Eco Care:

Nurturing Possibility & Resistance within Education

by

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Abstract

This research examines moral development in relation to the natural world within three elementary aged children and one public elementary school teacher. This work is based on several ethical starting points: 1) that entities within the natural world have intrinsic value and agency, 2) that we are interdependent with each other and 3) that we should therefore act with humility and caution. These considerations gave rise to a new methodological approach called 'eco portraiture', which builds upon questions and lessons arising from direct contact with the natural world so that the more-than-human remains in foreground of the research methodology itself. This work extends Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis (1997) conceptions of 'portraiture' as a methodology to also include arts-based explorations of place. This research took place on a weekly basis for a total of two years at a public elementary school focused on ecological education. Two themes regarding moral development were uncovered: 'empathy' and 'belonging'.

Empathy took the form of a developing 'eco sensitivity' in these students. Central to this type of moral development were particular ways of attending, valuing and listening to the more-than-human. These processes acted as roots for a type of ecological care to grow. Taking these life experiences seriously, this research proposes that young children are not inherently 'egoistic' as traditional developmental theorists such as Piaget (1932) and Mead (1934) have argued, learning to extend care outwards as they differentiate themselves from others, rather that they are relational. Phenomenologist Kleinberg-Levin (2008) suggests at this early stage, there is a "reversible communicative relationship with nature" that is working to shape and inform the child (p.61). I argue that if an educator diligently works on cultivating this notion of empathy, there is the potential for the child's moral orientation not to exclude or background the natural world but rather welcome it as an active teacher. This notion of empathy is then paired with the concept of belonging as feeling part of the human and more-than-human community was essential in building confidence and courage in these children. This appeared to be important in resisting dominant cultural norms that may be working against an ecological care.

Keywords: Ecological education; Moral development; Ethics of Care; More-than-human; Empathy; Belonging

For the wild others

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Prologue

Take a minute to look at the room around you right now, what images appear? How is your body oriented and why? What sounds do you hear? What sights and sounds are absent? Within the places we occupy, dominant culture pervades such that certain things are visible, tangible and audible while others are not. Indeed, even before we enter the room we also possess a culturally influenced lens which will determine what we impose onto place (Brookes, 2002). French philosopher Jacques Ranciere (2004) calls this the "distribution of the sensible" (p.12), by this he means the recognition of that which is speakable, thinkable, visible, tangible, audible, perceptible and that which is not. The presentation or partitioning of that which is perceptible means some things become intelligible, visible, possible while others become unintelligible, invisible and seeming impossible.

This foregrounding and backgrounding, that happens when certain cultural imperatives dominate, results in a constrained discourse where only certain ideas can be discussed and only particular voices are heard. While there are some advantages to such constraints, the overall result is that only a certain way of life is speakable, thinkable or doable. This extends to schools and educational research today where typically, students learn *about* the natural world and sometimes, on the occasional field trip, they get the chance to learn *in* it but they miss out on the great potential to learn *from* it. This is largely due to a type of cultural deafness in terms of what it has to offer. Christopher Manes (1995) points out that in western culture to say "nature speaks to me" strikes most people as "semipsychotic" (p.18). Why would we listen to something that is

supposed to have no voice? By denying that more-than-human[1] communities have the ability to 'speak' to us it makes it easier to use them instrumentally. The effect is that we destroy "the larynx of the biosphere" (Evernden, 1993, p. 17). It is much easier to pave over a field if you aren't aware of the subtleties of voice that it presents: the intricate tunnel system which tells us there is a healthy population of moles lowering the insect 'pests' in the neighbouring farmer's field, or the wildflowers covered in bees signaling a stopping place for the pollinators to whom we are in debt for our food. Symbolically cutting the vocal cords of these relations, as Evernden (1993) suggests is also what allows us to perceive this same place now as an empty field, a wasteland waiting to be developed solely for our use.

Ecofeminists Cuomo and Gruen (1998) describe this positioning of the natural world as a backdrop or an inert entity in our lives as a type of "moral distancing" which they define as "an accidental or intentional lack of spatial or emotional proximity that prevents us from adequately knowing or caring about whole categories of beings who are affected by our lives actions, and decisions" (p. 130). Such ethical detachment is infused within the moral development models that have dominated Western culture. In order for the maturation of separate selves to be complete, we must 'other' the world and broaden our

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[1] I use 'more-than-human', 'the wild other' and 'the natural world' within this dissertation to refer to the elements of the earth independent of human creation. Note, I'm not however denying that it is *affected* by humans. Bonnett (2012) points out that this notion of the more-than-human as 'of itself' and 'self-arising' is a concept found in many different worldviews including Taoism and the ancient Greek notion of 'phusis' (p.287). I realize that bundling all the varied and diverse elements that exist into this planet under these blanket terms results in gross generalizations and works to counteract the very notion of particularity that is key to eco care, however it is useful to be able to refer to all the constituents of the natural world as a collective at times. It is also useful to draw a distinction between the human experience and that which exists beyond it in order to emphasize that while ideas of nature and wilderness are socially produced, there indeed is an active, wild world beyond human control, purpose and culture that needs to be recognized. Even for members of the natural world that have been domesticated or impacted by the human species Bonnett (2012) emphasizes 'there always remains a dimension of their existence that is taken as not humanly authored. (p.287). Rather than further perpetuating a false dualism between nature and humans I aim to highlight that while intersubjectivity exists, the world beyond human creation has independent agency and worth and in fact, that human species depends on this for its very survival.

moral distance from it. Adorno and Horkheimer (1944) point out this detachment is essential in allowing us to create a false split between nature and culture, and the subsequent domination of the latter over the former. This type of moral distancing as rationalization for the elevation of the human species is particularly pertinent to those of us involved in the field of education. On a daily basis as educators, we help the child to make decisions about what is or is not to be taken seriously as part of one's ethical community and in doing so, we are deeply involved in helping children form "moral[2] orientations" to the world (Cuomo and Gruen, 1998).

Human-centered moral orientations, in which humans and their interests are seen as superior to the world around them, are the ones most dominant in Western culture so it's not surprising to see them ingrained in the traditional school systems. Classrooms in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut are often quite similar to those in Osoyoos, B.C.: sticky linoleum floors, white boards, fluorescent lighting and rows of desks. Orr (1994) refers to such architecture as "crystalized pedagogy" which has a tendency to reinforce "passivity, monologue, domination and artificiality" (p.14). The typical classroom is simple, sterile and effectively ignores all the nuances of the place in which it is situated. Weston (2005) points

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[2] It is important to emphasize here that morality is culturally mediated and socially constructed. I agree with Gilligan (2011) when she argues that morality is a reflection of how we experience ourselves in relation to others and to add to that I would add how we experience ourselves in relation to the more-than-human other as well. Questions regarding justice and care stem out of these very relations. I reject the idea of an 'objective' morality as Noddings (2013) describes "since so much depends on the subjective experience of those involved in ethical encounters, conditions are rarely 'sufficiently similar' for me to declare that you must do what I do" (p. 5). Instead, ethics and morality should be "rooted in receptivity, relatedness, and responsiveness" (Noddings, 2013, p.2). Thus, I define 'morals' and 'ethics' interchangeably within this dissertation not as predetermined principles which determine right or wrong but as lessons derived from experience and relation which may inform thought and behaviour. Ethics here are normative, just like an ethic of care, an ethic of eco care responds to questions about "whether and how and why we ought to engage in activities of care, questions about how such activities should be conducted and structured, and questions about the meanings of care and caring" (Held, 2006, p.46).

out how most of our educational spaces are filled with "wholly human sounds" which ends up subliminally conveying "a sense of the world itself as profoundly human centered" (p.33). Such backgrounding is symptomatic of a culture that does not see the possibility of the natural world as having real agency or voice.

Through such a lens, we are unable to see, let alone understand, that we are ecologically embedded and thus fail to properly respond as moral agents to the current ecological crises. Instead, Cuomo and Gruen (1998) suggest that the development of an ecological moral orientation, one that acknowledges the agency of the natural world and our dependence upon it, requires "education, practice, skill, commitment and consistency" in order to draw attention and care to that which is typically undervalued or invisible as a moral agent (p.132).

One question that can be asked right away is why bother fostering such an ecological moral orientation in schools? Eco philosopher Neil Evernden (1993) cautions against this line of questioning,

> Do you love nature? They ask. "Do you want to save it? Then tell us what it is good for." The only way out of this kind of trap, if there is a way, is to smash it, to reject it utterly.' Perhaps the best the environmentalist can hope to do is to reply: 'what good are you?' – not to insult the other but to illustrate the absurdity of our presumption that one being's existence can be justified only by its utility to another. (p.12)

Questioning the embedded principles of respect and care for human others within schooling seems preposterous, so a reluctance to consider more-than-human others as moral agents reveals an already implicit assumption that they do not have intrinsic value or are of lesser worth/importance. I refute this outright and consciously avoid trying to justify an ecologically attentive moral orientation solely in terms of human related benefits although there are many, including the significant fact that our survival as a species depends upon it. The very fact that we question the importance of such an endeavor seems absurd as if our dependence and interconnection to the planet is a choice that we can make, a relationship that we can opt in or out of. Drawing on my research I will be emphasizing key components of an ecologically attentive moral orientation, and

while I acknowledge that what exactly constitutes an ecological moral orientation should be debated, the importance of it should not.

In this dissertation I will offer different possibilities of how we, as humans, might develop an ecologically sensitive moral orientation to the world. Within this work I propose that young children are not inherently egoistic, learning to extend care outwards as they differentiate themselves from others, rather that they are relational. The early years for children which are deemed 'ego-centric' by developmental theorists such as Piaget (1932), Mead (1934) and others, can instead be seen as a position of fluid relation. One is not focused entirely upon oneself, leading to a type of self-absorption, rather that the self is porous and open mingling with all that it encounters and that these relations can be incredibly influential. Phenomenologist Kleinberg-Levin (2008) suggests at this early stage, there is a "reversible communicative relationship with nature" that is working to shape and inform the child (p.61). The child is still learning boundaries regarding the self and the other as neither have yet been fully defined for them. Thus, the child is at a crossroads in terms of moral orientation to the world; a child raised to define itself against others and learn to identify itself as discrete, separate and superior to the world around them will think and act very differently than the child who does not "graduate from that world but into its significance" (Shepard, 1982, p.9).

The distribution of the sensible has a direct influence on this moral development. What one learns to understand as intelligible/perceivable/do-able, contributes to the boundaries around what is valuable, ethical and what is not. Western culture's influence on the distribution of the sensible is such that relationships with the natural world are often backgrounded in the pursuit of cultivating healthy human relations. This in turn helps to influence the child to place greater value on human relations compared to those with the natural world. In this realm of human relationship, care (Gilligan, 1982) and justice (Kohlberg, 1981) stand out as two main moral orientations within the literature on moral development in Western society. Care is defined by the contextual concern for the well-being of others, and justice is understood as fairness when there are

competing claims or conflicts, requiring that individuals are treated in a manner consistent with their 'rights' (Hoffman, 2000). Precisely because childhood is such a pivotal time for developing moral orientations as educators we need to not only foster healthy human relationships centered on these two orientations, but also concurrently nurture an abiding, active sense of care and justice for the natural world.

Although ecofeminist Marti Kheel (2008) points out that care and justice are intertwined and both essential parts of an ecologically oriented moral compass, I have intentionally chosen to focus on care specifically in this discussion around an ecological moral orientation for several reasons. The first reason being that empathy and belonging have emerged as dominant themes within my research and these concepts appear to be central notions under the larger theme of 'ecological care'.

The second reason for focusing on care is that I would like to foreground it as an important concept within moral theory and within education. In the Western tradition, care has been seen as lacking the conceptual strength of universal law or reason and has been more aligned with the realm of personal relations and less with ethical theory (Kheel, 2008). Most feminist theories have argued for joining both care and justice as central to moral frameworks. Gilligan (1982) for example has emphasized that these two ethics are "complementary rather than sequential or opposed" (p.33) and that each lacks integrity until it is "tempered" by the other (Kheel, 2008, p.220). I agree with this yet I wish to highlight care because as Kheel (2008) points out "whereas philosophers have had centuries to ponder the merits of the justice perspective, the ethic of care, a relative newcomer on the philosophical block, has barely been explored" (p.223).

This work requires "ethical starting points", moral assertions that aim to orient one into an ecologically sensitive worldview. Lorraine Code (1991) describes these starting points as focal points for shaping the philosophic inquiry. Chris Cuomo (1998) suggests that "the most an ethicist can do for her audience is frankly to lay out her motivations and starting points", so that is what I intend

to do here (p.46). As notions of care and the moral consideration of the more-than-human world are both typically marginalized or ignored within dominant discourses around ethical theory, my ethical starting points aim to bring these concepts into the foreground and hinge on some clear assumptions. I align myself here with the radical ecology movement which believes that simply extending moral standing is insufficient to resolving the environmental crisis because it remains too human centered, frequently placing humans highest in moral standing and then extending moral consideration to those things sufficiently similar (often companion animals with wide eyes that are easily relatable). Instead, a complete re-visioning of who we are as human beings and our place in the world is required, which demands fundamental changes in the way we live and function and thus, our distribution of the sensible. Leopold (1949) suggests this in his famous "land ethic" calling for a change of "the role of Homo sapiens from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for fellow-members, and also respect for the community as such. Cuomo (1998) suggests "includ[ing] anyone but straight white landowning men into the ethical universe entails radical revisions of 'subjects,' 'objects,' 'communities,' and 'value' (p.110). This is a fundamental turn which aims to trouble hierarchal separations between humans and nature and to, instead, realize a humility as interdependent members of a vastly wide and wild set of relations. This requires three clear ethical starting points 1) that the larger more-than-human world has agency, 2) that it also has intrinsic worth (value in its own right and on its own terms as opposed to that granted by an outside arbitrator), and 3) that we are intimately dependent upon it. As Plumwood (1999) describes

> …a biospheric other is not a background part of our field of action or subjectivity…rather biospheric others can be other subjects, potentially ethical subjects, and other actors in the world, ones to which we owe a debt of gratitude, generosity and recognition as prior and enabling presences. (p. 197)

Such a re-visioning involves an understanding that our very selves and moral capacities are embedded in ecological relations and thus ecological flourishing is necessary for human flourishing. The recognition of agency, intrinsic worth and dependence also dictates consideration of the far reaching effects of our human

actions as bound into these assumptions is the notion of the self-in-relation. These ethical starting points aim to reduce moral distance between humans and the natural world.

An additional fourth ethical starting point of humility is also necessary in approaching ecological care. Eco care as a moral orientation will be invariably produced through human values and responses. This we cannot escape and to a certain extent our view is always anthropocentric, not in the sense that it is prejudiced or biased towards human interests but rather that we cannot escape our human perspective or experience. This means that indeed there will be times when we need to make ethical judgments on behalf of members of the natural world who cannot speak and the emphasis here must be on the fact that the worth of the more-than-human world is independent of our judgment. We must consider deeply what it means to think/act with and alongside the more-than-human world rather than for it or about it. This means taking seriously ways to include its agency in forming our ethical responses. Clearly, there will be many times when the path will not be black and white, but this tricky space should not act as an excuse for ignoring the more-than-human world. Russell (2005) states that "while the task may seem daunting, some argue that, ethically, it cannot be avoided" (p. 436). I agree with Armbruster (1998) who suggests that avoiding speaking as an ally with the natural world is a "retreat response" which is an "unacceptable avoidance of responsibility for those without the privilege of being able to speak and be heard within dominant culture." (p. 220). As a result, humility is the fourth ethical starting point; knowing our own epistemic and ontological limitations should lead us to move forward with caution, always hypervigilant regarding our ethical decisions regarding the more-than-human world. This is also prudent given the other starting points which emphasize the extensive scope of impact that humans can have; as Cuomo (1998) suggests "the complexity of connection recommends an attitude of humility and awareness of human ignorance concerning biotic interdependencies" (p. 134). This then requires constant reflexivity before, during and after entering the place of learning to check in to see whether the educative practices are contradictory to these ethical starting points or not and what moral distance they foster. For this reason

the word 'cautionary' will be included in describing this type of care. I state these ethical starting points to make it clear that these basic assumptions form the ground out of which my research and eco care takes root. Although I came into the research with this perspective, it is the data and the work that I did in response to the data that has concretized many of the specifics here in ways that I did not anticipate.

Through my research following the developing moral orientations of three students and one teacher, an ecological notion of care began to appear. As previously mentioned, both empathy and belonging are the main themes which will be discussed. This dissertation has the unconventional structure of placing the methodology first as the methodological approach itself determined the research questions that became the focus for this work. The results are presented in the remaining chapters in attempts to explore what can be learned from the experiences of the research participants regarding empathy development, care for the natural world and subsequent educational considerations. The first section presenting the findings, chapters two to eight, entitled 'possibility' will make up the bulk of the dissertation addressing the theme of 'empathy'. Chapter two involves a historical tracing of the term empathy in order to provide some background context to situate the research. This chapter also positions my research as a re-working of our understandings of moral development and empathy, which I argue can help reduce moral distance between humans and the rest of the natural world and thus, keep open possibility for relation and care for the natural world. In chapters three to eight, drawing on specific portraits of the research participants' own moral development, I will describe key aspects of an ecologically sensitive moral orientation to the world for these individuals. I emphasize how, although empathy is the word that emerged as a theme, 'sensitivity' is a more apt description of this moral principle. Sub-themes from the research under this larger theme of eco sensitivity include: intrinsic valuing, listening to voice and attending. These sub-themes acted as roots out of which particular relations grew and blossomed into an eco care. Possible educational implications of each of these sub-themes are outlined in hopes of providing ways to nourish sensitivity towards the natural world and keep open some of those porous relations that exist for the child in relation

to the natural world. I argue that if an educator diligently works on cultivating this notion of sensitivity, there is the potential for the child's moral orientation not to exclude or background the natural world but rather welcome it as an active teacher.

This work on 'possibility' is paired with a short section focusing on 'resistance' which will investigate how eco sensitive moral orientations of the research participants are affected by dominant culture and how the second theme of 'belonging' can help counter that. I will describe a type of ecological double consciousness which can seed doubt and apathy regarding developing ecological care. I will then offer some specific portraits to describe how the concept of belonging helps to build confidence and courage in these individuals and has the potential to generate resistance to the loss of ecological care. I contend that if an educator consciously fosters a sense of belonging, both to an ecologically conscious human community and to the more-than-human community, then this helps to resist other dominant cultural norms that may be working against an ecological care.

Through this dissertation I argue that cautionary ecological care has the potential to disrupt the dominantly held distribution of the sensible such that the natural world becomes foregrounded and recognized as worthy of moral attention. This in turn opens new possibilities for relation and learning as well as, fundamental points of resistance against ecologically destructive paradigms within education.

Chapter 1.   Methodology

1.1.   Introduction[1]

Connie Russell (2005) points out that environmental education research despite its best intentions can often background or ignore the very wild voices that it is attempting to highlight in significance. Robert Michael Pyle (2008) argues that

> Place-based education, no matter how topographically or culturally informed, cannot fully or even substantially succeed without reinstating the pursuit of natural history as an everyday act…what we desperately need…is a strong sense of our more-than-human neighbourhood.(p.156)

Attempting to foreground these wild voices within the research is essential if we are to trouble their silencing within dominant culture and our education systems. I will elaborate on this by sharing a story.

I once was on a guided interpretive forest walk called "Nature Recycles". The man leading it took us from station to station that he had created in a forest setting. The first station had a bucket of earthworms from his home composter, and the second station was a spot to create our own terrariums out of pop bottles. I remember someone on the walk, while building her small pop bottle world, remarked that she had forgotten that she was actually in the park because she was so absorbed by the activity. This made me look up and around at which point I saw a group of magpies chattering loudly, flying in and out of the forest. Our guide started to talk again, loudly now as he was competing with the noise of the magpies.   He told us some statistics about decomposition in landfills and we moved onto our next station.   More magpies flew

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[1] I have intentionally included fine details of the methodological approach here as they not only help set the context for the results included in chapters two to nine but were also important to formulating my final research questions listed at the end of this chapter.

overhead and he continued to talk about recycling. We moved through some more stations and soon the walk was over. I noticed some ravens and crows were now with the magpies and so I decided to go check out what all their calling was about. I followed some of the ravens and soon found they were picking away at an old deer carcass that had been hidden in the trees. The whole time I had been on the "Nature Recycles" walk, the birds had been busy 'recycling' and we had just dismissed it as noise. It made me wonder what other conversations I had missed along the way.

This was a useful moment for me in considering what it means to include the agency of the natural world in teaching and research. If we were to return to the start of the walk and take the agency of the magpies seriously what would it mean? It would mean acknowledging voice where there once was only noise. It also opens up the possibility for a different type of educational encounter. This means as a researcher, instead of seeing the natural world as an object to observe, I acknowledge it as a subject shaping our understanding of the world. Martin Buber (1947) describes three main modes of perception of the 'other'. The "onlooker" acts as an objective artist while the "observer" watches and judges, both of these stances treat the other as an 'object' which one must separate from the self in order to properly perceive (p.10). The third alternative, which Buber (1947) terms "becoming aware", sees the other as an active, distinct subject which "says something to me...speaks something that enters my own life" (p.12). Returning to my ethical starting points, I took on this third role as a research stance and started with the assumption that the more-than-human world has agency, could be a teacher and would act to shape my research.

