Deep Education:
A school counsellor's narrative voyage into schooling in times of climate change

by

Gillian Diane Smith

M.A. (Counselling Psychology), Simon Fraser University, 1996
B.A., University of Windsor, 1988

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in the
Curriculum Theory and Implementation Program
Faculty of Education

© Gillian Diane Smith 2015

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Summer 2015

Approval

Name: **Gillian Diane Smith**

Degree: **Doctor of Philosophy**

Title of Thesis: *Deep Education: A school counsellor's narrative voyage into schooling in times of climate change*

Examining Committee: **Chair:** Charles Scott
Limited Term Lecturer

Dr. Heesoon Bai
Senior Supervisor
Professor

Dr. Stephen Smith
Supervisor
Associate Professor

Allan MacKinnon
Internal/External Examiner
Associate Professor

Hongyu Wang
External Examiner
Professor
School of Teaching and Curriculum
Leadership, Oklahoma State
University, Tulsa

Date Defended/Approved: August 5, 2015

Abstract

Climate change will take a mammoth toll on our global civilization, and also on our capacity for restitution and sensitivity to the world around us. While many of us have a vague awareness of impending global alteration, much of contemporary society abides to the 'business as usual' mode of daily living. This dulling of response to the conditions of our world, I suggest, is partly reflected in the model of selfhood which predominates Western culture. To investigate this point further from an educational standpoint, I review many assumptions about how education is delivered, received and presumed, and how these assumptions are manifested within the framework of individualism and the consciousness they perpetuate. It is the notion of the 'self' and its overarching ethos of ontological, ethical and pedagogical ramifications that I explore in this narrative inquiry about modern schooling and climate change. The notion of an individual 'self' is for the most part an unquestioned part of our world and daily existence. Not surprisingly, much of contemporary educational theory rests upon the virtue and ideal of individualistic forms of thinking. But what if the common assumptions and practices embedded in a consciousness of separation contribute to the growing trend of social injustice, alienation and ecological problems of today? This dissertation is a sustained contemplation and investigation into this vantage point.

As our planet is facing the brink of crisis, out dated modes of understanding self and earth are slowly being replaced by a new narrative of reunion and reciprocity. In an effort to extend the reimagining of an expansive, ecologically-aware sense of self, I offer a theory of Deep Education founded upon ontology of interrelatedness, relational-integration and accompanying relational pedagogy. Tools for developing new conditions and practices in schools are offered to help students develop relational knowing and being, critical sensitivities, mindfulness and conscious awareness to grow into effective, positive change agents in the world. These proposals are presented as an antidote to prevailing mechanistic and separatist pedagogy, in order to create a flourishing world for all and provide resistance to the mounting ecological problems of today.

I dedicate this dissertation to my family, friends and faculty, especially....

- To Wayne for his patience and understanding;

- To my parents, Anne and Albert, for nurturing my journey of persistence, determination and valuing of education;

- To my brothers, Alan, Donald and David for their ongoing support;

- To my friends for their continued encouragement;

- To the course instructors who opened my eyes to the world;

- To Heesoon, my doctoral supervisor, for your care and direction;

- And to my cherished sons, Brandon and Fraser – may you also be inspired and encouraged to pursue your dreams.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank my committee members who were more than generous with their precious time. A special thanks to Dr. Heesoon Bai, my thesis supervisor, for her time spent reading my drafts, providing feedback, promoting encouragement and most of all patience throughout this process. Thank you to Dr. Stephen Smith for your valuable ideas, comments and thoughtful reflections on my dissertation topic.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the Vancouver Board of Education for the immense honour and privilege to work with the countless children, educators and families without whom this work could have been completed.

Finally, I would like to grateful thanks to Simon Fraser University, the Counselling Department, the numerous beginning-counsellors and beginning-teachers with whom I have had the great pleasure to meet and spend time with in University classrooms.

Table of Contents

Prologue.

A Call for Deep Education

We will never bring forth
what we haven't dared to dream or learned to imagine.
~Joanna Macy

In 1859, Herbert Spencer provoked educators when he posed his famous question "What knowledge is of most worth?" (Broudy, 1981, p.1).   At that time, Spencer was quoting and responding to an essential curricular question that Aristotle posed in Classical Greece. I would like to begin by considering how this perennial question might be relevant to education in the 21st century. I would like to begin by considering how this question might be relevant to education in the 21st century. I suspect that how knowledge is widely understood in our society may reveal an admission to a certain worldview that sees and understands "knowledge"—how it is deciphered, acquired, and valued—in particular ways. And if our ways of knowing and what we do with our knowledge have a lot to do with how we approach, relate to, and treat the world, then we have reasons to be concerned about our present state of the world. As the Earth's climate moves toward catastrophic weather patterns and unfathomable loss of bio-diverse living systems, all due in large measures to humans' exploitative presence on the planet, the urgent need for new ways for humanity to live in relation to each other and our planet is unmistakable and

unquestionable. Although we celebrate humanity's accomplishments, such as medical innovations, iPhones, and a myriad of new technological advancements, the current humanity also includes the propensity for social injustice and exploitation, violence, and ecological destruction of a finite planet. We are in urgent need to see, understand, and know the world and ourselves in radically different ways than what the hegemonic worldviews and values have been allowing us.

With a world in a state of climate crisis, some folks believe the root problem is a moral crisis; others suggest a strictly ecological challenge. Still others surmise a political, social, economic or spiritual crisis (Merchant, 2004; Evernden, 1993; Klein, 2014; Armstrong, 2006). Charles Eisenstein (2013a) in *The Ascent of Humanity: Civilization and the Human Sense of Self* writes that the human disconnection from the earth and from one another is molded into the very fabric of civilization itself. Humanity has somehow become estranged from our ecological roots.

A thinker like David Abram locates the root of our problems in the way we have "disengage[d] with our bodily senses and to view this wild-flourishing world as though we were spectators coolly observing it from outside" (Abram, 2010, p. 63). In his latest work, *Becoming Animal: An Earthly Cosmology,* he discusses the ways in which knowledge and discourses can stifle or honor human reciprocity with the more-than-human terrain. For example, the language of "objects" and objectivity forces us to see ourselves separate from and standing out over and above the plants and animals, not to mention rocks, water, and air—the so-called "inanimate" order of beings. Yet, from studying worldviews

2

and traditions outside the modern Western paradigm, we know that there are other ways of speaking and understanding that can provoke human sensitivities to reciprocate our attention to others and the so-called animate earth. In these worldviews, rocks, water, and air are not inanimate (Parkes, 2009; Bai, 2013) rather, they are regarded as a "concentration of earth's essential energy," or life force known as "qi" [or ch'i] (Parkes, 2000, p. 482). How would we learn to unlearn the structure of consciousness that sees the world as mostly inanimate, and open oneself to the kind of sensory attunement to the world that Abram speaks of? This question, too, is at the heart of my dissertation research.

Echoing the sentiments of Abram and Eisenstein, I maintain throughout this thesis that the greatest pedagogical task educators face today is to acknowledge, heal, and overcome the predicament of compromised human consciousness that is inadvertently perpetuated in schools: the consciousness of estrangement. This is where the theory and practices associated with what I will call Deep Education promises to be helpful in addressing and refining the sort of knowledge-making needed to overcome estrangement and instill hope and opportunity for the challenging times ahead. Deep Education cultivates critical sensitivities, integrative and embodied knowing, skills of focused attention, and most of all, love as a form of knowing. All of these combined, I believe, will have the capability of loosening the habitual patterns of living, being, and thinking that have been getting in the way of redirecting the future toward sustainability and creating a more ecologically harmonious human story.

Throughout this thesis I emphasize the development of *critical sensitivities* that can help foster wellbeing, show ways to build *mindful* connectedness in

relationships, and promote *relational* understanding of one's self within a broader repertoire of ecological connection. What motivated me to lay the groundwork of critical sensitivities, mindfulness and relational knowing and being is my deep personal concern about the ways in which we humans have been exploiting the planet's natural resources and other living species to the point of bringing about irreversible damage and destruction at the present time. The reflective practice of critical sensitivities steers us toward empathy and compassion for others and a renewed awareness of the animate world. Accordingly, education then becomes a relational practice (Bai, 2013).

Methodology, Structure, Content, and Flow

A few words about the matters of methodology supporting my dissertation: in keeping with my commitment to relational pedagogy, I have chosen a narrative inquiry as my main research method and writing for this dissertation. A narrative inquiry is defined as "an approach to the study of human lives conceived as a way of honoring lived experience as a source of important knowledge and understanding" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 17). Thinking narratively would help me to do the work I am imagining: that is, I am seeing and honoring my lived experiences as a source of knowledge and understanding, and by undertaking this narrative inquiry into my lived experience in light of great philosophies and theories I encountered, I hope to glean important insights to share with others. I realize, in looking back, that my interpretations of my life, the schools, and the students whose lives I encountered are essentially narrative accounts. I am also realizing that narrative recollections are a relational

4

methodology for understanding the storied experiences I have lived and wish to re-tell. As Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) would point out, my examination of my own experience underlines the social dimension of my inquiry:

> These stories are the result of a confluence of social influences on a person's inner life, social influences on their environment, and their unique personal history... Beginning with a respect for ordinary lived experience, the focus of narrative inquiry is not only a valorizing of individuals' experience but also an exploration of the social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences were constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted—but in a way that begins and ends that inquiry in the storied lives of the people involved. Narrative inquirers study an individual's experience in the world and, through the study, seek ways of enriching and transforming that experience for themselves and others (p. 41–42).

Reading the above, I am reminded of the ways in which interdependent stories have helped form the basis of my social inquiry to shape our culture, our institutions, and our schools. "Stories of school are powerful shapers of these stories we live in and by" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 22). Maxine Green (1995) also helps me think about the power of stories that were woven into our upbringing. Invariably, all of us are shaped by stories of school, stories of family, stories of life that "constitute, shape and enact" our experiences (Clandinin, 2013, p.18). As such, these cultural and pedagogical stories shape our understandings of self and selfhood and inevitably colour the ways in which we live. As Okri (1997) surmises, "if we change the stories we live by, quite possibly we change our lives" (p, 46). Furthermore, what becomes apparent in my representational inquiry is an ethical call to action. Kory Sorrell (2004) explains it further:

5

Epistemic agents may no longer claim merely to find the world and so thereby shirk responsibility not only for what they find, but also for the nature of what is found. These objects, these substances of the world, are so often not just epistemic constructions but rather ontological artifacts of our own making and doing… practices of representation are peculiarly situated in this process, for representation is itself a mode of intervention. (p. 74–75)

The ethical call to action has important implications for the way my narrative research is carried out. It reminds me that my inquiry is not a search "behind the veil" of common appearances that ends with an unchanging reality. Instead, my research is an ethical act within a stream of experience that generates new understandings and relations that then become a part of my future experience.

A qualification is in order to substantiate the approach to narrative inquiry I develop in my research. Through personalized collections of my own autobiographies, journal entries and fictionalized narratives, I find an inroad to explore the earnest challenges and dynamic features of schooling and the human condition. It will be necessary to offer some clarifications about the distinction between/among narrative inquiry, autobiographical inquiry, and fictionalized narrative inquiry, as my main research and writing methodology for this study. I would like make a further specification to this, namely that I adopt a customized form of autobiographical narrative inquiry and I also present an atypical method of fictionalized narrative inquiry. These two modes of inquiry, especially the latter, are not the usual within styles of narrative inquiry, since common practice in narrative inquiry is to involve the collection of interviews, accounts and stories of participants (Clandinin, 2013).

My stories are told and retold from my personal lived experience in schools to highlight who I am and who I am becoming as an educator and counsellor (Saleh, Menson & Clandidin, 2014). In this regard, I recognize that narrative inquiry is unavoidably autobiographical: "Because narrative inquiry is an ongoing reflexive and reflective methodology, narrative inquirers need to continually inquire into their experiences" (Clandinin & Caine, 2012, p. 171). Accordingly, as narrative inquirer, I examine myself and my experience as continuously in the midst of stories of myself and others. Therefore, I personify my ontological and moral obligation to investigate and probe the realm of schooling in the context of trying to make sense of the human propensity for violence and ecological destruction. Given that I have spent forty-five years of my life in school settings - talking and being with students, teachers, parents and the like - I did not collect narratives from participants but rather relied on my own autobiographical accounts.

The journal entries I select for my thesis were chosen to illustrate and illuminate certain plotlines of individualism I encountered in schools, and to probe further into societal and institutional narratives of injustice, violence and consumerism. My use of "fictionalized narrative inquiry" is to make clear the themes of lived experience, the themes of "student hood" and the influential narratives of selfhood I grapple with. In this sense, fictionalized narratives don't belong to specific individuals, teachers, schools or administrators. Rather, my fictionalized narratives are representations of psychological realities I wish to illuminate of myself and of commonly experienced examples of "fictionalized" students, contexts and stories to illustrate my points.

In one sense my use of fictionalized narrative echoes the methodological framework put forth by Peter Clough. Clough (2002) discusses the philosophical and theoretical justification for fiction as both research method and research representation. He stresses that the validity of the story, as research, rests on the assertion that the events it portrays *could have happened*. The resolve of the fictional story in narrative inquiry is to provoke the ethical issues involved in undertaking educational research, to amplify search for understanding, and the complexity of the discussion about the place of fiction in narrative research (Wyatt, 2007).

The combined method of autobiography, journaling and fictionalized narrative supported and challenged me to explore different realities, knowledges and ontologies about learning and teaching in kindergarten to post-secondary education. I view my research as a reciprocal process—my research and practice are inextricably linked and continuously evolving. Thus, through the autobiographical exploration of my own practice and my personal experience in schools I am transformed amidst the refracted means of my own voice.

Now, a chapter overview: the thesis is divided into three parts composed of six chapters that include theorizing and fictionalized narratives:

Part One of the thesis, that comprises **Chapter 1 and 2**, examines our moment in history as it is punctuated by ecological degradation and various acts of violence and extremism. The idea of separation and dissociation is central to historical accounts of Western scientific method, some religions, and many metaphysical conceptions of selfhood. **Chapter 1** gives an overview of what

brought me to this work and situates me as a researcher. I offer some historical and current affairs that may serve as cultural measures of the world in which we find ourselves. My descriptions of these happenings compel me to reckon that I am part of the storied landscape I am studying. I acknowledge and honor the landscape in which I find myself. I lay out the ecological parameters that set the context and conundrum of my research when I provide a storied account of war, terrorism, and 9/11. I propose to linger in my experience of 9/11 to further explore and illuminate what I mean by a relational account of a lived event.

Chapter 2 presents an account of pernicious individualism. I borrow the dramatic Buddhist metaphor of the Hungry Ghost to illustrate pernicious individualism that, in my reading, is the source of the phenomenon of human destruction and unrestrained consumption. I argue that if the Hungry Ghost is not addressed, we will have difficulty resolving the complex ecological challenges of the world today. I describe briefly the dominant worldview of modernist individualism, and identify it as the kind of sub-nutritional diet that would create a starving creature like the Hungry Ghost.

Part Two, comprised of **Chapters 3** and **4**, explores individualism in the context of schooling. **Chapter 3** presents the phenomenology of pedagogical individualism, and argues that it is pervasive in contemporary North American pedagogy. I make the case that pedagogical individualism has been eroding the fundamentally relational nature of education. I analyze the state of contemporary schooling through the lens of various theorists and writers, such as Bruce Alexander, Jack Martin, Nel Noddings, Charlene Spretnak, and my doctoral thesis supervisor, Heesoon Bai, who all have studied the significance of

relationship in education as central to human learning and flourishing. **Chapter 4** looks at the process and mechanisms whereby students become inducted into the individualist culture and become individualists. Understanding this process is critical for my project of re-visioning education for relational pedagogy.

Part Three, comprised of **Chapters 5** and **6**, is my response to how we can move forward to shift the consciousness of individualistic and instrumental pedagogy. Pedagogy is presented that is founded upon a commitment to relational principles, weaving together theory and story to show how we might shift our educational perspective toward the vision I construct of Deep Education.[1] **Chapter 5** lays out key pedagogic principles, such as critical sensitivities, mindfulness practice and relational knowing, that all underlie Deep Education. I will make the case that the aim of Deep Education is cultivation of integrated relational selves. **Chapter 6** presents concrete examples of what teachers in the service of Deep Education can accomplish on a day-to-day basis within the scope of current school systems. I provide key transformational tools and activities, such as mindfulness and outdoor education that can support practices of relational-integration.

The rest of this Introduction below is offered as a series of short ruminations on the long-drawn path of my PhD studies that has led me to the present moment of crystallization of personal insight, knowledge, and ethical

---

[1] I first heard the term "Deep Education" when listening to alternative radio talk program by Cornel West. West, C. (2012) Occupy Democracy. Soundtrack purchased from: Alternative Radio. Retrieved from http:www.alternativeradio.org/products/wesc005-moom004

resolve concerning aims and methods of education. I offer these ruminations to set the context for my research. The personal reflections that I present here grew out of my professional and personal experiences that have integrated many and varied influences from philosophies and theories that I have encountered over the years of my doctoral work. These ruminations are my calling card to the field of relational pedagogy wherein I wish to situate myself as a researcher.

In 2007, after working as a school counsellor for several years, I enrolled in doctoral studies and decided to study philosophy of education in the Curriculum Theory and Implementation doctoral program at Simon Fraser University. Through coursework and readings, I learned to apply ideas from philosophy of education, curriculum theory and ecology to my professional and personal experience. When I was contemplating a thesis topic, I wondered if my experience as a school counsellor and educator would be useful to helping other educators and concerned citizens to understand the connection between subtle forces of individualism in education and the challenges associated with climate change. It occurred to me that many observations I made over the years could perspicaciously frame the context of education from the viewpoint of a school counsellor.

In my search for understanding, I began reading broadly, and the first thinker whose work had an effect of switching a light on my consciousness was Professor emeritus and ecophilosopher Henryk Skolimowski.[2] His publications

---

[2] "Skolimowski held the position of Chair of Eco-Philosophy at Technical University of Lodz, the first such position of its kind in the world." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henryk_Skolimowski

The Participatory Mind (1994) and *Philosophy for a New Civilization* (2005) had a profound impact on my thinking, especially as I contemplated the existing assumptions and status quo behind the educational establishment. Through his work, I came to the realization that a modernist worldview of materialism and individualism has shaped the character of learning in K-12 schools and universities, and has had a profound influence on the filters through which we moderns, *including myself*, view reality. These worldview filters substantiate an underlying assumption and highly regarded value of students as independent, self-interested, and instrumentalist individuals separate from the relational field of the universe.

Over time, my understanding of ecology led me to recognize that relational ontology would be a better alternative to the current cultural reproduction of atomistic individualism **(Chapter 2)**. As will be shown in the discussions ahead, relational ontology and the implications for educational practice stand out as one of the most pertinent and practical means of creating a hopeful alternative to the myth of autonomy as set out by the liberal democracy of individualism (Thayer-Bacon, 2008). The myth of autonomy holds the assumption that humans are independent, self-interested, and self-governing individuals. But the irrefutable fact of human life is that we are through and through interdependent. Our individual lives interpenetrate each other's inexorably. To resolve and remove this discrepancy between our perceived sense of autonomy that we get by virtue of living in an individualist culture and interdependence and interpenetration as the fundamental fact of life as we experience it daily, albeit mostly unconsciously, I argue for the fostering of eco-relational consciousness that understands human reality as interrelated within a

larger cosmic order (Bohm, 1982). This relatedness, or eco-relatedness, I propose, ought to form the fundamental aims and necessary context for education.

In this dissertation, I describe the observations I have made in the midst of my professional and personal life. To illustrate my experiences while maintaining anonymity, I have written up an assortment of completely fictionalized stories drawn from my 20 years of experience as a school counsellor within the K-8 public school system, my seven years of work as a post-secondary educator, and also from my personal life. I offer the observations from a school counsellor's perspective, as I have witnessed many of the nuances and subtleties of public school. My position as a school counsellor has afforded me insights gathered from numerous classrooms, working with a wide range of age groups, and conversing and problem-solving with literally hundreds of students, parents, and administrators. This professional experience was accumulated through work at more than nineteen elementary schools, three secondary schools and three universities. I am eager to share insights harvested from living a life in schools: in classrooms, in hallways, in schoolyards, and countless meetings about and for students.

Many of the stories reveal my own conflicting pedagogical, ontological, and theoretical views and orientations, as I tried to think and sort through my way as an educator and school counsellor. Having been trained as a counsellor, I recognize the critical importance of the relational aspects of educational work. Yet, in many instances, I came to notice, the school lives of many children were shaped without sufficient attention to this crucial and integrative aspect of learning as a significant part of the thoroughly relational nature of our lives

(Biesta, 1995; Bingham & Sidorkin, 2004; Boyd, MacNeill & Sullivan, 2006). I confirm and assert, alongside many contemporary educational theorists, that children *are* their relationships. When relationships with adults and other children are strained—worse, ruptured and violated—our students suffer. Most often, such students are those who are already at great risk for school drop-out, "behavioural challenges," and learning difficulties.

When I began my career as an educator, I was keen, like the majority of teachers, to make a positive difference in the lives of children whose paths I crossed. I envisioned schools as an experiential setting from which to understand and contemplate schooling, its purposes and a broader range of human possibilities. However, I learned by experience that schools are not only places of both widespread optimism, but also intense alienation (Kozol, 2012). And for the most part, what I have experienced is that schooling as a whole is curiously far removed from understanding the relationship between human dwelling and planetary survival. I found myself grieving more and more; something was amiss in the gestalt of schooling. We have institutionalized the pushing and prioritizing of curriculum over relationship. We have folded into our curriculum the detriments associated with individualism: power-driven binaries, fierce competition, and individualized grades, without recognizing that such self-focused schooling contributes, in a subtle and insidious fashion, to a globalizing trend of detachment and alienation toward ourselves, one another, and the natural world.

School bells, deadlines, standards, the prizing of scientific knowledge, academic competition, competencies, the boxy design of school buildings, and

asking students to line up in classrooms and corridors, all constitute the structures of a typical school day. Many people take these assumed ways of being in the world as unquestioned, correct and "normal." But how do these overriding structures become constitutive of shaping a student's consciousness? And what if some of these structures create conditions and practices that disable students from developing the sensitivity towards and attunement to the natural world? Like many others, I felt a certain sense of wrongness with the instrumental and authoritarian sway of schooling. I suppose I never fully accepted, even as a young student, what was presented to me as natural and "normal." But now, as an educator, how was I helping students to discover meaning and purpose in their lives? As well, I had the expectation that school life should be more enjoyable and exhilarating for all students. Instead I learned that many children dreaded school, had anxiety meltdowns on Monday mornings (as did some teachers), and many experienced social isolation and outright rejection. How many days did I sit inside my office, looking out longingly from my window on a beautiful day? Just like so many students. If I as a grown-up felt that way, how would my students feel? It did not seem right that children were separated from the outdoors for most of the day, like captive animals, during their youthful lives. Why were so many of us—teachers and students alike—living for the weekends and holidays? From my vantage point, I came to see that many school structures ignored the most central and universal life-affirming value of existence: that all beings are capable of living in a world where our daily activities contribute to healing and wellbeing of the environment and to the benefit of others.

In this exploratory thesis, my stories slip in and out of places and spaces, and portray the relations and relational universes in which I have lived. I shall contemplate the ontological nuances and subtleties of atomistic and pernicious individualism with a specific aim to see how relational pedagogy may help unleash contemporary education from a rather entrenched educational model of instrumentalism and mechanical worldview.

My inquiry calls attention to the intersubjective ontological spaces and traces of my lived pedagogy. Within my personal inquiry of my school experience, I am challenged by my own inner tension: if the universe is relational, how can I enact relational understanding beyond the slivers of my own fragmented consciousness? Upon reflection, I come to recognize that my journey of growing into adulthood has been partly a process of mixed disenchantment, disembodiment and deamination from the natural world. How can I be an effective agent of ecological reinvigoration for future generations, given my own socialized limitations of conditioned ecological estrangement? To this end, what is the meaning behind my life purpose as an educator to repair this contradiction?

I take solace in my nature-concentrated experience; as an adult, the more I attend to my awareness of the animate nature of all life phenomena, including rocks, rivers, and trees, the more my kinship with the Earth is restored, and my feelings of alienation subside (Parkes, 2009). This discovery prompts me to think that the intimate link between compassion and environmental insight has significant implications for the promotion of ecological perceptiveness in our children. So long as all phenomena in the universe are seen as a collection of

inanimate objects, devoid of creative workings, our moral responsibility toward other-than-human entities subside. To this end, I shall ponder, in this thesis, key notions and principles of individualism and instrumentalism in contemporary education and the ethical and relational implications inherent in a world of ecological disintegration. My investigation leads to the fostering of relational knowledge to counter the consciousness of estrangement.

This doctoral research proposes a hopeful path on which we may travel to meet the environmental and social challenges of an unsettled world when it comes to the question of what knowledge is of most worth, regarding the sobering effects of climate change and social injustice. I attempt to answer Spencer's question of "useful knowledge" by exploring the question of how the consciousness of individualism, separation, and instrumentalism is immersed in contemporary pedagogy and what needs to be done to heal humanity's separation from nature and the individualistic history that fosters an isolated, and often de-spirited sense of self. This moment of tension in my place of inquiry takes me to discover new stories of possibility, agency and non-separation in my work and daily life. Inspired by this question, I have spent the last several years attempting to understand what is blocking humanity— and what is inhibiting me personally— from understanding what has gone amiss in the human-nature relationship. Researches in human sciences, philosophy, eco-education and relational psychology have been helping me to find some answers to my questions and interpret my life-practice. This is where I identify several transformational tools that educators can cultivate to help ourselves and our students to develop mindfulness, attunement and critical sensitivities so that we may live healthier lives as we sail through these turbulent times.

PART ONE

Chapter 1.

Schooling in Times of Climate Change

If we don't change directions, we'll end up where we're headed.
~ Chinese Proverb

I was twenty-five when I completed the Professional Development Program at Simon Fraser University and embarked on my new journey as a teacher. That was over 24 years ago. After only one year of classroom teaching, I decided to pursue graduate studies in counselling. In those days I didn't think too much about my career choices, but helping the children who had challenging circumstances in their lives felt like the right thing to do. As a school counsellor, I would be afforded of such opportunity, and as good fortune would have it, I loved my job. Over the years, I worked alongside many talented, caring and remarkable educators, and it seemed like we were doing really important work, guiding children and watching them grow up. Yet under the radar, there were other signals that all was not well.

My awareness of the health of the planet began to surface when I started reading on weekend ecology books, articles, and *Adbusters* magazines that showed pictures of depleted forests, and subject matter that explained how large corporations are exploiting the earth for profit. This was 20 years ago. On Monday morning I would go to work and notice that a school sports event was sponsored by McDonalds. One time, I observed that a sex education curriculum

19

for girls was written with a full curriculum package, including free samples, from Stayfree Maxipads. These sorts of corporate infiltrations were happening more and more. For example, an announcement was made that the BC government was giving free transportation to high school students during school hours to attend an international Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) conference in Vancouver. I knew I had to get some perspective on this subtle intrusion of the corporate world seeping into the schools. I noticed, though, that there seemed to be rather little interest from my teacher-friends in discussing these sorts of questions. Yet all around me, my colleagues were people just like me, doing their best to provide a good education for their students. Could it be that we, good and well-meaning educators and parents, are complicit in destroying the planet through inadvertently and insidiously altering our schools to participate in profits for faraway, often multinational, corporations?

Human Presence Today

Pollution, political instability, volatile markets, and the deterioration of a finite planet are all signals that the human world is living a global nightmare that has been precipitating ethical disorientation. The diminishing carrying capacity of the planet is at risk, and this risk is spread across all peoples, cultures, and countries (Dawson, 2003). Mass hurricanes, such as Katrina and the recent typhoon in the Philippines, are prime examples of the mounting problems of climate change. Signals of nuclear radiation from Fukushima are "steadily building up in our food chain" (Snyder, 2014) and recent catches of Pacific salmon are showing unexplainable lesions on their scales (Morton, 2014).

Never before in our recorded history has there been the sort of connection between human activity and the life-threatening destiny of our planet we are facing today. The world we have created is not, by all accounts, sustainable, and there is no certainty about the future of life on Earth (Dawson, 2003). For example, according to David Suzuki (2009), at least five additional Earths are required to accommodate the energy demands of Canada alone. Yet the global climate crisis is progressively unfolding with unexpected acceleration; and other climate catastrophes are soon to follow— particularly as new challenges unfold such as shrinking fresh water supplies, heat waves and prolonged droughts, forest fires, severe weather patterns, diminishing species, contaminated oceans, food shortages, and other effects of pollution (Merchant, 2004). As a result of rising greenhouse gas emissions, climate change is a prominent threat to the future of life on Earth (McKibben, 2010). Related to this issue is the preoccupation with terrorism, nuclear war, and the unfathomable gap between rich and poor (Boff, 1997). All communities on the planet will be inevitably, if not already be, affected by the effects of climate change by way of economic meltdown, ecosystem interruption, resource decline, depletion of food and fresh water, and other pressures (Laszlo & Combs, 2011).

