nature to replace the predominant generic, abstract, disconnected, and exploitative ones of today's society. It only makes sense that what we say deeply and completely reflects what we mean, in its content, and its structure.

Current Programs

Myriad education programs currently exist and a number of these programs begin to build some aspects of a strong and healthy SOP. Here in Missoula, Montana, a network of programs entitled Schoolyard Ecology for Elementary School Teachers, in which teachers learn to teach students about their world by studying what's under their feet (Brewer 1994). Another program, started fifteen years ago by Steve Harris, at Hellgate Middle School, hikes students a mile and a half to their own study area (the Eagle Site) to do cooperative work ranging from learning basic survival skills, to studying social issues (Harris 1994). Steve and his colleagues work in the classroom as well as in the field to give students an appreciation and knowledge about their world in hopes of establishing a biocentric view of their place in the world.

These programs do begin to make connections between students and their place and represent an important and successful departure from the predominant forms of education in our schools, and have overcome significant barriers in the process. However, they will still need to grow and change to fully incorporate most or all of the elements of educating for a SOP I have discussed here, and with patience and persistence, they may very well do it.

I must point out that many other programs (like project Wild and WET), even those that use the rhetoric of 'sense of place' (like Van Matre's Sunship Earth, 1979), still maintain a generic or abstract nature, and lack the pointed directions for educators to build the connections, community, and use of stories and language I'm advocating. Certainly, they must contain a general structure so that educators can apply them anywhere. But none that I have found provide guidance in making explicit connections to real aspects of place--connections that educators must point out and place value upon whenever possible. And not just in the use local examples, but giving their specific name and describing their

unique characteristics, so to bring them to life and give them meaning and identity within the student's community. It disappoints me that even many exemplary programs do not point toward providing local connection, value, and relevance in applying their material. However, no one should be limited by this, and creating your own projects specific to your classes' place makes a great deal of sense. (One series of programs I will mention here because of its notable value in that it provides hands on learning and valuing of local knowledge is the Foxfire series (1972). Foxfire focuses on teaching local craft skills as a means of hands-on learning of practical skills and cultural history.)

Educating the Urban and Transient for SOP

On the issue of urban SOP education, I must simply point to the theory--do what you can with what you have wherever you are. If that means that you are hard pressed to locate a patch of grass, just work with what you have to first understand your place, then explore what potentially used to exist there, and what might exist elsewhere. I think starting the process of thinking about one's place, and valuing it through connected thinking should be the primary goal. For if students lack this in their lives, an understanding of natural processes will hold little applicability.

As for transience, although it too hinders what I consider a strong and healthy SOP, we cannot let that keep us from teaching in a connected fashion, building community, and using organic, sustainable metaphors. Here we can work to instill the education community with the framework of SOP, even though it may not be attached to a particular foundation. Ralph Lutts expresses this idea nicely:

Traditionally, a place becomes a home after it has been lived in for a very long time. In a transient society, however, we are less likely to find such a commitment. It is increasingly important, then, that we educate for a sense of place and home in our environment. Programs of this sort should be readily available within each community. They would promote a more caring relationship with the place in which we live, however briefly. They would help us to understand and appreciate the larger story, of which we are all a part. (1985, p.41)

One final implication of SOP for education remains in how colleges and universities prepare teachers for work in the schools of our country. I currently work under a nationally funded grant for the reform of science education that focuses on teacher preparation as a means of reform. The reason for this focus remains in the repeatedly observed phenomenon of teachers taking the methods by which they were taught, rather than those they were taught **about** into their classrooms. These methods are the same one's that I have pointed to here as being sources of estrangement from the land and community. Typically, prospective teachers receive information passively, and particularly in science, in fragmented, disconnected ways (Eylon and Linn in Heikkinen et al 1992), and 'the quality of teachers is tied to the quality of their education' (Murray, 1986).

Clearly, certification programs must not only teach but also model the strategies for education and instruction addressed above. In doing so we can give future teachers the knowledge, skill, as well as a familiarity and comfort with these strategies, that comes from having experienced them first hand, in a variety of settings. If new teachers come into our schools without all of these elements not just in hand, but in their visceral responses to a formal educational setting, there will be little chance that they will carry out SOP education in their classes.

But beyond modeling and teaching connected, cooperative education, thematics, and storytelling, I truly believe that teacher preparation programs need to emphasize creativity and resourcefulness, giving them the ability to adapt and deal with the unique circumstances of any of the classrooms they come into. Therefore, they may enter a school without extra time, money, or a nearby nature preserve, and still effectively and comfortably 'do the best they can, with what they have, where they are.'

The change in teacher preparation, then must come from a long term commitment of education professionals and undergraduate content instructors to change the nature of their teaching. Further it will take a similar commitment from policy makers that influence the requirements for teacher certification (Murray 1986).

So what have I presented here? A great deal of it remains as theory-- theory that seemingly ignores the idiosyncratic obstacles to change present in any given classroom or school: no time, no money, no supplies, no training, parental objections, and administrative objections. These issues are as daunting as they are ubiquitous, but before shutting the book and putting SOP education at the end of a long educational wish list, look again at what I am asking: changing metaphors, telling stories, experiential education, cooperative learning, dialogue, community involvement, making connections, using local and relevant topics and examples, doing what you can with what you have where you are . None of these things constitute radical change in the workings of a classroom, or which require a huge influx of time and money. Certainly, educators need more of both of these things and changes to build a SOP in students could be greatly enhanced if society contributed more of each to the education process. But, building a SOP does not require such radical changes in the machinery of our society. It requires thought, planning, caring, and a desire for change, as well as a notion of what needs to be done and why it matters. I have tried to provide the latter of these requirements.

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