In attempts to incorporate the agency of the local land/community as an active voice and ethical starting point within the process, I drew upon the methods of collaborative ethnography (Lassiter, 2000; Spindler & Hammond, 2006) and portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) Both of these research forms provide techniques to involve and honour such a range of voice within the methodology. This chapter will first focus on the purpose behind the research and then highlight why portraiture was chosen as the central methodology to act as fertile ground for new study. I will then elaborate on a new branch of methodology I am calling 'eco-portraiture'. Here, I will emphasize some of the key considerations when using this approach drawing on specific examples of how

my research was enacted and documented. Along the way I will also discuss my use of collaborative ethnography, how and why the students, teachers and parents worked with me to help collect and interpret data.

1.2. Research Purpose

Faced with the prospect of increasing ecological crises, experts within the fields of place based, environmental, outdoor and experiential education have spent the last 30 years attempting to instill pro-environmental behaviour (Warren et al., 1995; Grunewald & Smith, 2008; Kahn, 2008). Yet, current pedagogical practices within most public schools still involve limited contact with the natural world and the programs that do exist show little evidence of long term change in students' relations with the more than human world (Rickinson, 2003; Saylan & Blumstein, 2011). As previously mentioned, students are rarely in the position to be learning *from* the natural world. If this were to occur it would require re-conceiving the more-than-human world not as an inert "background" (Plumwood, 1993) but as an active co-teacher (Blenkinsop & Beeman, 2010; Leopold, 1949). To investigate this potential for the natural world to act as a 'co-teacher', I chose to work with three students[2] and one teacher [3] at a public school centered on place based, experiential and ecological theory. My central research question was: **Given the school's focus on ecological education, in what ways does student and teacher relationship with the more-than-human world change over the school year?** Together we worked to document their relations within the larger context of their learning both at home and the school. This research question allowed for a broad scope during data collection. Once empathy and belonging emerged as themes out of this research, I refined my research question to be much more specific as I will describe at the end of this chapter.

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[2] I originally started with four students but one chose to drop out of the research because of personal issues.

[3] I chose to add a teacher two months into the research because I could see how the perspective of an adult educator could provide insight into the pedagogy and curriculum happening at the school.

1.3. Methodology Background

In order to pursue my central research question, I was particularly drawn to the methodology of 'portraiture' which combines the widely recognized methods of ethnography and narrative inquiry. Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005) describes it as 'painting with words' (p.6). Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis (1997) particularly emphasize the importance of context in the methodology of portraiture,

> Portraitists... rather than viewing context as a source of distortion, they see it as a resource for understanding. The narrative, then, is always embedded in a particular context, including physical settings, cultural rituals, norms and values, and historical periods. (p. 12)

Thus, this type of methodology was appealing to me as I saw it as a way to highlight the layers of particularity, relation, paradox and complexity involved in human relations with the more-than-human world which was at the heart of my research question. Thus, I thought it could allow for a deeper, more nuanced understanding and expression of this relationship.

The methodology of portraiture is also described as "acts of intervention", implicit and explicit points of social transformation where "we create opportunities for dialogue, we pursue the silence, and in the process, we face ethical dilemmas and a great moral responsibility. This is provocative work that can disturb the natural rhythms of social reality and encounter." (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p.11). Each translation is a chance for perceptual shapeshifting where every portrait has the ability to introduce a perspective that was not previously apparent. Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005) describes the process of having her portrait taken early in her life:

> it seemed to capture my "essence"; qualities of character and history, some of which I was unaware, some of which I resisted mightily, some of which felt deeply familiar. But the translation of the image was anything but literal. It was probing, layered and interpretive. In addition to portraying my image, the piece expressed the perspective of the artist and was shaped by the evolving relationship between the artist and me. I was never treated or seen as object but always as a person of strength and vulnerability, beauty and imperfection, mystery and openness. The artist needed to be vigilant in capturing the image but always watchful of my feelings, perspective and experience. (p.5)

"Probing, layered and interpretive…evolving", these are some of the principles she carries into her educational research methodology, aptly called 'portraiture'. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997), in describing this methodology draws on the fact that historically many artists and scientists were aware of "their inability to capture and present the total reality" so instead of attempting complete representation, they would select "some aspect of, or angle on, reality that would transform our vision of the whole" (p.6). This aspect of revealing the hidden dimensions of a situation or relationship was also appealing to me as I saw it as a way to highlight our relations with the natural world which are often seen as solely as the backdrop, context, or setting for learning rather than a source for it.

Thus, I have chosen portraiture for two reasons: 1) the ability to document a layered narrative which includes the voices integral to the study while situating them in their social and cultural context 2) the chance for perceptual reconfiguration, as the crafting of each portrait can be a chance to consider an aspect of the whole not previously considered. Knowing that the natural world in conventional notions of portraiture constitute the 'backdrop' for a human focused portrait, I am attempting to create a form of 'eco-portraiture[4]' which builds upon questions and lessons arising from direct contact with the natural world so that the more-than-human remains in foreground of the research methodology itself.

Central to eco portraiture are the ethical starting points previously mentioned: that more-than-human entities each have intrinsic value, agency; that we are interdependent on the earth; that we should proceed with humility and caution. Given this, eco portraiture is centered around several key considerations that have evolved over the course of my research; these are divided into two stages one focused on data collection and the other on writing the eco portraits.

Regarding data collection, place explorations using a) context specific data collection b) multiple perspective taking and c) repeated prompts; all proved to be helpful in maintaining context, relation, nuance, a sense of change and embodiment within the

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[4] This expands directly off of Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) work on the methodology of portraiture.

research. This in turn, permitted a deeper and more sustained investigation into the inner workings of each student's relationship with the natural world than it seemed that the traditional sit down interview could provide.

When it came to writing the eco portraits, portraiture offered some useful tools to help sort the stories collected into relevant themes. These themes were then flushed out into story based representations that under eco portraiture appear to be intentionally complex in their attempts to address the initial ethical starting points. I will first discuss the selection process of my research participants and then I will address both stages of 'eco portraiture' and what they entail in light of my research.

1.3.1. Context:

This research took place in southern British Columbia at a new kindergarten to grade seven public school rooted in principles of place-based, ecological, and community education. The school was the fruit of a partnership between the university, the local school district and a wide range of community partners. The learning was centered in regional parks and the downtown core of the local city. The main building that was used during the winter months was a yurt and the majority of the learning happened outdoors. The school opened in September 2011 and as of 2014 had four classes of mixed grades (kindergarten to grade 7) with a total of 86 students. It is a public school and therefore must cover the provincially designated learning outcomes for curriculum. The teaching staff at this time consisted of four teachers, three special education assistants and one support teacher. Five researchers from Simon Fraser University were present each week for the first two years doing field work; one or two researchers were present at the school on a given day. My main research collection took place from September 2012 to September 2013. Synthesizing and analyzing results occurred concurrently with data collection and continued until December 2013. I was involved in the school since its inception and this proved to be invaluable as it allowed me to draw on research dating back to when the school first opened in September 2011. So in total I have access to two full years of data regarding my research participants.

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1.3.2.   Selection Process:

In May 2012 I sent out an email invitation to the families of all students that were returning next year, 52 children in total. Over 50% of students in each grade level expressed interest and 82% of the total returning school population wanted to be involved in the research. Choosing the students was a difficult process as there were many more interested than I had the ability to work closely with[5]. I specifically selected four students based on age, gender and rural vs. urban home context and 'care' for the natural world. Regarding age, gender and home context I tried to select a range; gender: 2 boys, 2 girls; home context: 2 rural, 2 urban; age: grade 1, grade 4, grade 5 and grade 8. I was particularly drawn to students who were observed to have some sort of a pre-existing proclivity toward the natural world as these appeared to be 'different voices' as Carol Gilligan puts it, individuals that seemed to be still attending to and caring for the more-than-human world despite the larger influence of Western culture which tends to ignore or background it. In each of these individual cases I was curious like Gilligan (1982) to investigate "the different voices and the dialogues to which they give rise" (p.2), particularly how this 'different voice' came to be and how these interests might evolve over the course of the year. My determination of the participants level of 'care' for the natural world as they entered into the research project is based on what parents, other researchers, teachers and I observed over the course of the first year at the school. I relied upon field notes, interviews with parents and staff and student work to choose students who seemed to possess a complex level of care from the outset because I thought that this would provide a range and nuance to the notion of care (see below for more detail).

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[5] I worked with the remaining student population to gather general daily observations so that I could speak to what was happening in the larger context for these specific students. So that the students that were not chosen did not feel excluded, I regularly included them in 'nature notes', a section on the school blog that discussed the discoveries the students would find in the natural world at various school locations. I also started a 'phenology journal' for the other students to keep track of changes in the natural world; one teacher continued this for several weeks and then it was abandoned.

Selected Students

Bambi[6]: A female student who progressed from kindergarten to grade two during the research term. She lived in a rural area that backs onto a large ravine and had many pets at home. At the onset of the research, her level of care was seen by parents and teachers to be at the beginning of development. Throughout the first year she was noted for being keenly observant and attentive to the rest of the natural world and drawn to collecting and gathering items. She was also frequently found filling her backpack on a daily basis with snails, plants and caterpillars in the first year of school. Parents, teachers and researchers commented that at the onset of the research she vocally expressed great care for the more-than-human world but often treated it roughly. I was very interested in this apparent disconnect between Bambi's expressed 'love' for the creatures she found and her carelessness when handling them. I wanted to see whether and how this relationship would evolve and what would contribute to it.

Raven: A female student who progressed from grade three to grade five during the research. She lived in a rural area for the first school year and then moved to a suburban neighbourhood. At the onset of the research she had a self-proclaimed deep affinity for the natural world. She was noted by other adults to be deeply contemplative and that she seemed to possess a connection with the more-than-human world that was spiritual in nature. I chose Raven because I wished to find out more about what had contributed to her 'connection' (her words) to the natural world. I was also curious to hear more about her perspective on the world as she had a unique way of seeing things[7] and wondered whether and how her connection would change over the school year.

Eco boy: A male student who progressed from grade four to grade six during the research and who lived in a suburban area. He was noted in the first year of school to have an extremely strong curiosity and interest in the more-than-human world and had spent the school year building traps to observe the squirrels in his backyard. His

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[6] I had students and their families self-select pseudonyms to protect their anonymity

[7] Typical questions from Raven include: 'Does sound have a temperature?; What is at the end of the universe?; Is it possible to find new colours?'

favourite activities in the first year of school were fort building, fishing and fire making. His parents noted that he seemed to always have a deep love for animals since he was an infant. Like Raven, I was curious as to what contributed to Ecoboy's keen interest in the natural world and his strong observation skills. Over the first year I noticed him particularly drawn to the 'survival skill' activities which were a dominant theme at the school and I was curious as to whether and how this would affect his relationship with the natural world.

John: A male student who progressed from grade seven to grade eight during the research and who lived in a suburban area. This student was noted to be reluctant to be outside and yet, he described himself as possessing care and interest in the natural world. For example, he would state "I love to watch the patterns form on the surface of the water". Other adults noted that he was hard to engage and grumpy at the onset of the research. I was curious why this student often conveyed a disinterest in the natural world, yet if you talked to him on a one to one basis he expressed deep care for it.

The fourth student, John, withdrew from the project two months into it for personal reasons. I did not seek to add another student as I wanted to properly attend to the three students I was already working with and since I was present at the school two days a week, this number of research participants seemed to be an optimal amount.

Teacher Selection

I decided to add a teacher two months into the project because I could see how the perspective of an adult educator could provide insight into the pedagogy and curriculum happening at the school. I invited all four teachers: two female, two male, two from rural homes, two urban; all were willing to participate. I decided to work with one male teacher largely based on the complexity of care towards the natural world that he expressed at the onset of the research (see below).

Ocean: Male teacher who lived in a rural area. He worked primarily with grades five to seven during the two years of research. At the onset of the research he wanted to go deeper into his practice and was worried that he would just end up replicating conventional schooling outside, so he wanted to push himself to do things differently.

He had grown up hiking, fishing, camping and had experienced significant moments of connection to the natural world through hunting. In this first year of school I noted that Ocean was attempting to include the voice of the natural world in his teaching practice and increasingly so. I was curious as to where this change was coming from and what it would entail. I was also interested in his own personal relationship with the natural world, how that had evolved and ways in which it might be contributing to his practice.

All students and the teacher are Caucasian and come from a lower to middle income background (the majority of the school population was also of this demographic). I am aware that I am working with a particular and select segment of the population. Other theorists such as McKenzie (2005), Tuck & Yang (2002), and Kahn (2008) draw attention to the need to critically address issues of class and race within ecological education. I agree and want to emphasize that my research interest in the ways in which the natural world can be foregrounded as a co-teacher needs to happen concurrently with work against inequalities within human communities. In other words, this project, although not focusing on it directly, acknowledges the absolutely critical need to address marginalization and oppression of human beings in tandem with work against the colonization of the rest of the natural world. It is not my intention to lose sight of or sidestep human inequities, rather I wish to bring to the foreground our relations with the natural world so we can fully acknowledge and address injustices being done to the land *and* its inhabitants. I also wish to point out that the school under research here takes place in many spaces such as large parks and woodlots where the more-than-human world is readily present and that again, an increasingly small minority of the population on earth has access to such places. This has radical implications for an ethic of eco care, as decreased access results in the 'extinction of experience' (Pyle, 2002, p. 315) with the more-than-human world, less possibility for us to encounter it on its own terms and therefore, less opportunity for us to develop care and concern for our slithering or feathered neighbours, less chance to connect with the world that sustains us. If we return to the ethical starting points of intrinsic value, interdependence, agency and humility, starting to work with eco care in urban environments will mean acknowledging and addressing the marginalized human populations there within *and* the ways in which we have ignored and paved over the more-than-human inhabitants of the

city. Vital to eco care is the ongoing work to fight both human and more-than-human injustices; this is not an either/or endeavour.

I am also aware that my research participants represent only four voices each with their own particular contexts and thus, can't be used to make universal observations or claims about the human and more-than-human relationships of the other students at the school, this is not my intention. Instead, I decided to work with a small number of students and one teacher so that I could get to know them and their families in depth in ways that I could not had I chosen a larger group, because I would not have had the time. I also intentionally extended the research over a long period of time (two years) so that I could get a more detailed sense of the individual relationships and also, so that I could observe how the relationships have changed over time and what might have contributed to that.   As a result, I have compiled a vast collection of stories and experiences which I hope will allow me to be more particular, contextual and relational in building a narrative case. If we take each of their lived experiences seriously, these voices then offer some important contributions to possible considerations for a cautionary eco ethic.

1.4. Developing Eco-Portraiture

Down at the river a student turns over a rock and then calls out to me, "Laura, come quick!" I find my way through the water and crouch to see what she has found. "What is it?" she asks. There is a tiny tube made of rocks that are not much larger than a grain of sand. "Look at all the colours!" the student exclaims. Each small rock is a different shade, some pink, emerald, light purple, a miniature mosaic. It's a caddisfly house, built by the larva that lives inside with its own silk and the substrate of the stream. I like the tenacity and ingenuity of this underwater architect that has carefully crafted a strong structure of what lies around it.

I decided to model my portraits after the caddisfly, collecting and gathering bits of stories here and there, piecing them together to form a narrative casing to house

some tender living lessons. The stories strung in a silky web, are held up to the bright stars[8] (mentioned below) which reveal some areas of light and dark, room for growth and metamorphosis. With this in mind, I have separated the methodology of Eco Portraiture into two stages: 1) Collecting and gathering 2) Building the case and holding these stories up to the stars.

1.4.1.   Collecting and Gathering

Aim - To make room for thoughtful choices around: what to include and exclude, foreground and background, treat as noise versus discourse.

Collecting and Gathering with the Students

The three students worked with me on a weekly basis to help collect 'data' about their own perceptions and understandings as the school year unfolded. I wanted to involve the students in the research gathering stage as a way to engage them in the process, share some skills regarding the research process and potentially allow for greater freedom of expression. Each week I would engage the students in different activities (eg. photo essays, journal entries) to aid them in collecting bits and pieces of experience that later helped me speak to their evolving relationship. At first these chats were conventional sit down interview style but they soon evolved to be very hands-on and immersed in the place where we were. At the beginning of the year I gave the students some brief training using some of the collecting tools (camera, video, audio recorder) and then throughout the rest of the year I would hand them over to the students to use each week, so they were actively involved in collecting and gathering along with me.

Portraiture as a methodology allows the researcher to bring together a vast array of data including participant observation (field notes, audio/video recordings, extended immersion in place), open–ended interviews of student, parents, teachers and other researchers as well as document analysis (copies of student work, curricular documents)

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[8] There is evidence that caddisflies orient to the light (Grinager, 2009) and as they are nocturnal this could take the form of moonlight or starlight in calm rivers.

all of which combine to do justice to the complexity of the relationship. I started writing eco-portraits in October (see Timeline below) and then continued to do portraits of each student's relationship with the more-than-human every four months. At these intervals I then gathered 'portraits' written or otherwise expressed by the students and caregivers as well, which I drew upon when writing my portraits. Every three months I also asked both the caregivers and the students to provide feedback regarding the research methodology, in the beginning stages I asked the caregivers to ask the students for feedback so that they would feel comfortable to share any concerns. After six months I asked students and caregivers for feedback directly as this seemed integral to relationship building at the heart of the methodology, and they told their parents they felt comfortable to share any worries with me by this point as trust had been built.

The main collecting tools used included: video which captured some of the nuanced context and complexity integral to this study; audio which can reflect tone of voice and dominant/absent voices; photography which can speak to context; drawing which allowed for creative expression on behalf of the students; and field notes/journal which can slow the documentation down, possibly creating a more thoughtful orientation to the gathering and can travel well in inclement weather! I also collected relevant documents such as copies of student work, student drawings and creations from home which all helped to flush out their relationship with the more-than-human.

Table 1.1.   **Timeline for Student Data Collection & Analysis**

Activities	2012								2013											
	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Selection of Students	■	■	■																	
Sit-down Interviews with students					■	■														
Weekly Place Explorations					■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■				■			
Caregiver Interviews (approx. 1 hour in length)						■				■				■			■			
School Staff** Interviews						■				■				■			■			

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(approx. 40 min in length					■				■				■		■				
Field Observations and Collection of Student Work				■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		■				
Transcribing, Coding and Generating Themes				■	■	■		■	■					■	■	■	■	■	■
My Written Portraits						■	■				■							■	
Caregiver Written Portraits						■	■				■							■	
Student Recorded Portraits						■	■				■	■						■	
Incorporating Feedback and Refining Themes								■				■							■

** This includes 4 teachers, 3 Special Education Support Staff and1 administrator

Interview Questions

My original interviews with the students were intentionally broad in scope to get a general sense of the students and their relationships with the natural world. Here is a list of some of the initial questions that I asked all three students[9]

Table 1.2.   Sample Questions for Students -Fall 2012

1. How did you find out about this school and what interested you in the beginning?
2. Why did you choose to come to this school?
3. Experiences (to be asked in one of the school locations eg. park, city centre, river side)
- Tell me about your own experiences here in this place.
- Tell me some of what you've learned here.
- Tell me a little about what is interesting or special about this school/place.
4. Relationships
- Tell me about your relationships with fellow students.

[9] For the youngest student who was six at the time, I gave her the chance to answer the questions through drawings; this worked well.