Earthly citizens are in a game of Russian roulette: no one knows for sure the timing, the place on the planet and the severity of the next eco-catastrophe. As worldwide civilians of an industrial age—regardless of race, gender, position, and wealth—the situation seems to be that the whole world is participating in some form of spectacular global ecocide (Boff, 1997). More than a metaphor, it seems to be literally the case that the planet is being taken apart and consumed to death by the current humanity (Bai and Cohen, 2007). We should ask: how did

21

the contemporary world come to such a state? What is tearing up the fabric of common humanity that should dispose us to this madness of destroying our own habitat (Shepard, 1982) that is of course the same habitat of our more-than-human beings—plants, animals, mountains, streams, oceans, and air (Abram, 1996)?

Although the challenges associated with climate change are widely acknowledged, some research is showing evidence that a warming climate is closely linked to political and social instability and a greater risk of conflict (Kirby, 2014; Hsiang, Meng, and Cane, 2011). As I internalize the state of affairs of climate change, my own inner tension leads me to inquire about my experience and understanding of the human propensity for violence and conflict. The personal-social dimension of this narrative inquiry moves me to investigate more closely the cultural-historical landscape of emergent climatic events and evolving human struggle as new incidents of violence arise in various locations throughout the world. I feel the need to probe more deeply into the contours of this vast suffering, as I grapple with my search for collective human mending.

Roots of Violence and Destructiveness

The Roots of Violence: Wealth without work, Pleasure without conscience,
Knowledge without character, Commerce without morality, Science
without humanity, Worship without sacrifice, Politics without principles.
~ Mahatma Gandhi, 1925

Lately, I have become very concerned about our government's alliances with powerful corporations, and the interest in learning and education to "exist

within a context of consumer capitalism that increasingly structures how social, political, and economic life around the world is organized" (Sandlin and McLaren, 2010). The circumstances here are a prime example of the struggle between non-human life forms and the pressures of human and political-corporate pursuits as we actively consume non-renewable resources. Since my earliest childhood memory, I have witnessed many times an abrupt change that came over the landscape, all coinciding with aspects of globalization, free-market capitalism, and the enduring consumerism so rampant in contemporary society. In my neighborhood, many small, family-run businesses, such as grocery and hardware stores have been replaced by huge corporations, such as Walmart and Home Depot. Simultaneously, over time, I have witnessed the clear-cutting of forested landscapes, the disappearance of tadpoles and frogs in the lakes near my home, and the dwindling presence of once abundant bald eagles and plentiful spawning salmon.

Modern Western, or modernized and westernized, societies around the world emphasize individualism, instrumentalism and consumerism. Although we're investigating what we need to do, our laws, goals, and aspirations are all still very much rooted in the mindset that sees the universe as being made up of objects, people and beings that are ontologically separate. In the process of seeing the world through this individualist ontology, the human consciousness itself becomes fragmented and disconnects. The most obvious symptom of this fragmented and disconnecting consciousness is capitalism displayed in global competition for marketing resources, expanding corporate empires and continuing the momentum of unrestrained "progress" with indifference to humans and other life forms. Learning to live and act within the realm of

relational and interdependent knowledge is the greatest educational challenge we face today.

Much of what occurs in school is encouraging and hopeful. This I can testify as a student and educator who spent much of her waking hours in school in the last 45 years. Nonetheless, there are larger systemic forces behind a free-market world that have profound psychological and ontological implications for our students, educators and society at large. For example, Bruce Alexander (2010) stresses that free market globalization creates widespread dislocation of people and is the necessary precursor to various forms of addiction. In order for free market economies to operate, labour exchange, land, currency and goods must not be encumbered by psychosocial integration such as community loyalties, social responsibilities and family obligations. Thus, people who do not achieve psychosocial integration develop "substitute" life styles of excessive habits including drug and alcohol use, a myriad of other addictions, and social relationships that are not necessarily close or stable.

These forces are an immense and complicated influence on the globalizing effects of a larger societal, moral and cultural pressure. These corollaries of a globalizing world are complex, strange, and often downright frightening. Case in point, Zygmunt Bauman (2011) describes how inequalities associated with globalized liberal society produce "causalities" due to the unequal distribution of wealth. What he describes as "collateral damage" is the negative and profound impact on the lives of individuals. By constant consumption, people purchase a false sense of stability and belonging, and the poor are unable to benefit from general wealth.

Crimes against Humanity

Human life is full of challenges and difficulties: this we know. But every now and again something happens that is so absurd, so devastating, that it shakes the average person to the bone about what we take for granted. 9/11 was one of these events, followed by many more. Since the devastation of the twin towers and the homicides of over 2,977 innocent people,[3] the emotional reality of the world has been shadowed by terrorism (Carrington & Griffin, 2011) and, more recently, by war crimes and mass executions in the Middle East. Many events have occurred before and after the events of 9/11 to heighten a public perception of fear. Rwanda's genocide, the recent glut of war crimes in the Ukraine, the rise of ISIS militants, and the innumerable school shootings are but a few examples of events that awoke me and many other people from a complacent belief that much of the world is essentially acceptable (Eisenstein, 2013b). For me, 9/11 was the major trigger, the occasion that brought to my awareness a profound and horrific wrongness that was happening around the globe. Moreover, it occurred to me that many of us appear to be suffering from a form of collective social amnesia when it comes to responding to our present global circumstances.

In personally exploring this social amnesia of which I have been a part, I am reminded of what Sarris (1993) has to say: "[I]n understanding [a culture] you must simultaneously understand yourself" (p. 6). Who I have been and how I have been living and acting in the world are part of this paradox of

---

[3] http://www.cnn.com/2013/07/27/us/september-11-anniversary-fast-facts/

consciousness that develops something equivalent to blind sight. Thus, autobiographically and narratively understanding myself will shed light on the nature of this paradox and resultant problems in and of humanity. Hence the task at hand in this narrative inquiry is to engage in my own stories of experience to "time-travel" into memories and imagination to make visible what was invisible to my worldview.

In the next section, I invite you to journey with me as I re-tell my memory of the events of September 11, 2001. As I tell my story I hope to capture your imagination and your recollection of 9/11 to illustrate that we are, mutually and reciprocally, part of the storied landscape we inhabit. Beginning with a narrative autobiographical description would allow me to answer the "so what?" and "who cares?" questions that have shaped my understandings and the moral, spiritual, and emotional responses to these first-person accounts (Greene, 1995).

One Day that Changed and Challenged the World

Personal Journal, September 13, 2001

> *On the morning of September 11, 2001, I turned on the radio as I drove over the Lions Gate Bridge and heard the horrific and disturbing news that would change the world forever. An American Airlines Boeing 767 jet with 76 passengers on board crashed into one of the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City. Moments later it was reported that another Boeing 767 carrying 46 passengers flew directly into the Pentagon. Then, another passenger plane hit the second tower of the World Trade Center. During the following few hours the reports were confusing and contradictory.*
>
> *Like most listeners, I suppose, I was stunned and baffled. In the beginning I wondered if it could have been a joke—an off-colour joke being aired to make some obscure point. That thought was soon replaced with the belief it must have been*

an accident—accident? One place perhaps but three or four— the reports became more confused. There was even something about Pennsylvania and the President being hurried off to a secure, unknown location. Even before I had completed my short journey that morning, the assessment had been made: the United States had been the victim of a series of terrorist attacks.

The deep silence and sense of foreboding, which shrouded the school that day, was immediately obvious when I entered through the heavy, double doors with iron-clad windows. I was troubled and numb. How could I begin to bring myself to the tasks of my daily work? What words were there to say? What really mattered at that moment? I was the school counsellor. People looked to me for comfort and for reassurance. What words could I possibly offer? Was the world, as we had grown to know it, over? Was that horrific event the precursor to more violence and terror? Had the first volley in a new war been unleashed? I was totally unprepared, personally and professionally.

I made my way through the eerily empty halls to my office where I sat alone for some time. The intercom crackled, signalling an announcement was imminent. The principal began speaking—attempting to offer words of consolation relative to a still, fully unexplainable, occurrence. Her voice quivered beneath her well-intended attempt to provide calm and reassurance.

"Now, most of us know there was an incident this morning in New York City. At this point there is nothing we can do. We need to let the Americans go through whatever it is they are going through. Here, we will keep going about our school schedules."

I wondered to myself how by any stretch of the imagination (or her good intentions) that today could ever be approached as business as usual. And, why would this be relegated to an American-only issue? I shouldn't have been faulting the principal when I had nothing better to offer—nothing in the realm of reassurance, at least. Later, she announced that if anyone knew people in New York they should come forward and let the office know. But the school carried on through the day, going through the momentum of daily routines.

During the following days and weeks, children drew pictures in my office [see Figure 1], and asked the really tough questions that it often seems only children can (will) ask:

Figure 1.   The Twin Towers (9/11).

"Why do people want to kill other people?"

"What is terrorism? Where do the terrorists live? What do they look like?"

"I don't know why, but I feel so afraid. Should I feel afraid?"

I did my best to offer reassurance, such as immediate safety of the students and their families, and minimal answers, knowing I had no really satisfactory answers to the children's questions.

As the hours passed, the headline news portrayed the downtown metropolis of New York as resembling a ghost city, abandoned in an urgent hustle by people fearing for their lives and seeking immediate reconnection with their loved ones. The world, at first puzzled and reeling, soon displayed television accounts of anger and a determination to seek massive retaliation and revenge.

Sometimes historic events arise from what happens to us in our own lives. Yet, even if they do not, they usually connect with something felt deep within but out of immediate grasp.

In musing about my narrative memory of 9/11, I see my personal justification for choosing this event as part of my inquisitive journey. It is an

inquiry that helps me to understand the uncertainties of "valued knowledge" and the institutional landscape of schooling and the colours of wider culture in which I find myself. Looking back, I can see that my story bumps up against the social, cultural and personal spaces that metaphorically capture the flavour of the 21ˢᵗ century. The "research puzzle" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 42) that shaped my story was to come to a deeper understanding of the context and plotlines that I encounter as an educator as I make sense of occurrences around the world as cultural artifacts.   These happenings represent manifestations and symbolic representations of our cultural times. Much like archaeological artifacts from the past, we can draw conclusions about the attributes of modern culture by the events and goings-on in our current times around the globe.

Vaclav Havel had an editorial in response to 9/11 in the New York Times titled Our Moral Footprint, and he offered what I believe is a moral wake-up call:

> We can't endlessly fool ourselves that nothing is wrong and that we can go on cheerfully pursuing our wasteful lifestyles, ignoring the climate threats and postponing a solution. Maybe there will be no major catastrophe in the coming years or decades. Who knows? But that doesn't relieve us of responsibility toward future generations. (p. A33)

Although the 9/11 events happening far away across the continent were seemingly quite removed from my own life, the shock and moral horror that I experienced was a wake-up call for me, as Havel articulated. The attack on the World Trade Center prompted me— no, demanded of me—to think deeply about schools and the 'education' we were presenting to our students.   In particular, it demanded me to think how we are educating our young to face and

deal with the human capacity for violence, destruction, and hatred: the capacity that is in all of us, including myself and my students.

Did we, the educators and administrators in my school at the time, prepare our students to witness such a catastrophe? How do I help them become part of an effective movement to counter the prevalent divisive and violently oppositional philosophies sprouting and thriving in so many corners of our world? How do I help them become aware of such things as they related to ideology, ethnicity, and religion? How do I cultivate understanding that would require my students to consider what prompts human beings to unleash such horrific brutality on their brothers and sisters? In what ways can students work on their own consciousness that too can manifest, in different ways and degrees, what happened in 9/11 in extreme forms? As we shall see in Chapters 4 and 5, mindfulness practice is a transformational tool that can help humanity shift away from the pernicious consciousness of individualism toward peaceful co-existence.

The events of 9/11 are an expression of the dark story of humanity, and one worth spending time to consider its relevance to the project of education. Admittedly, I cannot fully explicate the complexity of that day or the intricacy of beliefs and events that lead to this occasion. But we can take the horrific occurrence of 9/11, the wars, the genocides, the Gulf of Mexico oil spill, the radiation leaks from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, the Typhoon in the Philippines, the resurgence of ISIS violent acts, and countless other tragedies as learning events that expose many unsettling questions about humanity and its seeming propensity towards superiority, greed and destruction. Our times call

for a critical review of socially imposed stories, age old religious tenets that construct seemingly insurmountable obstacles to peaceful resolutions, and a much needed rethinking about the divisions within and across cultures and religions.

In the next chapter, I examine one problematical story of humanity that came to dominate the planet and that seems to have constructed insurmountable obstacles to peaceful co-existence: individualism, or to be more precise, individualism gone too far and that has become pernicious.

Chapter 2.

Pernicious Individualism

Reflection on Children

Personal Journal, February 23, 2008

A certain way of viewing the world, prevalent in contemporary societies, is having a harmful impact on our children, including my children. What is difficult to recognize is the pernicious nature of separatist thinking and how it shapes our view of ourselves, one-another and our relations with the natural world. Watching my two sons grow up in a world of consumerism, what I have tried so hard to keep them from, has still left them much like other children. What I see around me is that how children learn, and how children socialize, is shaped by the mindset of capitalist culture. There is a sense that one's identity is captured in "cultural capital"—what one owns, what one wears, having the latest "this or that."

We often fail to recognize or forget to remind ourselves that enculturation of children leads to the shaping of little people, their beliefs about themselves, cultural values and how to understand the world. Upon reflection, I realize I myself have soaked up the values, symbols, discourses and definitions of the culture around me. Or, rather than 'absorbed,' I should say that I have been 'consumed' by them, as though I am overtaken by something alien and foreign. This is how I felt at times when working in schools for many years. It took a great deal of soul searching to understand how I had been enculturated and to recognize how children were also being socialized into pernicious individuals. While blending in the educational arena, the school culture is absorbed and accepted, complete with attitudes and modes of communication, trusting that it will deliver validation from my administrators, parents and coworkers. There is a silent and never challenged understanding that academic success will bring life attainment

to the students. After living this way for several decades I have internalized these values and hadn't even realized it. I have implicitly "agreed" (because I didn't know any better) to the values of the capitalist, neo-liberalist institution that defined my work and shaped the interactions I have with others.

I have witnessed a calm and contented child lose their soul, either through emotional crisis or ensuing addiction in their teen years and a combination of wants for this or that, probably for the same motives of validation from others. The result , it seems to me, is the perpetuation of an alienated self over time and a never-ending, vague feeling that some other way is just on the cusp of being discovered if only we try harder at those same tendencies for consumption. But the satisfaction never happens. All the while, children have forgotten their capacity for grace with the presence of all-life phenomena, to become ailed with "nature-deficit disorder" (Louv, 2008). In my musings I see the need for children to play outside in the streams and forests and get their hands muddy with earth. They need to discover that there are diverse varieties of plants, rocks and trees. Sensitivities are developed by settling in the grass and witnessing the natural surroundings unfold. How can children nurture their communities and participate in communal, preventative and restorative projects? Instead, I dread that the life that is handed to children is a vacuous, disenchanted Hungry Ghost, to borrow the Buddhist iconic figure of alienated consciousness.

It is only in hindsight, after years of doctoral study and readings in ecology, that I came to recognize that the perniciousness that surrounds individualism and its entailing separatist psychology is a problematic—nay, dangerous!—mindset. The dark side of this mindset, namely the fragmented and alienated consciousness, is that it compromises the ability for people to see themselves existing within and among an earth community. Politicians and corporations support the myth of the individual since this "worldview supports economic inequality" (Callero, 2013, p. 4). Individualism's central tenet, the notion of individual freedom, has become for many folks perverted into selfishness, materialism, and the desirability of shopping and consumption. In the next section, I offer a brief historical sketch of individualism: the worldview

that the self is an individual isolate that is self-contained and independent. As we will see, the question of how to define a "self" has a major impact on how we live our lives.

A Historical Thumbnail Sketch of Individualism

Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–1859) coined the term "individualism" in the early 1900s to portray an emerging sense of social isolation in Western society (Elliot & Lemert, 2009). The individualist commitment was to suppress relational connections with others and the natural world in favor of self-improvement and the development of one's own potential. Tocqueville depicted individualism as a sort of modest selfishness that prepared people to be concerned only with their own small circle of family and friends. For Tocqueville, this was problematic because individualism sapped the "virtues of public life," for which civic virtue and association were a suitable remedy.

Modern individualism materialized from these trends in society that Tocqueville identified and the resistance to aristocratic and sovereign authority that was viewed as oppressive to the rights of citizens to govern themselves. In that opposing struggle, support was gleaned from political philosophy with respect to individual rights and the Christian religion. Still, these influences on individual sovereignty were compounded by religious obedience and moral obligation, rather than complete freedom (Bellah, et al., 1985, 142–143).

In the 17th century, John Locke was enormously influential on the development of ontological individualism: the notion that one is a biological

individual in a state of nature. The individual is prior to society, and the primary cornerstone of existence is to maximize one's self-interest (Sigmund, 2003). This emphasis on maximization of self-interest has morphed individualism into utilitarian individualism and a form of ethics that places the individual before the needs of others. Modernity described and prescribed (mostly due to the writings of Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau) a story of rights and responsibilities as they belong to *individuals*. In this description of civil society, humans are seen as essentially self-interested and autonomous. Moreover, one's responsibility to others is weighed against their "right" to pursue self-interest. This conception of ethics has enabled the individualistic tendency to take full advantage of one's sense of entitlement and lessen one's obligation to the needs of others (Chinnery and Bai, 2008).

Fast forward to the 20th century, Herbert Hoover first used the term rugged individualism when he referred to the idea that each person should be autonomous, and that the government should not involve itself in people's financial lives or in nationwide economics by and large. His idea of rugged individualism reflected his conviction that the federal government should not interfere with the American people during the Great Depression. Hoover rejected the idea of providing large-scale humanitarian efforts, since these efforts would injure "the initiative and enterprise of the American people" (Hsu, 1983). What is encouraged, then, is that individuals withdraw from the public sphere in order to pursue a private life apart from the public interest.

As a Western legacy, the belief in science, progress and *self-improvement* has also been encouraged. For example, if one lives in poverty, it is frequently

understood that he or she has not taken responsibility for the pursuit of his or her self-interest, and has not worked hard enough at self-improvement. The article of faith in this worldview is that if one works hard, one can reap the benefits by landing a good income. Anthropologist Clifford Geerts (1975) explains the crux of this understanding of individualism as "a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe, a dynamic center of awareness, emotion, judgment, and action organized into a distinctive whole and set contrastively against other such wholes and against a social and natural background" (p. 48). Not incidentally, the word "against" is a give-away here. An individual in individualism stands against all others, for, ultimately each one is responsible for his or her own survival.

Generally, the understanding behind rugged individualism is that individuals behave in any given way as a matter of free choice. Thus, believers in rugged individualism would explain behavior as purely internally motivated, generally disregarding or minimizing the structural constraints and influences of the external environment. The assumption that humans are separate entities unconnected from nature and that there are no fundamental or essential interconnections with other humans or other species came to fruition during the Scientific Revolution in the 16th century (Merchant, 2005).

This radical and fateful turn away from an interconnected worldview eventually became the cornerstone of modern Western values (Spretnak, 2011, p. 17). Subsequently, what has been deemed as rational thought in the Western world and elsewhere is rational within a restricted framework, and is rather deficient in a more far-reaching comprehension of the wider nature of things.

Moreover, the conjecture of atomism (that matter is composed of indivisible units of building blocks that may bump into each other but remain unchanged at their core) contributed to the birth of the new mechanistic worldview that individuals are, likewise, similar tiny particles in a society (Spretnak, 2011). As a result, mechanistic orientation informed all aspects of life, including the assumption that everything in the physical world behaves like a machine. Not surprisingly, institutions like schools were designed in the 18th century to resemble machines (Spretnak, 2011, p. 17). Truths about reality were thought to be abstract, quantifiable, and measurable. Human subjectivity, the interiority of our experience, is marginalized, if at all acknowledged (Laing, 1982). There are, however, always far-reaching ethical consequences and implications to any worldview, and individualism compounded by empiricism is no exception.

The notion of the separate, detached, human beings who are separate from everything else in the universe, and can even be separate from their bodies and emotions, came to be regarded as the norm in the modern world. Under the ideal of individualism, people could be set free from all encumberments and restraints—the entire biotic communities, human communities, and extended network of family.

In the next section, I come at individualism from the more focused angle of ethical implications.

Not Individual-ism but Indivisible-ism

The current climate change is an outer mirror of our inner consciousness.
It is an outer mirror of our attitude to try to conquer nature, instead of

being in harmony with nature, but in the end the part can never conquer
the whole.
~ Swami Dhyan Giten

In 1641, Descartes published *Meditations,* in which he declared that mathematics and reductive science are the keys to understanding nature and the universe (Bordo, 1987). Since then the modern world has come to understand the world more and more in terms of separation. We have separated mind from matter, and viewed a material world of "objects" as "external things" separate from our own sense perceptions—emotions, inklings, inter-subjectivities (Abram, 1996, pp. 31). The rational self objectifies, externalizes, and "others" all that is not self-same (Jardine, 2000). We tend to identify the self with our rational mind more than our entire body-mind-heart; "truth" is external to the self, somewhere out in the objective world, and to be "discovered" through the Cartesian scientific method. The Cartesian scientific method is a metaphysics and epistemology based on rationalism, reductionism and objective science. This theory is thought to be the only way of understanding the absolute truth of an object or process under study (Merchant, 1996).

Although the human ability to reason has produced medical advances that have increased longevity and quality of life for some (Riley-Taylor, 2002, p. 34), our work lives have changed drastically with scientific technology. Yet, the focus of relationships with families and communities has been weakened and replaced by increased emphasis on materialism and competition—leading to further alienation and complacency. With increased alienation and detachment fuelled by motivation for money and profit, people are apt to exploit the earth's resources. The interdependence of planetary natural systems is essentially

ignored for personal gain. Modern people often measure self-worth more by material possessions and career status than by the fabric of their moral being. Elaine Riley Taylor (2002) explains:

> Questions regarding the kind of person I am, what I value, how I approach my relationships with others and the natural worlds are diminished amid demands to compete and to succeed within a free-market economy. In twentieth century United States, it is common for success to be measured by where you live, what you drive and what you wear (p. 35)

Our prevailing capitalist world encourages and makes allowances for the exploitation of planetary resources beyond the scope of any sustainable balance between humans and the rest of biotic communities.   Put it bluntly, individualism does not foster a way of living that is viable- individually or socially, and ecologically. David Loy reminds me that the source of collective anxiety that haunts the Western world is the fundamental delusion of separation from others and the rest of the biosphere. Furthermore, our futile "attempts to secure ourselves are just making things worse" (Loy, 2008, p. 12).   Instead of turning to the diversions and demands of our consumer society, how can we stay alert to what's really going on?

The Impact of Modern Western Tradition

In his book *Ethics of Authenticity* Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor accounts for what I see as the psychological discourses that shape the links between schooling and self-identity. As he describes it, there are three sources that have contributed to the sense of loss and disconnect that many people

ascribe to when it comes to contemporary culture. The first theme he points out is the rise of individualism apparent in our daily living: modern comforts, the ideas that we can choose our values and direction in life, and the fortification of these ideals (often considered accomplishments) by our legal classifications. These social arrangements set the stage for people to discredit the higher order of the universe and disenchant the world toward mere instrumentalism. A prime example is the sort of socially-endorsed values that justify poverty and disturbingly put dollar value on human and non-human lives for the sake of economic growth The dilemma of individualistic thinking is that it has eroded our moral horizons and broken us free from the "sacred orders that transcend us" (Taylor, 1991, p.2).

Taylor explains that people from earlier times understood themselves within the context of a larger cosmic order, in which people had their place among other entities and the world. Modernity has promoted the conditioning of the individual by discrediting these orders. He also associates our lost sense of purpose with the narrowing of our lives toward self-interest. "In other words, the dark side of individualism is a centering on the self, which flattens and narrows our lives, makes them poorer in meaning, and less concerned with others in society" (Taylor, 1991, p. 4). One way of understanding this flattening effect is that "self" in individualism is "flattened" already. This flattening, or loss of purpose, is not easily or readily noticed because, I suspect, people are narrowly focused on their individual lives instead of the greater good of society.

The second theme Taylor speaks of is that of disenchantment of the world due to our attribution of primacy to instrumental reason. He suggests that the

larger cosmic orders (e.g., the Great Chain of Being), to which our own human world belong, gave our lives meaning, since every being and entity had significance. The loss of this attachment to the cosmic order and our place in it, he calls "disenchantment." The aftermath is a form of suffering from a lack of passion and magic. When economic application is the means by which we make decisions, the best cost-output is the measuring stick for success, many times at the cost of humans and the natural world. Moreover, once the more-than-human world loses its significance in the "Great Chain of Being," everything is reduced to raw materials available for human consumption and manipulation (Taylor, 1991, p. 5).

Many people assume that the way our everyday instrumentalist understanding of the world shows up is the way the world really is. Yet this assumption is untenable on two levels. First, our picture of reality is not the same as reality. Even if we say that we can never know what reality "really is," as we can't get outside our pictures of reality, this recognition that reality is not the same as pictures of reality is an important piece of understanding that we can put forth. Secondly, we do not have just one picture of reality but many. Technically, we can have an endless number of pictures. An important question to ask in the face of this recognition is: which pictures are more in alignment of humanity's best aspirations of peaceful coexistence with all human and non-human others on this planet? Let us call these "helpful" pictures of reality. As I have been proposing, individualism is not one of these helpful pictures, let alone, it is not the best picture. Individualistic understanding of ourselves needs to be questioned and unpacked in order to recognize how damaging such a worldview can become when it's pushed far enough, as in the case of what I am

calling pernicious individualism. A fuller understanding of the pernicious nature of individualistic ideology may finally release the human psyche from the current deadlock of individualistic survival games that individuals and nations play. None of this is to say that the positive qualities of personhood, autonomy and liberation that individualism originally addressed should be ignored. But I am seeking to show in this chapter that a globalizing trend of individualism encompasses a set of challenges that extend beyond common conceptions of selfhood. The problem of pernicious individualism calls for analysis in an emerging global society that conflates human progress and ecological suffering on a massive scale.

Today, individualism as ontology still has a stronghold over our current day mind-set and socialization, even though research in contemporary science is producing mounting evidence to the contrary. Insights from systems, chaos and complexity theory (Bai, 2006) demonstrate the emergent nature of reality, full of unpredictable, fluid, and creative possibilities based on relational dynamics. The entire natural world is radically interrelated, interpenetrating, and interactive, including of course, humans. Charlene Spretnak (2011) reminds us that "the grand discovery was that nature is actually composed of zillions of dynamic relationships embedded with one another!" (p. 17).

When I reflect on my own training in psychology, I see how much of current psychology is grounded in the Enlightenment conception of human individuality wherein individuals are separate, independent, and self-governing, which distinguishes us from the rest of the biotic community members (Fay, 1996). Much of therapy and psychologizing has to do with the individuals'

thoughts, feelings and behavior in isolation of external contexts. In most occurrences, the training I underwent in psychotherapy had to do with the alleviation of a client's distress. But delving deeper, it became clear that there are subtle, even common understandings of how therapy endorses the assumptions behind what constitutes a good life. In many client cases of my experience as a career counsellor, the expectation is to help clients find meaningful but lucrative work. Various sorts of careers, socially prestigious or not, are linked to one's personal identity. Work life, for most of us, is the defining aspect of our lives. When someone asks *"what do you do?"* we generally reply with our occupation to explain who we are. And some vocations are considered prestigious (i.e. doctor, lawyer) and others less so (i.e. child-care worker, bus driver).

In other instances, my therapeutic conversations with my child-clients and their parents and teachers almost always involved individual accomplishments (i.e. the lessening of one's anxiety, the improvement of one's academic standing, the establishment of one's social skills, the development of self-regulation, the enhancement of self-assertiveness to express one's feelings freely, etc.). This sort of self-focused rhetoric is one-piece with the modern-Western worldview that endorses the pursuit of individual rights and autonomy. Symbolically, in Western psychotherapy the challenges faced by individuals are located within the hegemony of the individual—in his or her cognitive map of the world or personal shortcomings. Hence, the aims of counselling are mostly entwined with the cultural concept of personhood.

Thankfully, there are dissenting voices within psychology and psychotherapy. According to American psychologist James Hillman (1996), psychotherapy needs to change the theories that sanction individualism, to include and address concern for the environment, the economy, the school system, capitalism and systemic exploitation. On a similar note, green psychologist Ralph Metzner (1999) describes the modern psyche as profoundly "alienated from planet earth" (p. 2). As such, psychotherapy itself has been caught in the modern individualist zeitgeist. Metzner (1999) advocates for the necessary union of therapy and ecology as the disruption of the original union between human psyche and Nature is the root pathology of Western civilization.

