

2009

## Response to Professor Mueller's Critique'

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### Recommended Citation

Bowers, C. A. (2009) "Response to Professor Mueller's Critique'," *Journal of Educational Controversy*: Vol. 4 : No. 1 , Article 14.

Available at: <https://cedar.wvu.edu/jec/vol4/iss1/14>

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# REJOINER

## Response to Professor Mueller's Critique' by C. A. Bowers

I find it difficult to respond to Professor Mueller's critique of the article I wrote on how an eco-justice perspective leads to reframing how educational reformers think about social justice issues. The first third of his critique presents the reader with a summary of his knowledge of the local bird population and the work he is doing with his students. Near the end of this overview of his personal interests, he introduces what seems to be his first criticism with the statement that Bowers "perpetuates an unrecognized vulnerability for the rapid greening of American youth...." The nature of this vulnerability and how I contribute to it is never explained. It is simply presented as a fact. As he frames his critique as having some relationship to my earlier article on social and ecological justice, the reader might expect him to explain how my earlier arguments contribute to this vulnerability.

Professor Mueller then launches into an attack on people outside of the sciences who use the word "ecological." While he does not directly identify me as using a metaphor that supposedly only scientists should be allowed to use, if the reader is able to string together the gaps in his logic, his comments are meant as a criticism of me. The suggestion that only scientists have the right to use the word overlooks the word's history, which can be traced back to the early Greek word *oikos*. If Professor Mueller had read L. C. Nevett's *House and Society in the Ancient Greek World* (1999), he would have found that the word *oikos* originally referred to being culturally informed and thus acting correctly in terms of all the norms governing the household and other daily activities not included in the *polis*. In short, this word, which Ernst Haeckel in 1866 reduced to the neologism "oecologie" and transformed it to mean the study of natural systems, originally referred to culture as an ecology (Worster, 1977,p.192). Gregory Bateson (1972), as I have written about elsewhere (2008, 2009) has provided further support for using the word ecology to refer both to natural as well as cultural systems. The more important question that needs to be asked is how Professor Mueller's digression relates to the article I wrote on the differences between a social and ecojustice perspective on educational reforms. As in the case of his other criticisms, this one seems totally unrelated to my earlier article.

The third criticism that seems to be directed toward my writings is that I rely upon the crisis narrative. It is unclear what Professor Mueller is suggesting: that the scientists have not announced that there is an ecological crisis, that he does not think there is a crisis, or that my references to the changes in the chemistry of the world's oceans, the melting of ice fields that are the source of water for hundreds of millions of people, the toxins that are now altering the development of organism, and the growing number of environmental refugees are not evidence of a crisis. Yes, I use the crisis narrative in an effort to wake up educators to the fact that scientists who study changes in the earth's natural systems are telling us that the chemicals being put into the environment by our consumer-dependent lifestyle are further degrading the natural systems we depend upon. But the question arises again, how does this tangent in Professor Mueller's thinking relate to what the title of his critique suggests: namely, that he is going to critique my criticisms of the silences in how educational reformers understand social justice issues? Indeed, in no way does Professor Mueller's critique leave the reader with an understanding of the issues that were discussed in my earlier article.

After hearing him present a paper that exhibited the same characteristics of introducing ideas that were not explored in depth and too often were left disconnected to other themes in his paper, I suggested that he needs to clearly identify the main theme and then to explore the related issues in depth. As in the earlier paper I heard him present, what he intended as a critique of my writings exhibits the same shortcomings.

## References

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