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        - Tell me about your relationships with adults (teachers, adults, researchers,
          administrators)
        -Tell me about your relationships with place(s) (Allco Park, Golden Pond, other
          places)
5. Tell me a little about your experience at your previous school(s).
6. What are you hoping the school will provide/be like?  Three things?
7. Natural world relationship
            -What do you like to do when you are outside and why?
            -How much time in a day would you say that you spend outside?
            -When I say 'natural world' what comes to your mind?
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Originally these questions were asked as sit down interviews but with time the methods soon changed (see findings below). I had similarly broad questions for the parents and teachers regarding the students,

Table 1.3.   Sample Questions for Caregivers- Raven Fall 2012

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1. What were the original reasons for enrolling Raven in the school?  Have these changed?
2.a. What learning are you hoping that Raven will experience at this school?
   b. Can you see that this learning is happening? (If yes, how/where do you see it?)
3. Can you describe Raven for someone who has never met her before?
4. Can you speak to her relationships with teachers/other students/the natural world? Examples?
5. Any changes you have noticed in her over the last school year? Examples?
6. Any significant things that you feel she has learned over the last school year?
7. Where do you see Raven spending her free time and what is she doing?
8. How does she handle/treat/observe creatures when she finds them?
9. Does she initiate discussions or bring forward questions about the more-than-human world? Examples?
10. Any changes you see in terms of behaviour/attitude toward the more-than-human world?
Examples?
```

This general, broad data collection lasted for the first two months, after which I began to ask questions and participate in creative gathering processes (eg. photo essays, audio recordings) that were more specific to each child. Through ongoing coding, reflecting and writing I was able to find themes for each individual student and I then created questions that were particular to those themes and to each child. Here were some sample questions for the caregivers of one student from the end of the research term,

Table 1.4.   Sample Caregiver Questions – Raven Fall 2013

1. Describe Raven for someone who has never met her before. 2. How has the start of this school year been for Raven? 3. Changes in relationship with friends? Teachers? More-than-human? 4. Last time we chatted you saw her transitioning, showed me the banner on her bedroom wall, where do feel she's at right now according to that banner? 5. She was spending a lot of time outside, is this still true? What's she doing when she is spending her time outside right now? 6. How is her art progressing? When does she do it? How does she describe the process to you? 7. Any recent examples of Raven 'listening to/communicating' [your words] with the natural world? 8. Who is she currently 'connected' [her words] to and why? What/who does her current 'circle of care' [your words] extend to? 9. Recent moments where she has expressed 'connection/disconnection' [her words] with the natural world? Times when she needs 'grounding' [her words]? 10. How did the plant medicine workshop go? Interest from others? Questions from students?

The questions are much more specific than the initial ones and build on previous discussions/experiences, often incorporating particular language that the student or caregiver has used to previously describe their relationship with the natural world. In this regard they are very particular, contextual and relational.   There are some general questions still in there to act as guideposts for change (see 'Repeated Prompts' section below). After finishing this process of gathering I would code the responses using the suggested modes of analysis within portraiture , identify themes, write portraits, get feedback and then create specific questions around themes (see "Building the Case" section below for more details on this). These questions would then feed back into the data gathering process described above and I would gather more information, code it, find themes, write portraits, get feedback and create questions once again. I repeated this process until I completed gathering data in September 2013.

Collecting and Gathering with the Teacher

Most of my interviews with Ocean were done walking and chatting, simply due to the limited time available to talk with him during the school day. We would often find breaks in the day such as lunch and recess when he wasn't teaching in order to talk. I initially started the research by sending him written questions and asking for written responses so that he could put some thought into the answer instead of having to think of something on the spot. As with the students, the questions targeted broad topics at

first around his work as an educator and his relationship with the natural world such as "What do you think are some of your strengths as an educator?" and "In your opinion, what is the role of the natural world within education?" The purpose of this broad inquiry was to keep the scope wide open for themes to emerge which in turn could direct future investigation. The questions then got more specific as I used his written answers to flush out related questions to further my inquiry (see Table 1.4 for example). I asked these follow-up questions in person as this allowed me to chase threads that arose in the conversation as we went along.

Table 1.5.   January 2013- Sample Interview Process for Ocean

January 2013- Sample Interview Process for Ocean		
Initial Question	**Answer**	**Follow up Questions**
What are some changes that you have seen in your practice as an educator since starting work at this school?	I am striving more to be the one questioning and guiding towards inquiry and research or discovery rather than the one delivering the answers or content.	-Why? -What does this guiding look like? -How do you decide the direction you want to guide the student in? -Do see yourself as needing to provide 'answers' or 'content' at a certain point or should the onus be on the student? -How is this different from your approach in your old school?

I did not do portraits with Ocean as the themes were slower to emerge because I had less time with him each week than I did with the students. Instead I coded the transcripts of our interviews, my field observations of him and teaching/student documents related to him in the same manner as I did with the students. To take advantage of time at the school when I was not there, I asked him to do reflections to depict a day in his life as a teacher. I was curious to see what occupied the majority of his thoughts and actions on a day to day basis at the school. He completed a total of six days' worth of reflections in this manner, two days every two months. I kept the potential format open as I wanted to allow freedom of expression and have him find the process useful as well. He decided to do audio recordings throughout the day which proved to be rich sources of insight into his daily practice. An area for future research would be,

when working with adult teachers, to try the arts-based place explorations, repeated prompts and efforts in perspective-taking that proved to elicit more nuanced answers with the students.

Table 1.6   Timeline for Teacher Data Collection & Analysis

	2012		2013											
	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Selection of Teacher	X	X												
Written Interview with Teacher				X										
Bi-Weekly Oral Interviews with Teacher					X	X	X	X			X			
Field observations of Teacher			X	X	X									
Day in the Life Teacher Reflections					X	X		X			X			
Transcribing, & Coding					X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X

Findings regarding Data Collection for Eco Portraiture

My findings demonstrate that certain specific modes of data collection allowed for deeper insight into student relationships with the natural world[10]. In particular, I focused on explorations of place using context specific arts-based methods of data collection (such as photography projects, video work, journaling, soundscapes). These methods allowed for attention towards the natural world, relational ways of 'researching', somatic engagement, freedom of expression, as well as nuanced descriptions and an understanding of change over time. These outcomes in turn fostered the creation of a

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[10] I regularly checked in with the students and their families to ascertain how they were feeling about the research and changed course depending on their input. For example, if they were having a hard week for personal reasons I would ease off data collection.

much more detailed portrait than sit down interviews could provide. I will provide some specific examples to illustrate this below. In addition to these place explorations, I found that multiple perspective seeking and repeated prompts at different stages also provide essential insight into the student and more-than-human relationship. Below I will describe each of these approaches and how they were beneficial in the collecting and gathering stage.

A) Data Collection though Arts-based Place Explorations

As I got to know the students on a deeper level, I soon discovered their individual passions, interests and talents. I decided to attempt to coordinate those with the research-gathering stage as a way to engage the students in the process and possibly allow for greater freedom of expression, and that is precisely what I found. It was important that I had a range of options for investigating their relationship to the natural world as each student had different interests, and this flexibility allowed me to find modes of data collection that fit well for each individual. For example, both Raven and Bambi loved to draw and so I would focus more time on this activity with them, asking them to answer questions this way or draw together with them in free time to see what they would focus on and why. Ecoboy, on the other hand, loved photography and video so we would use these modes often to explore places together. As a way to investigate the children's relationship with the natural world, I decided to pair these arts-based methodologies with the techniques established in 'go-alongs'. 'Go-alongs' are defined as

> a form of in-depth qualitative interview method that, as the name implies, is conducted by researchers accompanying individual informants on outings in their familiar environments, such as a neighbourhood or larger local areas. ((Carpiano, 2009, p.264)

This type of interview has been shown to be useful in studying people's perceptions of place and their interactions with it (Carpiano, 2009). This approach seemed like a good fit because after the first round of sit down interviews I saw how limited the students answers were and how the natural world was still very much in the background of our conversations. As a result, I decided instead to focus on explorations of place using context-specific arts-based methods. I would often ask students to take

me to a place of their choosing within the school location and then ask them to share why they had chosen that spot and what it meant to them (this has included spots by the river, deep in the rainforest, secret shortcuts, animal trails, forts, lookout towers, climbing trees). I intentionally chose place exploration as a method in order to observe the students interacting with the natural world, as I knew that we would come up against moments where they would encounter a worm or fern or log and I wanted to observe the details in terms of how they would handle it, approach it, relate with it, all of which gave me an insight into their relationship with the natural world. The explorations of place were always semi-structured where I had a list of pre-prepared questions that I would ask, often related to the place, as we explored, but I would keep the wandering open to other questions as they would arise.

Some of the arts-based approaches that I have used with the students in order to gain more information about their relationship with the natural world include:

Soundscapes-The students and I would wander around a place and I would give them an audio recorder to collect sounds that they felt represented the place. I wanted to see what they would collect and why.

Figure 1.1.   Collecting Soundscapes

Memory maps-This idea was based on Hannah Hinchman's (1999) notion of an event map. The students would guide me through one of the places that they spend a lot of time in at school and share their memories of it with me. They would take drawings, photos of spots with strong memories for them and position them on a map that they

have created of the place. I took audio recordings of this process. I was curious what memories would stand out and the role the natural world would play in this.

Figure 1.2.   Sample Memory Map

Video work- On our place explorations I would sometimes hand over the camera to the students to let them document the place and show me around. Video was useful to capture subtleties about student interaction in the place that audio or still photos might miss.

Day in the Life Documentation-I asked the two older students to document a 'day in their life' several times to see what they highlighted and recorded and why. This also allowed me to remove myself from the process for a bit to see what play-time and conversations could look like when I wasn't around. I wanted to see what a typical day looked like from their perspective and how the natural world factored into it.

Voice Thread- This software allowed me to pair still photography taken by myself or the students with audio clips from our explorations. This helped me in crafting written portraits to see the narrative.

Participant in unstructured play time- I often joined in and participated in play-time at recess and lunch and would document our adventures using audio or video. This would involve such activities as fort building, fire making, creating bird nests, role playing animals or climbing trees. This fostered relationship building between myself and the participants and allowed me to see their creative, playful side.

Figure 1.3.   Unstructured play time

Inquiry projects- I worked with Raven to create a photo essay around her question "Do you know what I've really, really wanted to know, if there's another colour out there? Like a new colour." She took photos here and there of colours that were new to her. In this way, I got to honour some of their own research questions, so I could position myself as a co-learner.

Figure 1.4.   Sample from Student Photo Essay

Drawings - As mentioned, two of my research participants loved to draw so I would often sit with them and chat during free time as they would draw or I would draw as well. I would use drawings as an alternative to answering a question orally. This mode of expression showed me different sides of their character and created a calm, safe space for deep discussion.

Figure 1.5.   Student Drawing

Note: Faces have been blurred to protect anonymity.

Photography – I used photography like I did drawing, to help the students find other ways to express their answers to questions or show me aspects of their relationship. Often they would take 'photo essays' of hikes we went on and then we would use the photos as talking points.

Figure 1.6.   Sample of Student Photography

Contrast with Sit-down Interviews

After realizing the difference in results after attempting these arts-based approaches to data collection with the students, I decided to intentionally ask the students the same questions that I had previously asked them during a sit down interview, now using an arts-based approach to compare their answers.   Here are some specific examples contrasting the sit down interview with arts-based approaches. I will present these and then refer to them to share some outcomes of the arts-based methods afterwards.

Table 1.7.   Contrast of Sit-down and Arts-Based Interviews with Raven

Question: "How do you feel when you are drawing?"	Raven Answer
Method: Sit down interview	"Focused, like I can do a lot of details."
Method: Drawing	"Like in that picture of mine, there is a river right there. When I am drawing the river it makes me feel watery and thirsty. If there is a something missing on the drawing, I get a little feeling [tilts her head] like I've got to do that [add something]. I feel it in my body if something is missing and then I add it. When I draw a tree I feel squiggly. I feel like a tree, like if I need more branches I don't feel so good and then I just put some branches on."

Table 1.8.   Contrast of Sit-down Interview and Place Exploration with Ecoboy

Question: "**What are some memorable moments about your fort?"**	Ecoboy Answer
Method: **Sit down interview**	"It is my favourite fort. It is tall, off the ground, fun to climb on and waterproof."
Method: **Video/Place Exploration**	See Appendix A

Table 1.9.   Contrast of Sit-down Interview and Place Exploration with Bambi

Question: **"Tell me about some things you found in the forest today"**	Bambi Answer
Method: **Sit down interview**	Silence for a long time "…bugs."
Method: **Place exploration/audio recording**	See Appendix B

Outcomes of Context Specific Arts-based Approaches

Attentive to the More-than-Human

When exploring place, our attention returned to the world around us: Raven and I paused to listen to the river because of her drawing, Bambi pointed out the robin, on my walk with Ecoboy, he pointed out a nest and mushrooms and then, the rest of the hike involved him pausing to look at holes in the logs or salmon in the river. This hands-on approach to interviewing seems to provide a window into the nuances of the place. It opens up the space for the place to be heard again within the conversation. We paused to look at the fine hairs on the buds of the salmonberry and the satiny brown tassels of moss creeping up a nearby rock. The students asked to draw or take photos of these details. Our pace slowed considerably as we stopped to look at interesting things that we stumbled upon. Instead of us forging our way through place, place was guiding us from spot to spot: intricate lace patterns on the spiny wood ferns; the sound of plinking water dropping into a small pool; the bright, yellow candle of skunk cabbage letting us know that spring has arrived; vibrant spots of orange slime mold; and treefrogs creaking under the wispy lichen. Geoffery Hartman (1964) refers to this as 'halted traveling'; we are caught up in the wonders under our feet and overhead. "When we hike, my eyes are everywhere at once" Ecoboy commented.

Relational

Working with these students, their families and these places for two years, I felt our connections grow stronger. We saw each other through ups and downs in our lives. As I attempted to craft my portraits, I felt a weight of responsibility to honour those that trusted me with their stories. The students and the natural world changed the narrative arc of the day. Depending on where they led me, what we encountered and what questions they asked, the story changed. As the students helped with the research they told me "I trust you" or "you 'get' me" or "you're a good friend'. I learned much from them and the place. The boundaries between self and other, friend and researcher and who is under the gaze of the study, started to blur. By abandoning the sit down interview we were given time to touch the mosquito wing or climb over rocks on shortcuts or look up to feel the rain splash on our faces. We were immersed in the place and its ways. Qualitatively my experience was one of relation; I was left with the feeling of moss under my fingers and the scent of cedar, the vision of fog filtering through the forest. This was quite the contrast to the sit down interview where the main relation was between us as humans, there was now an open space for other voices to enter. As I remarked above, drawing, sharing in play, positioning myself as a co-learner in art projects also really strengthened relations as these moments worked to build trust and helped us to see each other outside of our roles as 'researcher' or 'student'.

Generative

Being there in place, or immersed listening to it, seemed to help facilitate questions and wonders both for me when it came to interviewing and for the students as they explored. For example, in the place-based interview with Eco-boy, I saw the logs as the roof and wondered how he would continue to build. I saw the lashing and I wondered how long it took him, whereas in the sit-down interview his list of point form answers gave me little to pursue further. In one of our encounters with a worm Bambi asked "Is this dark part, it's eye?", "how do worms breathe?", "Why does the worm dig faster when I touch it on the tail?", "Is it hiding because it is scared?" This steady stream of questions was typical when she found something in the woods. She was voraciously curious about her encounters with the more-than-human world, and in this way I saw her

grasping at learning opportunities which certainly wouldn't have availed themselves if we had done a traditional interview.

Exploring the place also triggered memories for the students as demonstrated in the fort video with Eco-boy, he recalled the old fort he was building and the bird's nest. He also pointed out where they had chosen to build their fort previously and why they moved spots. The conversation branched out and there were more places he wanted to show me. Things became way less abstract for the students, there was less reliance on memory; the students were able to concretely show me aspects of their learning because they were embedded in place.

Nuanced descriptions

The students told me that when we were working on the research they felt "calm, happy, free, empowered**"** and at ease to share thoughts and ideas. They also felt "creative". They attributed this to being able to do things such as take photos, draw maps and shoot video. As shown, this led to richer, more nuanced descriptions of place. If I had only interviewed Bambi sitting across the table from me, I may have surmised that she had not seen much in the forest that day and that she was shy in nature, and that's about it. Instead, by accompanying her, I had the chance to watch how she handled the worm, hear her background knowledge on what she thinks slugs and worms eat, listen to her confidence in identifying the robin, watch how careful she was when touching the mosquito and then subsequently watch how she carried this over into play time. Similarly, if I had only done the sit-down interview with Ecoboy, I would not have realized how his experience of the fort village is one full of life and homes for other creatures. The arts-based approaches allowed the students to express themselves in different mediums, and I got to see different aspects of them and their relationship with the natural world this way as well.

Somatically engaged

The students asked me to hold the worm or listen to the river. After the sit down interviews, I leave with only having touched the paper that my questions were on and only having looked at the student across from me. Through this other approach Bambi guided my hand to touch the tree bark, and Ecoboy challenged me to see who could

toss stones further into the water. Thanks to them I leave with the taste of raindrops on my tongue and mud underfoot. Through the arts based approach I also gained more insight into what's happening for the students somatically. For instance, regarding Raven I was able to understand how she actually embodied the thing she was drawing for the moment that she was drawing it. As noted in Raven's answer while she was drawing, the arts-based data collection often helped us become more aware of our own bodies and of those around us as we were actively drawing, watching, listening or moving through space.

Invariably, the exploration of place through context specific arts based approaches to interviewing elicited richer and more nuanced conversations regarding student relationship with place and the natural world. As well, encouraging the students to act as active participants involved in the data collection increased my own attentiveness toward the natural world, as they often pick up on details that I would not have noticed and are more somatically engaged in place than I am. These outcomes were immediately apparent as soon as I started experimenting with place exploration. As a result, I subsequently changed my methodological approach so that the students were often leading me on explorations of daily life at school and found new ways to collect data so that the process was more creative and embodied. Such an approach has also foregrounded our active relationships with the more-than-human world as opposed to presenting it as an inert backdrop. It seems very important to make these arts-based approaches context specific as some methods did not work for certain individuals. For example, two sets of parents abandoned journal-keeping and instead collected drawings or sent me important moments of note by email. Finding a comfortable and engaging mode of data collection for the research participants in this manner provided deep insight into the students' relationships with the natural world.

Figure 1.7.   Mud Play with the Bambi

B) Data Collection through Multiple Perspective-Taking

Another form of data collection that emerged was that of multiple perspective-taking. During my research the students and I would often intentionally pose questions to each other to consider the world from the perspective of an individual creature in the natural world. For example, within the first month of my research I asked one of the students, Raven, to take me to the fort that she had been building in the woods, and while we were there I offered her a camera to take photos of it. She took about five photos of the 'patio',' bedrooms' and 'lookout tower' and then handed the camera back to me. I decided to try an experiment; this student has chosen the 'pseudonym' of Raven because she feels connected to the birds so I asked her to photograph the fort from a Raven's perspective. Here are some notes from my field journal after this approach:

> I am struck by how she actually begins to move like a raven. She tries multiple different angles, swoops down and above. She is not concerned about documenting certain parts of the fort anymore but instead enters spaces where she thinks the raven would perch. She holds the camera for longer and takes more pictures. In my sit down interviews with Raven at the beginning of the year, she talked slowly calmly and quietly, listening to the audio one can hear the river and a raven in the background as we are talking but those voices remain there, in the background. In this approach I can see Raven open up and talk faster. Her eyes get wide

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and she begins to skip, usually ahead of me, excited to show me around. She eagerly asks me if she can use the camera. I see a whole different side of her when I allow the methodology to be more creative. We also experience a different way of being in place, where Raven, the bird, is perched on the forefront of our thoughts rather than separated in the distance.

Her photos below change from a typical human perspective on the fort…

Figure 1.8.   Raven`s Fort Photos from her Perspective

to that of a raven….

Figure 1.9.   Raven`s Fort Photos from the Bird`s Perspective
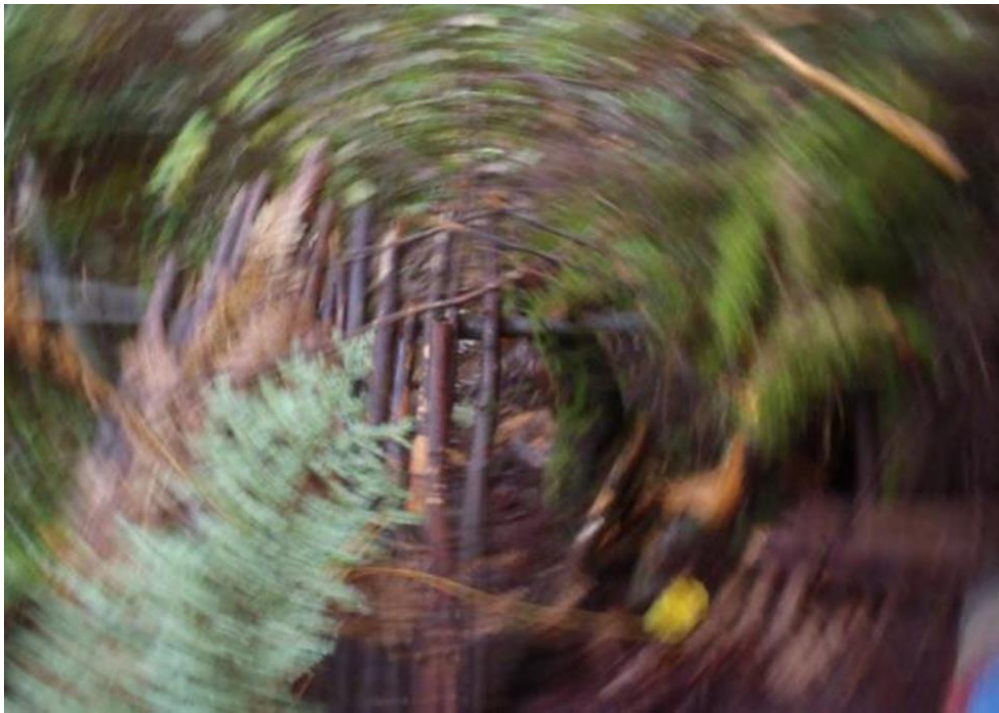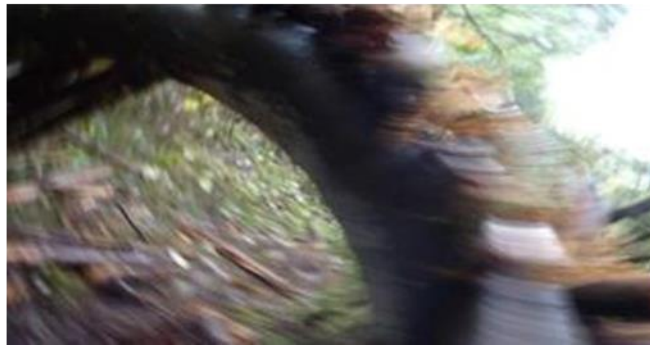
In this way we were playing with learning about the bird raven's way of being in the world, what it sees and experiences, and what we can learn from it. "I like thinking of the world like it would, I know I can't understand what it actually sees but I feel like I understand it more when I try." Raven commented. Young children love to role-play, and there is evidence that this helps in empathy development as well something I will elaborate on in a later chapter.