You may be wondering, "How did psychotherapy come to such a state?" In the late 1800s, psychology developed language to describe "personality" and "human nature" (Leahey, 1992). In the initial phases of the 20th century, behaviorism was popular by way of understanding human nature as conceptualized through scientific objectivism and as something that individual people did. Experiments were done to examine the behavior of isolated animals, such as rats, within controlled environments. This "natural science" view of psychology tends to dismiss the larger context of experience—i.e. cultural, historical, familial, political, and so on. When individuals are accounted for by behavior, there is an underlying ontological assumption of individualism, which explains a person's motivations by individual dispositions rather than as a member of a group (Fay, 1996). For example, the way children are commonly raised also has the flavoring of the individualistic mindset. To the contrary, a relational view would assume individuals learn, act, and develop through their interactions with others and the world in which we live.

North American children receive, reflect, and perpetuate the cultural messages of individualism. There are assumptions about the sorts of interactions children require, yet we mostly reject the most fundamental ones. For example, if a child has poor social interactions, we assume that child has a personal deficiency. Many parents believe that children should learn to be independent and stand on their own two feet. According to the famous pediatrician Dr. Spock, the recommendation was that children not sleep with their parents as this was viewed as unhealthy for independent sleep habits. Yet, evolutionary human needs seem to suggest that children need to sleep and be in close proximity to family members for their development (Throop, 2009). Another common child-rearing practice was to let infants cry at bedtime to get them to learn how to fall asleep on their own (Spock, 1948). We insist very early on in North American culture that children need to cultivate independence and make the goal of parenting to teach them how to be autonomous. Through conversations with many mothers with small infants and toddlers, I have learned that letting your infants "cry it out" for long periods of time without responding is still a popular practice, despite contemporary research evidence shows that when babies are responded to early with soothing and loving care, they cry less frequently (Hunziker & Barr, 1986).

I believe, along with many anthropologists (Throop, 2009; Diamond, 1992; Swidler, 1986), this desire for independence is more of a modern Western cultural demand than an actual human need (Diamond, 1992, p. 7). This attachment pattern of fostering independence is most likely detrimental to children (Throop, 2009; Neufeld, 2006). Critics of the manner of training children to be autonomous and independent early sometimes blame capitalism

for fostering a sense of false independence in children (Throop, 2009). Of course, as I endeavored to show throughout, there is a direct link between individualism and capitalism. In capitalism, the human need for interdependence is minimized if not even denied, and instead, individual competition, self-reliance and self-sufficiency are prized and promoted.

The recognition that the ideology of separate self has not always been the predominant viewpoint in human history is critical to bringing to light the assumptions we take for granted. Martin and McLellan (2013) explain:

> The entire purpose of critical historical inquiry, especially in the social and psychological sciences, is the increase in our awareness of the ways in which social historical conditions and practices (including the assumptions, methods, findings, teachings, and interventions of social and psychological scientists) have entered into the history of our current societal institutions and practices (in areas such as politics and education) and even into our contemporary understandings of ourselves and others (p. 8).

What I hope is becoming evident from this writing is that the historical and cultural phenomena that have contributed to the ideal of the autonomous individual and the notion that we are psychologically separate selves is counter to the reality of our interdependence and, as students of Buddhist philosophy would add, *interpenetration*. Speaking of Buddhist philosophy, in the next section, I borrow the icon of Hungry Ghost from the Buddhist literature to illustrate, graphically, the psychological effects of what I have been calling the pernicious individualism.

The Globalization of Hungry Ghosts

Hungry Ghost:
In Buddhism, a supernatural being filled with more desire
than it can consume. The hungry ghost is often depicted with
large belly and tiny mouth, a metaphor for people futilely
attempting to fulfill their illusory physical desires.[4]

In the Buddhist literature, there is this icon of Hungry Ghosts (Loy, 2008; Bai, 2012). They are typically depicted as having a bloated belly, a tiny aperture as their mouth, and a long thin neck. These creatures are incessantly thirsting and hungering after something or another, and clinging to one thing after another, but however much they consume, they cannot feel satiated. Nothing is satisfactory and nothing satisfies these pitiful creatures. Hungry Ghosts cannot be satisfied. Why can't they ever be satisfied? Because they are unreal. Real people eat real food and get satiated. Once satiated, they no longer want to eat until they get hungry again. But Hungry Ghosts, being unreal, eat unreal food, and they only get more and more hungry.

Who are these Hungry Ghosts? We human beings *as individualists*. An individualist sees the world as a separate other, and sees itself as categorically separate from others. However, since this world and we in it are through and through interdependent and interpenetrate each other in every way, there cannot be separate selves. But by thinking that we are separate selves, and acting as if we are, we end up experiencing ourselves as Hungry Ghosts. This delusion, according to the Buddhist psychology, is the source of all suffering. Hungry

[4] http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/hungry+ghost

Ghosts are we individualists, entertaining unreal notions about who we are and how reality works, and as a result acting in ways that go against our true nature of being interdependent beings.

The endless search for fulfillment stems from the entrenched tendency for people to become preoccupied with themselves and their experiences (Trungpa, 2009, p. 137). The world that we the Hungry Ghosts—that is, as individualists—create is *samsara*: the plane of existence perpetuated by endless thirst and unfulfillment. Samsara represents a state of consciousness suffused with affliction, lack of ease and contentment, dissatisfaction, anxiety and fear (Smith & Novak, 2009). Is what I am witnessing all around me, and in me, too, the disposition of people in a state of samsara? I think so. The world of conspicuous consumption that the current humanity is creating and re-creating, moment-by-moment, is samsara.

The human tendency for overconsumption is conceived as a persistent, cyclical desire to escape from suffering. Sucitto Ajahn (2010) explains it this way:

> The pattern is that each new arising, or "birth" if you like, is
> experienced as unfulfilling. In this process of ongoing need, we
> keep moving from this to that without ever getting to the root of
> the process. Another aspect of this need is the need to fix things, or
> to fix ourselves—to make conflict or pain go away. By this I mean
> an instinctive response rather than a measured approach of
> understanding what is possible to fix and what dukkha has to be
> accommodated right now. Then there's the need to know, to have it
> all figured out. That gets us moving too. This continued movement
> is an unenlightened being's response to dukkha. That movement is
> what is meant by samsara, the wandering on. (p. 37–38)

As I read Ajahn's understanding of the human psyche, I began to see more clearly that a consciousness that abides by the belief in an independently existing self is the root cause of suffering. (Above, the Pali term *dukkha* means suffering that comes from our inability to accept and face reality, wanting it to be otherwise, and either pushing it away or clinging to it.) According to the teachings of the historical Buddha, suffering comes from focusing on this illusory notion of an independent self—the individualist self—and the never-ending pursuit of gratification to fulfill this self that is not. In contrast, healing takes place by recognizing and narrating one's interdependence with others and one's place within a larger cosmic arrangement. Hence, if the root problem of a consciousness that views the self as separated and self-contained is not addressed, we will have difficulty resolving the complex ecological and societal challenges of the world today. Applying the Buddhist psychology to understanding the contemporary world, we can see that consumerism and economic growth are the manifestations of our collective suffering, not collective joy and power (Loy, 2008).

Selfhood and the Earth community

My research puzzle was to explore and attempt to understand how the assumptions of selfhood create conditions for human disconnect from one another and the earth community. It could be said that success, to the average person, is frequently associated with economic progress and the accumulation of material possessions. The defining processes of our institutions, laws, socialization, and political contexts all seem to equate the greater degrees of

psychological separation with success and advancement within industrial societies. Given this, many forms of community engagement are threatened. Often, in my own life as a mother and breadwinner, I am torn between the pressure to work and the demands of family. Consumed with the immediate tasks of daily living and making a living, I can easily turn a blind eye to the wider political and social implications of my work-life.

Globalization presents even more challenges. Some theorists refer to globalism as a homogenization of global culture (Hopper, 2003, p. 31). These global trends are understood as influences from the West, or especially American culture as demonstrated by examples of cities around the world that resemble each other closely. For example, "local cultures give way to the industrialized world and as a result cannot compete with globalizing businesses such as big banks, branded retail stores, and fast-food restaurants" (Hopper, 2003, p. 31). In my own travels, I have observed that many of the world's airports and cities look increasingly alike: the advertisements and retail outlets are essentially identical and uniform goods can be bought around the world. The globalization of branded goods, such as everything from Burger King to Guess Jeans whether you are in Vancouver or Madrid continues a rapidly widening market of consumption. The new face of global capitalism is one of the most prominent characteristics at the heart of global culture that undermines small business and diverse cultural tradition. The notion of the separate individual as personal identity prevails not only in the West but is also spreading rapidly across the globe (Alexander, 2010, p. 3). Globalization of Hungry Ghosts is a critical reality we have to contend with today.

The United Nations Development Programme illustrates the consumerist consequence of individualism within modern culture by the mass increase in consumer services and products around the world: in 2005, the wealthiest 20 percent of the world accounted for 76.6 percent of total private consumption. The poorest fifth was just 1.5 percent.[5] These statistics suggest the Hungry Ghosts side effect of consumerism: the yearning for constant but never attained self-fulfillment and an increased sense of social and universal alienation. How can we turn a blind eye to the suffering of our human siblings in other parts of the world?

According to Buddhist author David Loy, "the deepest frustration is caused by my sense of being a self that is separate from the world I am in. This separation is illusory— in fact, it is our most dangerous delusion" (Loy, 2008, p. 87). Loy asserts that our global and combined alienation from the biosphere and other less-fortunate humans must be an ongoing source of collective anxiety for us, and our attempts to secure ourselves are making matters worse. For example, why do we value so highly a "growth economy"? Why do we feel as though we never have *enough*? As I ponder these fragments and themes of modern selfhood, I make a case for interrupting the stories we live by.

Never before in our human history have we come face-to-face with the perils of our separatist ideology and the devastating global consequences (Cushman, 1996). What modernity has contributed to education is the assumption that how to lead a meaningful life is through the attribution of skills

---

[5] http://www.globalissues.org/issue/235/consumption-and-consumerism (Downloaded 09/14/11)

51

and abilities to become a free and autonomous individual (Taylor, 1991). But asking a child to lift her or himself up by the bootstraps—alone—is a self-defeating dogma that overlooks the "value of collaboration and sacrifice — among many of the complex aspects of living and learning that are ignored when our mythologies cloud the realities of being fully human" (Bowers, 1995, p. 7). Learning to live in this era in history requires communal interdependence and understanding. Yet, there is a significant contradiction between our individualistic cultural narratives and our denial of today's global realities. Still, despite some common awareness of environmental instability, and the desire for a healthy environment, many people feel powerless to change directions. According to Tina Lynn Evans, we are living in a "perpetual state of forced dependency" on the global economy (2012, p. 74). In order for the industrial economy of enforced dependency to thrive, Evans explains, corporations must continuously undermine people, community, small business and even government into constant and never-fulfilled dependency.

What I have come to realize is that the collective attention of society is narrowed by our busy work lives and other aspects of daily living, and the result is that many folks cannot contend with the problems associated with climate change. It is as though we are too busy chasing the cows to put up a fence! As globalization spreads throughout the world, self-sufficient communities (that are relatively sustainable) give way to the pressures of large-scale industry. The world of globalization seems to be fast becoming a corporate business that requires the vast majority of citizens to spend their lives indebted to a money-generating treadmill so that corporations can turn huge profit. The costs to Mother Nature (and her local people) do not make it onto the balance sheet.

When individuals become a part of a nameless, faceless, and complacent mass, democracy suffers (Evans, 2011).

The Western trend towards separation, dualism, and individualism fosters destructive anthropocentric practices. As a result, nature has been regarded as a commodity to be manipulated for human use. This way of thinking has led to an existential crisis in the sense that we are implicated in a personal and social alienation toward ourselves, each other and the natural world. In other words, this "distancing" is by and large the existential crisis that we are experiencing today—self from nature, mind from body, subject from object, etc. The reductionism based in individualism and instrumentalism that I have been exploring so far in this thesis is the cornerstone to many of the ailments of Modernity, and is at the root of what ails many of our modernist institutions, including education.

Contrary to the assumptions of mainstream medicine, physician Gabor Mate (2004) regards most human ailments as not individual problems, but reflections of a person's relationship with the physical, emotional and social environment, from conception to death. Mind and body are not separate in real life, and thus health and illness in a person reflect social and economic realities more than personal predispositions. In other words, personal responsibility cannot be separated from societal responsibility and changing the world (Mate, 2004). It is high time that we bring personal responsibility and social responsibility together into one dialogue: ethics.

In this regard, I refer to Heesoon Bai's (2004) proposal that we make intersubjective ethics an everyday practice. Proper *prevention*, she discusses, rather than making ethics an *intervention* after harm has incurred from not paying attention to the wellbeing of our selves, is the ethical ideal to strive for (Bai, 2004). Following the theoretical notion that all of the earth community is interlinked and interconnected, everyday practices include the integration of "mind/body, self/other, and subject/object" (Bai, 2004, p. 51). I resonate with Bai's plea that everyday activities that cultivate the intrinsic valuing of intersubjectivity, interconnection, and the wellbeing of the world are sorely needed to counter the prevalent pattern of consumerist consciousness. What is needed is an ethics of relational integration.

From what I have investigated so far in my narrative journey, I would say this with some conviction: that change will come from waking up from the delusive ideology of individualism. In the next chapter, in PART 2, I explain how the nuances and understandings associated with the formation of destructive self-identities are culturally endorsed in our pedagogy. Using examples from my experience and drawing from various authors, I show how trends in education have globalized the concept of the highly individualized self and have developed a language that defines our lived experience as internalized in school culture. I discuss the ways in which pernicious individualism has diminished a necessary sense of community and has increased the tendency toward increased alienation, anxiety and consumption (Elliot & Lemert, 2009).

PART TWO

Chapter 3.

Pedagogical Individualism

The range of what we think and do is limited by what we fail to notice.
And because we fail to notice that we fail to notice,
there is little we can do to change;
until we notice how failing to notice shapes our thoughts and deeds.
~ R. D. Laing

Scott Davies and Janice Aurini (2003) propose a definition of pedagogical individualism as "a highly individualized conception of learning; one that prizes a customized experience to enhance a child's personality, and an individualized sense of self" (p. 63). Self-identities are the narratives we tell about our lives (Bruner, 2004). As such, the phenomenon under study is the theoretical/social justification for shaping how we understand ourselves as individuals. Institutions like schools are entrenched in the dominant cultural worldviews of individualist self, i.e., individualism. Individualism is the hidden curriculum of mainstream schooling today, which has largely resulted, as we noted in Chapter 2, from historical constructions of the individualist self and a culturally promoted psychology of self that emphasize competition, anthropocentrism, and consumerism. One need not look very far to see the consequences of such views. We live in times of mass social and planetary injustice and catastrophic climate change, largely, I argue, as a result of our anthropocentric conception of

humanity's self-importance and notion of industrialized "progress" and instrumentalist thinking (Bai & Romanycia, 2013).

The Ethos of Modern Schooling

While I would acknowledge that students should become active participants in their learning, I agree with Riley-Taylor (2002) that "in its coupling with capitalism, 'corporate' schooling can easily become another process of bureaucratized rationalism and instrumentalism wherein the bottom line is student achievement, based on suitability to perpetuate an economically restructured global marketplace" (p. 16). One obvious example is the individualized grading system that is preserved and the intense competition that emerges from this practice. Marginson (2004) explains that social competition in higher education is much broader than economic exchange, but in the neo-liberal era, marketization is becoming more significant, particularly cross-border markets. In his words:

> Globalization and markets together are changing the competition for status goods (positional goods) in higher education. The competition is becoming more 'economised' because mediated by private capacity to pay, and intensified because there is diminished attention to public good objectives such as equality of opportunity: in any case transnational markets are configured as a trading environment where such objectives are irrelevant. The outcome is the steepening of university hierarchies, the formation of a 'winner-take-all' world market in elite and mostly American university education, a tighter fit between social hierarchy and educational hierarchy at the national level, and global patterns of domination/subordination that are as yet scarcely modified by global public goods. This suggests the need to rework the equality of the educational project and situate it globally as well as nationally. (p. x)

Another prime measure in the ethos of individualism in education that I see is how the conception of multiple intelligences has been taken up in curriculum design and pedagogic practice. The theory of multiple intelligence was proposed by Howard Gardener back in 1983. Basically, the theory presents the idea that there are different kinds of human intelligence. It has had a wide appeal, but also it provoked much debate and criticisms. One of the criticisms, levelled by Gardener himself, is that the theory of multiple intelligence supports individualized learning preferences or styles. When I embarked on my journey into teacher training, it was commonplace for theories of learning to be premised on the notion of individualized learning styles. If individuals all have different learning styles, and since the objective of schooling is to help individuals become competitive in their knowledge acquisition, then we would need to construct our curriculum and pedagogy around individual learning styles. Note how this reasoning would support, or justify, whether explicitly or implicitly, pedagogical individualism.

One more example: constructivist education, the theory that students build their own knowledge through experiences and reflecting on those experiences, has had a strong hold in education for past decades. The environmental philosopher Chet Bowers (1995) describes the underlying assumptions of constructivist education are based on the notion of the autonomous individual. He even describes this human-centered focus that reinforces individual interests and experiences of pedagogy as anthropocentric. Bowers says that these cultural beliefs and pedagogical practices have contributed to the environmental problems of the world today through the omission and neglect of, the significance of relations and therefore undermining

these relations—with others, community, family, and the ecosystem. "Sins of omission" are just as grave as, if not more grave than, "sins of commission." What's invisible can kill us without our knowing about it.

Similarly, *Earth in Mind* (2004) by David Orr helped me see the disturbing implications of the modern curriculum that is supported by the individualist psychology that fragments and divides everything into separate parts, including what we study: "We have fragmented the world into bits and pieces called disciplines, and sub-disciplines, hermetically sealed from other such disciplines. As a result, after 12 or 16 or 20 years of education, most students graduate without any broad integrated sense of the unity of things" (p. 11). This is a terrifying prospect of modern schooling that, I would argue, explains why modern schooling, now globalized, indiscriminate of geographical directions—east, west, north, south—has been producing citizens who are lost in planet-destroying activities through limitless and mindless production and consumption on the one hand and exploitation and violence on the other hand. This same habit of mind and pattern of activity are integral to schooling, and yet invisible to us in the way water must be invisible to fish. I will explore this issue in the next section.

"Peculiar blindness to the shadows of our individualistic psyche"

Going back to the notion of "lives as narratives" (Bruner, 2004), the ways that people tell their stories of school and self-understanding are "shaped by cultural conventions and language usage… [and] reflect the prevailing theories

about 'possible lives' that are part of one's culture" (Bruner, 2004, p. 694). The larger dominant narratives of the school culture are often not visible; accordingly we seem to have a "peculiar blindness to the shadows of our individualistic psyche" (Cushman, 1996, p. 1). For example, many recent documentaries on education—such as "The Lottery", "Race to Nowhere," and "Waiting for Superman"—investigate a wide range of educational issues such as school quality and selection, declining student performance in "more important" subjects like math and science, and high-stakes testing culture (Pierce, 2013). The fundamental message in the film "Waiting for Superman" is straightforward: poor student achievement is linked to the inability of schools to rid themselves of "ineffective" teachers (Pierce, 2013). The unmistaken value portrayed and transmitted in these films is the notion that "good" schools are prized for graduating students who are rational, self-enterprising and who can effectively compete in a "high-stakes, knowledge-driven global economy" (Pierce, 2013, p. 2). I am disturbed and concerned that this prizing narrowly limits and scarcely defines learning as objectives that standardize and quantify what a good school, good teacher, and a good student actually are when it comes to the potential of human cooperative intent. In what follows, I share my autobiographical account of the dominant institutional narratives of many teachers who describe what is commonly thought of as "teacher-responsibilities" and the common language behind our spoken stories. I offer a typical and recurring conversation between me the counsellor and a teacher.

A Teacher Seeks Counselling

Mary: *[knock, knock] Gillian, Do you have a few minutes...I need to talk....*
Gillian: *Ah, come in Mary, what's up?*

Mary: *Essentially, we're three months into the school year, and I'm going crazy. There are three kids in my class with ADD and at least six who are medically undiagnosed. I think there are seven who have learning disabilities. Five children in my class arrived in Canada within the last month and don't speak English. Two kids are ministry-designated as having behaviour problems and one child is special needs but has a nine-month waitlist for assessment at Children's Hospital—so, in the meantime I have no teacher's aide. I'm thinking of taking a health leave. Sometimes I vaguely recall that I once really loved being with children, and once upon a time I devised creative and fantastic things for them to do in my classroom. That was when we used to have fun. I feel like I don't have time for that now...PLOs, you see....*

Gillian: *PLO?*

Mary: *Yes, Prescribed Learning Outcomes, it's the prescribed learning standards set out by the province of what each student is expected to know and do at the end of each grade. And I have to put together and implement at least nine Individual Education Plans. I have the responsibility to ensure that each student with a ministry designation has an IEP while also ensuring that the prescribed learning outcomes in each IRP are met as well.*

Gillian: *IRP?*

Mary: *Yes, Integrated Resource Package. It's the government system for managing student assessment and identifying the required learning in relation to one or more of the three domains of learning: you know, cognitive, psychomotor, and affective. But that's the problem—there isn't enough time to do all that I'm required to do these days. There are 30 children in my class and I'm up until 2 am every night planning and assessing their reading, writing and math levels. My husband has forgotten I exist, I haven't seen my friends for months, and I am thinking of taking a health leave...*

Gillian: *Oh my, this sounds very severe. Surely, these PLOs aren't that demanding?*

Mary: *I have to collect data for every child in my class and I have to use the prescribed outcome criteria to assess each student to see if they are "not meeting," "meeting," or "fully meeting" in each subject area. I'm*

61

bewildered by the language and all the subheadings—you haven't got any vodka, do you?

Gillian: *Sorry, no. But I have some Tylenol in my desk.*

Mary: *I have to get all the data into the principal by the end of the week, in case we are audited by the province.*

Gillian: *Surely, you could ask the other grade five teacher, Ms. Brown, to help you?*

Mary: *Oh no, she rarely comes out of her classroom anymore. I think she lives in there.*

Gillian: *Well, I imagine you must know whether or not your students are making progress without having to refer to all those PLO criteria?*

Mary: *Of course, but teachers aren't to be trusted these days...that's why I have to complete all this data to see how our students and school compares...and to ensure we are up to snuff! Anyway, I'm so glad you take the children out of the class to talk to them about their personal dilemmas and problems—I don't have time for that—I have a curriculum to teach!*

As the aforementioned tongue-in-cheek story suggests, the expectation is that teachers adhere to a standardized curriculum and that each student learns in a unique manner as depicted by curriculum standards and the common custom of Individual Education Planning (e.g., Carol Ann Tomlinson's (2004) differentiated instruction). However, this reveals not only our assumptions about student learning and the backdrop of the competition factor inherent in mass educational standardization (Schmoker, 2011) but also an unquestioned, taken-for-granted worldview of individualism.

The belief of differentiating instruction—varying teaching approaches, subject matter, assignments, even the rules and structure of the classroom itself to teach students with differing needs, interests, and academic levels—has

62

become a mainstream model in education, and is regarded as essential to raising student performance and "closing the achievement gap." For example, Tomlinson's method calls for teachers to assess individual student needs in four areas: content, process, products, and learning environments. Then the teacher is to tailor materials and activities to match these needs. As pointed out in my story above, some educators see the method as an expectation that they should meet the learning needs of each individual student, which in my opinion is not practical and leaves teachers feeling overburdened since implementing such techniques is impossibly time-consuming (Schmoker, 2011). In particular, one aspect of Tomlinson's approach calls on teachers to address students' "preferred ways of learning." The notion of learning styles is relentlessly suspect when I consider the wider implications of the relational and collective realities of learning and consciousness. My vignette example is a prime illustration of the operations at work behind an individualist ontology. The more that learning becomes fragmented and separated to the needs of the individual, the more our way of schooling yields discrete units of things to learn and assess. I am concerned that cognitive learning is usually over-emphasised to the detriment of other aspects of inter-knowing and inter-being. When relationships form the basis for good pedagogy, the alienation and competition subside and interdependence is cultivated.

This catering to the individual needs all may sound enlightened: we value and care for individuals and their particular needs. Is this not what democracy is, or at least what democratic society needs to strive to become? The opposite to this vision of society would be oppressive collectivism where, as the Japanese saying goes, "if a nail sticks out, pound it down." However, individualism, as

63

manifest in pedagogical individualism that I have been describing, is as equally problematic as collectivism. Pedagogical individualism is oppressive to individual students since what is valued are not so much the idiosyncratic individuals and their intrinsic worth as the presumed results of enabling individual students to become more competitive against each other. Moreover, as I have been reiterating throughout the thesis, individualism—and by extension, pedagogical individualism—loses sight of the fundamentally interdependent—i.e., ecological—relationships that have formed who we are as individuals. Individuals are in-divide-ables; that is, *indivisibles*. Of course, it should be reiterated that individuation is a healthy goal of pedagogy. What I am advocating for is pedagogy that supports relational or self-integration. Relational integration is a position that supports the fine-tuning of the individual and one's commitment to interdependence.

In reflecting on my question of how we arrived at this juncture of *knowingness* in education, it appears the powerful mechanisms of schooling press us toward the instrumental reason that Taylor (1991) speaks of (see Chapter 2 above), and the disengagement from the larger orders of the universe. Our students are taught very important lessons about their identities as individuals: unique, separate, and distant from all others, including more-than-human beings. There are examples of how these mechanisms play out in our schools. For example, many children today spend most of their daily lives, including in school-time, in a highly de-natured environment. Our children are slipping into "real" worlds that are vacuous virtual worlds, despite the mounting evidence that contact with nature is necessary for psychological, social, ecological and spiritual health (Louv, 2008, p. 3-4). So you have the virtual world itself, which is

disconnected from nature, and then you have the real world, which is often steel and concrete. The worrisome feature of real and vacuous worlds is that both the physical, non-virtual world and sterilized real world involve so much that is manufactured.

Another consideration is the wide use of techno-gadgets endorsed by schools as tools for learning—an exploding trend in education. Do we sufficiently stop to reflect on the consequences of our confident momentum toward technology in schooling? Taylor suggests that institutional and political change endorses the structures and limitations of industrial-technological societies and constrains the choices we have. In this sense, altering the direction of techno-consumption is difficult at best, since schools are by and large constricted by the economic-political system of an industrialized and globalized world. This is the paradox of individualism.

In addition to the value of the "individual" as the central entity of our culture is the modern ideal— upheld by both West and East—of "progress." This assumption endorses people to adopt a life trajectory that is valued by expansion and growth. This idea is further complicated by the notion that individuals have a right to buy and sell within a free-market system. When associated with the Cartesian principle of "rationality," we stray from uncertainty in favour of the illusion of certainty and control over the future (Spretnak, 1997). The rational perspective generally implies the separation of matter into opposing dualisms—body and mind, male and female, morally "good" or morally "bad." These dualisms take shape in many ways, but the most obvious is the power dynamics of patriarchy: that masculine is superior to

feminine and that this epistemology is "normal." This black or white thinking of the nature of reality often distracts us from noticing the "between" of things (Riley-Taylor, 2002, p. 43). These dualisms are the greatest challenge to modernity since they are epitomized in dialogical binaries, such as rational versus emotional, male privilege and female subordination and cultural "progress" over the oppression of nature (Riley-Taylor, 2002, p, 45).

Taylor suggests that a powerful moral ideal is behind the currents of atomistic individualism. In this case, atomistic individualism is a term to describe the sociological and conscious understanding that the individual is the basic component of society and hence one's values, decisions and life choices arise entirely out of the interests and actions of the individual person (Taylor, 1995). This moral ideal behind self-fulfillment is that of looking after one's own self-interests, in a specifically modern way. In his own words,

> What we need to explain is what is peculiar to our time. It's not just that people sacrifice their love relationships, and care of their children, to pursue their careers. Something like this has always existed. The point is that today many people feel called to do this, feel they ought to do this, feel their lives would be somehow wasted or unfulfilled if they didn't do it. (Taylor, 1991, p. 17)

In his explanation, then, moral relativism is fuelled by a moral ideal: the ideal of the individual, however self-absorbed that may be. This has resulted in a form of liberal neutrality, resulting in impartiality of society in general. Yet, there appears to be a great silence about how these moral ideals are captured in our individualistic notions of pedagogy. Moreover, this position is espoused by the cultural worshiping of scientific explanation that connotes no connection to

66

moral ideals. The enmeshment of instrumental reason in our culture and pedagogies is assumed to have no moral force behind them, yet illustrations of egotism and apathy toward others may be indicating the opposite.

Free Market Schools

There are many who would agree with educational regulation and the progressive-capital approach to education. Many would claim that individual rights and independence are the central goals to which we should aspire, as well as to a booming economy. Nonetheless, as I explained earlier, there may be deadly costs to the hidden undercurrents of individualism and the associated moral choices we bestow to our children. Moreover, the modern-Western approach to education, coupled with a growing trend of a globalizing free market has resulted in a curious trend toward the "business model" of schools.