Attending to voice and perspective is an important aspect of portraiture as a methodology. I wanted to include the possible perspectives of the more-than-human (as in the Raven example above) to keep it in the foreground of research, to consider what the relationships under study could possibly look like from the perspective of the raven or the slug[11]. I also purposely wanted to include multiple perspectives[12] within my portraits of the students, so that different aspects of their personalities could be revealed and highlighted, allowing the reader to see nuances and complexity. One parent comments "You showed our qualms and that really tells me you are hearing us, and not just following your own point of view." As Michael Jackson (1989) points out "truth and validity never reside in a single voice but always in the complex interplay of voices" (p. 191). Such attempts to highlight a multiplicity of voices add layered meaning to the relations that are integral to the research.

As previously mentioned, within this research I attempted to foreground voices that are traditionally disregarded or absent within educational research such as that of the student, parent and the more-than-human world. Instead of acting as a lone researcher, I was inspired by collaborative ethnography which emphasizes the importance of a community perspective (Lassiter, 2000; Spindler & Hammond, 2006).

Lassiter defines collaborative ethnography as

an approach to ethnography that *deliberately* and *explicitly* emphasizes collaboration at every point in the ethnographic process, without veiling it- from project conceptualization, to fieldwork, and especially through the

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[11] I will address concerns about the anthropomorphism inherent in this process below

[12] These perspectives include the students themselves, myself as a researcher, the teachers, the caregivers, other students, other researchers and particular entities in the natural world

writing process. Collaborative ethnography invites commentary from our consultants and seeks to make that commentary overtly part of the ethnographic text as it develops. In turn, this negotiation is reintegrated back into the fieldwork process itself." (2000, p. 16).

If I was to follow this method precisely however I should open up my research to collaboration as such right from the very start, so that parents, students, teachers and I could work to co-construct the initial questions and design of the project based on our various interests and needs. However, I intentionally did not take this approach because I want to ensure that the more-than-human world stayed within the foreground of the research. Opening the research up to try to tackle some questions and needs from the human community creates a risk that the rest of the natural world will not be of research interest and once again slip into the background. Within educational research we become experts at creating borders and boundaries that exclude the more-than-human (Russell, 2005); this is not something I wished to perpetuate. Instead I wanted to intentionally draw attention to what Lassiter (2000) calls "the power and politics of representation" which means considering "who has the right to represent whom and for what purposes, and…whose discourse will be privileged in the ethnographic text" (p.4). Changing our approach to education and research to include the agency of the natural world means making time and space to listen to the voices within the natural world and consider their perspectives. With this in mind I also tried to include multiple perspectives in the portraits I wrote, here is an example,

Table 1.10.   Portrait Excerpt Demonstrating Multiple Perspective Taking

Portrait Excerpt Fall 2012 Bambi
Three perspectives   Flashes of light and dark are moving too quickly. It's like days and nights are moving at warp speed. Something has taken me from my dark home and I no longer know where to head. I squeeze and flinch trying to move my body to escape this place. Suddenly, I'm in serious pain, the lower half of my body goes numb. I feel much too hot and dizzy, it's hard to breathe.   -the worm
A sunny day in late winter and it's lunch time at school. I look over and see Bambi staring down at her wrist intently. I come closer and see that she has a worm curled around her arm like a bracelet; it hangs limply as she holds it by one end. I ask to see it up close and notice that part of it is squished and that it is actually drying up in the sun. It squirms under her firm grip. "Bambi, we need to put it back in its home." I say, "Look here, part of it is hurt". She drops it by accident and then quickly scoops it up and walks quickly away from me, "It needs a wet place so it can breathe properly" I follow her and tell her. "I will take care of it and protect it" she says pinching it even more tightly between her fingers. I wince and watch as she hurries off home for the day.

-the researcher

Ever since Bambi could walk she has been playing with bugs, and cuddling with any animal she could get her hands on. Sometimes she literally cuddles them to death because she is unaware of her own strength. I'm surprised at how some of these fragile creatures are able to survive her unconstrainable love. She doesn't want poor sluggy to get left behind so she carries him for over an hour with slime oozing out of her little hands. Let me tell you slug slime doesn't come off easy, it's just as fun to wash off as tree sap. Luckily I have a lot of experience with both.

One day last spring we had had a talk about how we weren't going to bring creatures home because we didn't want to take them away from their habitat. When we got home she was really protective of her backpack and kept telling me not to look in it. Soon she got distracted and I opened it to take out her lunch and to my surprise out flies an orange butterfly. It landed on the table, we carefully put it in a bug cage and a couple hours later we set her free. It amazed me how this fragile little butterfly was able to survive being trapped in a backpack full of books moving around. How long was she in there? I wonder... Bambi will never tell. Somehow she thinks that she's going to save every animal because if she leaves a caterpillar or centipede on the ground somebody might step on it and kill it, so she's got to bring it home. But I'm trying to explain to her that if she brings all the animals home, even if it's in her little bug cage that unless she knows what that animals eats, it's going to die at home because it doesn't have food. So I'm like "It's better in the natural environment like where it lives, you take it away from its home it's going to be scared and you know…so we're still trying to go over that. I don't know if she'll ever get it. I mean look at me I'm in my thirties and I'm still trying to bring home every animal.
-the parent

Of course, there is concern here in taking on the perspective of a tree or a robin of anthropomorphizing, but this is where we must return to the ethical starting point of humility. When perspective-taking it's useful to consider Don Mckay's (1995) notion of "poetic attention". He describes as follows:

> it's a sort of readiness, a species of longing which is without the desire to possess, and it does not really wish to be talked about...Poetic attention is based on a recognition and a valuing of the other's wilderness; it leads toa work which is not a vestige of the other, but a translation of it... Our perception is a restructuring of the world. Poetry should not be taken to be avoiding anthropocentrism but to be enacting it thoughtfully. It performs the translation which is at the heart of being human, the simultaneous grasp and gift of home making. And the persistence of poetic attention during the act of composition is akin to the translator's attention to the original, all the while she performs upon it a delicate and dangerous transformation. (p.25-26)

I remain aware that no human language can ever speak the voice of the more-than-human, and therefore know that every translation made has the ability to dangerously transform. We must choose our focus, our words, and our methods carefully as they help paint reality for our students, for ourselves; they help scale our eyes. Yes, we have a perspective as individuals and as humans but under an ethic of care we must do our best to try to listen to the other such that we are open to how their perspective may change ours. Although we can never fully grasp the perspective of the other, an attempt is made. It is important to note that the same limitations are involved in human perspective-taking; we can never truly know what the other perceives yet this does not and should not stop us from trying to listen. Instead of reverting to the cultural norms of ignoring or subjugating the more-than-human world within education, we need to intentionally highlight it; we need to turn our writing, teaching and research into political acts which emphasize its agency. As Annie Dillard (1974) points out, we can begin by lending an ear to these voices

> Two billion bacteria and many millions of protozoa and algae in a mere *teaspoonful* of soil... I might as well include these creatures in this moment as best I can. My ignoring them won't strip them of their reality, and admitting them, one by one, into my consciousness might heighten mine... (p. 96).

Explorations in place also helped to facilitate a sense of multiple perspectives and led to more inclusive conceptions of voice. This can be heard in the previous audio clip of lunch time exploration of place with Bambi. The worm, the mosquito, the robin all entered into the foreground of our consideration which is much different from our experiences just sitting with each other talking. As these 'voices' and perspectives of the worm or the raven entered the data collection stage through place exploration I got to see how the students approached them, how they listened or attended, what they noticed or ignored and this in turn gave me deeper insight into their relationship with the natural world.

C) Data Collection through Repeated Prompts

In addition to seeking multiple perspectives and engaging in explorations of place using arts based methodologies for data collection, I also designed some questions to help me assess change over time within the student/more-than-human relationships.

This helped me to address my main research question 'In what ways does the student and teacher relationship with the more-than-human world change over the school year?' Every four months with caregivers, teachers and students I would ask some repeated questions such as: 'Describe the student for someone who has never met them before" or "Describe some examples of interactions with them in outdoor settings." I intentionally chose open-ended questions that would provide a sense of where the student was at in that moment in time in terms of their relationship with the natural world. In this way, these questions acted as guideposts to help me see change over time, I kept track of individual answers and noted how the answers changed as the months progressed. The same was true for student prompts which I asked them every 4 months using the same questions every time. This was very revealing and this process helped to turn portraiture from a static snapshot to a more fluid sense of time.

1.4.2.   Building the case-holding stories up to the stars

Aim- to make room for ongoing reflection on methodology and eco-portrait creation and then adjust things accordingly based on feedback

I had originally envisioned revising the methodology only after gathering participant feedback and input, yet I found that I was constantly tweaking my approach week to week given my experiences working with the students. Every four months I sent the portraits that I had written out to the students and caregivers to provide feedback and edits[13]. I would then revise where needed and then send it back out to participants for another look. I also created a list of questions to assess the student's changes in relationship over time that I thought would be useful in keeping the natural world in the foreground of this reflection stage, such as 'Are we returning different times of year, times of day?', 'What voices are absent/ignored?', 'Are we taking time to write details, particularities, slow pace?' However, as I mentioned above, by shifting my methodology to include context specific arts-based approaches of exploring place, the consideration

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[13] There were a few instances where I tried to be mindful of personal issues families were facing as I did not want to bombard them with information during this period and thus, in a few cases this timeline was not met.

of multiple perspectives and ways to track changes over time, I found that those questions were not needed as this change in methodology was addressing them.

After collecting and gathering bits of stories here and there with the students in the above manner, it was now time to stick them together to form a narrative casing to house some tender living lessons. I will describe this process below and some of the bright stars which I held the stories up to, revealing room for growth. I wrote multiple portraits over the course of a year, as these stages were cyclical. After I determined where gaps could lie, I began to gather more bits of stories to add to the casing. Eventually I had so many bits of story tied on that the narrative casing seemed strong enough to be a fit house for the lived experience I wanted to share. This latter part will make up the rest of my dissertation.

Sorting the Stories Gathered

Portraiture suggests five different processes regarding crafting themes 1) listening for repetitive audible and visible refrains (repeated behaviours words or statements) 2) seeking resonant metaphors which act as symbols for larger stories happening in the lived experience of the participant 3) discovering different cultural, individual and institutional rituals which may shed light on values, narratives of participants 4) triangulating the data from a variety of sources 5) attending to dissonant voices which may contradict themes or patterns and in this way flush out complexity and particularity of the narrative.   I have re-named these five processes 'bright stars' as they were key in guiding and illuminating the stories that I had collected. Here is a sample of an interview under the light of some of these bright stars,

Table 1.11.   Teacher Interview as seen under the Bright Stars

Interview with Teacher Transcript Sample	Ecoboy Fall 2012 –Bright Stars*
Observations re: natural world interactions Teacher: Yesterday we were talking about 'Whose home is this?' because some of the kids were walking up and just destroying stuff. He answered	**Some kids 'destroying stuff'** (deviant voice)

very quickly when I started asking about 'what's that log?' He quickly had two or three answers that he wanted to share and recognized that it was more than just a rotting log.	**'Wanted to share'** (repeated refrain) **'Recognized it was more than just a rotting log'** (resonant metaphor-'making connections')
Me: Any changes that you've noted in Ecoboy over the last school year? Examples? Teacher: He feels more comfortable and therefore confident, in the past he's not been a very confident child when it comes to schoolwork. He wants us to scribe, his ideas are good and I think that he could do more but I think that he lacks that confidence but I think that it will come. He doesn't go into very much depth in anything written, so you know orally he'll do more, it would be a good way to test him. I think he's very caring. Yesterday C was being mean to him; he didn't bring that up necessarily but dealt with it well. Ecoboy's a good influence; he's always kind of calming. I see him being this way with friends but it's also how I see him in general right now, like he is calming himself, becoming more comfortable, less anxious.	**'More comfortable'/'confident'** (resonant metaphor-calming) **'Not very confident at all' re: schoolwork in the past** (repeated refrain) **'Caring'** (repeated refrain) **'Calming'** (resonant metaphor-calming)

*Note: Bright stars used for codes indicated in brackets

From this transcript we can see examples of repeated refrains such as 'caring' and 'wanting to share' for Ecoboy. These are examples of words or statements that I as a portraitist hear many times over, from various people, often including the research participants themselves. Through this example one can also see some of the resonant metaphors, for instance 'making connections' and 'calming'. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) point out "these words or phrases resonate with meaning and symbolism, sometimes representing the central core of an institutional culture or the dimension of a life story" (p.198). Such metaphors are often poetic and symbolic expressions of the lived experience of the participant. In this case, 'making connections' seems to be a driving metaphor for Ecoboy in terms of how he approaches life and learning but also speaks to his ability to see the interconnected nature of things. The same is true for 'calming' which seems to be symbolic of his life's path at that moment in time. This

interview also provides an example of a 'deviant voice', thoughts or perspectives that seem to contradict past statements,

> As the researcher organizes transcript data into categories, she must be vigilant in attending to the experiences and perspectives that do not fit the convergent patterns. In portraiture, we refer to this perspective that deviates from the norm as 'the deviant voice' and we never stop listening for it, even as we become increasingly focused in our inquiry and certain in our analysis (Lawrence Lightfoot and Davis, 1997, p.193).

These are not always explicit, the researcher often has to sift through with a critical eye to what is not said or is absent in observations or discussions to find this voice. In this case, the teacher who is regularly positive of student behaviour at the school noted that 'some kids were just walking up and destroying stuff'. Seeking this deviant voice[14] is useful in helping me to see the other side of things and in doing so helps me to seek new ways of framing or understanding the lived experience of the research participant. I also labelled transcripts for 'rituals', events that could reveal values, priorities and stories important to the participant. For instance, the kindergarten student that I worked with made a ritual of bringing her natural world finds to show other people and I would take note of the manner in which she would do this so as to draw out some of her interests, aims and would also document how people regularly involved, such as her mum, would respond. Here is a journal note made by her mother that is seen under the bright stars,

Table 1.12.   Parent Journal Entry as seen under the Bright Stars

Observations made by Feisty Ferret (parent) of Bambi	Bambi Spring 2013-Bright Stars
Also yesterday her, and her friends were playing in the yard and they found a dead robin…Anyways, Bambi said she was sad because he died, This is the 2nd robin that we have found dead in the last 3 days. The other one was on Sunday by the north [river]. That one she told me to pull some of his feathers off so she would have something to remember him by. I didn't, I told her that we should	Ritual (Finding creatures and showing them to others) -**sad because robin died** (visible repeated refrain) -**wanted feathers to remember it by** (resonant metaphor 'Holding Tight')

[14] Lawrence Lightfoot & Davies (1997) describe this deviant voice as "experiences or perspectives that do not fit the convergent patterns" (p.192-3). In this instance, the teacher's disparaging comments were atypical from the pattern of highly positive remarks that I usually received from him.

just leave him alone. This is so weird 2 identical birds, in 3 days and both of them looked like they died of natural causes. What a mystery? It's not a mystery that Bambi found them but it's a mystery of how they died.	-**Mum said 'just leave him alone'** (audible repeated refrain)

As one can see under the larger code of 'ritual' other codes such as 'resonant metaphor' and 'repeated refrain' appeared and this helped to tease out the details of the event. This type of sorting using the bright stars was done for each season of the research term. All data was coded in this manner.

Crafting the Themes

Using data from field observations, parent/teacher/student interviews and student work, triangulation was practiced and then it was crafted into emergent themes through coding for the bright stars of visible and audible refrains, resonant metaphors, dissonant threads and embedded rituals (Lawrence Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Similar codes found under these bright stars were grouped together and from this themes were discerned. Here is an example of an emergent theme crafted from the coding process,

Table 1.13.   Coded Terms Sorted into Themes

Ecoboy Themes Fall 2012	Terms coded using the Bright stars
Caring for human others	Calming (resonant metaphor) Making Connections (resonant metaphor) Smiling, nodding (visible refrains) Patient (audible refrain) Encouraging (audible refrain) 'Wants you to be happy' (audible refrain) Praise from teacher (audible refrains) Helping (ritual) Sweet (audible refrain) Sensitive to others (audible refain) 'Natural leader/helper' (visible and audible refrain) 'Wants to please' (dissonant voice) Not listening (dissonant voice) 'Goofing off' (dissonant voice)

Here we see multiple codes grouped together due to similarity. From this emerged the title 'Caring for human others' which acted as an underlying theme for all of these codes. The themes were then used to help structure the portraits that I wrote every four months (see below for example). I found grouping codes for themes to be extremely helpful and although I was worried about the possibility for it to simplify things into discrete categories, I found it instead allowed me to observe connections and realize how complex the relationships actually are. Thus, I identify with this point made by Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davies (1997)

> Naming convergence within a complex and diversified whole may seem to be a reductive activity. But the identification of emergent themes does not reduce the complexity of the whole; it merely makes complexity more comprehensible (p.215).

In addition to the coding that I did in this manner, I also did some interpretive reading (Gilligan, Brown & Rogers, 1989) which suggests multiple readings of the same transcript, listening for a different voice[15] or angle each time. This helped me to look for connections among themes, subtle changes over time and trying to maintain the particulars and the complexity of the relationship rather than flattening it into broad categories (Miles and Huberman, 1994). I used the themes that I constructed as a frame for the writing and then tried to flush out the details, particulars, subtle changes and dissonant voices through the narrative. In this way, I tried to balance the tension that those using the methodology of portraiture must face,

> the tension between organization and classification on one hand and maintaining the rich complexity of human experience on the other-the tension between developing discrete codes and searching for meaning, and the tension between the research's desire for control and coherence and the actors' reality of incoherence and instability. The portraitist does not try to resolve this tension by choosing one side over the other, "Rather she works to maintain the tension and experience the dialectic between these two approaches to thematic development" (Lawrence Lightfoot & Davies, 1997, p.192).

Here is an example of how I attempted to deal with such tension as I wrote the portraits. The theme that was structuring this piece was 'A companion in wonder'

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[15] These voices included the more-than-human, the parent, the child and the teacher.

referring to a support teacher at the school who regularly encourages and takes interest in Bambi when she finds items in the natural world. Instead of solely describing how Rosie acted to facilitate wonder, I wanted to portray some of the tension that Rosie felt, trying to get Bambi to keep up with the group and yet still trying to honour her finds.

Table 1.14.   Excerpt from Portrait

Excerpt of Portrait under theme "A Companion in Wonder"-Bambi Fall 2012
A crisp, sunny fall morning and today the class cuts onto a trail in the woods. Before we enter I help one of the older boys to take a picture of a spider he found on one side of the road. Bambi remains behind with him as the rest of the students enter the forest. Rosie stands by the cut-off and waves for Bambi to speed up and catch the group. I go over to help encourage Bambi to catch up and overhear her ask the older boy "When you are doing taking that picture show it to Sam ok?" she asks and waits to be sure of his response. She knows that her friend Sam, also in grade one, loves bugs and so she wants to be sure that someone lets him know about the spider. I tell this to Rosie as we wait for them to catch up. Rosie says "See! You just have to listen to them." I remark that yes, Bambi wasn't simply lagging behind but rather was being quite thoughtful for a friend of hers. "I don't think I'm patient enough." Rosie says. This surprises me because I consider her to be an extremely patient person. The rest of the hike Rosie walks with Bambi and another kindergarten student.   I hear Bambi soon yell out "Rosie! A slug!", "Wow" says Rosie crouching down to peer at the creature with her. Rosie looks up the trail realizing that they are losing track of the rest of the group, she urges Bambi to keep moving Bambi says "but I want to move it out of the way", Rosie reassures her that the slug will be safe there. Twenty seconds later, Bambi shouts out again "I found something. Look! Look!" I turn back to see she has found a hole in the ground the size of a golf ball. "I know what made that" Rosie says and looks closely with her. We ask Bambi what she thinks could have made it, "A mole" she says. Bambi stops a few steps later to touch some shelves of fungus. "Fairies might live here." she says. Rosie greets each of Bambi's discoveries with tenderness, care and attentiveness. I notice that Bambi as she makes her way along the trail to catch up, points out slippery spots or sticks to Rosie, saying "Rosie, it's slippery here, hold hands" or "Rosie careful, this is a hill".   We make our way to the bottom of the hill and finally meet up with the class; Bambi has found plastic ties and tells me they look like 'rabbit ears'. I would have never thought of that. Ocean begins talking to the class and off to the side I see Rosie bend down to look at a piece of wood that Bambi is showing her. "How lovely!" Rosie says and they grin at each other. After this, Rosie gently guides her attention back to the teacher.

Although, coding using the bright stars helped me to discern the theme of Rosie's role in encouraging Bambi's wonder, I also tried to include subtle details in the narrative showing how Rosie constantly tried to get Bambi to catch up and focus back on the teacher in order to illustrate how Rosie also feels the need to get Bambi to participate in school learning as well. These subtle encouragements did not often show up on the

audio as they were a wave of the hand or a soft turn of the body to face the teacher so they could've been easily missed had I just relied on coding the audio alone. Instead, I remembered subtle details about the walk that I included to balance the extreme patience that Rosie embodied with the impatience that she mentioned she felt inside as a way to illustrate some of the complexity of the situation. Due to the narrative approach of portraiture, I felt able to convey dissonant voices and rich nuances giving the impression that although these themes emerged, they were filled with complexity which at times defies their own discrete label.

Using Themes as Springboards Forward

As I did ongoing coding, synthesizing, reflecting and writing throughout the data collection stage, this work acted like a springboard for pushing me forward, revealing gaps that I could refine and identifying key areas to study next when collecting and gathering. Miles and Huberman (1994) called this ongoing work with coding 'iterative cycles' that assist with clarity and refining themes. For example, here are some questions generated after writing a portrait about Bambi under the theme of 'Attentiveness' which had emerged for her. I also identified some possible sources to help me answer these questions which really helped to refine my inquiry and I would then use this to create the next set of questions for parents, teachers, field observations etc.

Table 1.15.   Questions Arising out of Research & Possible Sources for Answers

Bambi 'Attentiveness' Theme Fall 2012 Questions	Possible Source
What is it about the early childhood years that lends itself to that wide-eyed awareness?	literature, question for other researchers, parents
Is this attentiveness innate? Are/were her parents like this?	question for parents, literature
Is her ability for keen observation a skill that has been cultivated? By whom and how?	-question for parents, teachers -daily observations of those that might assist with this at home (read through parent journal) and at school
How does she retain this skill when most adults around her are encouraging her to rush her pace and focus in on human interaction?	-field observations and question for teachers, parents

What does this 'detailed eye' extend to?	-observe her drawings, what she halts for and why, question for teachers and parents

This process helped to provide refinement and clear paths forward for each stage of data collection. That being said, many themes were abandoned for a variety of reasons some were not as significant or strong as others, some were off topic from the general research focus of relationship with the natural world and some simply stopped appearing. As a result of starting with broad questions, I was able to craft many themes initially in order to guide collecting and gathering and was never at a loss for questions or threads to pursue. This is in line with one of the goals of portraiture

> any system of data organization and synthesis must be flexible enough to allow the researcher to shift gears and change direction as she moves from fieldwork to analysis and back to data collection. (Lawrence Lightfoot and Davis, 1997, p.188)

Story-based Representations as Complex and Ethical Projects

To demonstrate what an 'eco-portrait' might entail I will share an excerpt of a portrait of Ecoboy crafted around the theme of 'attentiveness' that appeared for him. Following this, I will share how the final stage of 'case building' for eco-portraiture is intentionally a complex and ethical endeavour.

Table 1.16.   Excerpt from Portrait Eco Boy-Fall 2012

Excerpt from portrait of Eco-boy Fall 2012
We walk toward the fort village and Ecoboy stops at a muddy patch to look at the tracks "Looks like dog" he says. I agree and we look for claw marks. Satisfied with our identification we keep walking. He is walking in front of me and again, I'm surprised when he goes off trail away from the fort village. He detours to take a look at the river. "That would be good cover for a fish" he says pointing to the overhanging tree branches. "There's a dead fish below you can see it there?" he asks. "Oh neat." I say, looking to see the body caught in a whirlpool created by a mossy log. As we are leaving Eco boy points a large hole in a log below our feet "maybe that's a home for a marten" he decides. As we enter the fort village he stops and looks in another hole at the base of a tree. I'm surprised by this because he's walked this route so many times and yet, he still stops to look closely at things as he is walking. He reminds me of his fort from last year and we decide to go check on it. I follow behind him. "I haven't been back here in a while." he says. "There's the bird's nest." He points out a mossy ball hanging off a tree branch. "I think it's abandoned now" he says peering up at it. He takes a photo of it.
"If I had my waders on I'd go down in there" he looks at the pool of water where his old fort used to be. I laugh and say "be careful" as I watch him cross a slippery muddy slope. "There's probably frogs in here now" he says. We look into the pool, checking for that splash of green and listening quietly to see if we hear

any movement in the water. As we wait, I realize that instead of simply showing me his fort, Ecoboy has been stopping along the way to show me a community of living creatures that also share this spot and call it home. The tracks in the mud, those fish in the river beside the village, the bears that he has seen pass through, those holes at the base of the trees, that mushroom growing on the fort, the bird's nest, the frog pond, he has taken the time to pause and attend to all of these things. I normally walk quickly on the trail all the way here and he asks me to divert off of it. I normally only see the human impact on the area in the fort village and he asks me to crouch down and look at the small mushroom I would've easily missed. I thought we were going on a walk to hear about his fort when really Ecoboy had been busy soaking up the signs and clues that surround him.

I liked playing with the aesthetic dimensions of story because as previously mentioned, crafting a portrait can help shift our distribution of the sensible: to reveal aspects of the whole not previously considered. Hopefully the result is something that inspires the reader to look at the world in a different way. For example, in the above portrait with Eco-boy I tried to highlight Ecoboy's way of relating to the world around him such that the reader could see the forest from his perspective and hopefully in doing so, experience a metaphorical shift from seeing the forest as 'background' to seeing it as a varied and diverse place, full of life, full of homes and worth stopping to explore.

How the narrative is crafted depends on many factors. Lightfoot and Davis make a distinction about switching from 'listening to' the story towards 'listening for' the story (1997, p.99). In the traditional methodology of portraiture, the researcher is listening *for* a story, actively creating a narrative that is both authentic and open to interpretation. They are careful to note that this is *a* story not the '*the'* story. However, I was wary about this switch as I'm constantly asking the question is 'our purpose here getting in the way of what place or the more-than-human world has to teach/tell?' I was worried that if I began 'listening for' a story, if I had my own agenda about what the story should be then I wouldn't be able to really listen closely to how the natural world was actively influencing our ways of knowing and being. As a result, as I explored place with the students I decided not to listen 'for a story' per se but I rather 'listened to' the students and the place quite intently. However, interestingly, afterwards as I listened to the audio or read the transcripts I switched to the 'listening for'.

> Post-data collection analysis is less action-oriented and more ruminative
> than the day to day analysis of the data gathering phase-less about
> preparing for the next day of purposeful and strategic data collection and

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more about deep contemplation and probing insight. (Lawrence Lightfoot & Davies, 1997, p. 189).

By holding the bits and pieces of information that I've gathered up to the bright stars that portraiture offers, I was able to step back and see the larger picture and hear how the voices intertwined, I could see patterns in the tales collected and out of this I begin to see larger themes. For example, in the above portrait about Eco-boy, I originally went into the interview thinking it was going to be about his fort and filed it under that heading in my files and yet, as I listened to the audio, glanced at the photos and read my notes I soon realized the story that was unfolding was more about his relationship with the natural world.

By stepping back from the need to construct a story from the outset and listening rather to what emerges, I felt that I'd been learning how to co-create the story *with* place and the students. Often a student interrupted my 'plan' or questions; for instance, one day I was trying to chat quietly with Eco-boy and he started throwing pebbles to see if he could reach the river from where we were sitting. Instead of just chatting we broke out into laughter as we challenged each other to throw them farther. He changed the narrative arc of that day and I was grateful for it. The same is true for the natural world; when I was with Bambi the grade one student that I worked with, inevitably a slug or the worm pushed its way by and changed where the story with her was headed and what emerged. This co-creation of story allows for various voices to be highlighted other than my own and the flexibility of letting the students take control of where the story should head helps build relations between us. In this regard they feel like co-researchers rather than studied 'subjects'.

A storied approach also meant that I tried to note as many details as possible throughout the day from the shoes of the student to the colour on the wing of the bug because I never knew what was going to be important or not. Of course I couldn't pick everything up, but portraiture asks us to seek out relations in a detailed way that I don't think I would have captured if I was simply making general observations. In this methodology the challenge ends up being that of finding out how the rock throwing is connected to all the rest. For example, as I crafted the story above, I grew curious as to how little moments like Ecoboy waiting quietly in anticipation of finding a frog or gently

touching a mushroom could possibly be connected to larger themes of empathy and curiosity that have arisen for him. It helped me to think in terms of context, the body, relation and the particular, all key elements of an eco care as will be described. Each time I finished the story writing process with a nuanced sense of the interconnection of ideas, people and places.

I found that the process of portraiture revealed as much about the researcher as it does the participants and thus, we are all faced to see aspects of ourselves that we may not be used to having out in the 'light of day'. As I shared at the end of the portrait about Eco-boy, here I am an 'ecological educator' of 18 years and yet, I had been walking that trail that I walked with Eco-boy countless times not noticing even remotely the extent of things that he picked up in a couple minutes. In trying to *know* the 'other' I realize the depths of being and knowing that I can never quite access. I find the process humbling as it put me steadily in the position of 'student' or 'learner' as much as 'researcher'. So it's helped me to see research in a new light, one that is inherently messy and paradoxical but also rich because of these very complexities. One of the parents I work with hinted at this very thing when she described her appreciation for "the way you see all the angles, and the way you let it all be both oppositional yet pull it all together." It means that when writing or interpreting or translating, there will always be another way to look at it, another angle or perspective to consider.

Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005) suggests that portraiture is full of paradox and that is actually what makes the methodology meaningful work. She says "I think that one of the most powerful characteristics of portraiture is its ability to embrace contradictions, its ability to document the beautiful/ugly experiences that are so much a part of the texture of human development and social relationships" (p.9). I would add that such complexity is also inherent in our relationships with the rest of the earth. I am aware that in attending to context-specific place encounters that aim to consider multiple perspectives and subtle changes over time that these portraits will not at all be black and white, clear cut representations. With this in mind, I do not intend to use the portraits as essentialized 'case studies' rather as intimate glimpses into the possibilities and challenges present in our relationship with the natural world. Portraiture is helpful in this regard as the detailed narrative approach aims to portray small particular gestures,

behaviours and character traits such that enable readers to identify with the piece and find recognizable themes in the particular example (Lawrence Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Again, the hope is to reveal aspects of human relationship with the more-than-human through this narrative that we might not have previously considered.

I am also aware that I will be caught up in a "string of paradoxes" as a researcher, always experiencing a "crucial dynamic between documenting and creating the narrative, between receiving *and* shaping, reflecting *and* imposing, mirroring *and* improvising" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005, p.10). Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) suggest that

> the investigator needs to manage the tension between personal predisposition (more or less explicitly recognized and expressed) and rigorous skepticism... One might even say that *because* the self of the portraitist is so essential to the development of the work, the portraitist must be that much more vigilant about identifying other sources of challenge to her or his perspective. The counterintuitive must always be present even as the portraitist takes full advantage of the intuitive (p.11).

Unlike traditional positivist methodologies which attempt to eliminate paradoxes, portraiture challenges us to value the complexity, work with the contradictions, and represent both the light and the shade of the lived experience.

Let me be clear that I am aware that data collection in this regard shapes relationships with the natural world instead of solely 'documenting' them. For instance, Raven's encounter with the tree when drawing it for the purposes of my research may affect her future relationship with that tree, feeling more 'connected' to it in her words. Instead of seeing this as a distortion of the research, I see this as impossible to escape. I'm reminded of a course I taught on winter ecology in which, we spent time observing snowflakes under hand lenses. While observing the snowflakes we used cold metal plates to keep the crystals cold but the students soon realized that the warmth of their breath or their fingers would melt the flakes (great to watch under a hand lens; you can even see bubbles!). We became aware that we were active participants in what we were observing. In a similar manner with this research, I realize that I cannot distance myself completely from the relationships that I am studying, acknowledging my subjectivity as a researcher is an essential part of portraiture. As Lawrence Lightfoot &

Davis (1997) comment "the researcher must set aside her need for control, order, stability and submit to the complexity and instability of real lived experience." I help to frame the experiences that the students are participating in; therefore, I help to shape their relationships with the natural world. However, there are many factors which affect this relationship besides me, and I tried to highlight these while ever acknowledging that yes, I had an influence. I would've also had an influence if I had hovered quietly in the background and did not attempt to build relations or engage the students; such is the nature of 'research'. As apparent within the contrast between sit-down and place exploration interview answers, the process of data collection will of course affect what is found, and the best I can do is be explicit about my involvement at each stage. I also wanted to challenge myself to see the boundaries to my own thought, as Hart (2003) points out "What we see, as inquirers, depends on how we choose to look, where we choose to look, and why. We invariably fail to see what our lenses, filters and viewfinders won't permit." (p. 62). By inviting multiple perspectives this provoked me to add complexity to my own perceptions and conceptions.

Within this dissertation most of the chapters and sections begin with a short theoretical discussion, this was done to set the stage for descriptions coming out of my research and to situate the research within the discourse of the wider literature. However, this format does not reflect the process of learning for me as the research was always driving my questions and inquiry, which in turn would send me to the literature to expand my understanding of what was emerging on a broader, theoretical level. This way of writing was also another way for me to add multiple perspectives into what I was researching, writing and thinking, by drawing on other authors to challenge and add to what I was learning.

Refining the Research Questions

My original question was '**Given this school's focus on ecological education, in what ways does student and teacher relationship with the more-than-human world change over the school year?'** As mentioned, portraiture has the ability to reveal an aspect of the whole not previously considered, while I had been interested specifically in students that had a proclivity towards the natural world, I had not thought of empathy or belonging in particular as important aspects in this regard. These themes became

apparent through the process of writing the portraits and were confirmed when I finished data collection in December 2013 and had completed coding the data. Throughout the process I was surprised that the terms 'empathy' and 'belonging' came up more frequently in interviews than the term 'care' in the case of all the students and so it seemed there was a specificity to the type of care that I became really intrigued with. As a result, I wanted to delve into the role these concepts possibly played in regards to care. It was also striking to me that empathy emerged as a theme independently for *all* of the students because each of the students own relationships with the natural world seemed so particular, I wasn't sure that there would be many commonalities and yet there clearly were. In keeping my methodology broad in scope at first and then narrower and narrower in detail in response to what emerged, it allowed me to really hone in on empathy and belonging for each of the students to see what particular lessons each life experience might bring.

Concurrently, throughout my research, I grew fascinated by the conversation around moral development that emerged. Although the ethical development in these students was often seen by their teachers, school staff and caregivers through the lens of traditional frameworks, in my observations and experience with the children, their development seemed to break these same frameworks. One moment in particular made me realize that I needed to research what could be learned from the development of empathy from these specific students. Halfway through my research with the youngest student Bambi, a school staff member declared that Bambi was not progressing much in terms of care towards the natural world. This upset me because there were all these subtleties that I had observed that were counter to that suggestion. The staff member then commented that "she's at that stage where it is all about 'me' and 'mine' so it makes sense that she puts her needs before others." Instead, my two years with her had shown me the exact opposite; that she was consistently thinking of and attempting to care for the natural world. Instead of being born ego-istic, I saw these students, from an early age, being acutely aware and sensitive towards the natural world around them. Thus, I felt an urge and responsibility to share what I had learned from the lived experiences of these children which did truly represent a 'different voice' from the classic moral development frameworks. Thus, the process of research itself allowed me to form and articulate a more specific research question (see below).

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This all seemed to meet up with a gap in the literature; while there was a lot of research into the development of empathy in children in regards to the human community, I could find very little in regards to what this might look like in relation to the natural world. In order to address this gap, my new research questions were: **'If we take these life experiences seriously, what role might empathy and belonging play in the development of ecological care? What are the educational implications?'** These questions became the focal point of this dissertation and emerged in response to the research itself.

1.5. Conclusion

An eco-portrait is different from standard portraiture in that it addresses the ethical starting points of agency, intrinsic value of the natural world and our feelings of interdependence and humility around this. The methods described in this chapter in terms of data collection for eco-portraiture include place exploration using context-specific arts-based methodologies, considering multiple perspectives and using repeated questions to document growth. As mentioned this has resulted in research that can be somatically engaging, relational, dynamic, generative, particular and inclusive of a diversity of voice, all of which address the ethical starting points mentioned. The stories collected reflect these experiences and provide a window into the ethical dimensions of our relationship with the natural world. Possible questions when ruminating on these stories include: When the students are engaged in place exploration, how do they interact with the place and its inhabitants? When they encounter different voices and perspectives in place how do they respond? In the nuanced and particular descriptions they provide of their experience, what particular patterns emerge and why? This is where the bright stars of repeated refrains, resonant metaphors, institutional/individual rituals, dissonant voice and triangulation are useful in guiding a search for a larger theme that may guide understanding. In the 'case building' stage of eco-portraiture, the stories have been held up to the stars, room for growth has been noted and this has provided insight into new approaches to data collection as more tales are gathered. Eventually, a rich collection of stories has been collected such that the portraitist feels confident to craft a narrative casing to house these lived experiences in the form of an

'eco-portrait'. In this stage, the portraitist makes a shift from 'listening to' the relationship with the natural world to 'listening for" the story of this relationship. This story-based representation is intentionally complex in order to address the particularity of relations it attempts to convey and it in itself is an ethical project, as the researcher must choose what voices are present and absent, what aspects to emphasize in order to help the reader reconsider the whole.

The lessons around eco-portraiture articulated here are contingent upon one another and not meant to stand alone. For example, incorporating multiple perspectives and voices could simply result in moral relativism if not paired with the ethical starting points such as understanding of the agency of the more-than-human world. A 'complex understanding' void of context could result in daunting abstractions leading to apathy. I want to be clear that these examples are by no means a comprehensive 'list' for ways into ecological portraiture and that they are not meant to be taken as a 'recipe'. Assuming that one can simply outline the characteristics of ecological consciousness and then embody that in a methodology simply replicates the de-contextualized, simplified models for thinking that are at the root of the ecological crisis. Instead, eco-portraiture emphasizes the need for contextualized, diverse and complex understandings that take into account the local and the particular instead of the generalized and abstracted. As a result, the lessons offered here are not meant to act as a definitive prescription but rather, as starting points to critically consider the current distribution of the sensible regarding the natural world within schooling and research. How does methodology shapeshift if we "become aware", of the more-than-human world as having agency and thus, the ability to inform and teach? The hope is that eco portraiture can help us re-imagine what is speakable, thinkable or doable in schools, in research and finally make room for silenced voices of the more-than-human to be heard and considered.

Possibility

Chapter 2.
The Development of a Cautionary Eco Care Ethic

2.1. Introduction

This first section (chapters two to eight) of the results will investigate the development of empathy toward the natural world within my research participants. Relying on psychological and educational literature, this first chapter will first explore the historical use of the term 'empathy' and its connection to moral development and relations with the natural world. By tracing the historical use of empathy and moral development frameworks, I wish to provide some background context to situate this research before going into direct examples in subsequent chapters. The arguments presented within this chapter (as articulated directly below) were not postulated before the study began rather, they stem directly from my research and are a result of what I learned from the development of empathy in my research participants. Any claims around what eco care entails are based on what was found through my research and these particular lived experiences. After outlining the case for cautionary eco care here, the remaining chapters will draw explicitly on examples from the research which outline how this argument came to be and in doing so elucidate ontological and epistemological orientations that could be influential in reducing the moral distance between humans and more-than-human world.

This chapter aims to situate this research in the literature and then describe how empathy has the potential to orient individuals into a cautionary ecological care, increasing care and concern for the more-than-human world. I will explain how educators need to be vigilant about the manner in which they attend to this. The frameworks for the development of empathy toward the natural world have thus far been theorized in the same manner of progression as traditional moral development models. Using Carol Gilligan's (1982) work around an ethic of care, within this chapter I will

provide some background to the possible problems with these models and then expand on how the moral implications of these frameworks are antithetical to an ethic of eco-care. I then emphasize how the concepts of particularity, relation and context at the heart of an ethic of care could help to reduce moral distance from the natural world. This is essential to consider as the most common moral development frameworks are based on separation, hierarchal assumptions and abstraction. A care ethic instead asserts our felt responsibility in moral decision-making resulting in a nuanced and cautionary approach. Thus, the empathic individual as understood within an ethic of care does not develop into a rationalizing, separate self but instead, grows deeper into relation, aiming to both cognitively and emotionally understand the unique other. I will end by critically reviewing the anthropocentric lens at the basis of an ethic of care to emphasize the need to re-think these foundations when aiming for an ecologically attentive moral orientation.