Like many of my colleagues in my early days of teaching, I was mesmerized by the idea that the free market would unleash creativity and bring greater effectiveness to education. There is something comforting that the sway of a free-market will bring about some unforeseen and pleasant consequences— ideally insurance that disadvantaged children will not be neglected and that better equality education will be realized and offered. I wanted to believe that choice and accountability would lead to great changes. But as time went on, and whatever the new trends were in education, be it a new curriculum, new teaching methodology, or the latest, best, evidence-based practice, I realized that many of the well-intentioned ideals did not meet up to their promise. The more I

saw, the more experiences I had with children, families and teachers, the more I wondered about the "business-like" direction we are taking with our schools.

Several recent educational reforms have attempted to change the "factory model of schooling" to a restructuring of schools to function like business corporations. The idea is to transform classrooms to resemble workplaces that feature "high performance," teamwork, and interpersonal skills. While this movement away from the factory-model of schooling may seem promising at first, this form of education, as Philip Wexler (1996) concludes, looks a lot like corporatist reorganization that manifests the business vision of a growth economy with a productionist emphasis. Wexler argues that the translation of work skills into the academic curriculum deems education as closely linked to economic production and analogous to another process of rationalization and instrumentalism. I have observed this trend recently in the professional development of administrators who are coached on the development of business strategies for use in schools.

As I ponder about this productionist emphasis, I am also sympathetically listening to educational philosopher Alexander M. Sidorkin who experienced communism in the old Soviet Union before he moved to the United States. Sidorkin (2002) describes the flaw in the educational enterprise as "the production of useless things" (p. 5). Sidorkin suggests that the work that students are asked to do might be considered hard labor, not because it is particularly difficult, but because it is unavoidable and compulsory. Hence, reports from many school children are that they experience schooling as imprisonment and forced labor, by and large. There are, of course, a few

students motivated to rise to the top by "beating the system" but many others experience only dreariness and disconnect. He also points out that the motivation to learn may very well be impeded by the fact that much of the work produced in schools inevitably ends up in the wastebasket or recycle bin, which certainly rings true in my school observations. In his own words:

> The most important fact about learning is so obvious that it goes unnoticed in theoretical work on education: because children are asked to make things that no one really needs, they do not want to make these things. Now, the fact of not wanting is fairly well-established. What is almost totally ignored is the simple explanation of why students do not want to learn: because learning involves mass production of useless things. (p. 15)

Sidorkin seeks to define learning as it relates to the space between students and the activities they engage in while at school. Moreover, Sidorkin points out that learning activities surrounding useless work contribute to the political economy of education: as he calls "an exploitative economic enterprise" (p. 26). Education, in this sense, is a certain form of capital; the results are submission to supervision and authority, continuous work on mundane tasks, fragmentation and all of the things that a capitalist economy requires. In this manner, I wonder how this plays out ontologically for students when they witness their work in the wastebasket or recycle bin. Does this lead students to existential malaise and crisis in their schoolwork or do they assume "their contributions do not matter in the grand scheme of things"? (Sidorkin, 2002, p. 14).

An instrumental framework for educating children has flavored the structure and delivery of education for the last several decades. Knowledge was

fragmented into parts, content areas were separated apart, and power relations between teachers and students were created in order to maintain "control." Our implementation of standardized testing has shaped the way that curriculum has been understood—that it is measureable—and the way knowledge is transferred from teacher to student. There has been a favoring of the rational mind with a marginalizing of the other aspects of human expression. This mechanistic worldview has supported the flourishing of fragmentary pedagogy (Evans, 2012) and other forms of power-over relations (Riley-Taylor, 2002). Moreover, the government control over education, and their multinational corporate affiliation, may very well alter the curriculum to serve corporate interests. For example, Figure 2 below is an example of a page from a colouring book designed for primary children that illustrates how gas extraction companies produce books for children in the United States featuring "Talisman Terry, your friendly Fracosaurus."[6]

[6] http://www.theguardian.com/environment/blog/2011/jul/14/gas-fracking-children-colouring-book
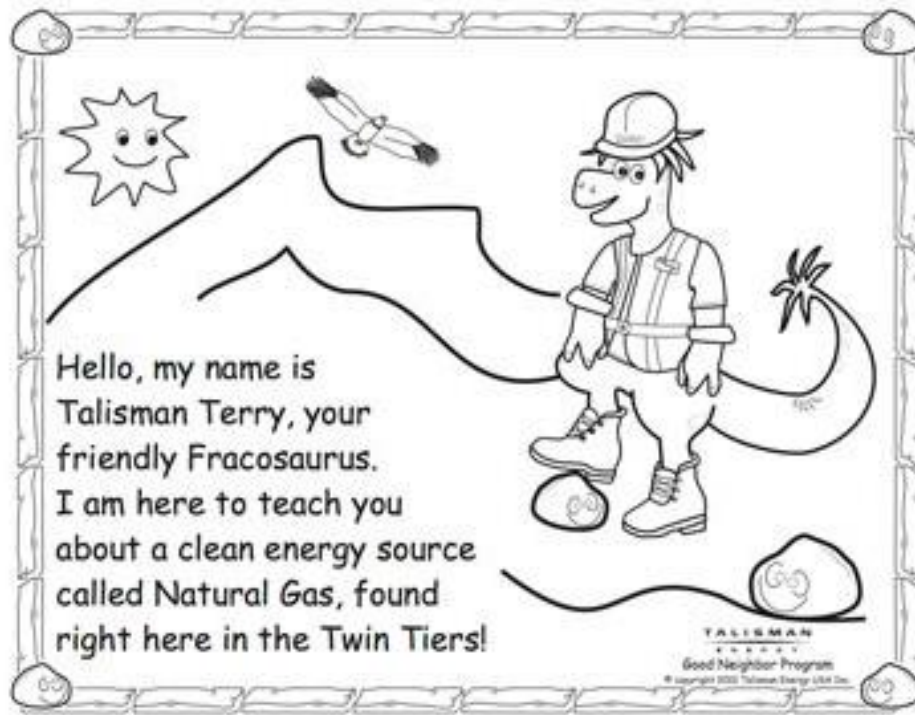
Figure 2.   **The "friendly Fracosaurus" featured in a 24-page coloring book for children made by Talisman Energy**.

The gas company (Talisman Energy) was aiming to teach children that gas drilling is safe for humans and the environment. To the contrary, in many communities, the development of natural gas drilling and hydraulic fracturing has involved the contamination of drinking water, health conditions, dead livestock, and obliteration of unspoiled forest and farmland. Fortunately, this particular colouring book was rejected and not distributed by the local schools after some negative publicity (Nikforuk, 2014). Another example of corporations attempting to influence elementary-age children is the children's book published by Scholastic entitled *The United States of Energy*. This fourth-grade teaching curriculum is sponsored by the American Coal Foundation and positively

promotes their business activities, all the while neglecting to mention the toxic hazards associated with burning coal.[7] These dimensions of industrial-political ordeals are a real concern for me, as they have the propensity to entrap and narrow the future direction of our world toward unsustainable industries.

Many philosophers and theorists wrestle with these sorts of malaises of society, and the dangerous lack of a cultural starting point for grappling with the problems of our time (Taylor, 1991, p. 1). Such concerns partly reflect anxiety and insecurity about the radical and rapidly changing world. We all use mental filters to make sense of our experiences. In terms of those filters, from an educational standpoint, do we think in terms of a web of relationships, or a distribution of individual entities? Much of Western thought—in fields as diverse as psychology, criminology, biology, theology and education—has tended toward an individualist perspective. That "atomistic" slant has contributed to the social and ecological dilemmas we face, by concealing crucial dynamics of how the world really works. I believe that a dynamic, relational perspective of ourselves provides a more accurate picture of the world, and may steer us toward more sustainable ways of living. For example, social housing programs are a way of helping individuals who have difficulty getting employment, or finding a place to live, but they do not fully address the systemic inequality of our social system. Yet there appear to be "recognition breaks" happening around the globe that we can meet our human "needs without destroying the planet" (Macy, 2007, p. 140). Ideally, we need to aim at

[7] http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2011/jul/14/gas-fracking-children-colouring-book

addressing both levels: the individual and the systemic, and find ways to do both through one integrated move/approach.

Chapter 4.

Pedagogy and Identity

We are here to awaken from the illusion of our separateness.
~ Thich Nhat Hanh

What Sort of "Selves" Are We Constructing?

Psychotherapist R. D. Laing reminds us that relational ontology must conceive of assisting "people to recover the wholeness of being human through the relationship between them" (Laing, 1967, p. 32). But we are in a world in which the inner world is torn from the outer. Having developed the idea that human beings are autonomous egos, we are expected to approach the world as an external site from the viewpoint of separate ego selves. The world is "out there," and I am "over here." Karen Hawkins (2003) put words to our present day predicament vis-à-vis human moral agency:

> But the separation of ourselves from our broader contexts and connections, and the separation of dimensions of ourselves from our own meaning-making processes, has enabled us to sink, as individuals, and as a society, into a state of apathy and indifference. This separation has cut us off from our ability to recognize and value all our ways of interacting with and making sense of the world. It has cut us off from deeper connections with each other, and with the world. Unfortunately, the absence of connections also tends to result in the careless dismissal of the wider implications of

choices and actions, and, therefore, to cause or condone actual harm (p. 126)

Has this sense of estrangement, indeed psychic numbing, branded contemporary education from the wider aspects of life?   All the while, the distress signals from our planet Earth continue to rise, like the weather atrocities from the effects of a heating climate, loss of species every day, and other warning signs.   As a modern global society we seem to be turning a blind eye to our reality by distracting ourselves with technology, substances, and consumerism. Like Hawkins, Susan Griffin (2000) explains that when it comes to a sensible response to the threat of climate change, "we are a culture in a state of paralysis" (p. 52.)   Hysterical paralysis of this magnitude is akin to an unconscious and seemingly irresolvable conflict.   "One of the selves is divided against the other" (Griffin, 2000, p. 52).   The wholeness, integrity, and unity of our being and interbeing is broken, opening ourselves to all manners of invasive operations, especially in the name of learning.

Our schooling methods, historically speaking, deem students as essentially isolate beings into which learning can be poured. The breakdown in the overarching assumptions of reality—the deferred realization that reality is inherently dynamic and interrelated at all levels—has resulted in a vast array of suffering. I would say that many students are discouraged and hindered by the fast-paced, sink-or-swim competition-based learning that is insisted upon in the world of schooling. Generally, students are unaware of the hidden curriculum of capitalism; rather, their attention is continually focused on the all-encompassing threat of the next assignment or test, and their growing, insatiable, state of unease, which typically morphs into a broad-based, underlying sense of

pervasive insecurity. This is what I notice in my everyday work as a school counsellor and educator.

In my search for ways to understand individualist construction of selfhood in educational settings, I came to consider the prevalence of psychometric assessments to portray common individual differences of learners. On an everyday basis, students are administered a plethora of assessments to determine their individualized learning profiles and behavioural difficulties, most of which are absent from any relational context. Some examples include the vast array of behavioural checklists, personality assessment inventories, Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC-IV), a glut of achievement tests, and the popularity of Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) initiatives. While some of this analysing has been helpful within the scope of general educational pursuits, psychoeducational assessment has been heavily criticized by educational philosophers for the lack of attention to *how individuals develop in relation to others* (Noddings, 1984) and for ignoring the inequality of power arrangements that surface from such assumptions (Foucault, 1980; Thayer-Bacon, 2003). For example, although teachers are aware of the tremendous and diverse needs of many students, the vast majority of children are required to compete independently in the same compulsory curriculum, regardless of circumstances, interest or aptitude (Noddings, 1997). Despite these criticisms, the ideal of a liberal democratic education that endorses the individualized learner prevails.

The ideal behind pedagogical individualism that creates self-accomplished learners exerts a significant influence on the thinking and practice of teachers, administrators, parents, students, curriculum-makers, and the

general public. In my experience as a member of countless school-based teams, much of the concern has been about a student's individual learning profile. What concerns me is that individualistic thinking, in its extreme, endorses a particular from of selfhood that has pervaded curricular development in our modern economies of globalization and consumption.

Construction of Narcissistic Selves

The notion of "self" as individual entity is considered a given; it is, for the most part, an unquestioned part of our world and daily existence. Not surprisingly, much of contemporary educational theory (for example, developmental, behavioural, experimental, and cognitive learning theories of mainstream psychology, to name a few) rests upon the virtue and ideal of individualistic forms of thinking and acting. Why not? After all, the "favoring of individual autonomy in thought and action [are] the central aims of personal development" (Watt, 1989, p. 118). Yet, is the idea of the self-esteemed, self-fulfilled individual appropriate as an educational goal in our world today? Has our global culture of individualistic tendency contributed to a form of existential alienation and detachment from others and our shared planet? As Stout (2000) and Twenge (2006) point out, many psychologists are concerned that educational practices that stress the self-esteem and self-interest of students are making students less respectful, and are contributing causes of school failure and general student unhappiness.

To illustrate this point further, to some educational philosophers it seems as if narcissism is on the rise in our schools (Stout, 2000) and its destructive

consequences are being felt in all corners of modern life including the degradations in civic, vocational, political and economic life that seem attributable to self-interest running amuck (Twenge, 2006). Martin and McLellan (2013) report that many educators are concerned that the heavy emphasis on student self-esteem is "inflating grades, negatively affecting student conduct and contributing to school failure" (p.179). The New York Times publicized a review of Twenge and Campbell's (2009) recent book *The Narcissism Epidemic: Living in the Age of Entitlement*, which I quote at length here:

> [Twenge and Campbell] marshal statistics, polls, charts, studies and anecdotes to assemble a complete picture of the epidemic's current state of contagion, brought on by the Internet, reality television, a booming economy, easy credit and other developments over the past decade. The authors dismantle the prevailing myths that have made us inclined to tolerate and even encourage narcissism: that it's a function of high self-esteem, that it's a function of low self-esteem, that a little narcissism is healthy, that narcissists are in fact superior, and that you have to love yourself to be able to love someone else (Brubach, 2009). While the self-focus in education and society has been associated with a sense of covetousness and student prerogative (Bush, 2009), many researchers neglect to explore the significant role of psycho-educational testing, and interventions in the advancement of "self-esteem, self-concept and self-regulation" as praiseworthy educational goals in and of themselves. (Martin and McLellan, 2013, p. 180)

As I came to understand the stories of school and conceptions of selfhood within which students and educators are living, I began to make sense of the phenomena of student aggression as being related to individualist psychology. The acute prevalence of violence in schools around the world, including dreadful instances of school shootings, has been well noted in recent decades. Over the

past few years, I have been serving as a critical incidence responder at school, paying close attention to violence in school settings, in my own school or elsewhere. During this period, the brutal murder of family members of some of my students, increase in the number of suicides of secondary students, and the amount of threat assessments undertaken on Vancouver schools has been an unfortunate reality. These and other signals that point to the level of violence in and around schools may be that "being a student is more dangerous than being an employed adult" (Sidorkin, 2002, p. 63). Even though all students have a right to go to school without worry of being hurt, teased, or abused, this is unfortunately not the case for millions of children in Canada and around the world, with girls especially at risk for sexual harassment and exploitation.

Fragmented Selves and Addiction

To witness the phenomenon of individualist psychology enacted and recreated in everyday schooling is to journey into the creation and manifestation of individualism that is culturally reproduced in schools. Infrequently do the majority of people step outside of the parameter of the daily aspects of schooling to investigate, reflect, and question the ideological and axiological assumptions, and political currents that carry these, behind the common educational enterprise (Cushman, 2013). What does it take to "step outside"? What does it take to shift ontological and epistemological optics so as to see reality beyond individualism? What are the structural forces that keep us enthralled?

What I am detailing all along in this thesis is society's pursuit to regard a conception of students' view of self as individualistic, decontextualized, and

instrumental while undermining the wider dialogical, social and ecological context of human life. I gradually came to perceive that our reliance on isolated selves has robbed children of their sense of belonging. To fill the void, many children turn to addiction or alternative communities such as cyber-reality to quench their psychosocial needs (Alexander, 2010). I describe the contours of the virtual world and the role of computer-based reality in an entry from my journal that talks about my encounter with a child-client named Sam.

Sam the Virtual Gamer

Personal Journal, October 27, 2011

Sam in grade six was referred to me since he had anxiety about coming to school and his parents reported he was playing in excess of six hours a day on video games to make "life interesting". His parents were concerned that his video gaming play was compulsive and that he isolated himself from family and friends except those who he met online in his gaming sessions. His focus was almost entirely on in-game achievements rather than other life events and people in his "real-life", and he often became belligerent if the gaming was impeded by his parents. In addition, he was neglecting his personal hygiene, had lost significant weight due to skipping meals to play video games, and frequently was up late at night to play resulting in sleep deprivation. He was often late for school or missed the day entirely due to his need to catch up on sleep. His parents reported they also felt he was not honest about how much time he spent playing video games when his parents were not home. His parents fought with him continuously and he adamantly refused to come to school saying it was "useless and a waste of time."

During our first session, I asked, "What would you like to talk about today, Sam?"

"Well, I don't see the relevance of school. Its dead boring....and I don't understand why my parents make such a big deal out of videogames...all kids do

it...and it's what I want to do. All my friends play videogames, every day like I do, so I don't see what the big deal is."

"You sound frustrated that you cannot do what you would rather do—play videogames" I replied.

"No kidding!" he said.

"Tell me how what you are doing at school is relevant to your future?" I asked.

"No, what I learn in school has absolutely nothing to do with my future. What we do in school is stupid and has nothing to do with my life. It's totally boring. I hate it here" he stated emphatically, slumping in his chair.

"How do you see your life and school as different?"

"Well", he continued, I don't see any connection between the vast majority of what we learn in school and what I am doing in my life. I mostly like to just play video games. For example, in school we are learning algebra. Now that there are calculators and computers, why do I need to learn algebra? And with the internet, I can look anything up within seconds on a Google search. So, why do I need to learn all this stuff?" I really didn't know what to say in that moment. He has a point, I thought to myself. I scrambled through a response,

"OK, so the information you learn seems irrelevant to you, but if you were to tell other kids about this school, what would you say?"

"Do you want me to be completely honest, really honest?" He asked hesitantly, as if not to offend me.

"Well, it's a dump, like a prison, and there are bars on all of the windows and doors so it's like we are locked up inside and can't get out. The lockers are falling apart; half of them don't close properly and are scribbled with graffiti people leave their garbage everywhere. Basically the only teachers I like in this school are the janitor and my grade two teacher. And the janitor isn't even a teacher...."

In Sam's case, the virtual gaming world provides him with a substitute community and the need to *belong*. Bruce Alexander (2010) speaks to the alarming spread of videogame addiction as people grapple with dislocation and the need for psychosocial integration (p. 166). Dislocation, in its extreme, refers to psychological and social isolation from one's society (Alexander, 2010). For

example, in Sam's case, he never wanted to go out of the house because he only wanted to play video games and become involved with a computer-enhanced fantasy life.   Still, Alexander (2010) conveys that even games centered on simulated social reality offer the player an imaginary sense of community:

> In the virtual world of these role-playing games, players can put all their energies into individual competition and expect that psychosocial integration will follow, gratuitously (p. 167).

Psychosocial integration seeks to reconcile the "essential needs of people to belong socially along with the equally necessary need for autonomy and achievement" (Alexander, 2010, p. 58). In 2007, a media/technology research and analysis company, "Parks Associates," reported that "video game addiction is a growing problem in Asian countries such as China and Korea." Results of a 2006 survey suggest that 2.4% of South Koreans aged 9 to 39 suffer from game addiction, with another 10.2% at risk of addiction (Noyes, 2007; Faiola, 2006). A recent Harris Interactive online poll of 1,187 United States youths aged 8–18 gathered detailed data on youth opinions about video game play. The average play time for 81% of admitted gamers varied by age and sex, from eight hours per week for teen girls to 14 hours per week for teen boys. Among 8–12-year-olds, boys averaged 13 hours per week of reported game play and girls averaged 10 (Harris Interactive, 2007). These trends and statistics hint to the dark side of losing connection with human-others and the natural world.

While many students are not perilously addicted to video consumption, there are large numbers of children who spend significant portions of time watching television or on their techno-gadgets causing serious problems in life

such as social isolation, relationship troubles, and disastrous breakdown at school or work (Alexander, 2010, 39). There are myriads of students in my schools who play video games daily. I have wondered why so many of our children are seduced and enticed into consumptive video gaming and cyber-realities? Why is the range and scope of addictive behavior spreading rapidly on a global scale to include not only drugs and alcohol, but also mindless consumption of television, internet surfing, gambling, pornography viewing, and so on (Alexander, 2010)? What is it about schooling that is seemingly irrelevant for many youths of today, other than to find a vocation in a growth economy?

Alienated Selves

I have wondered how it came to be that so many children exhibit a sense of self that seems thin and fragmented: a sense that they are not really there. The metaphor of a thin and fragmented self brings me to Erich Fromm who discusses the notion of "abstractification" and the effects of capitalism as the phenomenon of alienation (Fromm, 1964). Here is Fromm's articulation of alienation:

> By alienation is meant a mode of experience in which the person experiences himself as an alien. He has become, one might say, estranged from himself. He does not experience himself as the center of his world, as the center of his own acts—but his acts and their consequences have become his masters, whom he obeys, or whom he may even worship. The alienated person is out of touch with himself as he is out of touch with any other person. He, like the others, is experienced as things are experienced; with the senses and with common sense, but at the same time without being related to oneself and to the world outside productively (p.67).

The vast majority of schools in the West are based on pedagogical theories that understand the world in an individualist and instrumentalist manner. What is largely missing is the relational aspect of being human and being life. For example, one time I asked students to tell me about the best time they had experienced recently in their classrooms, and a majority related techno-related activities and discussions: how the "cloud" was improving life, iPhone vs. Samsung vs. Nokia, what they thought the next innovations on the internet were going to be (and which ones they wanted). It was not surprising, of course, since it has been a well-established fact that when classroom activities are based on topics that are relevant and interesting to students they become intensely participatory in the discussions, as relevance and meaning are eternally engaging (Dewey, 1929). But is this obsession with technology changing the relational intuition of children or competing with the lost relational intuition of previous generations? As Dewey would point out, much of education is challenged because it neglects the fundamental principle of the school as a form of community life: "the school must represent present life" (Dewey, 1929, p. 36). But what if life for so many of our students is entrapped by the consumption and ownership of technology and therefore is missing vital elements that would ensure the development of humanity? Let us turn to Dewey for the articulation of what this vital something is. Dewey (1929) asserts:

> The moral education centers upon this conception of the school as a mode of social life, that the best and deepest moral training is precisely that which one gets through having to enter into proper relations with other in a unity of work and thought. The present educational systems, so far as they destroy or neglect this unity, render it difficult or impossible to get any genuine, regular moral training. (p. 36)

When I reflect on Dewey's assertion that schooling is at the heart and pulse of learning human relations and learning a moral social life, I find our societal overindulgence in self-advancement that plays out in the daily aspects of education to be deeply concerning. Our relationships are becoming more and more mediated by technology rather than personal interaction. Therein lies starvation of the soul whose hunger finds no satiation.

Developmentally Immature Selves

According to developmental psychologist Gordon Neufeld and physician Gabor Mate (2004), both of whom worked extensively with youth and families, it is suggested that many young people lack self-control and are increasingly prone to alienation, drug use, violence, or just a general aimlessness. These authors describe students as less teachable and more difficult to manage than their counterparts of even a few decades ago. Many have lost their ability to adapt, to learn from negative experience and to developmentally mature (Neufeld & Mate, 2004). Unprecedented numbers of children and adolescents are now being prescribed medication for depression, anxiety or a host of other diagnoses. The predicament of the young has manifested itself ominously in the growing problem of bullying in the schools and, at its very extreme, in the "murder of children by children" (p. 13). Such tragedies, which are thankfully rare, are "the most visible eruptions of a widespread malaise, and aggressive streak rife in today's youth culture" (Neufeld and Mate, 2004, p. 16).

These disturbing trends, along with my meaning-making encounters—or lack thereof—with students compel me to pose that some deepening of the quest

to be human is called for. What we call education is mostly what's on the surface: the daily grind of schedules, recess bells and a plethora of discrete subjects. Beneath all these are certain assumptions and beliefs: the commitment to mechanistic and materialistic worldview, trust in a government-generated curriculum, and the authority of the school; and faith in technology and our subsequent "advancement." But when we are confronted with problems as complex as climate change, I must put into question our cherished beliefs and assumptions. Vaclav Havel, in his article in the New York Times, *Our Moral Footprint*, reflects on the challenges of today's world, whether they concern the economy, society, culture, security, ecology, or civilization in general. He confronts the moral question What action is responsible or acceptable? "The moral order, our conscience and human rights—these are the most important issues at the beginning of the third millennium" (Havel, 2007, p. A33). I return to my memory of my story of 9/11 described in chapter 1 which illuminates the reality of personal human experience and the importance of relationship that help me understand the absolute importance of a deep, ethical education toward the healing of our world.

Today, we still live, more than ever it seems, in a mechanistic world that has taught us to think in terms of fragmentation, separation, and linearity. The inner rhythms of our biological ties with the biosphere have been replaced by our routines in many ways. Riley-Taylor (2002) explains:

> We wake to an "alarm," live our lives according to the hands on a clock, spend most of every week at a job that, in many cases, is disconnected from an internal desire to create or engage in a task for its own sake. So often, the meaning within our work is disconnected from the immediacy of experience, or is even

unknown to us. Extrinsic motivation, such as output requirements and job security, replaces intrinsic motivators. The capitalistic system of the United States—coupled with industrial and technological growth—keeps us running on a wheel of ever-escalating production and consumption. (p. 2)

This sense of alienation immersed in modern industrialization permeates almost all aspects of our daily living. We need to move away from the alienated "selves," as we are defined by the problematic worldview of alienation, which in turn generates a worldview of separation. The question in my mind remains, How can we stay alert to global changes and the elimination of other life forms and not become overwhelmed with insurmountable hopelessness? Nonetheless, we can envision a new way of life, of being, and a world void of violence and destruction (Macy, 2007). This involves hard work and the practice of service to others, via relational ontology, ethics, and praxis. This practice is largely ethical, since one makes the conscious effort to prioritize the "Other," and their counter-stories. It is also pedagogical, in that it adopts a relational positioning in the larger context of multiplicity. To sum it up, ontology entails ethics (Bai, 2003a).

Starhawk (1994) points out: "As Westerners we do not see ourselves as part of the world—we are strangers to nature, to other human beings, to parts of ourselves" (p. 176). The relational understanding of the world seeks to highlight a consciousness that brings into awareness our connection to our finite planet. Joanna Macy (2007) also explains that we numb our consciousness in order not to feel the pain of separation, as though we collectively "suffer from some form of resistant and dismissive attachment disorder." It is as though we have ignored our lived experience altogether— the ontology of estrangement.

Towards Relational Selves

Educationally speaking, then, how do we work with and help students so that they can overcome their existential conditions of alienation? This question is at once a challenge to education itself: in the way we are educating ourselves and our students. For, as I have been endeavouring to show, our form of education has been an integral part of this process of alienation. Hence what we need is a complete reorientation of pedagogy: one that respects the individual in ways that highlight the relational aspects of learning, knowing and being, which will result in relational selves. You may very well ask, How do we arrive at such pedagogical appreciations of self and learning?

As I have described earlier in this thesis, the historical Enlightenment period in the West fosters schooling that emphasizes the individual and the assumption that the best thing a student can learn is to be liberated from the "constraints" of society. As we move into the 21st century, however, we must realize that the entire project of education is in need of serious readjustment. As a starting point, here is what McLelland and Martin (2006) have to say about this reorientation:

> Psychology, through its discourses and practices, has become infused in contemporary lives as individuals search for their selves. Changes to psychological discourses and practices can be expected to stimulate changes in our broader conceptions of ourselves as persons and citizens. Although our liberal ideals celebrate an individualistic, autonomous self, they also can celebrate dependency, mutuality, collective action, and commitment to others, and it is important that psychology and education have something to say about the latter as well as the former. (p. 86)

What I observe repeatedly is that the individual approach targets problems in the people who need help, such as a need for vocational help or the ability to become self-sufficient. A relational perspective recognizes a broader set of intertwining factors that are involved. Both perspectives are necessary in order for healthy integration to unfold. In families and in community life, a focus on the web of relationships is more revealing and more fruitful than an emphasis on individuals in isolation from each other. This is not "collectivism" that disregards the individual or "individualism" that disregards the collective. Relationalism is the third-space perspective that intersects the two binary antipodes—individualism and collectivism. This is a mode of understanding that diffuses selfhood as a strictly interior, independent psychological self, and instead encompasses the realm of social (McNamee and Gergen, 1999) and ecological interchange. In my effort to move toward a new institutional story, attention is drawn here to the patterned exchange between self and others, and self and environment. What is interdependently redeemable about pedagogy is to bring into question the historically situated psychological assumptions we have held near and dear, especially if they are deemed to be faulty. When we view the world through a relational lens, we change our practices and priorities in all aspects of living.