2.2. Historical use of the Term 'Empathy'

At the turn of the 20[th] century, German scholars first coined the term 'Einfuhlung' ('feeling into') to discuss the concept of empathy. Previous to this, the closest word in terms of definition was 'sympathy' which, as described below, has quite different connotations than conceptions of empathy. According to Theodor Lipps, one of the philosophers who initially defined empathy, when we see a foreign gesture or expression, our tendency is to imitate it, evoking feelings associated with the movement and in turn, these feelings grant us a glimpse into what we assume the other to be experiencing (Goldstein & Michaels, 1985; Hoffman, 2000; Zahavi, 2010).This concept was influenced by the work done by another German philosopher Lotze, who described the feeling that humans can get from animals and non-living objects (including art) through 'placing ourselves into them" (Gallese, 2003, p.175). Today, this definition of empathy is often referred to as 'projection' which Goldstein & Michaels (1985, p.9) characterize as the placement of one's own wishes, attitudes and behaviours onto another. According to Lipps, the only emotional and mental states which we can access are our own, thus any form of empathy must take the form of projection (Zahavi, 2010).

In 1929, German psychologist Wolfgang Kohler asserted that empathy was distinct from such projection as it involves the process of understanding rather than

simply the affective process of feeling your own emotions in light of other people's emotions or via an object's influence (Davis, 1994). Philosopher Lori Gruen (2009) describes

> the primary difference between earlier forms of empathy and cognitive empathy is that in the latter the empathizer is not merely mimicking or projecting onto the emotions of the object of empathy, but is engaged in a reflective act of imagination that puts her into the object's situation and/or frame of mind. (p.28-29)

This was the basis for new theories around cognitive empathy, which focused not on emotional reactions or affective projection but rather on the ability to intellectually understand others' emotions and thoughts (Davis, 1994). American philosopher George Mead advocated that the study of empathy should focus on this effort to cognitively understand others through exercises in perspective-taking and placing oneself into others' dispositions (Davis, 1994; Goldstein & Michaels, 1985).

In summary, empathy has been historically defined as: a) a state of intellectually understanding what another person, or being, is feeling, thinking, perceiving (cognitive state) b) a state of feeling what another person, or being, is feeling, thinking, perceiving (affective state) c) a state of responding compassionately to another's distress (response state) and d) a state of projecting one's own feelings onto another (projection) (Hoffman, 2000; Levenson & Ruef, 1992, p. 234). The definition of the term currently sways between cognitive and emotional aspects (Goldstein and Michaels, 1985) with most arguing that both should be considered, which means both intellectually and emotionally perceiving as well as responding to others' emotional states and dispositions (Hoffman, 2000). There is an awareness among many current theorists that one can never entirely grasp what the other is experiencing but the aim of empathy is the best attempt to know and feel the world from another's perspective while still acknowledging your own (Coeckelbergh, 2007). This final aim is the one that I will use for the purposes of definition within this chapter; here the empathizer occupies emotional, cognitive and response states[16].

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[16] Note that I have not included 'projection' as a desired state within my definition of empathy as it conflates self with other creating a host of ethical dilemmas.

Attending to the affective state alone, we only attend to one part of the story; for example, one could observe a person crying and assume that they are upset when in actuality they could be crying out of joy. The cognitive state of empathy encourages us to seek out the epistemological context behind the situation so we can imagine intellectually what they are going through. Focusing on the cognitive state alone however one overlooks the problem that although we can cognitively attempt to understand, without the emotional context we cannot quite imagine what another might be feeling. For example, if a person has just been hurt and then had feelings of happiness, the joy will have a different quality to it than if the person had already been in a state of happiness. Similarly, the response state cannot be as effective if one does not attempt to consider both the affective and cognitive states. For example, offering someone our sympathy when they are actually joyous could be a mistaken response to the first scenario or laughing when they are actually recovering from being hurt could be an inappropriate action to the second scenario. Traditionally it appears that definitions of empathy have perpetuated a false dualism between body and mind. Instead, both the affective and cognitive are intimately intertwined and thus, an empathetic response should similarly attend to both. However, thinking of empathy in these terms is already anthropocentric and limiting as most other than human creatures are not frequently considered to even possess cognitive or affective states. Can a mosquito feel? Does an eel intellectualize? I don't presume to know, but most would answer 'no'. Empathizing with the non-living seems even more preposterous, and yet the children I have been researching would disagree. Given this research, it appears that assessing the affective and cognitive states of the 'other' is not the only way of entering into an empathetic relationship.

2.2.1.   Similar terms

The following terms were sometimes used synonymously with empathy by my research participants but there are some useful distinctions as follows:

Sympathy

The etymology of sympathy is the Greek prefix 'sym' (together) and suffix 'pathos' (feeling), literally translated as 'feeling with' or 'feeling together'. However, as we will see below it has strayed away from this meaning. Empathy etymologically means 'em' (within or in) 'feeling'. This goes back to its historical roots of projecting oneself 'into' another. Today, empathy, not sympathy, is often understood as 'feeling with' because of the evolution of the term to now mean both an affective and cognitive attempt at understanding the other (as described above). Within the psychological literature, sympathy is currently known as the perception, understanding and reaction to the distress or need of another human (Decety & Michalska, 2010). In other words, the sympathizer occupies an epistemic and usually active response to what the other has experienced and can identify the experience as unpleasant or unfortunate, but they do not actually attempt to feel what the other feels from the other's point of view (Gruen, 2009). Sympathy is frequently used to refer to a person's response to the distress situation of another individual, whereas empathy can address both positive and negative situations that another is experiencing and does not necessitate a direct response (see Moral Imperative section below). For example, it is possible for a person to empathically feel joy or anger for another person, whereas sympathy has a specific affective response such as compassion or pity (Goldstein & Michaels, 1985). A typical sympathetic reaction might be 'that's too bad' or 'poor thing!', whereas an empathic reaction might entail a response such as 'I feel what you are going through' or 'I understand how hard this must be'. Sympathy is also characterized by an individual that is more preoccupied with their own feelings in response to the other and is less able to respond "to, for or with" the other person's needs (Goldstein & Michaels, 1985, p.8). This is unlike modern conceptions of empathy where the perceiver is able to draw distinctions between self and other and yet still move towards feeling and knowing from the other's context/perspective. Thus, in regards to the natural world, a purely sympathetic approach would be one that commiserates with the suffering occurring in light of the ecological crises, but this approach does not seek to understand the more-than-human 'other' on its own terms and as a result, may end up essentializing important differences or projecting human needs/desires upon it. It must not be discounted however as an important emotion within empathic concern (see Moral Imperatives below).

Projection

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As previously mentioned, early conceptions of empathy were synonymous with projection (placing one's own needs or emotional state onto another). However, it is now assumed that given cognitive awareness of another's context, one can 'understand' aspects of the other and move toward more accurately responding to *their* state as opposed to solely one's own (Goldstein & Michaels, 1985; Hoffman, 2000). Although one cannot escape one's own emotional range, state or experience, theorists such as Martha Nussbaum (2001) believe that cognitive awareness allows for a "two-fold attention" in "which one imagines what it is like to be in the sufferer's place and at the same time, retains securely the awareness that one is not in that place" (p.328). Again, this distinction of the self and other is important to avoid a type of eco care that appears to be addressing the more-than-human world but in reality only responds to the needs/wants/assumptions of humans.

Identification

Identification has been defined as the process whereby an individual "assimilates an aspect, property, or attribute of the other and is transformed, wholly or partially, by the model the other provides" (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973, p.204). This can be 'heteropathic' (Scheler, 1954) where the individual identifies their own self with the other or 'centripetal' (Wallon, 1946) whereby the individual identifies the other with themselves. This term "implies a desire to be like the other individual", whereas empathy is defined as an effort to understand (Goldstein & Michaels, 1985, p.9). There is an interesting danger in the context of an ethic of eco care whereby promoting 'identification' with entities within the natural world could lead towards totalizing assumptions that reduce difference.

2.3. Evolutionary Importance of Empathy

In order to understand the contribution that empathy might have towards an ecological care, it's useful to briefly trace its importance historically. Primatologist Frans de Waal (2008) argues that the pressure to evolve emotional connectedness through empathy started long before our species developed. He gives the example of how offspring of many species alert their caregivers to come into action through smiling and

crying in attempts to evoke an empathic response. Those avian and mammalian parents that remained alert and responded to their offspring's emotional needs likely "out-reproduced those who remained indifferent", according to de Waal (2008, p.282). Simple empathic reactions have also provided an evolutionary advantage historically, since the emotional contagion of stress or fear expressed by one individual may lead other individuals to hide or flee for example (p. 283). Overall, de Waal (2008) states "empathy allows one to quickly and automatically relate to the emotional states of others, which is essential for the regulation of social interactions, coordinated activity, and cooperation toward shared goals" (p.282). De Waal (2008) argues that animals also possess the ability to empathize and that this is not an exclusively human trait.

Popular social theorist Jeremy Rifkin (2010a) argues that empathy is akin to "social glue" as it allows diverse individuals to form bonds of solidarity. He argues that historically empathy has gone from strengthening tribal blood ties to associations based on religious identification to nationalism where "Americans empathize with Americans, Germans with Germans and Japanese with Japanese" (Rifkin, 2010a). I would argue that although this has happened, it is dangerous to conflate empathy solely with identification as described above, as it ends up reifying moves toward homogenous populations, and there is a slippery slope from this line of reasoning to the assumption that we are evolutionarily destined to associate with those that are more like us than not, essentially excluding the more-than-human world from our possible empathic connections. Rifkin (2010a) is quick to avoid this and states that "we are coming to see the biosphere as our indivisible community and our fellow creatures as our extended evolutionary family". In his opinion, in this time of ecological crises, we need to develop students' "innate empathic tendencies" so that "we can prepare the next generation to think and act as part of a global family in a shared biosphere" (Rifkin, 2010a). Whereas, historically empathy may have helped our species to survive, Rifkin (2010a) is now suggesting that empathic ties need to extend to the biosphere. According to Rifkin (2010b),

> Social scientists… are beginning to re-examine human history from an empathic lens and, in the process, discovering previously hidden strands of the human narrative which suggests that human evolution is measured not only by the expansion of power over nature, but also by the intensification and extension of empathy to more diverse others across

broader temporal and spatial domains. The growing scientific evidence that we are a fundamentally empathic species has profound and far-reaching consequences for society, and may well determine our fate as a species[17].

He argues that we need to hone a "biosphere consciousness", realizing that human consumption of resources ultimately affects the lives of every other creature on earth (Rifkin, 2010a). Rifkin (2010b) points out that human lives are entwined with all other life forms and the geochemistry on earth in a "rich and complex choreography that sustains life itself" and that we are all 'dependent on and responsible for the health of the whole'. In his opinion, this responsibility entails harnessing empathy to establish a new global ethic that contrasts with the previously detached, self-involved and utilitarian ethos of the western capitalist state.

Both Rifkin and de Waal emphasize that humans have innate empathic sensibilities towards other humans. De Waal (2008) argues that humans have very little control over empathic activation regarding our own species so that we often shield ourselves from it. He provides the example of how we often cover our eyes during a movie when something scary is about to happen because we empathically relate to the on-screen characters (p.291). The question remains as to whether such empathic activation is possible regarding the more-than-human world and whether it would be advantageous (as will be further explored in this dissertation). De Waal (2008) does provide examples of where empathy "reaches beyond its original evolutionary context" such as when people send money to distant communities affected by natural disasters or when primates care for unrelated juvenile orphans (p.291). Overall, research into historical empathic ties with the more-than-human world or inter-species is sparse, but both of these authors stress the importance of such caring interactions and Rifkin (2010a) would like to see them included within education. De Waal cautions the move of empathy into education however, as he believes that it is a neutral characteristic that can be used for good or bad (see Moral Imperatives below); others within the literature agree.

[17] No page number, electronic source.

2.4. Empathy and Moral Imperatives

Coeckelbergh (2007) is one of several theorists who argue that empathy is "morally neutral" (p.68). In his opinion, an empathic experience is "not necessarily followed by ethical action" (p.65). He insists that empathy has to do with the capacity to feel what another is feeling and understand their situation, therefore, it is a tool that can been used for negative *or* positive purposes, that it doesn't have a moral imperative embedded within it. Take the used car salesman who may attempt to use empathy to know the proper selling points on which to pass off an unreliable car or a torturer who uses empathy to know what will affect their victim the most. De Waal (2009) is quick to point out the potential for empathy to be morally dangerous in light of a cerebral bias of empathy toward one's 'own group' and for those 'similar' to us. As previously mentioned, this could be counter-effective if we are considering empathy as a tool to build diverse ecological relations. Thus, while such a cognitive bias may exist, it must be overcome in efforts toward an eco care. To address this, eco feminist Lori Gruen (2009) has created her own term of "engaged empathy" (p.23) which entails a state of responding to others, including the more-than-human world, as a sincere attempt to be aware of and feel another's context. She has deliberately built in a compassionate response piece, "engaged empathy thus involves both affect and cognition and will necessitate action" (p.30). Emotional and cognitive responses are not the ultimate limit of empathy, rather for Gruen (2009) they are what should alert us to seek out more information to help satisfy the other's needs or eliminate risks. The addition of a response that attends to the state of the other is what makes this 'engaged' empathy rather than typical empathy which Gruen (2009) seems to agree is morally neutral.

Empathy, as the attempt to know and feel from another's perspective, distinct from your own, is not morally neutral. The examples listed above of using empathy for morally negative purposes, such as learning ways to torture another or to take advantage of another, are examples of superficial attempts at empathy. An attempt has been made to put oneself in the other's shoes on a cognitive level to understand how they might respond. In contrast, the empathy that I will describe in this dissertation involves an attempt to 'receive the other into myself', to see and feel with the other and undoubtedly be changed by that process myself (Noddings, 2013, p.30). To view

empathy as morally neutral implies that we can partake in empathy without being affected by it ourselves, an objectivist stance that is unattainable. Indeed many psychological studies have shown that with empathy there is a direct increase in the motivation to care for another individual (Batson, 1991; Slote, 2007).[18] Being open to the other also means open to being cognitively and emotionally affected by them such that you may begin to care. Noddings (2013) describes this experience:

> When I receive the other…, there is more than feeling; there is also a motivational shift. My motive energy flows toward the other and perhaps, although not necessarily, towards his ends. I do not relinquish myself, I cannot excuse myself for what I do. But I allow my motive energy to be shared; I put it at the service of the other. (p.33)

Noddings here is careful to note that this does not involve the dissolution of 'self' rather the reception of the other into the self and thus, an expansion of empathic concern which including feelings of sympathy, compassion, tenderness and the like (Lishner, Batson & Huss, 2011). Thus, this open receptivity to the other within the process of empathy, as defined here, results in a morally positive outcome which can benefit both the one-caring and the cared-for.

Given the morally positive outcome implicit within the empathic process I agree with Gruen (2009) that empathy is not just important on an evolutionary level to ensure the survival of our species but also a potential tool to draw attention to the "conditions that undermine the well-being or flourishing" of the more-than-human other (p.30). It has the potential to sensitize us to the wild other that is typically relocated to the background, which in turn can act to transform our distribution of the sensible in terms of what is understandable/perceivable/doable etc. "Engaged empathy requires that we develop skills that will ultimately make us more sensitive and attuned perceivers and more informed and effective moral actors." Gruen (2009, p.35) commented. As Val Plumwood (1993) noted, such "sensitivity to the situation and fate of particular others is an index of our moral being" (p.185). Thus, although I disagree with Rifkin and Gruen on the moral neutrality of empathy, I agree that it can be useful as a tool to include the

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[18] According to the psychological literature, there are key factors necessary in order for empathy to occur in the first place. This will be discussed in chapter three.

more-than-human world within our awareness and moral community. If we are to seriously consider this as educators, the next step is to look at the common models for the development of empathy, first on a broad level, then specifically regarding connection to the natural world and whether these could work as a solid basis for ecologically oriented empathy.

2.5. Moral Development Models and Empathy

Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget's work provided the foundation for cognitive empathy in child development. According to Piaget (as cited in Borke, 1971) children younger than seven years are basically egocentric and therefore, do not have the ability to take another's point of view. In his opinion, cognitive development moves from centralized towards decentralized thinking and thus, children become less egocentric, beginning to increasingly engage in perspective-taking as they get older. He believed that children could only start developing empathy after they had learned to distinguish the needs of their self from those of others (Davis, 1994). This work then informed Kohlberg who constructed a developmental sequence of universal, moral stages centered on principles of justice (Gilligan, 1982; Hoffman, 2000). Kohlberg's six stages of moral development as described by Carol Gilligan (1982) are:

> a three level progression from an egocentric understanding of fairness based on individual need (stages one and two) to a conception of fairness anchored in the shared conventions of societal agreement (stages three and four) and finally to a principled understanding of fairness that rests on the free-standing logic of equality and reciprocity (stages five and six) . (p.27)

This model is particularly relevant to the study of empathy as it posits caring as subordinate to justice; it positions care as a personal affective mode of decision-making which lacks the rationality and formal properties of justice based moral development (Hoffman, 2000). Overall, the majority of the theoretical work done regarding empathy suggests that children's empathic abilities mirror Kohlberg's and Piaget's child developmental models, increasing with age, experience, cognitive development, and socialization.

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Given this, Martin Hoffman has developed an empathic model that is in line with Piaget's developmental path. According to Hoffman (2000), the first five modes are automatic, the child learns to perceive and discriminate affective cues and an affective response follows. The first stage involves 'emotional contagion', an automatic reaction to the feelings of another (Hoffman, 2000). Gruen (2009) points out that those with pet dogs will recognize this effect

> dogs are emotional sponges—they often become stressed when their person is stressed, sad when their person is sad, joyful when their person is joyful. Infants and small children also regularly engage in these spontaneous reactions. (p.27)

This is a kind of mimicry and does not require any conception of self and other. The next stage is known as 'personal empathy' one empathizes with the actual situation of another but does not distinguish one's own perspective from the perspective of the other, there is no acknowledgement yet that the other is capable of independent thought/emotion (Hoffman, 2000). Gruen (2009) describes it thus: "This stage is characterized by "me too-isms" and while it is not yet clearly cognitive, it isn't the same as emotional contagion/affective resonance as there tend to be personal desires or inclinations that drive it" (p.28). At this point, the responses are tied to the states that the empathizer has, so projection is thought to take place (Gruen, 2009). Hoffman suggests that this is generally true for the first two stages of empathic development where the child responds automatically to the other through motor-mimicry, classical conditioning and direct association of cues from the situation with their own experiences. These responses are largely ego-centric as the child according to Hoffman (2000) in the early stages lacks a clear distinction between self and other (p. 6) and thus, can't differentiate the needs of another with the needs of themselves so everything relates back to the self (p.64). In the third stage, according to Hoffman (2000) the child realizes that the self and other are separate physical entities but they still confuse their own inner states with the other and try to help by doing for the other what would comfort themselves. Gruen (2009) points out that many theorists have stopped to define empathy at this level when the empathizer loses herself in the emotional context of another yet research recognizes that empathy goes beyond these purely affective reactions as cognition begins to play a role.

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The fourth stage is where cognitive reasoning kicks in, children realize that others have an inner state independent of their own but consider little of the context behind it (Hoffman, 2000). In the final stage, the child realizes that others have lives and experiences beyond the immediate situation; they begin to understand the context of where the emotions/thoughts may be coming from. Then through mediated association with their own experiences the child is able to develop higher forms of empathy. As they get older they are able to consider contextual information and take on role playing where they are able to transpose themselves into another's situation. Gruen (2009) claims "Empathy of this sort enables the empathizer to not only grasp the object's state of mind or preferences or interests, but also the features of the situation that affect the object of empathy and information about what led to the object's being in that situation in the first place" (p.29). In the fifth, most advanced stage of Hoffman's (2000) empathic developmental model,

> observers may act out in their minds the emotions and experiences…and introspect on all of it. In this way they gain understanding and respond affectively to the circumstances, feelings and wishes of the other, while maintaining the sense that this person is separate from themselves. (p.7).

Thus, the model demonstrates a clear blend of the cognitive and emotional aspects of empathy.

The thought behind this model is that with age, cognitive and emotional development, children usually learn more advanced skills in perceiving and accurately interpreting cues regarding another's emotional state (Hoffman, 2000). Building on this, Eisenberg, Murphy and Shepard (1997) also suggest that children as they mature usually have greater opportunities for social interaction which in turn could increase their perspective-taking skills, one aspect of empathy-building. My intention in outlining Hoffman's stages of development is to emphasize that although Hoffman disagrees with Kohlberg's model of moral development where care is subordinate to justice, he also posits a model where the child grows increasingly autonomous and independent, able to think their way into empathy and rationalize a cogent response that is beyond their mere affective response. In doing so, he continues to embody some of the problematic norms associated with the Piagetian and Kohlberg models; these will be discussed below as I

now expand the conversation to include the development of empathy towards the natural world.

2.6. Children's Development of Empathy regarding the rest of the Natural World

Not surprisingly, the background literature regarding the term 'empathy' largely focuses on human to human relations. It can be a stretch to think of empathy in regards to the natural world as the earth is commonly perceived as an inert backdrop for our actions. It seems ridiculous to speak of empathy for a rock for example. Psychologists are quick to point out that the empathic bond amongst human species seems much more feasible and stronger than that of human to other relations; newborn human infants do not cry as much in response to the cry of a chimpanzee as they do to a human, Hoffman (2000) points out. The literature that does exist on this topic puts a 'face' on nature and focuses on empathic connection with animals, specifically on the importance of companion species. Again, this seems an easy leap as perceiving the emotional state of a dog seems more plausible than trying to develop an empathic connection with a fern.

A large number of studies also suggest that animals may be able to enhance children's humane attitudes and empathic development (Ascione, 2005; Levinson, 1972; Thompson & Gullone, 2003). It is thought that an important part of empathic development is the ability to understand others' feelings and recognize affective cues, and animals give children ample opportunities to refine this skill (George 1999; Levinson, 1978). Within this literature, some theorists also align children's empathic development in relation to the natural world with traditional child moral development models. For example, Ascione (2005) states "children's knowledge about animals, their needs, and appropriate ways of interacting with and caring for them is likely to increase with age, experience, instruction and exploration" (p. 71) and Levinson (1978) emphasizes "empathy develops as the child is able to move away from egocentric view of the world" (p.1036).There is a sense here, once the child knows what is wrong and right regarding interactions with animals and can rationally understand animal behaviour then they will be able to make higher level moral decisions regarding them. Levinson (1978)

continues "treated with adequate love and respect [a child] will come to love and respect himself and then extend these feelings to others as he recognizes that they are like him." (p.1036). Again, along this line of reasoning, the child will be more able to relate with the puppy than the tree because it is 'like him', can share similar facial expressions or gestures that are easy to understand because they are familiar to the human species. This points back to the danger previously noted by de Waal (2008). Although we have a 'hardwire' cognitive bias to empathize to those that are familiar to us, in perpetuating a empathic bias towards those that are similar to us or those that we 'identify' with, we are on a risky path of continuing to marginalize and ignore the diverse world beyond our own likeness. As such a framework of the development of empathy toward the natural world has thus far been theorized using the same progression as traditional moral development models; I will take time here to examine the norms or assumptions that lie beneath them. First, I will provide some background to the problems present within the field of moral development and then I will expand on how the moral implications of these models and beliefs are antithetical to a model of eco-care.

2.7. Implications of Traditional Moral Development Models for a Cautionary Eco Care

As previously described, one of the foundational models of child moral development is that of Kohlberg's six stages, which emphasizes rules, rights and abstract principles as the pinnacle of moral progress. As we have seen, this is mirrored in some of the literature on development of empathy (Ascione, 2005; Levinson 1978; Hoffman, 2000). Carol Gilligan, a psychologist and student of Kohlberg, contested Kohlberg's justice-oriented model of moral development as it particularly marginalized the experience of women. Through her studies, she would pose ethical dilemmas to both genders and invariably girls were shown to be more concerned with the complexity of relationships involved than boys who thought of the dilemma in terms of 'right' and 'wrong'. Thus, when these girls were assessed using Kohlberg's model of development they would be determined to be less ethically proficient than the boys. Gilligan (1982) described,

Kohlberg and Kramer imply that only if women enter the traditional arena of male activity will they recognize the inadequacy of this moral perspective [care] and progress like men toward higher stages where relationships are subordinated to rules (stage four) and rules to universal principles of justice (stages five and six). (p.18)

Gilligan (1982) argued that within Kohlberg's moral model which values personal autonomy and achievement, care was seen as a "moral weakness" which clouded judgement and yet, "women not only define themselves in a context of human relationship but also judge themselves in terms of their ability to care." (p.16-17). The work of Piaget (1932) and Kohlberg (1981) focused solely on the moral development of white, young, upper class males and in doing so, created a model that was oblivious to the importance of an ethic based around care. This has dramatic effects according to Gilligan (1982) as "the morality of rights differs from the morality of responsibility in its emphasis on separation rather than connection, in its consideration of the individual rather than the relationship as primary (p.21). The two models directly contrast each other in this regard. Knowing oneself as always in interdependent relation with the other can provide a radically different moral outcome from a model that values separation, autonomy, individuation and personal rights. Gilligan (1982) continues

whereas the rights conception of morality that informs Kohlberg's principled level (stages five and six) is geared to arriving at an objectively fair or just resolution to moral dilemmas upon which all rational persons could agree, the responsibility conception focuses instead on the limitations of any particular resolution and describes the conflicts that remain. (p. 22)

Context, relationship and wariness of an absolute universal moral standard are all key aspects in an ethic of care.

So how does this relate back to notions of empathy and eco care that is the subject of this dissertation? Interestingly, both Hoffman's (2000) empathic model, where the child is expected to have higher empathic concern as they mature away from a self-centered approach to one more concerned with the other humans around them and Ascione's (2005) and Levinson's (1978) understanding of children's relationships with animals where the child is expected to be more oriented towards justice as they mature both mirror Piaget's model of development. Thus, it is problematic when theorists such

as Chawla (2009) and Gruen (2009) begin to build a model of care for the natural world centered on Hoffman's model of empathy. By adopting this theory as foundation one accepts that self and other are "confused" in early infancy but rationally sort themselves out into distinct entities as the child matures. This directly conflicts with many eco-philosophers who suggest that this polarized differentiation of self from other is a false dualism which is dangerously antithetical to an ecological worldview (Plumwood, 1993; Warren, 1994). Hoffman (2000) himself responds to other theorists who suggest that the development of a distinct, separate, autonomous self is not universal but a construct of Western society. He states,

> If these writers are correct and self-other differentiation is a culturally determined, primarily Western construction, then my entire empathy development scheme, which is based on the synthesis of empathic arousal and the development of a separate distinct sense of self, becomes a cultural artifact of the West and certainly not universal. (Hoffman, 2000, p.276)

He then continues to use cognitive science and studies regarding the elitist nature of societies which value a 'collective sense of self' to re-assert his belief that the self develops from "self/other confusion" to a stage where self and other are distinct (Hoffman, 2000, p.278). Such individualistic and disembedded notions of the 'self' are typically defined in contrast to others and ignore the importance of relationship and interdependence. There are obvious differences between individuals that one does realize as one matures, but this is a process in understanding particularities and context not of separation or hierarchy; as we are interdependent on the earth never is a clear, totally separate 'self' possible. Yet, historically this cleaving apart of self and other rationalized through moral development, has given rise to the dangerous misconception that human and nature are separate and as Plumwood (1991) points out "this kind of human self can only have certain kinds of accidental or contingent connections to the realm of nature"(p.11).

On the reverse end of the spectrum, Hoffman (2000) argues against a 'merged' sense of self for good reasons, as Jean Grimshaw (1986) suggests

> care for others, understanding of them, is only possible if one can adequately distinguish oneself from others. If I see myself as 'indistinct'

from you, or you as not having your own being that is not merged with mine, then I cannot preserve a real sense of your well-being as opposed to mine. Care and understanding require the sort of distance that is needed in order not to see the other as a projection of self, or self as a continuation of the other. (p.182-183)

Yet, the alternatives that Hoffman presents of either a holistic merged self or an independent, distinct self is a "false choice" (Plumwood, 1991,p.14). Instead we need to understand the self-in-relationship, as embedded in vast webs of connection with the other. As Hoffman follows a Piagetian model for his framework he perpetuates individualistic notions of the self which ends up being antithetical to a moral framework for eco care. In forming an ethic of eco care, we need to rigorously examine the basis for theories around moral development such that they are not denigrating and ignoring embodiment, relationality, particularity, and context which are essential when considering our moral orientation towards the natural world and each other for that matter.

Ecofeminist Lori Gruen (2009) comments on this point precisely, she states

traditional ethical theories not only fail to promote moral perception, they often thwart it by having us focus on only a small part of the moral picture. Standard conceptions of rationality and universality fail to capture the full range and complexity of our ethical experiences. (p.25)

She argues that the typical rational approach embedded in moral development theory occludes "emotion, particularity, context and embodiment"; this mindset not only helps to contribute to environmental crises but also prevents us from mitigating them (2009, p.25). This last sentence is important as we consider what moral development model should form the basis for eco care; I will delve deeper here into what Gruen might mean by this.

While some theorists may argue that emotions, particularity and context, key aspects of an ethic of care, might actually get in the way of reason, Carol Gilligan (1982) emphasizes that care and justice are not mutually exclusive but rather inform one another. Gilligan's project was to emphasize the existence of a 'different' not superior moral voice. Her aim was to show that women rather than being deficient in solving moral dilemmas or stunted in the scheme of moral development actually view moral

maturity in a different light from the men under her research. It's best to consider these gendered trajectories of moral development through the historical context which they themselves developed[19].

As Kheel (2008) points out "in the Western tradition, the establishment of moral conduct and social integration typically has been conceived as a matter of transcending the (animal) realm of necessity, including instincts and feelings, through the exercise of reason." (p. 53). During the enlightenment, care was discounted and moral development was seen as the attainment of impartial knowledge. Kheel (2008) describes

> during this time, an emphasis on non-personal law, associated with the traits of masculinity, developed in contrast to the private realm of family life, which was allied with the feminine domain of affectivity and personal bonds. The public area of law was conceived as abstract, rational, and universal, free from the fluctuating contingencies of the private realm of personal desires. (p.57)

It is essential to note that differences exist across the lines of class, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and historical period making it impossible to attribute a sole masculine identity to which all men conform. However, as Kheel describes "the disparate expressions of masculinity all exist in relation to a culturally exalted hegemonic ideal which has exerted a powerful influence on Western culture." (2008, p. 3). She identifies the traits most commonly associated with masculinity to be: 1) rationality 2) universality and 3) autonomy and their counterpoints as: 1) nonrationality (or emotionalism) 2) particularity 3) relation and dependence. The latter traits were seen as weak and to be transcended through moral development. British sociologist Victor Seidler (1997) points out that throughout modernity the child was seen to have "an animal nature that had to be trained out if children were ever to make a move towards existing as 'rational selves'…" (as cited in Kheel, 2008, p.57). This also points to an even deeper challenge whereby the characteristics of the 'lesser' human are in fact described in terms of the non-human. Indeed, we can see that these concepts of universality, autonomy and rationalization in Kohlberg's moral stages where the child progresses to the most

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[19] It is important to note that although Gilligan points out that men may have a leaning towards justice and women towards care, this not a completely resolute or binding separation.

abstract level of moral reasoning, arguing for the rightness of a given action based upon self-chosen, universal, ethical principles and laws and farther and farther away from 'animality'.

Thus, particularity, emotion and relationship were seen to cloud judgment rather than inform it. Instead Gilligan (1982) argues that what may have been seen historically as a moral weakness, caution in making judgements given the aforementioned factors, actually signals a high level of moral regard. This cautionary approach highlights a sensitivity and responsibility to listen to the needs of others and include these voices in moral decision making. Moral maturity under Gilligan's ethic of care seeks to 'relinquish moral dichotomies' (1982, p.21) and attend to particularities, shades of grey and complexity, acknowledging their existence and importance. Kheel (2008) points out that care itself depends on context and is "not always ethically desirable" (p.223) citing the example of an abusive relationship where maintaining relations is not healthy. So a care ethic itself shouldn't be considered a universal norm but rather an "appropriate care" which is contingent on context should be followed (Kheel, 2008, p. 224).

Such an ethical maturity which is realized through attendance to embodiment, context, particularity and relation, highlights the importance of empathy. The ability to feel with the other and the effort to understand their context and particularity helps us recognize the relationships/emotions involved and the paradoxes potentially embedded within the situation. This may make decisions harder but actually helps us reach a more nuanced ethical stance especially regarding the natural world as we cannot be truly attentive to particularity, embodiment, or context without feeling and acknowledging our interdependence with the earth, the complexity of these relations and, thus the far reaching effects of our impact. A patriarchal model involving an autonomous agent in search of a universal, rational truth, treats such relational, particular and embodied experience as an obstacle to overcome whereas, a care ethic embraces this type of cautionary, emotional 'knowing'. Gilligan (1982) drawing on the voice of one of her female participants presents the case for care,

> Thus, morality rather than being opposed to integrity or tied to an ideal of agreement, is aligned with "the kind of integrity" that comes from "making decisions after working through everything you think is involved and important in the situation" and taking responsibility for choice. In the end,

morality is a matter of care, "It is taking the time and energy to consider everything. To decide carelessly or quickly on the basis of one or two factors when you know that there are other things that are important and that will be affected, that's immoral. The moral way to make decisions is by considering as much as you possibly can, as much as you know…the only "real constant is the process" of making decisions with care, on the basis of what you know, and taking responsibility for choice while seeing the possible legitimacy of other solutions. (p.147-148)

Some may argue that attending to particularity and emotion may result in ethical relativism as there will often be so many contributing factors to a moral dilemma that it seems impossible to make a decision. However, Gilligan (1982) makes an important distinction in the paragraph above, stating that indeed a decision is eventually made and that this also involves 'responsibility' on behalf of the decision maker to do the best they can do given the context. Gilligan (1982) defends the reluctance to judge

The reluctance to judge remains a reluctance to hurt, but one that stems not from a sense of personal vulnerability but rather from a recognition of the limitation of judgment itself. The deference of the conventional feminine perspective thus continues at the postconventional level, not as moral relativism but rather as part of a reconstructed moral understanding. (p.102-3)

Thus, the one caring carefully weighs their options and is aware of the felt complexity of the decision-making process and how they are responsible for their choice.

Returning to Gruen's (2009) statement that, by ignoring context, embodiment and particularity in moral development theory, we risk not only contributing to the ecological crises, but we also prevent work to mitigate them. She argues that this is largely due to a masculinist approach which tends to "flatten or erase" the emotional complexity of actual moral problems and thus alienate us from their particular, relational context (p.26). While Kohlberg's model of development does not lack moral complexity, it does lack a sense of embodied engagement and responsibility as described above and hence alienation from the felt impact of the moral decision. A care ethic instead recognizes the interconnected nature of relations such that there is recognition that impacts of decisions can be far reaching. So the dominant question is not 'whose rights should take precedence?' but 'what is the responsible thing to do?' In acknowledging our responsibility in how we react to moral dilemmas, a care ethic invites us to attend to the

quality of our response such that simply following a logic of rights and universalized, rational thinking no longer seems adequate. In fact as Gilligan's participant implied, not considering the particular relational context actually becomes amoral as it is dangerously selective and absolves the decision maker of responsibility. This in turn, widens moral distance emphasizing separation instead of relation as Gilligan warned.

As previously mentioned, current theorists emphasize that it is impossible to entirely understand what the other is experiencing. However, this should not stop us from trying. Reaching out to consider the wild other in moral decision making is imperative as it acknowledges our embeddedness in relation. In summary, the development of empathy has been structured around traditional models of development which emphasize the progression towards an autonomous separate self, perpetuating self/other, human/nature dichotomies. This works to block possibilities for relation and chances for an ecologically oriented empathy as the self is stripped of embodied context, relation and particularity and thus, is denied the felt complexity and responsibility of moral action. In this way, such models work to increase moral distance between humans and the rest of the natural world rather than narrowing it. A moral development for eco care should model itself on an ethic of care which instead highlights embodied context, relationality and particularity in an effort to reduce moral distance. Interestingly, this is in line with Nussbaum's understanding of the goal of empathy. Regarding empathy, the goal is to make the other[20]"less strange", "the distinction between the other and me remains but the distance decreases" (Coeckelbergh, 2007, p. 68). As a result, empathy acts as a central tenet of ecological care in this dissertation. The empathic individual as understood within an ethic of care does not develop into a rationalizing, separate self but instead, grows deeper into relation, aiming to both cognitively and emotionally understand the unique other. With this type of empathy, emotion and cognition do not separate out but rather inform one another and intertwine and in doing so, also break down false dualisms between self/other, nature/culture.

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[20] Although she is referring to the 'human' other here, this is still very relevant to the more-than-human other.

2.8. Critique of a Human Centered Ethic of Care

Given that, so much of eco care is rooted in Nodding's (2013) theory of care, it is essential that before continuing I address her reluctance to include the more-than-human as worthy of moral consideration and thus, care. Noddings (2013) excludes the possibility of having a genuine caring relationship with the natural world for several reasons. To begin, within her rationale she presents a pre-existing hierarchy of value which situates humans clearly at the top of the list as the only truly rational and affective agents. Within her arguments Noddings (2013) consistently positions other living animals as less than human in this hierarchy, and this is clearly demonstrated through her concern that "an ethic that forces us to classify human infants with rats and pigs is unsettling" (p.151). While deserving of *some* moral consideration, because of their ability to experience pain, any rights, that other living creatures may have exist for two reasons according to Noddings, the first being that we as humans have conferred those rights (Noddings, 2013, p.153; 157), and the second is an "instrumental ought" to care for such creatures because they may have some use to us as humans (Noddings, 2013, p.158). At the bottom of her list of 'valued' recipients of care are less appealing creatures and the non-living.

> I have not established, nor am I likely ever to establish, a relation with rats. The rat does not address me. It does not appear expectantly at my door. It neither stretches its neck toward me nor vocalizes is need. ...It skitters past in learned avoidance. Further, I am not prepared to care for it. I feel no relation to it. I would not torture it, and I hesitate to use poisons on it for that reason, but I would shoot it cleanly if the opportunity arose. (Noddings, 2013, p. 157)

Clearly, such a hierarchy contradicts the ethical starting points that emphasize that the constituents of the more-than-human world have intrinsic value and agency. My point here is not to reason why intrinsic value in the more-than-human is justified (as noted before this can be seen as absurd as asking why humans have value) rather to point out Noddings' bias in this regard. As those lower on the list are not capable of voice, 'the rat does not address me' (Noddings, 2013, p.157) and have little value in themselves, then whether we care for them or not if a choice she leaves up to us,

> I may, as individual, be willing to enrich and complicate my ethical life by including some members of the animal kingdom in it but, aside from demanding justification for the infliction of pain, I cannot judge you if you decide not to complicate your life in a similar fashion. (Noddings, 2013, p. 159)

This ethical position that caring relations with the more-than-human represent a choice that we can opt in or out of, reasserts the false dualism between humans and nature, implying that we can opt to exist independently and separately from other relations on earth. It also dangerously situates humans as the sole subjects capable of bearing and conferring value which, as argued previously, is what precisely allows us to treat the rest of the world instrumentally. It also seems to actively disavow any moral construct which includes the non-human.

Reasoning against care for the more-than-human, Noddings (2013) also presents a concern that she might override the needs and desires of human beings in her "zeal to protect the creature" (p.159). Again, an ethic of eco care does not posit the more-than-human over the human; caring for the two is not mutually exclusive as an either/or endeavour. This binary line of reasoning only works to underestimate the complexity of moral dilemmas, such as the commonly perceived false choice of 'jobs versus the environment'. This only perpetuates the notion that we have to sacrifice care of the human or more-than-human if either is to flourish when in reality it is possible, and in fact, necessary for the survival of the human species that care in both realms occurs simultaneously. I'm not denying that there will be times when ethical choices directly position human against more-than-human, for example, in instances of killing creatures for the purposes of food but, instead, am asserting that if care and empathy were alive and present at the heart of these decisions it would result in the very "gentle, considered, committed and often conflicted state of ethical caring" that Noddings (2013) suggests is not likely possible with members of the natural world (p.159).

Noddings (2013) also argues that "I may not know enough about the creature's natural ways to ensure that my 'caring' will be completed in the cared-for" (p.159), which is what she defines as the 'reciprocity' needed for caring. There are many ways to remedy this potential problem as I will describe in the subsequent chapters, such as increased time in the presence of the other, listening to it, learning from it as well as

consulting local experts and resources to learn more about its 'natural ways' and best ways to care for it. This is largely about cultivating the ability to recognize and understand the more-than-human constituents as active communicators, Noddings (2013) herself suggests "we can see clearly that animals are not capable of entering a mutually or doubly caring relation with human beings, but as their responsiveness or perceived responsiveness increases, our natural caring increases also" (p.159). The onus of responsibility should not be located within the already responsive more-than-human world rather within our ability to perceive/listen to/understand not only their responses, but also how they might be addressing us in the first place. This is also a matter of learning to value the more-than-human other on its own terms. In contrast to this, Noddings (2013) underscores human centered conceptions of value when describing her relationship with a cat,