Remaining Hopeful

Through my inquiry in this chapter, I have come to recognize the tensions I experienced in schools and in dominant political, cultural systems, and my understandings of pedagogy and selfhood as they jolted up against a larger narrative of schooling; I became "dis-postitioned" (Clandinin, 2013). This place

89

of dispositioning is a place of possibility from which I can learn to "un-know" and "not know." As described so nicely by Anzul, Downing, Ely and Vinz (1997):

> I think of my *un-knowing,* giving up present understandings *(positions)*…to make gaps and spaces through which to (re)member ourselves as we examine the principles behind our practices, as a way to articulate our theories in practice, or transform pedagogical principles and purposes into new beginnings…*Not-knowing* is easier and harder. To *not-know* is to acknowledge ambiguity and uncertainty… [It] is to admit vulnerability. (p.139)

It was from this place of wanting to explore my stories of school, and the cultural-historical trajectory of pedagogical theory, I was able to inquire how students are shaped by the cultural narratives and practices pervasive in the school experience. While I know that my narrative inquiry begins and ends in my storied life and the research I have undertaken, I began to see that I needed to find new ways to look across these accounts, to see that new conceptualizations and sets of processes were required to bring into fruition what I see as a necessary integration of selfhood, otherness, and Nature. The "integrated, relational self" is developed through our relations and through critical, embodied conversations with others. In our open-minded relations, we alter our own and other's understandings.

To stay consistent with viewing narrative inquiry as a deeply complex relational practice, I return to the issue of ontology and relational ethics in the next chapter to illuminate a new pedagogical space for pondering the integrated, relational self.

As I returned to my office, day after day, reflecting on plentiful conversations with children, parents, teachers, principals and custodians, I decided to write a thesis about what I had learned. I wanted to describe some of the challenges associated with climate change and the common pursuit of schooling. We are at a point in history where we cannot eliminate our challenges unless we are willing to carefully examine where we got entangled in them. In our transitional place in time, who can predict the influences of our pedagogical actions? This school year, I started working at a downtown eastside school near Hastings Street. While there are plenty of families who suffer from severe poverty, trauma and substance misuse, never before have I encountered a school so vibrant with love, laughter and gentleness. The teachers seem to *choose* to work there, as if called to want to really make a difference in the children's lives. The children and parents are treated with deep, honest respect, never patronized or judged, and seem to be given an experience of unconditional love. Food and recycled clothes are provided, as well as a myriad of before- and after-school activities, much of which is at no cost. Although there is a harsh, degrading world outside along Hastings Street, I see an esteemed glow in the spirits and the eyes of the children (and some parents) when they are treated with such respect and kindness. I remain hopeful that these early years of planting seeds in children will sprout and blossom as they grow. To have schools as sanctuaries of care during the formative stages of a child's life may imprint children toward a tendency for compassion, self-love and security. How will these early revered imprints alter the child, or alter the world, later on in life?

PART THREE

Chapter 5.

Mapping the Contours of Deeper Education

In nature, spring—the time of ripeness when hibernation ceases—
happens only once a year. In the psyche, the potential is always present.
The time to act is now.
~ Carol Gilligan

Relational Occurences

Personal Journal, April 13, 2012

I remember: in the summer of 1974, when I was almost nine, I sat in the sun-dried yellow grass among the oak and maple-trees in the backyard of my childhood home. The light in the sky gradually faded into dusk, and the evening turned pleasantly humid. I thought about the shrill and wailing sounds of the bagpipes that my father had played that morning in the spot where I had settled in the grass. He played them faithfully every Sunday morning, a lonely Scottish piper in the center of our block, captivated by his Great Highland practice. As the sound of bagpipes drifted across the neighborhood, the occasional passing car would slow down. It was not uncommon for the neighbours to come out of their houses and listen as they went about their business, hanging clothes on the line, gardening, or raking leaves. Such was the effect of the mesmerizing, even haunting sound. Even now, the vibration of the bagpipes stirs me, as it brings back fond memories of thick Glasgow accents and pieces of memories of playing hide and seek games in the backyard with my father and Mr. Parsons, an elderly neighbour who used to pass me little army men and small boxes of Smarties through the bushes between our properties. Although my father died when I was fourteen, somewhere deep within me, the sound still resonates.

The bagpipes have been proclaimed an instrument of war (Malcoln, 2011), a notion far removed from my immediate awareness and response to their sound, for

they always stir in me fond memories and love for my father and my neighbour. This childhood experience and other historically situated moments from my past partly mediate my worldview and contribute to a framework from which to understand the world. I understand myself as not being an ontologically separate entity, with my needs, motivations, and aspirations arising in me without any specific feature of my father or other relationships from my past. I am at core a relational being. I was born into relationships, carry features of my father and other people in all moments of my life, and derive my identity in mutual emergence.

I embrace the view that reality is inherently relational, and that each individual is ontologically bound to other entities in their creation and engagement. People and things are neither self-sufficient entities nor vague events, but relational occurrences. This view implies that I, too, am not an independent entity but rather a connected, fluid, and integral consciousness that knows myself through my relationships. As a thesis-writer, all of my writing has flourished on the help, communications, readings, and conversations with others. It also implies that the ontological journey of humanity as relational beings is to develop our sensitivities to engage with others and our natural environment. This fundamental view of personal identity is ecological in that all living things are mutually linked, reciprocally dependent, and equally respected. It is pedagogical because it opens up the exciting potential in K-12 education and beyond of fostering a more holistic view of selfhood that recognizes that we are interdependent with nature and each other. Given this understanding of reality, our educational aims need to be that we help our students to develop greater self-integration, wherein the self is integrated more fully with others and the natural world.

This philosophy that relation is fundamental to who we are is significant for education because our frame of reference guides our understanding of the world. I believe that Deep Education calls us to attend to our relational occurrences that weave the very fabric of reality. By embracing this philosophical framework and the relational pedagogy that flows from it, counsellors and teachers can help students, parents, and communities cultivate mutual respect for one another, increase opportunities for collaboration and cooperation, increase compassionate acts, cherish the natural world, and honour

the differences of others while modifying our own. To work toward this end, we need to make efforts to understand ourselves not only as unique persons but also as members of a community. As well, we need to investigate our pedagogical decisions and practices, wrestle with them, and re-shape them to develop a clearer picture of the kind of education most relevant to the world today.

In this chapter, I suggest conceptual starting points to help promote a better understanding in both students and teachers of our fundamentally relational nature, an understanding that may help power a collective will toward sustainability. I will lay out key interrelated pedagogic principles, including critical sensitivities, mindfulness, and relational knowing, that I see as foundations for Deep Education. In doing so, I will be making the case that the primary aim of Deep Education is cultivation of integrated relational selves, which I term relational-integration.

Critical Sensitivities toward an Ethic of Care

[Teaching] is a sacred calling. [It] entails gradually evoking and nurturing the child's unique gifts and deep interiority and providing a sound orientation to this world. We as a society must do better at protecting and supporting these delicate processes of maturation— and comprehending that relationship is at the heart of it all.
~Charlene Spretnak

In an effort to set aside many educational practices that embrace isolated frameworks for understanding selfhood, I propose a main theoretical perspective that helps me articulate a relational pedagogy to nurture Deep Education: *critical sensitivities.* Developing students' aptitude for critical sensitivities toward their

relationships with others and the environment highlights how the everyday experience of people as they situate themselves in the world has repercussions beyond their personal space. Developing critical sensitivities toward the natural world involves *deconstructing* the overarching beliefs and actions that have broken down the relationship between humans and the environment with little regard for symbiotic balance. The adjective "critical" in "critical sensitivities" refers to this part about deconstruction.

I view the aptitude for critical sensitivities as having two main aspects. The first of these is being able to critically question and evaluate societal beliefs and presuppositions, opening the way for new ways of thinking about others and the world (Zembylas & Vrasidas, 2004). This includes learning about natural interrelationships, how societies impact those relationships, and how their own actions might be eco-friendly. Nurturing students' critical questioning and new perspectives requires teachers to carve out, among all their other educational duties and projects, ample time to help students understand the interrelations among people, societies, and nature. This includes how local circumstances and concerns tie into global and ecological realities and how societal norms and beliefs affect ecological balances, including how personal, local, and national decisions affect ecological issues such as global warming and loss of animal habitats.

The second aspect of critical sensitivities is the marriage of critical thinking with ways of feeling and being (Zembylas & Vrasidas, 2004). This aspect refers to the integration of the intellectual (mind) with the affective (heart). To nurture students' understanding of their own and society's impact on nature,

it is important to create activities that bring them in touch with nature. For example, an afternoon outdoors, exploring the natural habitats of trees, flowers, birds, squirrels, insects, and other creatures, can not only be a welcome respite from classroom work for students, it can also provide numerous opportunities for students to learn, in embodied ways, about the interconnections of beings and the costs of ecological imbalance. Thus the information we present to students does not just go into their "head" but, more importantly, it is integrated into their perceptual and affective layers of being.

In fostering critical sensitivities, teachers can begin by becoming aware of power-over frames of reference that negate the equal importance of the learner, and by taking a perspective that taps into the unique nature of every human being. This "power-with" approach involves "attentive openness to the surrounding physical and mental environment and alertness to our own and others' responses….This power enhances the power of others" (Oxford and Lin, 2011, p. 355). Although power-over relations cannot always be avoided, educators can become more conscious of them and more mindful of their potential influences. If I am aware of the choices available and discuss them with my students, we all become more knowledgeable about our choice-making and the broader consequences of our decisions. For instance, exposing various practices, such as activities that privilege the authority, point of view, and wishes of corporations to the detriment of the environment can be discussed, politically understood, and actively challenged. Although we are socially interpenetrated, our culture is not monolithic. "Each of us lives at an *intersection* of traditions" (Cushman, 1996, p. 293); therefore, alternative perspectives provide us resources

from which to draw when questioning our own beliefs or the predominant norms of society.

It is clear that the pedagogical key to developing students' critical sensitivities for the sake of Deeper Education is to move away from the focus on a student's autonomous individuality and emphasize the significance of the student self within the broader context of a social and biological universe (Bowers, 1991). Assisting students to examine critically their own minds and appraise enculturated ways of knowing will help to shift the emphasis away from anthropocentric and androcentric epistemology toward a relational review of the world (Merchant, 2005). This shifting to a relational pedagogy will require an ontological repositioning from an individualistic mindset to the development of a relational praxis based upon critical reflection on the ideals and practices that have fostered alienation toward ourselves, others, and the environment. The shift in consciousness becomes a re-evaluation of the ideology of individualism and an appreciation for response-ability in an interconnected world (Bowers, 1995). Focusing on a more relational pedagogy will help children to develop not as fragmented, but as relational selves—selves integrated within the worldwide community of others and the natural world.

This, in turn, can be expected to encourage in them an ethic of care. As they learn, in embodied ways, their deep-seated associations within a broader scheme of relationships, they will be better able to embrace the notion that they have obligations and responsibilities to the welfare of others and the natural world. As John P. Miller (2000) contends, "If we can see ourselves as part of the web, there is less chance we will tear the web apart" (p. 5). Fostering children as

relational selves will thus support an ethic of responsibility and care for others and the natural world, "helping them see they have response-ability within a world community much larger than themselves" (Riley-Taylor, 2002, p. 146–147).

Nel Noddings wrote extensively on the ethics of care and much of her extensive work prioritizes concern for relationships. Noddings (1984) describes the ethics of care as "feminine" to illuminate the idea that the essence of human nature is relational as opposed to a traditional, so-called "masculine" approach that valorizes the individual and "his" accomplishments. This view aligns with the basic feminist view of human nature itself. If we are relational beings who naturally care for others, and knowledge is grounded in relational and feeling ways, then our natural instinct will be to think about morality in the same way. Moral acts are evaluated based on the relations of the people involved; thus, relationship is at the core of all human dealings. Noddings believes that ethics is ultimately about enhancing the connections that are naturally there but are de-emphasized by modern, individualistic, masculine or patriarchal worldviews.

What appeals to me about many ethics of care theorists (Noddings, 1984; Gilligan, 1982) and ecologists (Naess, 1989; Sessions, 1995; McKibben, 1995) is the emphasis of the interrelatedness of the world. An ethics of care, when joined to deep ecology, then naturally implies an ethics of earth care, which recognizes that all beings are necessarily and crucially connected to each other, really only existing in relationship to each other. The idea of earth care is similar to Aldo Leopold's (1949) "land ethic," which encourages us to live on the planet with reverence to earth as community, not earth as commodity. He defines ecological ethics by way of setting limits on human activity, thereby protecting others

(human or non-human) from humans' tendency towards overproduction and overconsumption. Leopold's land ethic provides a rich foundation for broadening our vision of schooling. In Leopolds' (1949) words:

> All ethics so far evolved rest upon a single premise: that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts. His instincts prompt him to compete for his place in that community, but his ethics prompt him to also cooperate. The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land. (p. 203–204)

Fostering students' critical sensitivities can excite and engage them, as they are often hungry for new perspectives. I once asked my son, who is in grade 10, what sorts of discussions they have at school regarding climate change. He responded that this topic *never* comes up in his classes. But since we have these sorts of discussions frequently at home, I observe him dialoguing and researching on the Internet matters associated with climate change with his friends. During a dinner conversation, in which a few of his friends joined our family for a meal, the teens were acutely interested in sharing their concerns and understandings of what is happening to the planet. After supper, they mutually decided (and it wasn't my idea!) to approach their schools and ask their teachers to make time to discuss themes of global warming in their respective classes.

Many teachers, too, would welcome new perspectives on how, pedagogically, we may foster critical sensitivities and a more relational understanding to nature among our students. As educators we may sometimes believe we are bogged down in customary patterns inhospitable to such perspectives, but we are likely to find colleagues eager to discuss or even help

implement new ideas if we reach out. Allow me to share a story about a time when I was reflecting on my frustration with my work. Sensing that our ways of schooling were far removed from an ecological worldview, I was really wishing that somehow I could find some way to enact a more environmental approach in the work that I do. It seemed that most conversations I had with colleagues and administrators about schooling and the climate situation fell on deaf ears. Later in the school year, the time allotments for school counsellors changed, and I had to switch to a few new schools in September. This turned into a blessing.

The Disclosure

Personal Journal, November, 2014

> *I was aware that not everyone shared the same values as I do, but more and more among my network of activist friends, ecological values were the norm. The trouble was that I wasn't sure the schools in which I worked would share my beliefs, especially as I was getting involved in activist activities. I mostly kept silent about these activities, thinking that I might be treading a fine line at times. Growing increasingly concerned that my two worlds could not co-exist, I needed to understand more about where I should be directing my attention in my work in schools. A friend challenged my assumption that my work colleagues would think negatively of my social engagement toward preservation and integration and urged me to seek some discussion among my new colleagues. Upon having an ad-hoc conversation with a vice-principal in the hallway one day on the subject of schooling and the environment, I was surprised to hear her response, "if I was to have my dream, I would start an outdoor school!" I was astounded to hear her excitement. We talked extensively over the following weeks, and as it turns out, we are in the midst of writing a proposal for the Vancouver Board of Education to start an environmental/outdoor school in Vancouver! The school will be a Kindergarten to grade four Annex, near the downtown eastside. While we work out the details and get approval from the district, we are starting a school garden and reaching out to the community for support. As good fortune would have it, there is a direct bus to Lynn Valley and the folks at the Lynn Valley eco-center are*

on-board with supporting the project. Many of the teachers and staff are eager to welcome this new direction into our school. One day we took some students on a field trip to Lynn valley, and the surprise was that students who were thought to have 'attentional challenges' and 'behavioural problems' showed enthusiasm and engagement as they discovered the woods for the first time (many of these students had never left the downtown eastside, and therefore had never experienced a forest before). We had an animated discussion about respect and care for the forest and the local ecosystem, and how different the woods are from where the children lived. It was really positive, and I came to see that my strong ecological values are actually beneficial to the counselling and teaching work I do. The realization that my interest in environmentalism could be helping in my professional role, not hindering it, was a real eye-opener. It felt like such a relief, and I experimented with the possibility and playfulness of allowing my new and different self to emerge as I absorbed the idea of starting an ecologically-focussed school with my colleagues. As I contemplate the future of an outdoor school, I wonder what new stories of learning will unfold in our inter(intra)personal communicative process? I was intrigued by my inner passion, fuelled by my passion for change, and I am thrilled with the anticipation of a new co-created journey about what schooling can become.

This example illustrates the constructive change toward incorporating nature back into education if even only a few join together and meld their ideas. It also illuminates how many children who struggle with daily activities in school are happy, cooperative and engaged when thrust into outdoor endeavours. This helps to promote the feeling and being aspect of critical sensitivities, as being in contact with nature becomes an integral and welcome part of their schooling. The teachers were delighted at the students' enthusiasm for the outdoors. In this instance, the development of critical sensitivities can take place within and about the local place, and the natural environment can become the new teacher, enabling lessons about sustainable practices and promoting respect and care for the natural world as well as one another.

Overall, developing students' aptitude toward critical sensitivities amounts to fostering the awareness and appreciation that all persons are simultaneously individuals, members of a society, and members of a species that exists in sensitive relation to all other species on a fully interconnected planet. Teaching critical sensitivities involves both traditional and non-traditional lessons that focus on how phenomena are interconnected, especially those that are relevant to environmental issues. In particular, teaching critical sensitivities includes—and must include if this teaching is to be embodied—helping students understand and appreciate their own connections to others and the natural world. By helping students develop a relational view of themselves and all humanity, we may foster a greater awareness of how each of us is an integral part of the whole interconnected system of the biosphere. At this junction of awareness, there is the possibility for a reorientation of the ethical-political decisions of the planetary community as they relate to local, place-based responsibility and to global citizenship. The likely result of a new educational focus on developing critical sensitivities is that coming generations will take greater local and global responsibility for both societal and environmental health.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness (being "mindful") is a state of being aware of your own mind, at any given moment. It means to pay attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and without judgment.
~Jon Kabat-Zinn, 1990

A second theoretical perspective that informs my view of a relational pedagogy to nurture Deeper Education is *mindfulness.* Mindfulness is a practice

that arises from Buddhist philosophy, a philosophy that emphasizes interdependence, the importance of healing practices, awareness, and "loving kindness" (also known as "friendliness") and compassion as central to ethical action. In an effort to overcome psychological and social separation from one's social and ecological community, Buddhist philosophy provides a "dynamic, systemic, process view of reality" (Smith, 1996, p. x1). Central to Buddhist teaching is Dharma-consciousness, known as the embodied awareness of interdependence of all beings and things and the recognition of the deep sustenance that comes from attention to "human connection within a larger web of relationships" (Riley-Taylor, 2002, p. 105).

This perspective of Buddhist philosophy is one that reverberates with my own view of the school community as not being a static, self-contained entity, but rather a living system, multi-faceted, multi-dimensional, and intersected with other systems and facets of life. A basic principle of Buddhist philosophy is the "dependent co-arising" of "self, society, and world" (Macy, 1991, p. 99). All things are collaborating and mutually co-determining. For example, consider the linear, power-over frame that suggests that my counselling interventions on a student's "problem" behaviour are a one-way, cause-and-effect arrangement. But this particular viewpoint negates the significance of the receiver and the "infinite possibility of relations and their capacity for combination" (Riley-Taylor, 2002, p. 109). If both my students and I are mutually important to determining outcomes, the dualistic framework subsides, and we are mutual participants in creating change, which further empowers both parties.

Mindfulness meditation itself is the practice of intentionally directing one's attention to what is currently present in one's consciousness. This includes being aware of the present existence of one's sensations, thoughts, emotions, and moods. Practicing mindfulness for a period of time, whether that be a minute or an hour, implies that one has continuing awareness of one's experience moment-by-moment. Typically, while performing mindfulness meditation, practitioners attend to the physical sensations of their in-and-out breath as a means of anchoring them to the present moment. Practitioners do not dwell on their thoughts (sensations, percepts, feelings, mental objects) but just pay attention to them rising and vanishing, all the while anchoring their attention to their in-breaths and out-breaths. The practice of not dwelling on the *content* of consciousness, but letting it come and go, brings about a profound change to consciousness. Basically what happens is a "shift of attention from focusing on what is in consciousness (content) to the consciousness itself (container)" (Bai & Scott, 2009, p. 100). By focusing on the "container" and letting the content vary, we learn to expand the capacity of the container and strengthen its ability to hold the content. For instance, if I'm prone to anger, and I dwell on people and situations (content) that trigger my anger, saying that they "cause" my anger, anger will fill up and dominate my consciousness to the point that it explodes out of me or implodes in me. I would be a victim of my own anger. Mindfulness practice helps me to dis-identify the content (my anger) and the container (my consciousness) so that I can work on strengthening and expanding my consciousness. Over time, my consciousness becomes strong and expansive enough that it will hold my anger rather than letting it explode or implode.

Many people, when they think of mindfulness meditation, picture it as a practice in which the body is held relatively still, sitting cross-legged on a mat on the floor with eyes closed or half-closed—as in zazen, sitting meditation. The practice of mindfulness can certainly be engaged in this way, with the target of one's intention being conscious phenomena such as thoughts, sensations, and fleeting images. But mindfulness can also be practiced while engaged in activities such as walking or washing dishes, with eyes fully open and one's attention directed to the rising and falling of the panoply of perceptions that may populate one's conscious experience. In fact, many teachers of meditation have been pointing out that being able to be mindful while engaged in everyday activities demonstrates a true progress in one's mindfulness training and a real benefit of the practice. Such everyday activities include handling emotionally charged situations we come into, and this is where mindfulness training can truly show its power and merits.

Three primary characteristics of mindfulness are that it is active, open, and non-reactive to one's current experience, whatever that may be. The characteristic of being active means that the state is intentional, with focused attention being purposefully directed to simply touching or observing the contents of one's consciousness. Being open means being open to whatever may be in one's experience in the moment, not purposefully ignoring or attempting to put a mental barrier against any sensation or thought that may enter consciousness, including any that may seem painful. In fact, the painfulness of some thought or perception, should it occur, is a part of one's experience that is subject to attention. The third characteristic of mindfulness, that it is non-reactive, or sometimes interpreted as "nonjudgmental," is closely allied to the

106

characteristic of openness since to be truly open to one's experience requires one not to cling to whatever arises, including judgmental thoughts about people, including one's self, and situations. To note, non-reaction or being non-judgmental does not mean that we should have no views of or assessments about things (Bai, personal communication, April 26, 2015). Of course, we will have views and assessments. How else? However, we do not tightly hold onto them as if they are absolute truths. We do not obsess over them, and we are not fundamentalistic about them.

Because mindfulness is directed to present consciousness, it is held to be a practice that allows one to more fully experience the present moment than is the case when caught up in considerations of the past or the future, or when thought processes directed toward some current concern or problem dominate consciousness. In being directed to present experience, mindfulness is the conscious contemplation of the now instead of being caught up in memory of the past or projections into the future. If such thoughts do enter consciousness, the mindful approach is to recognize and accept them for what they are without being consciously swept in thought into the past or the future, or being mentally carried away by some other stream of thought that ignores present experience.

Its open aspects, along with its focus on present experience, are held to be antidotes to stress. In fact, a main expositor of mindfulness, Jon Kabat-Zinn, developed the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program at the University of Massachusetts Medical School in 1979, which has since served as a model for stress-relief programs in various kinds of organization. The value of mindfulness for relieving stress is that its open focus on present experience

serves to calm the mental chatter of thoughts, judgments, worries, and imaginings that often instigate stress while taking us out of our present experience. Actively focusing on present experience without clinging to it tends to relax the mind and reduce bodily tension, opening up space that defuses rigid thinking while promoting mental flexibility and emotional intelligence. The latter I address below.

Of great importance is the fact that mindfulness fosters compassion. In a video talk sponsored by the Greater Good Foundation, Kabat-Zinn (2010) claims that the practice of mindfulness is about the presence of heart or warm-heartedness. He maintains that humans are already naturally loving and compassionate, as is shown in the regard that almost all parents have for their children. He holds that compassion is therefore a core universal human emotion. Naturally, we may ask, if love and compassion are our inherent and natural state of consciousness, then why isn't their presence more obviously and vividly seen and felt throughout the world? Why do we have to "teach" them and train people to acquire them through mindfulness and the like? My answer to this question has been indeed offered throughout this thesis: my own personal stories and observations of schoolchildren have been showing how we become alienated and distanced from our own core state of humanity through acculturation and socialization that obscure and erode our humanity. As a practice, mindfulness serves to uncover compassion, kindness, generosity, and the like that are the birthright of us all.

A feature of mindfulness that is particularly valuable as a pedagogical tool is its ability to alleviate the mental chatter that often suffuses the mind and to

108

thereby open up cognitive and emotional space for seeing and thinking of oneself, others, and the world in new ways that are not dominated by old thought patterns, such as those influenced by individualism and instrumentalism that are central to neoliberalism. Through mindfulness practice, the meditator can better experience the relatedness and continuity, instead of discreteness and separateness, of the beings and things surrounding us (Bai & Scott, 2009). By helping to soften the rigidity of customary ways of thinking and seeing, mindfulness creates a mental and emotional atmosphere in which we are better able to see others in accepting, kind, and supportive ways. This helps foster recognition of our shared humanity, which in turn nurtures our compassionate nature. As such, mindfulness practice can help to cultivate selfhood that goes against the grain of the societal notion that each person is, most fundamentally, a unique ego separate from all others. The walls of separation that are generated by dominant paradigms of separate individuality weaken.

Mindfulness also enables students to feel in closer relation to the natural environment. Attending closely to present experience helps to break down any imagined barriers between ourselves and Nature. Open-hearted and -minded acceptance of our perceptions of the world can allow us to better appreciate the interconnections among the natural objects we encounter in experience and our personal connection to those animals, trees, rocks, and skies. It becomes clearer that the natural world is not something over and against us, but is an extension of us, and that to harm nature is to harm ourselves.

That its various characteristics make mindfulness a powerful pedagogical tool has been recognized by a number of educators. Teaching mindfulness

109

typically involves having students first close their eyes and get comfortable, often as they sit together in a circle. The teacher then instructs them to closely attend to their sensations, such as the movement of their chest as they breathe, the thoughts and images that may enter their minds, and any other sensations that may appear in their consciousness (Weare, 2013). The sense of being related to nature and to others can be encouraged by engaging children in various forms of mindfulness, guided classroom discussions, and outdoor activities. More details on these suggestions follow in Chapter 6.

Research findings indicate that the practice of mindfulness by students leads, over time, to various beneficial spinoffs. These include not only reducing stress, but also improvements in children's behavioral control, executive function, stress reduction, optimistic outlook, and health (Weare, 2013). An important aspect is that it is customary for the children to enjoy their mindfulness sessions, as was clear during a mindfulness session I observed in the Grade 3/4 split class at Pender Elementary School in Vancouver. Below is my journal entry on mindfulness in a classroom that I observed.

Minding the Class

Personal Journal, November 15, 2013

> *It's a drizzly November afternoon and distractions and stressors thrive: it's Reading Break at UBC and eight post-secondary students are observing at the back of the class with anticipation; I am moving around the room, squatting and taking photos of students while they strain to pay attention to their teacher, Mrs. Streithrop. I notice that the abundant energy in the room is enough to make any child wound-up and agitated.*
>
> *But sadly, these humble students aren't just subject to distractions at school. Pender Elementary is located in the Downtown Eastside neighborhood of*

Vancouver, just blocks from the troubled East Hastings Street corridor. In my conversations with these students, I learned that many of them come from a nearby BC Housing co-op where violence, poverty, abuse, and hunger are part of their everyday experience.

Within a few minutes of the students assembling at their teacher's ankles on the carpet, however, all of those diversions and distractions seem to disappear. At the teacher's invitation, they sit cross-legged, rest their hands on their knees palm-side up, close their eyes, and attend to the chime she rings as it echoes through the room. I watch with amusement as the children focus on their in-and-out-breaths at her direction. This is called mindful breathing, and the Pender students practice this exercise three or more times every day. This daily exercise is part of the MindUP program our school, and many other schools in BC, have utilized to help students cope with anxiety and be better prepared for learning as part of the Healthy Schools BC initiative.[8]

After mindful breathing, the students proceed to mindful senses, becoming aware of bodily sensations like hearing, tasting, seeing, and touching. Finally, the MindUP program teaches students intentional acts of kindness towards one another and the community. The ultimate aspiration is to teach children empathy, alertness, positive energy, and altruism, but it begins with students' ability to regulate their own tension and concentration.

The MindUP program was founded by actor Goldie Hawn with the support of neuroscientists, positive psychologists, and researchers on social-emotional learning (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010). MindUP is one of many programs used in British Columbia's schools to teach children and adolescents the benefits of mindfulness. Research evidence suggests that students who underwent the MindUP program have improved optimism and self-concept, healthy self-regulation, positive classroom culture, and improved math achievement scores (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010; Schonert-Reichl, Lawlor, Abbott, Thomson, Oberlander, & Diamond, 2011). As part of my own critical sensitivities learning, I would like to point out that mindfulness practice,

[8]http://www.healthyschoolsbc.ca/program/418/mindup

including MindUP program, can also be delivered and practiced in ways that yield at the most anxiety reduction associated with tests and, even, that lead to instrumentalism. Many critics of the instrumentalist way that mindfulness is practiced have been pointing out that if mindfulness is treated as a technique or tool, it too is not immune to misuse and abuse. Or at least, it would not take us to the fountain of humanity: compassion, generosity, kindness, and wisdom.

Mindfulness practice is also valuable for teachers, as it is thought to improve teachers' habits of mind, including "tendencies to gather data through all of the senses, to be aware of and reflect on experience in a nonjudgmental manner, to be flexible when problem solving, to regulate emotion and be resilient after setbacks, and to attend to others with empathy and compassion" (Roeser, Skinner, Beers, & Jennings, 2012, p. 167). Another study showed that teachers given mindfulness training showed beneficial emotional effects, including increased recognition of emotions in others and increased activation of cognitive networks associated with compassion (Kemeny et al., 2012).

Researchers have also shown mindfulness training to result in positive changes in teacher-student interactions (Singh, Lancioni, Winton, Karazsia, & Singh, 2013). In my own case, practicing mindfulness has been helpful to my working alongside others and with students and has led to a deeper appreciation of the I-thou relationship, where I respond more fully to "thou" with my whole being (Buber, 1987, p. 16). In the next narrative account, I make visible how I have utilized mindfulness to help children resolve relationship disputes.

Receptive States

Personal Journal, May 12, 2011

Tom and David were two boys in grade two I came to know in my second year at Westside Elementary. They were referred to counselling by their teacher and the principal since they had spent so much time in together in reactivity, mutual insults and fighting, that it was getting in the way of the learning environment in the classroom and the safety of the playground. The principal had already had several meetings with their parents and she asked me for some counselling assistance. I decided that one way to try to help the boys was to assist them in strengthening their ability to "enter a receptive state of awareness" (Siegel, 2010, p. 216). The sensibility of being heard by one another, who has your best interests at heart, is the emotional nourishment I surmised they needed to help them part amicably that day.

We began with a visual relaxation exercise where the boys were invited to close their eyes, relax their muscles and do some deep breathing exercises. Both boys were to notice the feeling they were having in that moment and where they felt it in their bodies. After asking them to visually, metaphorically and mentally release their tense feelings, I invited them to imagine images of what healing the challenges they were having together would look like and feel like. After we stayed present and quiet with those restorative images for a while, I asked each boy to tell us what those descriptions looked like. Tom explained that he actually craved David's friendship and saw they could be friends who played fun games at recess and lunch. David seemed pleased to hear this news and also affirmed he, deep down, really liked Tom. They were then probed to listen to the other's unfolding story and honour the vulnerability of the other's pain and hurt feelings.

What emerged, interestingly, was a more positive feedback loop that was less reactive to each other and more connected—first to their own bodies and emotions and then to the internal world of the other. Breaking their cycle of discontentment and aggravation was not the responsibility of either alone. A healing space was created to allow for "seeing" the other, and accepting that they are participants in their mutual healing.

This anecdote illustrates a great value of mindfulness practices: that they help us to "see" the other and to develop concentration, clarity, emotional positivity, and a calm seeing of the perspective of the other, while caring and trusting the other person "is often the key to widening our windows of tolerance" (Siegel, 2010, p. 138). By my engaging Tom and David with holistic or integrative mindfulness practices, they became better acquainted with the patterns and habits of their minds and were offered a means to imagine and cultivate new, more positive ways of being with one another. What I have found in working with children who experience conflict is that with regular work and patience these nourishing, focused states of mind can deepen into profoundly peaceful and energized states of caring for others. The sketchy autobiographical account above suggests that such experiences may have a transformative effect and may lead to new understandings of self and others.

Overall, the practice of mindfulness, which Daniel Siegel (2010, 2013) calls *mindsight,* may foster in the individual a more comprehensive and enlightened consciousness of self and others. Siegel, who writes extensively on the integration of psychotherapy and brain science, contends that individuals need to have certain experiences to develop the human capacity to perceive their own minds with clarity. Like muscles that need exercise, it is possible to direct our thoughts and feelings, our inner state of mind, and "*remold* neural pathways" (Siegel, 2012, p. 74). According to Siegel (2012), mindfulness or mindsight may even promote the onset of a mutual or collective consciousness as language and socio-historical contexts play out in wider culture, leading to cultural evolution. He explains this further:

> When we come to see that consciousness permits choice and
> change, then this shared awareness can be at the heart of creating
> large-scale shifts in human *culture*. Rather than being some

mysterious metaphysical influence, instead the direct experience of shared awareness may have concrete effects on *relationships* and on *brains*. In this way, *cultural evolution* may occur by a shift in shared awareness that is transmitted in the profoundly important but often subtle patterns of interpersonal communication that are a fundamental part of our socially-embedded and interpersonal mental lives. (p. 52)

There is also a second sense of mindfulness that goes somewhat beyond the kind of meditational practice I have been describing. This is the idea of living mindful of one's beliefs and actions with the desire to act in the best interests not only of oneself but also of others and of the world as a whole. Mindfulness in this sense equates closely with the idea of living intentionally and can be furthered by the practice of meditational mindfulness. To help students develop mindfulness in this sense—thoughtful, intentional living—is one of the overall goals of teaching them the meditational practice of mindfulness as well as of fostering their critical sensitivities.

Mindfulness in this broader sense is also a way of being and understanding that is beneficial to teachers. Relationally-aware education encourages us as educators to act more mindfully in our interactions with our students, to ask more personally relevant questions, and to reflect on our relational practices as immediately and continually as possible. As educators, it behooves us to be continually mindful of how we relate to others and build trusting relations with our students. This contextualizing relationship includes the cultivation of an attitude of deep respect for ours elves, for other humans, for other species, and for restoration of a healthy global ecosystem.

Riley-Taylor (2002) speaks of the choice to live with conscious intention toward others:

> Living out of conscious intention suggests that each move in life, each choice, is important; that every moment-by-moment decision matters, because it suggests who we are by means of our own construction. And I would suggest that bringing "intentionality" into day-to-day life as part of a personal praxis contributes to the cultivation of an integrative awareness, drawing on heart, spirit, and reason, our capacities for action based on informed judgement.
>
> (p. 114)

Personally, practicing meditational mindfulness has helped me to live more mindfully in the second sense—i.e., to live more intentionally. It has been helpful in the moments I am engaged with co-composing stories, helping me remember to intentionally consider, more deeply and in an embodied way, what it means to live relationally toward caring for others who dwell on our mutual planet. Living with intentionality in this way has helped me to open spaces between conflicting reference points of self-other and draw on more integrative understandings that serve as a basic foundation to everyday living.

The practice of meditational mindfulness has also furthered my sense of relational-integration in the context of my life experience, allowing me to better see myself as who I am being and becoming and to embrace ways to build a more relational view of my*self*. I have come to envision myself as an "ecological self" engaged in "the greening of the self" (Macy, p. 183). I imagine myself as fluid and interchangeable with other animate life. A few years ago, I began an activist group with many other local community members to initiate preservation and protection of Howe Sound. Over time, our group has connected with many other like-minded alliances around Howe Sound and

British Columbia to form a rather extensive network of people working to conserve our local areas. Many efforts have been initiated by our group, including the halting of old growth deforestation, educating ourselves and others about local ecosystems, employing protections of marine mammals and species at risk, and encouraging the government to create a myriad of Marine Protected Areas. These acts of activism and countless other acts of community agency reveal a sense of self that is widened and integrated with other life forms. The meaning of my own life includes the necessary flourishing of trees and whales, not as objects to be exploited, but rather as inseparable from my sense of extended self and well-being.

Relational Knowing and Being

If we are not really separate from each other, our destinies cannot really be separated from each other, either.
~David Loy

Relational knowing and being is a concept with close ties to the two main concepts discussed above: critical sensitivities and mindfulness. For one thing, a main objective in teaching students critical sensitivities and mindfulness is to foster their aptitude for relational knowing. For another, relational being for teachers is at the same time a way of relating to students that fosters the students' critical sensitivities, their mindfulness in the sense of living intentionally, and their own aptitudes for relational knowing.

Relational knowing/being itself is an approach to understanding a person, situation, or other phenomenon that requires being open to and, as much as possible, attending to the relational aspects of whatever one is attempting to understand. This implies that to understand individual humans, one must

117

understand the relationships they are in and how those relationships affect the individual's views of self, others, and the world. Relational knowing also implies being cognizant of how one's actions (or inactions) affect others, as well as being aware of their local and global effects. For teachers and school counsellors, this includes being cognizant of educator-student relational aspects that inform situations, when one is dealing with students. It also includes being attentive to the relational aspects of students' associations and communications with one another.

I believe that relational knowing is something almost all of us do at least to some extent. We attempt to view and understand ourselves and our family, friends, colleagues, and students in terms of the individual's relationships to others. And we are always somewhat aware, if only dimly, of our own effects upon others. But I believe that often we rely too much on cursory understandings of these myriad relationships that actually go to make the reality of the person, or even, ignore relationships because, for the sake of simplicity and ease, it is inviting at the time to do so. What is needed is a more thoroughgoing embrace of the ontology, epistemology, ethic, psychology, and pedagogy of interrelationship in which we admit that the truest understanding is always relational understanding, of which there is a limitless depth, and that in forgetting all this, we are prone to misunderstanding.

Of considerable relevance to relational pedagogy is the form of thinking that emphasizes the blame of "a person" and holds individuals accountable for behavioural flaws or wrongdoing. However, faulting people for their behavior is only one form of having a conversation. There are other frames of reference for how certain ways of behaving become visible within a relational context. For example, another's autonomous action—utterances, behaviour, gestures—are not

his or hers alone but are related to someone to whom they are directed (McNamee and Gergen, 1999). The after-result of attempting to understand something relationally may be a way of opening spaces for new ways of understanding, new ways of framing events, and new ways of relating to one another. For example, when I shift students' attention to a co-authored narration of a person's history and cultural context, I foster new ways of relating and framing events. These new ways of framing events will be more constructive potentially than the narrative of blame and have substantial implications for relational understanding and dialogue.

I see this prevailing co-created identification of students play out in some school programs like our Special Remedial Behaviour Program. Students' autonomous actions are often unintentionally reinforced as belonging to the individual student. In these cases, the lack of relational understandings serves to perpetuate the very trauma and brutality of the student's experiences that they are trying to remediate. The programs often exacerbate rather than mitigate the injustices that these children routinely experience in their families, communities, and schools. While their emotional difficulties may contribute to the problems they experience, without an adult to advocate for them, they continue to be problematized. Encounters with a young boy named Ward help illustrate what is meant by taking the relational perspective.

Ward, "H" Designated

Personal Journal, June 22, 2012

Ward is six years old and a brilliant mind with vigorous energy. He accompanied his mother one day to our school near the end of June to secure a placement in grade two for the following September. Space was available for Ward, and the

principal asked me to call the counsellor at the previous school for background information before his personal file arrived. This is often a common practice to find out ahead of time what the student's learning needs are and to find out information to help with the transition to a new school. As well, Ward's mother thought Ward might have a Ministry Designation, but couldn't recall what it was. When I made the call, the secretary on the phone paused upon hearing my mentioning Ward's name. In a somewhat anxious tone, she replied, "One moment please, I will connect you with the principal."

It seemed the principal was elated to learn that Ward was changing schools. "Are you serious?" the principal responded. Her voice quickly turned to concern, "Are you aware that Ward is an 'H' designation?" (An H designation is a special needs category described as "Students Requiring Intensive Behaviour Intervention or Students with Serious Mental Illness."[9]) She continued, "His behaviour is horrendous; he is constantly in trouble for hurting, punching, and pinching other children. He gets no work completed and hides under his desk. And when the meltdowns begin they are a nightmare! Well, best of luck with this one...you'll need it."

The following week when Ward's file arrived, the content looked even more discouraging. There appeared to be a number of police incidents at the family home and the Ministry for Children and Families were involved with the family. If there was any good news, it was that Ward was going to be in Teresa's class. Teresa always spoke positively about her students, but lacked recognition that she created incredible magic in her classroom. The children could not get enough of her, and she was well-respected by parents and her colleagues. Children who were labeled as "behaviourally problematic" in other classrooms seemed to be able to endure the school year without incident in Teresa's class.

On day one, things went rather smoothly. A "buddy" was introduced to Ward to help him get oriented the first week. Ward seemed genuinely astonished at the calm behaviour of the other children. This was not something to which he was accustomed.

On the second day, the challenges began. Ward arrived at school an hour late looking rather tousled and clearly upset. He had missed breakfast since his

---

[9] See http://www.vsb.bc.ca/sites/default/files/school-files/Programs/CategoryH.pdf for a list of BC Ministry designations.

mother slept in. I invited him to my office where I gave him a granola bar and an apple. This is when I learned he'd had a terrible night's sleep due to the police incident at his home last evening. His father was retained for "fighting" with his mother and would spend the night in jail.

After recess, he returned to his classroom, apparently wandering about to his liking. When it was time to line up with the class, he became angry once again. He ran off to the playground in the schoolyard, hiding inside the little yellow and blue playhouse. Teresa sent a couple of the children to fetch me to see if I could coerce him back into the school.

"I'm not going to drag you inside," I said, as he defiantly peered at me through the window of the playhouse. "If you want to stay out here, it's up to you, but it's cold and it's going to rain." (I noticed he was without a jacket). "Also, your class is baking cookies this afternoon." (Thank goodness, I had something positive to report).

"I'll give you a few minutes to think about it," I said and slowly walked back to the school with fingers crossed. As I eagerly turned to look through the window, he was already making his way back to the school. "Do you want to go back in?" He nodded, and I accompanied him back to the classroom.

Over the following weeks, the adults at our school agreed to a "wrap-around" approach with Ward. We made a point of positive greetings, highlighting his strengths, and showing him that school is a place where you can do remarkable things. It was discovered that Ward is extremely bright and good-natured, talented at art, and motivated in math— despite his aloof and distant bravado.

As expected, he formed a beneficial relationship with Teresa. He was aware that he was liked by the teacher and staff. The positive efforts also had an effect on the other children, and they also accepted him. Over a matter of months he was settled and content. Interestingly, his home life became more stable as well, and we met regularly with his parents to discuss how we could all work together to support Ward.

In this case, rather than accepting a foregone classification of this young boy, I and others in our school were cognizant of the fact that Ward's potential relationships to school, classmates, and teachers was not something written in stone. Furthermore, we were aware of the importance of how our own relation

to Ward might positively affect his schooling and acted accordingly. This is relational knowing because it views the student not just as an individual being but in a more fundamentally truthful way as a person whose present and future reality is defined by his relations to others. An instance like this is also appropriate for reflecting on how we may impair children's development when two schools can perceive the same student so differently. The actions and language of educators in schools has significant meaning when considering the invisible but very real medium of intersecting relations (Sidorkin, 2002). Ward's situation reminds me, with great force, of the critical importance of our responsibilities as educators to prioritize in our schools the importance of relational knowing and understanding.

The example of Ward as an individual known for his problem behavior in his previous school is a prime example of culturally endorsed psychologies and educational practices that have resulted in students perceiving themselves and the world as a collection of physically separate entities. I believe that the ontological underpinnings of many everyday exchanges and communications that occur in schools have missed the deeply relational nature of reality. Schools have become fragmented and alienating for many students, as the focus for modern culture has become the supposed "separate individual." The connection between relational ontology in schools and humanity's regard for the natural world may seem unobvious. However, our relentless misunderstanding of ontological alienation and our neglect of relational knowing have pushed an ailing planet to its physical limits. The beginning of a cure is to start realizing that the only genuine knowing, the only wisdom, is through relational knowing.

Many a time, with regret, I have wondered how many students are imperiled by situations similar to Ward's, situations in which they are socially

alienated in the sense of having a high degree of distance or isolation between the student and others in school (Ankony & Kelly, 1999). Heidegger (1962) describes a social construction called "the they," which is a symptom of an alienated understanding. "The they" signifies a sort of nameless authority who is "in the know." This kind of reference often ensues when a topic is discussed in an everyday manner by invoking this supposed authority called "the they." In this way, students are conferred about as already known, as in, "you know what *they* say." In such a mode, as illustrated by the case of Ward, there is a subtle understanding that nothing more can be questioned or discovered about a student since the facts have been stated and therefore ought to be endorsed and repeated.

Juxtaposed against this kind of alienated understanding, Heidegger (1962) set forth the concept of *authenticity.* Authenticity, as I see it, is a mode of empathy, whose central features are being truly present and personally responsive to another (Buber, 1987). Applied to our understanding and talk about another individual or entity, empathy unfolds as a kind of openness or wonder felt toward who or what is under discussion. The alienation of idle talk is abolished through a genuine dialogue, which makes whomever or whatever is being discussed one's own. It is precisely by making the person or entity one's own, in one's own self-understanding, that a relational understanding is achieved. Thus, a more relational understanding implies a more authentic understanding.

To attend to relational knowing is not only a fertile approach for teachers and counselors, it is an aptitude that we should be striving to develop in our students as an antidote for the fragmentation that appears to characterize many of their lives. It is clear from the section on critical sensitivities that developing

123

students' critical sensitivities amounts to helping them to develop their relational knowing. By increasing their critical sensitivities regarding the interrelationships among phenomena, the adverse ecological impacts of contemporary norms, attitudes, and practices, and what personal and local attitudes and actions can help restore social and ecological health, they are strengthening their aptitudes for relational knowing. The competently guided practice of mindfulness, too, can help create a state of mind out of which students are better able to appreciate the myriad relationships that go to define themselves and other entities. In this way, mindfulness fosters relational knowing. Furthermore, insofar as practicing mindfulness and developing critical sensitivities help promote an ethic of care and of earth care, they are promoting a better understanding in the student of his or her own impacts on others and the environment, which is also a form of relational knowing.

I believe that by helping students develop their aptitude for relational knowing, we are at the same time counteracting the pressures toward fragmentation that I have argued are a result of the ontology of the separate ego. In my work as a school counsellor, I struggle to make sense of the many students who seem to experience ontological alienation in their relationships at school. My observation of children and young adults in schools is that students encompass tremendous resilience and creativity. Nonetheless, despite well-intentioned educators and a thoughtful curriculum, the underlying belief systems and structures of education, much of which came under my examination in this thesis, instilled in our students throughout the education system are contributing to their emotional and psychological wounds. Many young people today appear seriously adrift, as they contend with the adverse effects of mesmerizing electronics, attachment problems in their relationships, lack of nutritious food, and high levels of alienation, anxiety, and depression (Spretnak,

2011). These generalizations remind me of the personal-social dimension of my narrative travels, as for years I have entered and explored the continuities and discontinuities of children's stories of substance use, physical and sexual abuse, and feelings of social isolation as I fleetingly pass through their lives in my attempts to understand their worlds.

To reverse this fragmentation, I believe, as teachers and school counselors, it is incumbent that, as much as possible, we embrace relational knowing in our approaches to students and teachings and that we shift our focus to relational knowing within the existing curriculum, teaching our students to understand in a relational way. This will require helping students understand from an early age that they are part of a complex intermingling of relationships beyond the narrow identity of an isolated self. The notion of a distinct self is not abandoned altogether, but questioned and incorporated into a larger framework, making it serve as part of that interconnected framework, rather than in place of it. Learning about the deeply relational nature of the world, students will be able to see the world as one that "places humans within, rather than above or outside of nature …and places values on all entities that are self-renewing…from individual organisms to the ecosphere itself" (Merchant, 1996, p. 205). The result is a form of "eco-intelligence," which involves a "rethinking the nature of intelligence" away from the model of separation, individualism, and the detached spectator (Spretnek, 1997, p. 122).

Making Change Happen

Many teachers question whether we can create these widening spaces in pedagogy, given the current public school curriculum (Orr, 2004). The curriculum we adhere to is a product of our epistemology: subjects are separated

into fragmented topics and time periods, we have confidence in "facts" and information (Evans, 2012). Our educational imperatives reflect our reverence of scientific methodology and the objectivity and standardization that are an outcome of that thinking. But our curriculum is also a reflection of what society values, and teachers lawfully cannot abandon it. They can, however, learn to reframe it not as rigid and inflexible, but as a tool and an opportunity to work within the institutional contract while enabling students to question, explore, and reconstruct that contract and the associated curriculum.

To achieve this shift will take much work, as our intentional actions become habits only when we repeat them over and over (Loy, 2008). But every effort we make helps to move us toward a pedagogy that takes account of the ontological primacy of relationship, one that embraces relational knowing and commits itself to developing our own and our students' critical sensitivities. It is an education that teaches mindfulness meditation as an invaluable practice as well as mindfulness, in the sense of living intentionally, as a way a life. The result is that we begin experiencing the world and our responsibilities differently, and thereby transform ourselves.

Though difficult, the work is necessary and worth it, as I believe is shown by the implications reflected in the story of Ward. This young boy's story is a example of what takes place daily in everyday interactions with students. As my mind returns to memories of Ward, I recall the rigidity and the stronghold of the school environment. When we are bound within its grip, rarely do we remember that there is a whole sensate world outside the building complete with blossoms, Douglas firs, and birdsong, that there is a rhythm of life taking place in the landscape right outside the school.

In the next chapter, I provide practical activities that educators might use to further the development of students' critical sensitivities, mindfulness practice, and relational knowing. These suggested practical means, an outgrowth of the philosophy of relational ontology, are meant to provide sustenance to the flowering of Deeper Education.

Chapter 6.

Key Tools for Relational-Integration as Daily Practice

"It is through communion with nature that we attain our full humanity."
~ Charlene Spretnak

The Everyday

Personal Journal, January 22, 2011

Through my desk window, the first hints of sunshine illuminate a crisp January morning. The cloudless sky provides a welcome reprieve from the rainforest drizzle that has commanded the past three months. With amusement, I watch the stellar blue jays and robins pick among the variegated greens of the Douglas firs in the front yard. Miles, my ever-selfless golden retriever, lies sleeping at my feet, warming my toes against the last remnants of the cool night just passed. He twitches and whimpers occasionally from his canine dreams, with running legs cast alongside the floor. The world outside my window emerges from the darkness of night into the brightness of day, from the gray, gloomy desolation of winter to the green re-birthing of spring. As the hours pass, twists of light transform the scenery into the forest beyond. I watch the miniscule rain droplets gradually build and plunge from the tips of the fine emerald pine needles. I catch a glimpse of the inescapable interconnectedness I sense with my surroundings; I resonate with the extraordinary spirit of nature. I muse about my hope that the children of tomorrow will live in a compassionate world.

At this juncture, I feel my own private yearning for a restored connection with the inclusive life force, for an internal remembering of my place in an all-encompassing universe. My cellular phone rings from a distant room, and my fleeting spell of enchantment is abruptly broken.

Moments like the above are when I consider myself very fortunate, since I tend too often not to notice the astonishing expressions of such natural grandeur when I am thrust into the distractions of daily living. I am not alone, as many folks often fail to attend closely to their immediate experience and their engagement with the natural world (Abram, 2010). My work in schools tells me that this lack of attention begins early, as schooling inducts and indoctrinates students to devalue their animistic subjective experiences. This arguably results in alienated consciousness in our experience, though R.D. Laing (1967) insists that our psyches *are* our experiences, and our experiences *are* our psyches.

In previous chapters, I have suggested that an ethic of relational-integration can enrich our understanding of the interrelatedness of our human place to a larger universal order. Relational-integration becomes the profound interpenetration between people and communities (Cohen and Bai, 2008), and between people and the natural world that sustains us. An ethic of relational-integration provides an approach to knowing and being that acknowledges that humans cannot rightly be divorced from each other and the natural world. Through relational-integration, people are enabled to understand themselves not as individuals with inner voids to be fulfilled with consumerist tendencies, but as meaningful, coexistent members of a world community wherein the world and other people are experienced as partners and extensions of oneself.

I believe that this kind of relational understanding and knowing is what we, as educators, must advocate if we are to begin to create, in our students, a new ethic of earth care that will enable us to start solving the serious environmental problems we face. Our predicament is to understand our world and the impending problems of climate change (draughts, severe weather systems, food and water shortages, and diminishing resources) and to make

immediate plans for how we are going to respond to them (McNamee and Gergen, 1999). There are many fronts that could help enable such responses.

The over-arching pedagogical rationale behind relational ontology is that relational ontology emphasizes that relations between entities are ontologically more substantive than entities themselves. This understanding has the capacity to dramatically change the way we engage with the world. When relations are understood and embodied, i.e., understood in embodied ways (i.e., not just informational or propositional understanding), greater compassion and responsibility have practical consequences for ecological stewardship, overcoming oppression, injustice, etc. The basic pedagogical foci behind the suggested activities are that some are intuitive, taught with actual materials/lessons but "between the lines" – as embodied and relational awareness as well as overt critical discussions.

What is needed is education focused on mending the ontological divide by helping students develop their capacity for relational-integration as they come to understand their fundamental nature as not separate from but inclusive of others and the natural world. Whereas mainstream educational psychology has conceptualized people fundamentally as being isolated egos, the essence of our humanness is, in fact, the *primacy of interrelatedness and resulting interaction*. "We are first social and then psychological, and our psychological personhood arises only within our coordinated interactivity with others" (Martin & McClellan, 2013, p. 177–178).

The focus of this last chapter is to imagine our path together alongside the day-to-day educational practice that can be urgently utilized to help foster relational-integration among our students. The chapter is divided into several

main sections in which I will make recommendations, both broad and specific, for ways to transform the education of our children. This vision of a Deeper Education rests on a relational pedagogy that leads students to become more attuned to the natural world, more cognizant of the interrelationships of all people and things, and more critically sensitive to the ecological issues that confront us all. In regard to integration with nature, Joanny Macy (2007) speaks eloquently:

> Just as lovers seek reunion, we are apt, when we fall in love with
> our world, to fall into oneness with it as well. We begin to see the
> world as ourselves. Hunger for this union springs from a deep
> knowing, which mystics of all traditions give voice to. Breaking
> open a seed to reveal its live-giving kernel, the sage in the
> Upanishads tells his student: "*Tat tvam asi* – That art thou." The
> tree that will grow from the seed, that art thou; the running water,
> that art thou; and the sun in the sky, and all that is, that art thou. (p. 27)

Practical Suggestions for Relational Pedagogy

Overview

In this section, I suggest a number of specific ways for implementing a pedagogy more focused on (a) developing students' critical sensitivities toward their relationships with others, the community, and the environment; (b) creating outdoor activities to better nurture an ethic of earth care; and (c) implementation of mindfulness practice in the classroom. Some of the suggested activities, especially in regard to developing critical sensitivities and practicing mindfulness are traditionally done in the classroom. But I believe that learning from direct experiences outside the classroom is as important as the content taught in the curriculum. Here, the curriculum relates specifically to personal

and intrapersonal interaction with the geography, sociology, ecology, and politics of local places and can help generate understandings that can then be extended globally. Lessons about local places can enable students to spend large amounts of the school day outside, with nature as teacher. As learning takes place in local natural settings, students are taught to enliven their senses and sensibilities to understanding the ecosystem over seasons and years. The study and contemplation of sustainable living and being can be integrated into every activity and every decision.

Schooling that can help students better understand and reconnect with the natural world is one that can also promote an understanding of our planet as a mutual commons, a view in contrast to the idea of the planet as private property and one for which there is a growing interest (Shiva, 2005). On a local and global scale, communal trends around the globe are recognizing the economic, social, and ecological costs associated with a globalized free market. There is thus a growing need to capture this notion of the commons in our educational pursuits, as a form of resistance to the enclosure of the commons—given the devastating effects of the privatization of public resources.

Fostering Critical Sensitivities

One of the most obvious and valuable ways to help students be more ecologically aware is to stimulate them to think about natural interrelationships and help them identify and think critically and creatively about ecological problems with an eye to devising workable solutions to solve local and global environmental and social problems (Oxford and Lin, 2012). In what follows, I provide some specific ideas for topics and approaches that teachers may use to spur awareness and critical ecological thinking. With some imagination and

planning, many of the suggestions below can be incorporated into writing assignments or into lessons in history or science. They can also be integrated into lessons and discussions in various guided outdoor activities such as those described in the next section. It is doubtful that any set of lesson plans could cover all of the suggestions below. Some may seem more cogent or applicable to the current curricula of a particular class or school than others. Some may be more appropriate for one age group than others. My purpose here is simply to make some practical suggestions that might stimulate educators' thinking about what is possible in the way of helping students develop their aptitude for critical sensitivities.

- A first suggestion is for the teacher to develop course objectives to embrace the particularities of local culture and community and to delve into what is characteristic or even unique about the community and the local natural environment (Pierce, 2013). Every town and region has its own particular character, history, and natural setting. Engage students in investigating and talking about what may have been done to better life socially, culturally, and ecologically in the area (e.g., local services for financially challenged families, a local historical museum, or recycling services) and what may have been done that is socially, culturally, or ecologically damaging or questionable (e.g., a lack of preserving nearby wild spaces for people to go hiking, or excess loss of animal habitat). In regard to local circumstances that are deemed to be problematic in some way, discuss how this problem may affect people, wildlife, or vegetation, and how the problem connects to past, present, and future human activities. Ask students to develop ideas for how the problem might be ameliorated.

- A second suggestion is to engage students in reflection and discussion about the concept of the common good and what is best for the common good in relation to the classroom, the community, and the planet as a whole. Include discussion of the native philosophy of making decisions that would benefit successors seven generations hence (Oxford and Lin, 2012). Discuss the kinds of conflict that occur between the common good and individual good. There are countless

ways of illustrating this conflict, from the poaching of elephants in Africa to real estate developments that take land that could be made into a park serving the entire community. Help students understand that while all such conflicts of interest occur in a particular community or region, and are in that sense local, they also have global implications. Discuss cases where the common good aligns with individual good and discuss how the conflict between the common good and individual good is often adjudicated by the passing of legislation.

- Teachers can also educate students about the ecological, societal, and health effects of consumerism, capitalism, and unsustainable industry (Pierce, 2013) and document the ecological and health effects of local and global environmental hazards (Sobel, 2008). These issues can be addressed by focusing on circumstances and realities that students are probably familiar with. An example is the plastic bags that most stores use to package purchased products. Discussing how many of these bags must be distributed each day, why the bags are used, and what ecological problems they cause can help students understand how such a common and seemingly unproblematic feature of contemporary life has, in fact, serious ecological implications. Encourage students to put forth suggestions for what they themselves can do to help ameliorate problems discussed. Use this as a springboard for discussing the concept of unified collective action. Talk about the importance of education for bringing people to realize the short- and long-term effects of their actions. Ask students to think about and comment on whether some people are eager for such knowledge and some people purposely avoid such knowledge. And ask them to think about what people do when they do learn that some of those actions have negative effects. Is there a difference between people who act upon that knowledge and those who ignore the knowledge in their actions?

- Tell stories about special places in nature. Enable students to tell their own stories about their engagements with nature, including their camping, hiking, and other outdoor experiences and their experiences with animals and plants. Ask them to talk or write about any natural places where they have felt especially connected with their surroundings. This could be something as large as a provincial park or as small as an area where they go to pick berries or to fish. Encourage them to speak about any trips they may have taken to regions with

134

different geography, weather, or wildlife than their current locale. If any of them have experienced occasions of stargazing at night, what was that experience like? Talk with them about what their stories and experiences may suggest about the interrelationships always present in nature and ways to care for nature. Students may bring up any number of places or experiences they believe were special. Any of these can be the starting point for discussions that can help them realize the meaning of the experience for them and to further anchor it in their memory.

- Teach students the cost in natural resources of consuming various types of food and other products; for example, discuss the amount of water required to produce a pair of jeans, or a steak, or a loaf of bread (Shiva, 2005). Discuss with them the ecological effects of transportation of goods. Provide reasons, both ecological and economic, for students to buy locally produced products (Shiva, 2005). Again, such lessons can be anchored in realities that students are aware of in their everyday lives such as the food they eat and the clothes they wear. If there is a farmer's market in the area, ask students to investigate the kinds of food and other items that are sold there. Have your own list ready of various products—not just food—that you know are produced and sold locally. Talk about the economic and environmental effects of this local production.

- Discuss energy, how it is produced and used, and how environmental issues are connected to energy use, especially reliance on fossil and nuclear fuel. Discuss the different kinds of renewable energy and how conversion to renewable, cost-effective energy based on wind, solar, and geothermal sources could help ameliorate environmental problems (McKibben, 2010). Construct a "pollution index" chart based on the different kinds of pollution that different energy sources produce. Discuss the various kinds of pollution that result from energy use (e.g., air, water, soil), and develop a chart to compare different kinds of energy sources in regard to how much and what kinds of pollution they produce.

- Share with students research that suggests the soothing value of nature and spirituality as an antidote to stress (Macy, 2007). Such research includes several studies. One of these was conducted at the University

135

of Rochester showing that when people are engrossed in a natural setting, which includes sitting near plants or viewing slides of nature photos, they are disposed to care, to value others and their communities, and to be more generous than before (Weinstein, Przybylski, & Ryan, 2009). Conversely, looking at photo slides of strictly human-made settings, the viewers indicated that they valued money, prestige, and fame more than interpersonal relations or generosity. Ask students to share experiences in which they have found joy, comfort, or peace being in natural settings and encourage them to express why they think they felt that way. The teacher can also share his or her experiences. Talk about whether the students' experiences in natural settings versus their experiences in human-made environments do or do not seem to corroborate what was suggested by the University of Rochester study.

- Talk to students about poverty as it occurs globally, nationally, and locally. Explore questions such as the culture of poverty, why the circumstances of those who are in poverty often lead to their being not obvious (as the elderly poor who stay behind closed doors and certain subcultures such as migrant farmworkers). Discuss what kinds of challenges those in poverty may have to face with regard to shelter, diet, medical care, and being able to enjoy common pleasures such as eating out, going to a movie, or taking a vacation. Invite students to brainstorm about how to find ways on both the local and global levels to provide food and shelter to those less fortunate (Boff, 1997).

- In continuation of the focus on poverty, foster discussions of the pros and cons of collaborative sharing and living arrangements, such as community resource sharing, co-housing, eco-villages, non-individualized forms of land ownership, and localized ways of living (Dawson, 2004). Challenge students to consider how such alternative arrangements might help ameliorate problems of poverty and homelessness.

- Introduce to students the idea of relational ontology and relational understanding and knowing. The concept of relational knowing can be introduced and illustrated in many different ways that demonstrate how not taking into account a person's or other entity's relationships can result in a superficial understanding. Encourage students to speak

or write about how relationships with others help define who they are. Give examples of how relational knowing is necessary if we wish to understand the behaviors of animals, as these behaviors can only be explained in relation to various aspects of the environment and other living creatures. Discuss how taking account of ecologically relevant relationships is necessary in order to develop cohesive, practical strategies to combat climate change at both local and global levels (Pierce, 2013).

School and community service learning projects

Determined social action can be fostered through classroom, schoolyard, and communal activity engendered by service learning projects. In Tina Lynn Evans' (2011) conceptual framework for sustainability praxis, a key focus for relational responsibility is student-learning projects that can be conceptualized within a critical view of the world-system. Pedagogy that involves social action projects (Oxford and Lin, 2012) may assist the transition toward true ecological education.

Local actions that build sustainable communities around schools could build neighborhood cohesion for renewable energy systems close to home, green transportation, and local food. According to David Suzuki (2014), households can conserve up to one quarter of energy consumption by turning off video-game consoles, installing solar panels, and starting a backyard garden. At one of my schools, every Friday is "bike or walk to school" day. The amount of traffic and idling cars around the school is greatly diminished, and the number of children and families walking in the community brings a sense of being together and friendship. As I write now, I am happy to report that virtually every school in which I work has a community garden tended to by the students and community volunteers.

Through service learning projects, students can also be helped to connect the dots between the historical, political, and social causes of climate change and economic implications. A variety of eco-educators are incorporating service learning projects that will help promote global and economic awareness. Listed below are examples of how service learning projects can be implemented to foster social action and develop student awareness toward ecological self-integration. These initiatives can also help serve to reposition schools as communities of care—caring for people, community, and the effects of globalization on people and species the world over (Noddings, 2004; Eisenstein, 2013b). Some specific suggestions for school and community service learning projects follow.

- Create classroom projects that require student participation in daily tasks that contribute to classroom stewardship or school functioning. These jobs might include watering classroom plants, arranging books in a classroom library, cleaning blackboards, recycling, or checking to ensure that all electronics are off at the end of the day's class. Articulate and discuss the students' participation in terms of the concept of an ethic of care, and then extend the concept of an ethic of care to the concept of an ethic of earth care that focuses on the local environment and the global ecosystem (Sobel, 2008).

- Return schoolyards or portions of schoolyards to previous more natural environments. Encourage students to contribute ideas of what they would like to see in these areas and engage them in helping to prepare the areas. Ideas for enhancing these environments include establishing a pond or water garden and developing school yards that attract wildlife (Sobel, 2008). The tactual, kinaesthetic, and goal-directed experience of actually wielding a hoe or rake, or of transplanting a bush, makes restoring a particular area to a more natural state more than just an idea to contemplate. It makes the idea real for students and underlines the fact that they themselves can put into action an ecologically beneficial idea, connecting them more closely to the notion of being personal caretakers of nature.

138

- Involve students in social and collective action at levels that are age-appropriate, so they may become confident stewards of the Earth and effective campaigners on its behalf (Pierce, 2013). Specific activities might include a Saturday morning trash pickup at a local park, writing a class letter to a legislator to ask for action on a local environmental problem, or creating a one- or two-page ecological newsletter to be distributed throughout the school or within the community. Getting students involved in taking action, even in only a small way, can help nurture in them a sense of societal and ecological responsibility and of being able to make a difference by their own actions, both of which are ways of thinking that are much needed in our world.

- Create a "small world activity" (Sobel, 2008): students build miniature models of the community and then create overlays of streams, lakes, eco-places, and other geographical features. The small world activity can be used to make decisions such as: which area receives the most sun (experts say six hours a day or more is necessary for good plant growth) and therefore, where the best location for a school garden might be (Sobel, 2008). By creating a model of the community, students are able to view their community as a whole and are better able to notice the relationships of different entities within the community and to what degree the human-made community has respected and incorporated the natural environment into itself. There is a lesson here for relational ontology and relational knowing, because what the community as a whole is cannot be divorced from its presence in and impact on its natural surroundings. Given this, it can be emphasized to students that to know their community as fully as possible, they must know what these relationships are.

Other Outdoor Activities

As a child, one has that magical capacity to move among the many eras of the earth; to see the land as an animal does; to experience the sky from the perspective of a flower or a bee; to feel the earth quiver and breathe beneath us; to know a hundred different smells of mud and listen unselfconsciously to the soughing of the trees.
~Valerie Andrews

Along with eco-psychologist Theodore Roszak (1995), I see the importance of taking schooling into the outdoors as being to reconnect students to their natural surroundings. The psychological, spiritual, and ecological benefits of such outdoor schooling are far-reaching. If incorporated into educational programs, they can greatly enhance psychological well-being (Ausubel & Orr, 2012). Furthermore, allowing students to play within, while having physical and other sensory contact with, natural settings helps them to become sensitized to the idea that nature is a valuable playground whose health is important.

In his book *Childhood and Nature* (2008), Sobel, too, contends that it is not enough to simply talk *about* the life cycle in a classroom; this type of education only leads to a superficial understanding of ecology. Instead, children must experience nature kinaesthetically—*first-hand*—in order to appreciate and want to care for it. The most effective way to educate children in environmentally sensitive ways is to foster experiences for children to play in nature. Here, I stress the importance of flexibility in our rigid system of standards, curriculum frameworks, and high-stakes testing to allow for these essential outdoor experiences that foster love of nature and, ultimately, environmental stewardship. In other words, rather than just memorize the plants, animals, and trees you might find in the local ecosystem, children need to *go out into the ecosystem and develop their love for it* (Sobel, 2008).

I resonate with Sobel's hypothesis that "one transcendent experience in nature is worth a thousand nature facts" (2008, p. 18). These meaningful experiences in nature can lead to multiple understandings about ecosystems and human empathy for them. According to Sobel, experiences where students are "talking to trees, hiding in trees, and climbing trees [precede] saving trees" (2008, p. 19). Not only would these experiences in nature help students to learn,

research also shows there is a powerful relationship between evocative childhood experiences in nature and adult environmental ethics and behaviour (Sobel, 2008). Some practical suggestions for getting our students enjoying and learning in the great outdoors follow.

- Arrange school field trips and hikes into nature. Many lessons can be learned if the students are at the same time helped by the teacher to understand and embody some of the countless ways in which the details and processes of natural settings and biological entities are interdependent. These experiences can be interwoven with class assignments and projects that reinforce what the students encounter and learn outside. Even simply taking a few minutes the next day to discuss with students what the group and individuals experienced and learned in their outing can help anchor the events and their lessons in students' memories. During excursions, taking photographs to be posted on a classroom bulletin board can also help anchor in the students' minds the outings and what they have learned from them.

- Equipping students with methods to help the school model environmental sustainability for greening the community can be a wonderful way to develop their stewardship potential. For example, involve them in planting indigenous plants and generating local ecosystem restoration projects in the schoolyard or community. Even engaging students in restoring a small area of the schoolyard to its previous ecosystem can teach them valuable, lifelong lessons about ecological interrelations (Oxford and Lin, 2012). An ongoing project for which students must act as stewards for a small outdoor area over a period of months may be especially valuable for making students more aware of the continuities that characterize natural processes.

- A school garden can be an excellent teacher. An encouraging development in recent years is the plethora of school gardens that have surfaced across schoolyards in settings from preschool to post-secondary schools. A school garden can be a good launching point for lessons about ecology, caring for gardens, and relational implications. Moreover, students and teachers who participate in the establishment and maintenance of school gardens report numerous benefits such as decreased anger and stress, particularly among students who exhibit

undesirable behaviour in school. For example, a grade six student in a low-income school reported: "Before, we were all mean to each other, but now if you have a watering can and somebody wants it, you say, 'Here!'"

- Ongoing lessons about the seasonal aspects of nature can be provided to students by scheduling an hour or two during each season expressly for that purpose. Take the students outside during fall to see, touch, smell, and discuss the changes in trees and leaves and the drying out of other plants, or possibly to observe a squirrel gathering nuts or a flock of birds flying south. Then take them out again in January to learn what is happening during that season, including the dormancy of trees or the presence of birds that remain while discussing why they remain. Again in springtime, students can observe new growth among trees, flowers, and other plants. One particular tree or flower bed might be part of the focus of all these trips, helping to anchor observations, lessons, and discussions by attending to particular entities that illustrate both change and continuity over the seasons. Make sure students have opportunities to touch things, and as they do, point out characteristics and differences among the items they touch—e.g., differences in the barks of different species of tree, the lack of moisture in a dried leaf versus the moisture that is present in a new leaf, or the new buds on a flowering tree as they are just opening up, with some open and some still closed.

- For younger children, especially, playing a game outside in which each is given the role of a biological entity such as a tree, robin, flower, or bee may help them to empathize with nature. For each role, the student is asked to use his or her imagination and knowledge to perform actions that are natural to the plant or animal. The game could be restricted to the child acting as the entity would during a particular season, or to show what changes might occur in the animal's behavior given the encroachment of civilization into its habitat. The purpose of the game, other than to have fun while learning some lessons about nature, would be for the students to feel their ways in their imaginations into what life and living might be like for a particular plant or animal. An extension of the game would be to have some of the children play the role of natural environmental phenomena such as water, rain, wind, or sunshine and interact in appropriate ways with

142

the ones having the roles of biological entities. Some could even play the role of air pollution, drought, or soil erosion in their interactions with others. The lessons that could be learned from such a game might seem simplistic, but it is important for students to be aware of simple, basic ecological relationships, and acting them out in an enjoyable game may be an excellent way to make them real for students.

These are just a few ideas that teachers might find doable and valuable. There are many other curricula available for enriching students' understanding of natural systems. For example, since salmon has historically been such an important species in nearby regions, the grade four teacher in my school, Ms. Bennet, has adopted the program, "Salmonids in the classroom."[10] In partnership with Fisheries and Oceans Canada, students learn to place eggs in tanks designed to re-create the habitat of a salmon stream. As the days and months go by, children check the water temperature and report on the progress of the eggs. When the salmon hatch, the children are then bussed to a stream on the North Shore, where the fish are then released into the wild. Many of the students from around British Columbia who also take part in the program trade letters and emails about their salmonid experiences. One student wrote, "We hope they stay friends forever, and maybe one day they will meet each other out there in the ocean."

An increasing number of parents and teachers are recognizing the significance and captivating power of contact with nature as an important part of a child's education. This school year, our students have raised plants and vegetables from seeds, and planted milkweed around the school to attract monarch butterflies. The children have come to realize that our neighborhood school yard, once regarded as a run-down gravel field littered with trash, was

---

[10] http://www.salmonidsintheclassroom.ca/

actually a magnificent habitat. We now work as class teams, each with various stewardship responsibilities.   Many volunteer parents and other community members are also committed to accomplishing a great deal. Said one girl of the new school garden in grade two, "Now it's so wonderful and so sparkling!"

Mindfulness Practice

As explained in Chapter 5, teaching students mindfulness meditation can have a number of benefits, including lowering students' stress levels, increasing their attention span, and improving their behavioural self-regulation.   Also, importantly, it can help students better realize that what defines them is much more than a particular ego. In so doing, it can foster a way of feeling, thinking, and being more open to their essential relatedness to others and nature and thereby foster critical sensitivities and greater appreciation for relational knowing and understanding.

Initial mindfulness training for both primary and secondary students will typically involve simple sitting meditation, in which the students might be seated in a circle in chairs or on a mat, outside, or in chairs all facing front. They are instructed to get into a comfortable position but to sit erectly, then to close their eyes and attend to the sensations of their in-and-out breathing while allowing their minds to calm with their breathing. The students can also be gently instructed that as they do this, if they notice any other thoughts or sensations entering their consciousness, to simply take note of the fact that the thought or sensation is there, to experience it briefly, and then to let it go.

Cowan (2010, para. 12) provides a simple two-minute mindfulness meditation practice script that could be used each day one or more times,

perhaps to help students settle down after a recess or at any point simply to refresh their minds. The practice amounts to a minute of mindful listening and a minute of mindful breathing. The script goes something like this:

1. 'Please get into your "mindful bodies"—still and quiet, sitting upright, eyes closed.'

2. 'Now place all your attention on the sound you are about to hear. Listen until the sound is completely gone.'

3. Ring a 'mindfulness bell,' or have a student ring the bell. Use a bell with a sustained sound or a rainstick to encourage mindful listening.

4. 'Please raise your hand when you can no longer hear the sound.'

5. When most or all have raised their hands, you can say, 'Now slowly, mindfully, move your hand to your stomach or chest, and just feel your breathing.'

6. You can help students stay focused during the breathing with reminders like, 'Just breathing in…just breathing out…'

7. Ring the bell to end. 'Wait until the ring tone ends, and slowly open your eyes.'

This exercise can be extended to longer periods as the teacher calmly suggests that students continue to follow the physical sensation of their breathing and allow any thoughts or perceptions they notice arising in their minds to be there non-judgmentally and then to disappear. Cowan (2010) notes that it can be helpful if the teacher has her own mindfulness practice about which she talks to the students. For example, the teacher might share with the students how the use of mindfulness has helped her or him to deal with emotional occurrences or feelings such as embarrassment, anger, or irritability. Such sharing can help students better understand the usefulness of mindfulness for the everyday emotional vicissitudes of life. Students may share their own

experiences also, which "allows others to be aware of things to notice while practicing mindfulness that they may not have heard otherwise" (Cowan, 2010, para. 10).

Mindfulness training for students can be of various sorts. Jennings (2010) gives an example of a kind of session that has been developed by the organisation MindUP, which I referred to in Chapter 5 and in which primary students learn to practice mindfulness of their breathing, sensations, feelings, and thoughts. In this particular kind of session, students learn to be mindful during eating, as they attend to the sensory qualities of a raisin, piece of chocolate, or some other small piece of food. They mindfully see, feel, smell, and taste the morsel as they prepare to eat it, taste it, and then eat it. Jennings (2010) states that research shows that students who were in a MindUP program reported greater happiness, sense of well-being, and mindful awareness when compared to students not in the program, while teachers reported less aggression and disruptive behavior episodes among mindfulness students, as well as improvements in attention levels and social skills.

Mindfulness training can be extended to "walking" meditation with students learning to mentally observe their moment-to-moment experiences in an open and attentive manner as they go about various activities. The example in the last paragraph of mindful eating could be considered a case of this type of meditation. Other occasions when students might attend in a mindful way to their current experience include while they are brushing their teeth, eating a meal, riding the bus, or walking through a park.

Challenges and Rewards of Relational Pedagogy

Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I
can hear her breathing.
~ Arundhati Roy

A main objective of the educational activities suggested in the previous sections is to help foster students to become more compassionately integrated with the world outside their bodies. Ecological approaches to education allow students and teachers to stray afield from contemporary manifestations of traditional practices in education. The relational perspective, in my imaginings, could acknowledge both the traditional and the multifaceted approaches to pedagogy by honoring both. It is important to identify the most redeeming aspects of traditional educational practices to take forward while revising pedagogy toward understanding of a relational world.

By promoting relational pedagogy in education, we can create a form of schooling that reflects an ecologically responsible understanding of the world and one that fosters global consciousness. By doing so, we may not only help heal the planet, but ourselves as well. Our suppressed, marginalized, and discredited intuitive "knowing" is a yearning to be reconnected to ourselves, each other, and the natural world, which is bursting with life affirmations and remains the source of human well-being. The forms of schooling that represent this need will be ones that affirm our humanity and acknowledge our wakefulness to living as part of the web of life.

Advancement of relational pedagogy in schools will require initiatives in professional development for teachers. These include encouraging them to become familiar with the theoretical literature on relational education and

implementation (Orr, 2004) and the creation of relational education lesson plans that connect learners and the curriculum to relational awareness (Spretnak, 2011). Professional development for teachers that reflects a comprehensive approach to ecological education includes systems thinking, place-based pedagogy, sustainability as a common practice and real–world learning (Spretnak, 2011). As educators, we will also need empathy, caring, and ecological sensitivity.

It will also be important for teachers to seek their own individual self-integration, which involves coping with one's individualistic tendencies and building awareness of oneself as interdependent with all life phenomena. In my own case, effectual action toward self-integration at the personal level has been partly achieved by recognizing my own limitations of selfhood and by reflecting on my life, my institutional narratives, and my family members and friends. I have shared some of these personal narratives in this thesis.

Awareness of human impact on all life phenomena is painful because it means acknowledgement of the serious, often irreversible harm that one has done to other people and the natural world (Macy, 2007). But rather than despair, I see that awakening to ecological consciousness is a call to action. The group we formed for protecting Howe Sound has grown extensively since we have connected with many other groups who share similar values of sustainability. I have come to an understanding that the mutual repairing of what seems to be the fragmented segments of society can be a huge relief (Alexander, 2010). Helping others have the opportunity to discuss their experiences and be heard with an empathetic ear has a liberating effect. Listening to others' stories with compassion is as significant as telling one's own.

It will also be important to advocate to policy makers the pedagogical implications of relational pedagogy (Thayer-Bacon, 2009). Examples of how whole school systems can be altered into an ecological approach can be found at the web address "Center for Ecoliteracy".[11] Cofounded in 1995 by Fritjof Capra, the centre focuses on eco-education in K-12 schools and enhances the notion that students need to experience and acknowledge how the natural world is needed to sustain life and how we must live according to this principle.

There are many challenges to transforming education, but as the UN has pointed out, we have a window of opportunity over the next few decades to stabilize the planet and to prepare the next generation of students for stewardship of one another and the Earth. With the ecological reorientation of the sciences and the sustainable energy sources that have recently emerged, the teachers of tomorrow will require a re-education that involves adequate preparation to pave the way toward relational pedagogy. But there are positive indications the world is coming together to address and solve problems of climate change and issues facing humanity, through the United Nations and international events and conferences.

At first consideration, a worldwide theme of enlightened education (Nakagawa, 2000) may seem like a preposterous thought. How could we possibly endorse a policy that needs to be relevant to the vast diversity that exists between continents and cultures? While an integral and globally significant curriculum may not be the only tenet of the educational project, some room is needed for such an adjustment. It must be done if we are to pull together our human and planetary resources to establish global consciousness on a necessarily

[11] http://ecoliteracy.org/

149

global scale. The Internet presents us with such a forum for planetary communication. Never before in the history of the planet has there been the opportunity and potential for vast expansion of awakening around the globe.

Right now there are countless examples of a relational shift occurring around the world that provide hope for a paradigm transformation from that of a mechanistic worldview to a relational worldview (Spretnak, 2011). The myriad of environmental groups and green initiatives around the world is encouraging (Hawken, 2007). Many community campaigns such as avaaz.org[12] and sumofus.org[13] are bringing people-powered politics to decision making worldwide. These global civic organizations launched within the last five years are a testament to the global promotion of activism on issues such as climate change, human rights, animal rights, and political corruption.

There is also a shift toward ecological awareness in many schools. A wide variety of "green" conferences, gatherings, groups, and formalized curricula are emerging. For example, an innovative school project underway in Maple Ridge, B.C., is the Environmental School Project: Place-Based Imaginative and Ecological Education. Since 2008, this project has been proceeding as a partnership between the school district, community members, and Simon Fraser University as a research initiative.[14] The environmental school project encompasses several features of schooling that gear teaching and learning toward a union of the human and natural world. Such initiatives help students

[12] http://www.avaaz.org/en/
[13] http://sumofus.org/
[14] http://es.sd42.ca/#

learn to be consciously connected to others and the world, nourishing their sense of place, local community, and their membership in a global village.

Fostering students' relational-integration will promote embracing holistic and cooperative ideals as they move away from the extreme individualism model enmeshed in our systems of education. An example of such ideals is provided by the African tribe Xhosa, wherein group interpersonal resonance occurs among the children in the short sketch presented in Figure 3.
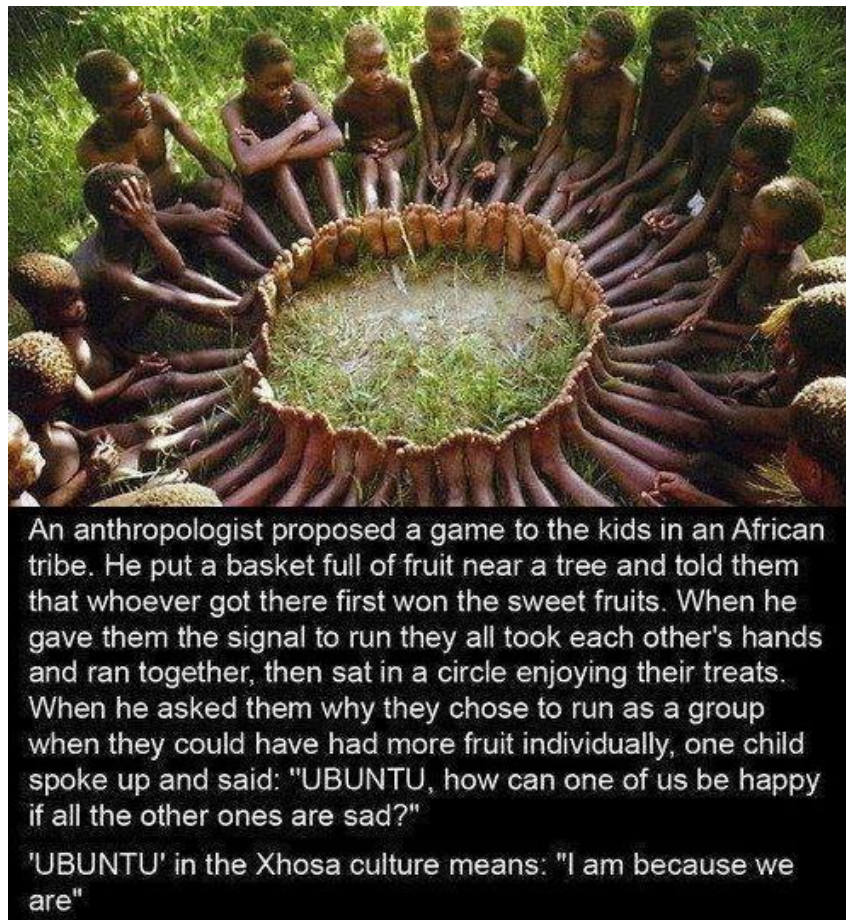

An anthropologist proposed a game to the kids in an African tribe. He put a basket full of fruit near a tree and told them that whoever got there first won the sweet fruits. When he gave them the signal to run they all took each other's hands and ran together, then sat in a circle enjoying their treats. When he asked them why they chose to run as a group when they could have had more fruit individually, one child spoke up and said: "UBUNTU, how can one of us be happy if all the other ones are sad?"

'UBUNTU' in the Xhosa culture means: "I am because we are"

Figure 3.   Xhosa culture "Ubuntu" – "I am because we are". [15]

[15] http://wakeup-world.com/

I hold no misconceptions that there are serious challenges and difficulties associated with the implementation of any progressive or alternative pedagogy. One challenge to a self-integrated approach to education is the reluctance of teachers, parents, and students to change accepted practices when a deviation in learning is suggested. Teaching and learning alternate forms of consciousness are difficult and can be met with much active and passive resistance. Another challenge is the logistics of applying new educational approaches in general. From a political standpoint, changes are challenging to any existing system. This is especially true when moving from traditional to radically alternative approaches and when the political pressures are to conform to a neoliberal capitalist agenda. Unfamiliar approaches to teaching can pose challenges to teachers who prefer to rely on familiar methods of teaching, using lesson plans from former years.

Despite these obstacles, the transformation of pedagogy around the globe is needed to counter the ecological challenges of climate change, the notion that the Earth is nothing more than a human resource, and the supposition that mass extinction of other species will not have an impact on human flourishing. The common understandings of relational philosophy present a viable foundation for a practical educational approach to lead us into the 21st century and beyond. We are living on the brink of millennial transformation. This transition into a planet-conscious age depends, in part, on a purposeful effort to introduce insightful new theory and practice in education. The relational self as the context for Deep Education provides a far more conscientious, imaginative, and healthful pedagogical basis for our World Community.

Epilogue.

A Few Words about My Journey

An unfolding journey occurred for me as I wrote this thesis. When I began the PhD program in Curriculum and Philosophy in 2007, I had no inkling that I would write about impressions and representations of selfhood, schooling, and ecology. Yet, the concept arose over and over as I contemplated my doctoral readings and considered what was important to me as an educator and counsellor. As time went on, the light began to show through the darkness: we humans have lost sight of our psychological connection to the Earth.

Over the last several years, I wondered how this issue could be better addressed in education and what, specifically, I could do about it. And while there is plenty I have yet to uncover, what I have learned in this reflective journey is that in order to cope with the global ecological crisis facing the world, we must develop new methods for existing upon, knowing, and valuing the earth, which requires a transformation in the context of education. This shift will not be possible, in my opinion, without modelling a worldview of mindful self-integration. Education can play a momentous role in this enhancement of deep-seated change because it can alter our way of thinking.

During this time, I have been concerned about how I can find ways of practicing as an educator and counsellor that do not reproduce the dualistic

schism of a modern Western worldview and the social world in which I dwell. How can I work within an individualistic system of education and maintain reverence for relational practice? Over the past few years I have been struggling with these issues and contemplating how to honor my commitments to relational pedagogy and avoid getting caught up in the language, cultural understandings, and educational interventions so typical of the current school terrain. I wanted my approach to students to be freed from the language of the separated, independent self. I was interested in manifesting a pedagogical and therapeutic approach that reflected a mindful, interrelated way of being with my students that facilitated understanding of our human planetary commitment. By the same token, I didn't want to risk sounding so "out there" that my colleagues or students would not understand me.

I believe I have made progress. First, I am learning to recognize my everyday work experiences and consider how my/our social realities are reproducing the world in a certain way. Second, I imagine alternate ways of bringing language to my considerations, and make efforts to allow different viewpoints to come to fruition. Over the past few years I have been fortunate to have a principal who was very interested in having like-minded discussions about pedagogy and "greening" the school environment. Many new projects have been put into place, such as a school garden and the amount of time the students are spending outside. Through our conversations, I have come to appreciate what we were bringing to light and what we were doing together as a school community of teachers, parents, and students to summon a new school-world. These experiences have allowed shifts in perspectives, making room for new pedagogical possibilities.

My account of the transformative nature of relational ontology, critical sensitivities, Buddhist mindfulness, and relational knowing arose from deep encounters with philosophical texts, time in nature, personal experience of mindfulness practice, and my own reflection. A transformative process emerged through extensive journaling and my effort to comprehend the texts of many thinkers and relate them to my own life world. Another way to reflect on my experience is in terms of many layers, with each layer taking me to a deeper and richer place of awareness and new knowledge. I have found that practicing mindfulness has taught me to have patience and a willingness to remain open and curious and trust that eventually things will come into place. While practicing mindfulness, I become aware of my choices and I experience myself changing while I engage in my daily goings-on. Writing about my work, concerns, and pedagogical gleanings has been helpful for the purpose of better understanding myself. This process, in turn, has changed the way I practice as a professional teacher and counsellor. This thesis is a reflective showing and sharing of my story and of my sense of becoming transformative on the path of self-integration.

Learning to be a therapist, teacher, and thesis-writer and also trying to live with authentic presence while studying, mothering, and performing other life tasks seemed, at times, overwhelming. I felt paralyzed for extended periods, as it seemed that I was making little headway. At times, I was in a deep state of depression. I would then go and walk almost daily along the wooded trails near my home. This was therapeutic, as many times, when I hiked or sat in wilderness settings, I got a nourishing effect, often with unexpected insights, as if receiving wisdom from nature. The following anecdote details one of these nourishings that came for me at a difficult time.

Hiking in May

Personal Journal, May 3, 2011

> *Sometimes, when I went out for a walk, I felt somehow pulled or drawn toward a certain trail, where I would find a fallen log and just sit for a few minutes, enjoying the silence and listening to a nearby bubbling stream. On one such occasion, a bald eagle came flying down, squawking loudly in a series of high-pitched notes. I was surprised that eagles had a surprisingly delicate call for such a large and majestic bird. It sat on the ground in front of me, seemingly wanting me to pay attention to it. I gave it my attention, and it muttered away, turning its head toward a direction and then back at me. I felt as though it wanted to tell me something. Then suddenly it flew up into a tree and I felt drawn to stare in the direction it was looking. And that's when I saw it— a large nest high up in the canopy of trees. I could see two small nestlings poking their small furry heads and hungry shuddering beaks up out of the nest. I felt then a comforting presence, as the sight of the eagle and nest touched me deeply. It was as though she was telling me something. I imagined our exchange as indicating that **she saw me as seeing her.** The encounter seemed to contain an implicit message that the Earth can be healed by healing myself/ourselves. I saw this exchange as part of the magic of my spiritual, mindful practice. The depression from earlier in the day subsided and my spirit soared in happiness and joy.*

In this thesis, I opened the discussion by challenging the convention of individualism and the Western worldview entrenched in North American pedagogy. As I put forward, education founded on relational pedagogy will serve to create a sense of community and mindful ecological responsibility. As we make these adjustments in education, we must commit to the development in ourselves and our students of critical sensitivities, mindfulness, and relational knowing. My utmost aspiration is that these ideas will encourage discussion and provoke educators and stakeholders to consider their views on these very important subjects.

I have worked in education for twenty years and have been researching transformative pedagogies for the last seven years; but on an intuitive level, I find I have been practicing many of the aspects of relational pedagogy for some time without realizing there was an official academic niche. Many of the suggestions originate from others who have explored the issues and practicalities of alternative education, mixed with my own intuition of what could be deemed relational education practice. In order for this transformation of pedagogy to occur, there must be widespread participation. Growing consciousness of this alternative philosophy of education must be far-reaching, with imagery, descriptions, metaphors, rituals, music, and metaphysics that bring it to life in the daily imagination and actions of people. If we work toward educating students to conceive of themselves as intertwined with their communities and their surroundings in essential ways, we will be laying the foundation for an ethics of earth care in education that understands humanity as inseparable from the biosphere. Education, on this basis, is a supremely ethical task and a call to action: "Henceforth we have to learn to be, to live, share, communicate, commune as humans of Planet Earth. Not to be in one culture alone, but to be earth people as well" (Morin, 1999, p. 38). Human consciousness rooted in interdependence conveys potential for the greatest hope for our shared future world, if cultivated more deeply in education.

References

Abram, D. (1996). *The spell of the sensuous: Perception and language in a more-than-human world.* New York: Random House Books.

Abram, D. (2010). *Becoming animal: An earthly cosmology.* New York: Random House Books.

Ajahn, S. (2010). *Turning the wheel of truth: Commentary on the Buddha's first teaching.* Boston MA: Shambhala.

Alexander, B. K. (2010). *The globalization of addiction: A study in poverty of the spirit.* Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press.

Ankony, R. C. & Kelly, T. M. (1999). The impact of perceived alienation on police officer's sense of mastery and subsequent motivation for proactive enforcement. *An International Journal of Police Strategies and Management, 22,* No. 2, 120–132.

Anzul, M., Downing, M., Ely, M. & Vinz, R. (1997). *On writing qualitative research: Living by words.* London, UK: The Palmer Press.

Armstrong, K. (2006). *The great transformation: The beginning of our religious traditions.* Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf.

Ausubel , K. & D. W. Orr (2012). *Dreaming the future: Reimagining civilization in the age of nature.* White River, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing.

Bai, H. (2003a). Learning from Zen arts: A lesson in intrinsic valuation. *Journal of the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies* 1(2), 1–14.

Bai, H. (2003b). *Proceedings of the 2003 Complexity Science and Educational Research Conference. Edmonton, Canada (19–30).* Retrieved from Complexity and Education.com, http://www.complexityandeducation.ca

Bai, H. (2004). The three I's for ethics as an everyday activity: Integration, intrinsic valuing, and intersubjectivity. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education 9*.

Bai, H. (2006). Philosophy for education: Toward human agency. *Paideusis*, 15, Vol.1, pp. 7–19.

Bai, H. (2012). Reclaiming our moral agency through healing: a call to moral, social, environmental activists, *Journal of Moral Education*, 41:3, 311– 327.

Bai, H. & Banack, H. (2006). To see a world in a grain of sand: Complexity and moral education. *An International Journal of Complexity and Education*. http://www.complexityandeducation.ualberta.ca/journal.htm

Bai, H. & Cohen, A. (2007). Breathing qi (ch'I), Following dao (tao): Transforming this violence-ridden world. *Cross-cultural Studies in Curriculum: Eastern Thought and Educational Insights*, eds. Eppert, C. & Wang, H. 35–54. New York: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Bai, H. & Romanycia, S. (2013). Learning from Hermit crabs, Mycelia and Banyan: Schools as centers of critical inquiry and re-normalization. In R.

B. Stevenson, M. Brody, J. Dillon & A. E. J. Wals (Eds.), *International Handbook of Research on Environmental Education* (pp. 101-107). New York: Routledge.

Bai, H., & Scutt, G. (2009). Touching the earth with the heart of enlightened mind: The Buddhist practice of mindfulness for environmental education. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education, 14*, 92–106.

Bauman, Z. (2001). *The individualized society*. Malden: Blackwell Publishers. Malden.

Bellah, R. N., Madsen, R., Sullivan, W.M., Swidler, A., & Tipton, S. M. (1985).

Habits of the heart: Individualism and commitment in American life. New York: Harper and Row Publishers.

Berry, T. (1998). *The dream of the earth*. San Francisco: Sierra Club.

Biesta, G. (1995). Education/communication: The two faces of communicative pedagogy. *Philosophy of Education.* Available: http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/eps/pesyearbook/

Bingham, C. & Sidorkin, A.M. (2004). *No education without relation*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

Boff, L. (1997). *Cry of the earth, Cry of the poor*. New York: Orbis Books.

Bohm, D. (1982). *Wholeness and the implicate order*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Bordo, S. (1987). *The flight to objectivity: Essays on cartesianism and culture.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

Bowers, C. A. (1987). *Elements of a post-liberal theory of education.* New York:Teacher's College Press.

Bowers, C. A. (1991). An open letter to Maxine Greene on "the problem of freedom in an era of ecological interdependence." *Educational Theory*, 41, p. 325– 330.

Bowers, C. A. (1995). *Education for an ecologically sustainable culture: Rethinking moral education, creativity, intelligence, and other modern orthodoxies.* Albany: SUNY Press.

Bowers, C.A. (2013). *Revitalizing the commons: Cultural and educational sites of resistance and affirmation.* Lanham, Maryland: *Lexington* Books.

Boyd, R., MacNeill, N., & Sullivan, G. (2006). Relational pedagogy: Putting balance back into student's learning. *Curriculum Leadership,* Volume 4, Issue 13. Retrieved August 29 from: http://cmslive.curriculum.edu.au/leader/vol4_no13

Broudy, H. S. (1981). What knowledge is of most worth? *Educational Leadership.* Retrieved from: http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/journals/ed_lead/el_198205_broudy. pdf on November 15, 2013.

Bruner, J. (2004). Life as narrative. *Social Research*, 71(3), 691–710. Buber, M. (1987). *I and thou*. New York: Collier Books.

Bush, V. (2009). Review of "The narcissism epidemic." *Booklist*, 105, p 6.

Callero, P. (2013). *The myth of individualism: How social forces shape our lives*. Plymouth, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Carrington, K.L. & Griffin, K. (Eds.). (2011). *Transforming terror: Remembering the soul of the world*. Berkeley: University of California Press..

Chinnery, A. & Bai, H. (2008). Levinas and responsibility. In D. Egea-Kuehne (Ed.), *Levinas and Education* (pp. 228–241). London: Routledge.

Clandinin, D. J. (2013). *Engaging in narrative inquiry.* Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Clandinin, D. J., & Caine, V. (2012). Narrative inquiry. In A. Trainer & E. Graue (Eds.), Reviewing qualitative research in the social sciences (pp. 166-179). New York, NY: Routledge.

Clandinin, D. J. & Rosiek, J. (2007). Mapping a landscape of narrative inquiry: Borderland spaces and tensions. In D. J. Clandanin (Ed.), *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology* (pp. 35–76). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Clough P. (2002). *Narratives and Fictions in Educational Research*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Cohen, A. & Bai, H. (2008). Suffering loves and needs company: Buddhist and daoist perspectives on the counsellor as companion. *Canadian Journal of Counselling*, Vol. 42:1.

Cohen, A. & Bai, H. (2012). *Minding what really matters: Relationship as teacher.* Unpublished Manuscript.

Combs, A. (2009). *Consciousness explained better: Towards an integral understanding of the multi-faceted nature of consciousness*. St. Paul, MN: Paragon House.

Cowan, M. (2010). Tips for teaching mindfulness to kids. The Greater Good Science Center, University of California at Berkeley. Retrieved from http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/tips_for_teaching_mindfulness_to_kids

Cushman, P. (1996). *Constructing the self, constructing America: A cultural history of psychotherapy.* Cambridge: Da Capo Press.

Cushman, P. (2013). Relational psychoanalysis as political resistance: Social theory and the industrialization of psychotherapy. Presentation at Institute for the Humanities, Labatt Hall, SFU Harbour Center, Saturday, November 16th.

Dawson, J. (2003). *Ecovillages: New frontiers for sustainability*. Schumacher Briefing No.12.

Davies, S. & Aurini, J. (2003): Homeschooling and Canadian educational politics: rights, pluralism and pedagogical individualism. *Evaluation & Research in Education*, 17:2–3, 63–73.

Dewey, J. (1929). *My pedagogic creed*, as cited in Flinders, D.J & Thornton, D. J. (2009). *The Curriculum Studies Reader*, 36, New York: Routledge.

Diamond, J. (1992). *The third chimpanzee: The evolution and future of the human animal*. New York: Harper Perennial.

Eisenstein, C. (2013a). *The ascent of humanity: Civilization and the human sense of self.* Berkeley: Evolver Editions.

Eisenstein, C. (2013b). *The more beautiful world our hearts know is possible*. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books.

Elliot, A. & Lemert, C. (2009). *The new individualism: The emotional costs of globalization*. London: Routledge.

Evans, T. L. (2012). *Occupy education: Living and learning sustainably.* New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

Evernden, N. (1993). *The natural alien: Humankind and environment*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Faiola, A. (2006 May 26). When escape seems just a mouse-click away: Stress-driven addiction to online games spikes in S. Korea. *The Washington Post Foreign Service.* Retrieved 1 November 2012.

Fay, B. (1996). Contemporary philosophy of social science. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Fromm, E. (1964). The Sane Society, in Sykes, G. Alienation: The Cultural Climate of our Time. Toronto: Ambassador Books.

Gardener, H. (1983; 1993). Frames of Mind: A Theory of Multiple Intelligences. New York: Basic Books.

Geerts, C. (1975). *The interpretation of cultures*. Basic Books: New York.

Gergen, K. (2009). *Relational Being: Beyond Self and Community*. University Press: Oxford.

Glossary of sociological terms (1997). *School of Sociology and Anthropology*. University of Canterbury: New Zealand.

Greene, M. (1995). Releasing the imagination: Essays on education, the arts, and social change. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishing.

Gilligan, C. (1982). In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Griffin, S. (2000). Woman and nature: The roaring inside her. Berkely, CA: Counterpoint; Reissue edition.

Harris Interactive (2007). Today's Youth: Understanding their importance and influence. Retrieved from: http://mediasmarts.ca/video-games/video-games-special-issues-teens.

Havel, V. (2007). Our moral footprint. A version of this article appeared in print on September 27, 2007, on page A33 of the New York edition.

Hawken, P. (2007). Blessed unrest. How the largest movement in the world came Into being and why no one saw It coming. New York: Penguin Group.

Hawkins, K. (April 2003). Thinking your way out of the box: A response to *Ecology, spirituality, and education. Educational Insights, 8* (1). Retrieved from: http://einsights.ogpr.educ.ubc.ca/v08n01/readersresponse/hawkins/

Heidegger, Martin (1962). *Being and time,* trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. New York: Harper & Row.

Hillman, J. (1996). The soul's code: In search of character and calling. New York: Grand Central Publishing.

Hopper, P. (2003). *Rebuilding communities in an age of individualism*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing.

Hsiang, S. M., Meng, K. C., & Cane, M. A. (2011). Civil conflicts are associated with the global climate. *Nature*, 476, 438–441.

Hsu, Francis L.K. (1983). *Rugged individualism reconsidered: Essays in psychological anthropology.* University of Tennessee Press: Knoxville.

Hunziker, U. & Barr, R. (1986). Increased carrying reduces infant crying: A randomized controlled trial. *Pediatrics*, 77(5): 641–8.

Jardine, D. (2000). *Under the tough old stars: Ecopedagogical essays*. Resource Center for Redesigning Publishing.

Jennings, P. (2010). Mindful education. The Greater Good Science Center, University of California at Berkeley. Retrieved from http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/mindful_education

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2010). *What Is Mindfulness?* (Video).The Greater Good Science Center, University of California at Berkeley. Retrieved from http://greatergood.berkeley.edu

Kemeny, M. E., Foltz, C., Cavanagh, J. F., Cullen, M., Giese-Davis, J., Jennings, P., Rosenberg, E. L., Gillath, O., Shaver, P. R., Wallace, B. A., & Ekman, P. (2012). Contemplative/emotion training reduces negative emotional behavior and promotes prosocial responses. *Emotion, 12*(2), 338–350. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0026118

Kirby, A. (2014). Climate change 'makes violence likelier'. *Climate News Network*. London, 31 March.

Klein, N. (2014). This changes everything: Capitalism vs. the climate Toronto, ON: Random House of Canada.

Kozol, J. (2012). Fire in the ashes: Twenty-five years among the poorest children in America. New York: Random House.

Laing, R.D. (1967). The Politics of experience and the bird of paradise. Harmondsworth: Penguin, p.32.

Laszlo, E. & Coombs, A. (Eds.). (2011). Thomas Berry Dreamer of the earth: The spiritual ecology of the father of environmentalism. Vermont: Inner Traditions.

Leahey, T.H. (1992). The mythical revolutions of American psychology. American Psychologist, 47(2), 308–318.

Leopold, A. (1949). *A sand county almanac and sketches here and there*. London: Oxford University Press.

Louv, R. (2008). Last child in the woods: Saving our children from nature-deficit disorder. Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books.

Loy, D. R. (2008). Money, sex, war, karma: Notes for a Buddhist revolution. Boston: Wisdom Publications.

Macy. J. (1991). Mutual causality in Buddhism and general systems theory: The dharma of natural systems. New York, NY: State University of New York Press.

Macy, J. (1995) In Roszak, T. (Ed.). Gomes, M. E. (Ed.). & Kanner, A.D. (1995). Ecopsychology. San Franscisco, CA: Sierra Club Books.

Macy, J. (2007). World as lover world as self: Courage for global justice and ecological renewal. Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press.

Malcolm, C.A. (2011). The piper in peace and war. London: Hardwicke Press.

Marginson, S. (2004). Competition and markets in higher education: A 'glonacal' analysis, Policy Futures in Education, Volume 2, Number 2.

Martin, J & McLellan, A. (2006). Psychology and the education of persons in British Columbia: A critical interpretive investigation. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 28, 1 & 2 (2005): 7391.

Martin, J. & McLellan, A. (2013). *The education of selves*, 177. New York: Oxford University Press.

Mate, G. (2004). *When the body says no: The cost of hidden stress.* Toronto, ON: Penguin Random House Canada.

McKibben B. (1995). *Hope, human and wild: True stories of living lightly on the earth.*Minneapolis, US: Milkweed Editions.

McKibben, B. (2010). *Earth: Making a life on a tough new planet*. New York: Times Books.

McNamee, S. and K. J. Gergen (Eds.). (1999). *Relational responsibility: Resources for sustainable dialogue*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Merchant, C. (1996). *Earthcare: Women and the environment*. New York, NY: Routledge, p. 206.

Merchant, C. (2004). *Radical ecology: The search for a liveable world*. New York: Routledge.

Merchant, C. (2013). *Reinventing eden: The fate of nature in western culture*. Milton Park, UK: Taylor and Francis.

Metzner, R. (1999). Green Psychology: Transforming our relationship to the earth. Rochester: Park Street Press.

Miller, J.P. (2000). Education and the soul: Toward a spiritual curriculum. Albany: SUNY Press.

Morin, E. (1999). Seven complex lessons in education for the future (Paris: UNESCO).

Morton, A. (2014). The commons vs Canada's corporate aquaculture, Aquaculture Digest, April 5. Downloaded September 28, 2014 from: https://responsibleaquaculture.wordpress.com/2014/04/05/the-commons-vs-canadas-corporate-aquaculture/

Naess, A. (1989). Ecology, community, and lifestyle: Outline of an ecosophy. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Nakagawa, Y. (2000). *Education for awakening: An Eastern approach to holistic education*. Brandon, VT: Foundation for Education CDROM.

Neufeld, G. & Mate, G. (2004). *Hold onto your kids: Why parents need to matter more than peers*. Toronto: Vintage Canada.

Nikforuk, A. (2014). *Andrew Nikiforuk on LNG and petro-state politics*. Downloaded September 28, 2014 from: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nv6RVyi-Zfg, 18:13.

Noddings, N. (1984). *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education.*Berkley, CA.: University of California Press.

Noddings, N (2013). *Education and Democracy in the 21st Century.* New York, NY:Teachers College Press.

Noyes, K. (2007 June 25). Docs retreat from 'video game addiction' diagnosis. *Tech News World.* Retrieved 1 November 2012.

Okri, B. (1997). *A way of being free.* London: Phoenix House.

Orr, D. (2004). Earth in mind: On education, environment, and the human prospect. Washington: Island Press.

Oxford, R. L. & Lin, J. (2012). *Transformative eco-education for human and planetary survival.* Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Parkes, G. (2000). Reading Zen in the rocks: The Japanese dry landscape garden. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Parkes, G. (2009). In Skirbina, D. (Ed). (2009). *Mind that abides: Panpsychism in the new millennium.* Amsterdam: John Benjamin Publishing.

Pierce, C. (2013). *Education in the age of biocapitalism: Optimizing educational life for a flat world.* New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Riley-Taylor, E. (2002). *Ecology, spirituality, and education: Curriculum for relational knowing.* New York: Peter Lang.

Roeser, R. W., Skinner, E., Beers, J., & Jennings, P. A. (2012). Mindfulness training and teachers' professional development: An emerging area of research and practice. *Child Development Perspectives, 6*(2), 167–173.

Roszak, T. (1993). *The voice of the earth: An exploration of ecopsychology.* New York, NY: Touchstone Books.

Roszak, T. (1995). *Ecopsychology: Restoring the earth, healing the mind.* Grand Rapids: Phemes Press.

Saleh, M., Menson, J., & Clandinin, D. J. (2014). Autobiographical narrative inquiry: Tellings and retellings. *LEARNing Landscapes, 7*(2), 271-282.

Sandlin, J. A. & McLaren, P. (Eds.) (2010). *Critical pedagogies of consumption: Living and learning in the shadow of the shopocalypse*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Sarris, G. (1993). *Keeping slug woman alive: A holistic approach to American Indian texts*. Berkely and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Schmoker, M. (2011). *Focus: elevating the essentials to radically improve student learning.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Schonert-Reichl, K. A., & Lawlor, M. S. (2010). The effects of a mindfulness-based education program on pre- and early adolescents well-being and social and emotional competence. *Mindfulness, 1*, 137-151.

Schonert-Reichl, K. A., & Lawlor, M. S., Abbott, D., Thomson, K., Oberlander, T. F., & Diamond, A. (2015). Enhancing Cognitive and Social–Emotional Development Through a Simple-to-Administer Mindfulness-Based School Program for Elementary School Children: A Randomized Controlled Trial. *Developmental Psychologist, 51* (1) 52-66.

Sessions, G. (1995). *Deep ecology for the twenty-first century*. Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications.

Shepard, P. (1982). *Nature and madness*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.

Shiva, V. (2005*). Earth democracy: Justice, sustainability, and peace*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.

Sidorkin, A. M. (2002). Learning relations: Impure education, de-schooled schools, and dialogue with evil. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

Siegel, D. J. (2010). *Mindsight: The new science of personal transformation*. New York: Bantam Books Trade Paperbacks.

Siegel, D. J. (2012). *Pocket guide to interpersonal neurobiology*. New York, NY: WW Norton.

Sigmund, P. E. (2003). (Editor), *The selected political writings of John Locke,* Norton, p. iv.

Singh, N. N., Lancioni, J. E., Winton, A. S. W., Karazsia, B. T., Singh, J. (2013). Mindfulness training for teachers changes the behavior of their preschool students. *Research in Human Development, 10*(3), 211–233.

Skolimowski, H. (2005). *Philosophy for a new civilization*. New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House.

Skolimowski, H. (1995). *The participatory mind*. New York: Penquin.

Sorrell, K. (2004*). Representative Practices: Pierce, pragmatism and feminist epistemology*. Bronx: Fordham University Press.

Smith, H. & Novak, P. (2009). *Buddhism: A concise introduction,* Harper One, Kindle Edition.

Smith, S. J. (1991). Remembrances of childhood as the source of pedagogical understanding. *Phenomenology and Pedagogy*, 9, 158–171.

Snyder, M. T. (2014). *28 signs that the west coast is being absolutely fried with nuclear radiation from Fukushima.* Downloaded from: http://www.activistpost.com/2013/10/28-signs-that-west-coast-is-being.html#IGKhxjCdd38J8eUf.99

Sobel, D. (2008). *Childhood and nature*. New Hampshire: Steinhouse.

Spencer, H. (1884). *What knowledge is of most worth?* New York: John B. Alden Publishers.

Spock, B. (1948). *Baby and child care.* London: Simon & Schuster.

Spretnak, C. (1997). *Resurgence of the real: Body, nature, and place in a hypermodern world.* New York: Adison-Wesley.

Spretnak, C. (2011). *Relational reality: New discoveries of interrelatedness that are transforming the modern world*. Topsham, ME: Green House Books.

Starhawk, (1994). *The fifth sacred thing.* New York, NY: Bantam Books.

Stout, M. (2000). The feel-good curriculum: The dumbing down of America's kids in the name of self-esteem. Cambridge MA: Da Capo Publishing.

Suzuki, D. (2009). Presentation at Brennan Park in Squamish. May 22.

Suzuki, D. (2014). *The David Suzuki reader: A lifetime of ideas from a leading activist and thinker.* Vancouver, BC: Greystone Books.

Swidler, A. (1986). Culture in action: Symbols and strategies. *American Sociological Review, 51* (2), 273-286.

Taylor, C. (1991). *The ethics of authenticity*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Thayer-Bacon, B. (2003). *Relational (e)pistemologies*. New York: Peter LangPublishing.

Thayer-Bacon, B. (2008). *Beyond liberal democracy in schools: The power of pluralism*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Throop, E. (2009). *Psychotherapy, modern culture, and social policy: Immoral individualism.* New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Tomlinson, C.A. (2004). *The Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the needs of all learners.* Alexandria: ASCD.

Trungpa, C. (2009), *The truth of suffering and the path of liberation* (edited by Judy Leif), Shambhala.

Twenge, J.M. (2006). *Generation me: Why today's young Americans are more confident, assertive, entitled – and more miserable than ever before.* New York: Free Press.

Twenge, J. M. & Campbell, W. K. (2009). *The narcissism epidemic: Living in the age of entitlement*. New York, NY: Atria Books.

Video game addiction: is it real? *Harris Interactive* 2 April 2007. Retrieved 1 November 2012.

Watt, J. (1989). *Individualism and educational theory*. Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Weare, K. (2013). Developing mindfulness with children and young people: a review of the evidence and policy context. *Journal of Children's Services, 8*(2), 141–153.

Weinstein, N., Przybylski, A. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2009). Can nature make us more caring? Effects of immersion in nature on intrinsic aspirations and generosity. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 35*(10), 1315-1329.

West, C. (2012) *Occupy democracy*. Soundtrack purchased from: Alternative Radio. Retreived from http:www.alternativeradio.org/products/wesc005-moom004

Wexler, P. (1996). *Critical social theory: Studies in the postmodern theory of education.* New York: Peter Lang.

Wyatt, J. (2007). Research, narrative and fiction: Conference story. *The Qualitative Report, 12*(2), 318-331.

Zembylas, M., & Vrasidas, C. (2004). Emotion, reason, and information and communication technologies in educations: Some issues in post-emotional society. *E–Learning, 1*(1), 105-125.