> clearly her responsiveness is restricted…she has no projects to pursue. There is no intellectual or spiritual growth for me to nurture, and our relation…does not possess the dynamic potential that characterizes my relation with infants." (p.161)

In this way, she 'others' the more-than-human to the point where the relation is indecipherable and "falls short of the human relation" (Nodding, 2013, p.161); the relationship is instead happening largely on an instrumental level. Although she mentions that she is wary of this type of caring as it is a product of 'cool knowledge" (Noddings, 2013, p.158), there is no choice but to limit it in this manner, because the cat or other more-than-human entity has little value here on its own terms, and here we can see the previously mentioned hierarchal assumptions come into play.

We need to move away from this dangerous position where humans occupy the role of granting value, playing god, subtracting and adding worth depending on how similar or different a creature is in comparison to an elevated human standard. This means acknowledging that the more-than-human other is valuable on its own terms and that labeling its response or purpose in life as 'restricted' is the product of a narrow cultural lens that has contributed to widespread ecological crises in the first place. We are interdependent on these wild others and implicated in their lives, we cannot escape this embeddedness, thus, an attempt to dismiss them from our moral consideration by claiming ignorance denotes a dangerous avoidance of responsibility. Indeed, in many

cases we will not know with certainty if the care has been adequate or received fully but this should not stop us from trying. Surely, this uncertainty about whether caring is completed in the cared-for holds true for many humans especially those unable to verbalize or give conventional communication cues such as infants or the disabled, but withholding care from these individuals for these reasons would be deemed unethical.

These suppositions embedded within Noddings' theory are representative of the larger anthropocentric lens of western culture, which as mentioned treats the more-than-human world instrumentally instead of relationally. Noddings (2013) perpetuates false dualisms between humans and nature and reasserts a hierarchical system of value in which humans are conveniently placed at the top. She also places care for the natural world in opposition to care for humanity when these two actions do not need to be mutually exclusive options. Finally, she questions whether we can achieve a sense of reciprocity, an understanding that our caring has been completed in the other, largely because the other is incapable of response on a human level. This 'othering' excludes possibility for relation and acts as an escape from responsibility. As a result, eco care while relying on the principles of an ethic of care must be vigilant about such cultural assumptions and patterns of domination. If we are to re-orient an ethic of care as ecologically sensitive, this requires us to then adopt the ethical starting points of intrinsic value, agency, caution and dependence on the natural world such that we do not slip into the ecologically destructive assumptions embodied above. Empathy under this newly conceived eco care ethic can thus be directed at the wider more-than-human community instead of being limited to the human realm.

As mentioned in the introduction, eco care requires fundamental changes in our distribution of the sensible such that the more-than-human is perceived as a valued, active agent upon which we are dependent. This requires us to trouble ethical and developmental frameworks which position humans as autonomous and morally superior, abstracting us from the very natural world relations that help sustain us. An ethic of care works instead to re-orient us to the value of embodied, relational, contextual and particular knowing within moral decision making. However, in adopting a care ethic we must also question dangerous assumptions embedded in Nodding's framework that suggest that the natural world is not worth moral consideration and thus, such empathic

and caring efforts. These suppositions are exposed as a narrow and ecologically destructive distribution of the sensible, symptoms of a culture which is deaf to the value and agency of the more-than-human. An ethic of care once stripped of such anthropocentric tendencies forms the roots of a framework for eco care. Empathy defined here as the attempt to know and feel the world from another's perspective while still acknowledging your own, can act as a way into this eco oriented care. Fostering empathy in this regard helps us to reduce our moral distance and increase our responsibility to the wild other. As educators we need to begin to see empathy as an essential sensitizing practice, such that this possibility for relation and learning from the more-than human is not shut down due to cultural constraints but instead allowed to flourish.

Chapter 3.   The Importance of the Childhood Years and Intrinsic Valuing in Eco Care Development

3.1. Introduction

Care theorist Nel Noddings (2013) states "our motivation in caring is directed toward the welfare, protection, or enhancement of the cared-for" (p. 23). Building off of this and my research findings, educating for eco care has the explicit goal of assisting in the welfare, protection or enhancement of more-than-human entities. Specifically, eco care can be defined as doing one's best, given the context, to build appropriate caring relations with the more-than-human world in ways that honours the ethical starting points of agency, intrinsic value, interdependence and humility[21]. Key to this is attending to the nuances of the other in order to build relation, understanding and in turn, a felt responsibility toward them. It also requires humility and caution particularly in the context of the more-than-human because the modes of communication used to assess whether one is helping or hindering the welfare of another can be less explicit and directly understandable than human speech. As well, time is essential here. Learning the details of what it is to know and feel life from another perspective in order to properly attend to them, comes from long term relation. This is not intended to be a 'reciped' approach, as Virginia Held (2006) mentions

> The ethics of care…appreciates the contribution of emotions in helping us to understand what morality recommends. For instance, empathy, sensitivity, and responsiveness to particular others may often be better guides to what we ought to do than are highly abstract rules and universal principles… (p. 157-158)

Instead, I intend here to provide a descriptive account of the development of empathy toward the natural world within the students that I researched and in doing so, illuminate

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[21] For more reasoning behind the particular wording of this goal see chapter seven.

particular examples of what this eco care could entail. Drawing on portraits which speak to each of the research participants' own moral development, I will emphasize how, although empathy is the term that emerged as a theme, 'sensitivity' is a more apt description. Specific ontological and epistemological orientations to the world helped these children become sensitive to the possibility for relation with the banana slug, the hemlock and wild others. Three central roots[22] nourished this eco sensitivity: valuing, attending and listening. Perspective-taking and particular contexualizing grew out of these three roots once they were established (see Figure 3.1). I will describe how these roots and shoots collectively work to narrow moral distance from the natural world, as the student develops felt relations with particular subjects and a sense of being ethically 'answerable' to them. In this way, eco sensitivity blossoms into eco care. This is opposed to traditional moral development frameworks which, position children as developing a distinct self through a type of rational separation. It is also intentionally different from deep ecology's relational moral development models in which the individual self is subsumed to a larger unbroken, indistinguishable whole (Fox, 1990). While this latter approach has good intentions of breaking down false dualisms it also strips both the human and more-than-human of their distinct and independent needs, assimilating the very particular differences which are essential for appropriate care (see chapter seven). Thus, I will illustrate how eco sensitivity involves honouring not only our relations with each other, but also points of disjuncture, particular differences, perspectives and needs. I argue that if an educator diligently works on cultivating this notion of sensitivity, there is the potential for the child's moral orientation not to exclude or background the natural world but rather grow deeper in relation with it.

[22] Although I have identified three main roots here, this is not intended to be a fixed list as more contributing factors are likely involved. I address these factors in particular as they are the main sub-themes found during my research.

Figure 3.1   The Growth and Blossoming of Eco Care
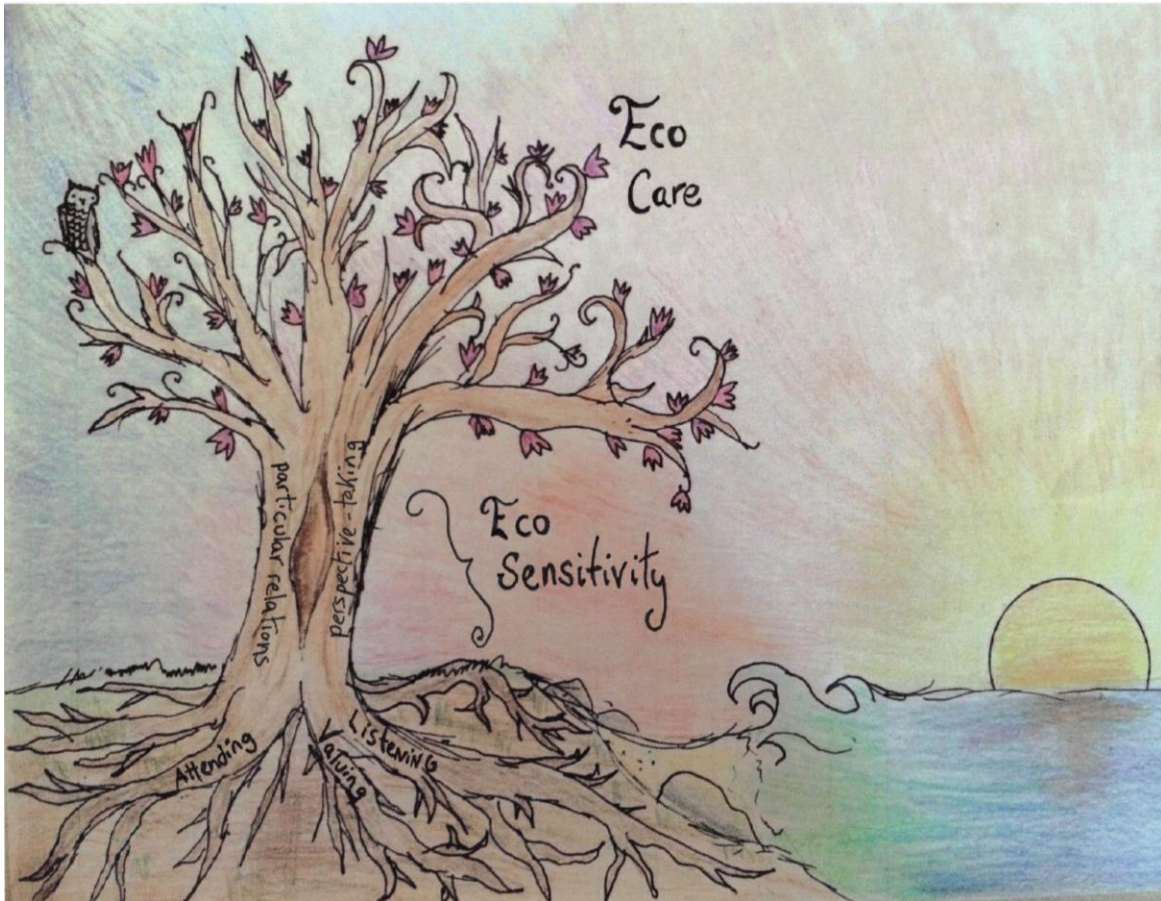
Drawing by Raven, Labels Added

3.2. Empathy as Theme

As described, empathy was a term that was repeated by parents, teachers, friends and other researchers regarding each of the students that I worked with. I will first explain how it was used within the research, then why it is important to an eco care and finally, how sensitivity is a more expansive and inclusive conception of the term. This will allow me to set the context for how sensitivity can blossom into eco care. Within my research, observations regarding the development of empathy for each student were frequently noted, such as, "she is currently lacking empathy" or "he is deepening his level of empathy". I will briefly summarize these observations to provide some insight into how these students were perceived by others around them.

Two of the children in my research were described by parents, teachers and peers as "extremely empathic" towards other humans at the school and towards the natural world. One parent commented in this regard when speaking of their son Ecoboy, "he's always had empathy for his surroundings, for his world." Empathy was also listed by his parents as one of the main "gifts" that he brings to the school. A teacher also commented "he has deep empathy with everything, people, the natural world". This was also a theme regarding another student Raven. "She has a huge amount of empathy for the natural world. Everything around her she cares for…" a teacher observes. Her stepdad also elaborated "she's very compassionate in general, very sensitive of others". Both of these students were observed to be consistently strengthening empathic connections with other humans over the research term. Teachers and friends reflected on Ecoboy's ability as a "peacemaker" amongst his friend group. Like Ecoboy, Raven's friends described her as the "glue" that holds them together.

Raven who transitioned from age eight to ten, during the period of the research term, was regularly noted as strengthening her empathy towards the natural world. "She just keeps deepening her connections with the world around her" a staff member commented[23]. Meanwhile Ecoboy aged nine to eleven over the research, was seen to be distancing himself from explicitly caring or empathizing with it while at school. His mother explained the changes over the research term,

> Friends and the activities he shares with them have become the center of his world right now. Although Ecoboy still would rather be outside than in, it is for reasons that are important to an 11 year old boy…He would rather go to the skatepark than the real park. He would rather scooter uptown to the mall than go for a hike through the woods.

According to his caregivers and teachers, near the end of the research term he was seen more and more often to be treating the natural world as a background for human centered activities[24].

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[23] I will describe the ways in which Raven grows in terms of empathy in the coming chapters.
[24] See chapter nine for more details on this.

The remaining student Bambi aged five to seven within the research term, was regularly noted as a loner, as confident and comfortable being on her own away from other humans and was described by teachers, parents and other researchers as being "at the beginning stage" of developing empathic skills towards other humans and the natural world. A teacher shared a general observation about Bambi: "she is very loving and has a lot of it to share". Another staff member observed: "when she has a creature I think she genuinely cares for it yet she may end up damaging it. I don't think it's ever intentional it's just 'I want to look at this, I want to pick it up and touch it' versus the creature's needs." Her mum described her at the beginning of the research term as "loving things to death", but near the end of the research she observed that Bambi was now "extremely gentle with things".

In these interviews with the caregivers and teachers, I noticed that often when they answered a question about a particular student's interaction with the natural world, they would tag on a qualifying sentiment such as "that could just be the stage she is at" or 'this is likely just part of her development'. For instance, a staff member comments regarding Bambi's empathic development: "When I ask her not to take things from the natural world, she answers 'I'm going to do it', it's not said with any malice but a really egocentric disconnect." Comments such as these, which reveal the adult's perception as to where the students were 'at' in terms of moral development, were prevalent and typically followed a Piagetian perspective, that younger students were egocentric while the older ones were increasingly independent and thus, more capable seeing the other's perspective and exhibiting empathy. I was interested in this conversation around moral development that emerged from the research particularly because, although the ethical development was often made sense of by others in terms of traditional frameworks, in my observations and experience with the children their development seemed to break these same frameworks. These students appeared, from an early age, to be extremely caring, relational and attentive to the world around them. As I will describe in upcoming chapters, I also noticed that as the dominant culture seeped into school and in daily life, the students were actively forced into an ego-ist to autonomist Piagetian trajectory.

These traditional moral frameworks seem so ingrained that instead of questioning their validity, we take them as axiomatic and this is dangerous as we end up

reinforcing individualistic understandings of the self instead of troubling their existence and offering more particular, contextual and relational alternatives. With this in mind, I would like us to consider what education would be like if, instead of following a moral development model that hinged on separation and differentiation of self from other, it was built on sensitizing oneself to the other[25]. Nel Noddings and other theorists have explored this relational approach to ethics amongst humans but largely in terms of 'care' and the human species. Noddings (2013) herself mentions that "one of the most important tasks facing care theorists (and other moral philosophers) is a thorough analysis of empathy." (p.203). Thus, I will devote the coming chapters to investigating the development of empathy as a possible sensitizing skill which can help us gain awareness of and learn to care for other entities in the natural world, increasing our ability to attend to conditions that help or hinder their well-being. I am proposing a range of ontological and epistemological orientations which seem to help students remain open to an axiological position of eco care. Using field observations, one-on-one interviews with the students and parents, staff and peers I will attempt to flush out the particular details of the empathy/sensitivity presented by these students and what it can offer to an ethic of eco care.

3.3. Key Importance of Empathy to Eco Care

The term 'empathy', as previously mentioned, comes with a litany of varying definitions, involving the cognitive or the affective or both. Noddings (2013) points out

> our responses depend not only on our capacity to 'feel with' others but also on our ability to achieve empathic accuracy. Recognizing this, it is almost certainly a mistake to separate the cognitive and affective dimensions of empathy…The great strength of the new empathy is that it involves both cognitive and affective processes. (p.205-6)

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[25] Let me be clear here that I am not proposing a developmental model based on an axiological model. Instead I suggest a moral development model that grows out of multiple ontological and epistemological orientations. These are not intended to be 'stages in development' but rather a range of ways of knowing and being in the world which keep open the possibility for eco care to develop.

As previously mentioned, I agree and define empathy as the aim to know and feel from another's perspective while still acknowledging your own. Noddings (2013) distinguishes different types of care that are relevant to this definition of empathy here,

> 'Caring-for' describes an encounter or set of encounters characterized by direct attention and response. It requires the establishment of a caring relation, person-to-person contact of some sort. 'Caring about' expresses some concern but does not guarantee a response to one who needs care. (p.xiv)

Corollary examples under eco care that emerged in my research include: 'Caring-for' a slug in the forest or 'caring-about' a forest nearby that is being clearcut[26]. Empathy is useful in stimulating 'caring-about', if we aim to know and feel the clearcut as experienced by a tree in the forest this can bring us concern. However, as Noddings points out, the empathy present in 'caring-about' eventually decays as we don't have the time or resources to keep up the care. Empathy in terms of the 'cared-for' however, is usually iterative and informative as the more one knows and feels the other the more it informs one's ability to find a suitable response given the other's context and provide appropriate care. For instance, I watched students realize how well camouflaged slugs can be and then learn to be mindful of where they were stepping. I've also watched students learn that if the slug curls into a ball and is trying to protect itself against harm, this indicates they should give it space. As will be demonstrated through examples in the upcoming chapters, by involving both the felt and cognitive dimensions, empathy sensitizes us to 'care-about' in such a manner that we can feel an increased responsibility and capacity to care-for. In this way, empathy (or 'eco sensitivity' as described below) can blossom into eco care.

3.4. Sensitivity as an Alternative Term

When the caregivers and teachers discussed the children's empathy they often described it in terms of "sensitivity". For example, "When I say empathetic, I mean she

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[26] I am aware that Noddings would not view these as possible 'cared-fors' because of the lack of reciprocity she attributes to the more-than-human world; as mentioned in chapter two, I contest this.

is very sensitive of others"; "She's has tons of empathy and compassion in general, she's very sensitive of how others might be feeling, this includes other creatures"; "There's not a mean bone in that kid's body…he shows lots of empathy, I mean he's a quiet, sensitive kid" and "In terms of empathy, she lacks sensitivity right now, it's more about her needs than anything else". The term 'sensitive' can be used in a pejorative sense to indicate being too emotionally affected by what another thinks, says or does. Historically this term has been used to label women as overly emotional, and sensitivity was, and arguably still is, perceived as a weakness that must be overcome in efforts to act 'rationally'. This comes out of a patriarchal culture, which sees women and the more-than-human as lesser beings and emotionalism as a weakness, to be transcended through the process of moral development (Kheel, 2008). Instead, I argue that sensitivity is a useful and essential skill in developing relations with the more-than-human world. The word itself is intriguing and full of multiple associations which are highly appropriate when describing these students. Here are some relevant aspects of the term which, interestingly, pair with some of the sub-themes (in bold) that I discovered in my research:

1. One definition of sensitive is "quick to detect or respond to slight changes, signals or influences" (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014). In this regard, the word signals an acute **attention to subtleties/particularities** that I will argue is essential for empathic accuracy and exhibited from an early age within the students that I studied.

2. Another definition of the term is "of life, knowledge perception: connected with the senses"; "having the function of sensuous perception" (OED Online, 2014). The word here is associated with an **embodied, sensory attending** to others that aids in 'feeling with' the other which is essential for empathy and again present in the students I worked with.

3. The term is also often used as a synonym for 'delicate', which is apt when considering the aforementioned ethical starting points of eco care; it is essential to **proceed with caution and humility**, to tread lightly. This humility will be threaded through the sub-themes that I present.

Given this, I wish to use the term 'sensitivity' as an inclusive expansion of the concept of empathy. As mentioned I have defined empathy here as the aim to know and feel the world from perspective of the other while still acknowledging your own. However, the common understanding of the term drops the second piece of this definition; for example, empathy according to a popular dictionary is "the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the

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feelings, thoughts, and experience of another" (Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 2014). This common definition lacks a sense of the difference between self and other that is integral for empathy in order to avoid assimilating the self or the other. Thus, drawing on these definitions, I define the skill of eco sensitivity as: a felt, humble and receptive attending to the more-than-human other on its own terms[27], while still acknowledging your own particular context and the various ways in which these perspectives might inform one another. Here I honour both difference *and* relation such that self and other co-mingle in efforts to break down false dualisms attributed to the roots of ecological crises.

This investigation of eco sensitivity', will start with the youngest child given that my research has suggested that ontological relationality rather than egoistic behaviour exists at this age. Then, in order to illustrate ways of maintaining and deepening sensitivity to our more-than-human relations, I will discuss how sub-themes of my research: intrinsic value, attention and voice form the roots of eco care, growing into other sub-themes of perspective taking and particular contextualizing. I will devote a chapter to each of these roots and shoots as well as, their educational implications except for intrinsic value which I will discuss below. Finally, in a concluding chapter, I will argue that these roots and shoots collectively narrow our moral distance towards the more-than-human other, as they create an awareness of the possibilities for relation and a felt responsibility to them. Along the way I hope to elucidate ways in which the educator can foster this eco sensitivity such that eco care can blossom.

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[27] 'On its own terms' is used here to emphasize that recognition of the intrinsic worth and agency of the more-than-human other is essential for eco sensitivity to blossom into an eco care which truly addresses the needs, welfare and perspective of this wild other. In the age of the Anthropocene some argue that is impossible to find areas undisturbed by human influence. However, entities in the natural world are indeed still self-arising with their own ways of being and knowing in the world that are independent from human involvement or ascribed significance.

3.5. Keeping Possibilities Open – The Need to Nurture Natural Caring and the Ethical Ideal in Early Years

Piaget (1932) and Kohlberg (1981) posit the young child as egocentric, focused inwardly on its own self, unable to see other's viewpoints. Hoffman (2000) extended this to his model of the development of empathy, emphasizing that the self and other are 'confused' in the early years. Rather than seeing this 'confused' stage as egocentric, using the work of Kleinberg-Levin (1999) and Merleau-Ponty (1945) as well as my research results I will argue that it is instead deeply relational, leaving open the potential for ecologically sensitive understandings of the world. This shift in understanding is essential because the Piagetian egocentric stance that underpins current moral development models narrows the possibility for relation (as described in chapter two); by assuming that students are too young to engage in ecologically thoughtful conversations or behaviours, one risks shutting down the chance for eco-care. This belief in an egocentric framework for young children can have far reaching effects. If adults do not help students orient towards eco care during childhood (which I argue is a uniquely ontologically and epistemologically fluid section of life) then the chance to establish such roots may be increasingly difficult as they get older and more fixed in terms of ontological and axiological possibility.

Noddings (2013) points out "Taking relation as ontologically basic simply means that we recognize human encounter and affective response as a basic fact of human existence." (p.4).   I agree and would add that knowing that we are in relation with the world as well also means recognizing human encounters with the more-than-human and the affective responses that come with that. Time spent with a young child reveals these connections - from infancy they are searching for ways to connect, touching and pondering everything from the banister to the ant crawling by to the leaves overhead. They do not yet understand separateness or 'otherness', rather exist in a space of fluid ontology (Blenkinsop & Piersol, 2013). According to Kleinberg Levin (1999) as infants we occupy a "prepersonal' existence", here he is drawing on the work of Merleau-Ponty who states that "the child lives in a world which he unhesitatingly believes accessible all around him. He has no awareness of himself or of others as private subjectivities." (1962, p.355; 1945, p.407). This sensory melding of colours, sounds, textures and

smells is what William James (1911) called an "aboriginal[28] sensible muchness" (p.50). In this fluid sense of being it's hard to tell the boundaries of where the 'I' resides.

Bambi, the grade one student I studied demonstrated some of this undifferentiated ontological orientation early on. On one hand, she seemed so incredibly immersed in the natural world that her mother commented it's hard to tell where Bambi ends and 'mud' or 'tiger' begins. On the other hand, I witnessed her regularly, literally loving the world to death. When she was five and six she could be found squeezing a worm too hard in her affection for it or removing creatures from their homes and habitats so as not to be parted from them because she felt like she could "protect them best". She was still learning that there is a feeling/sensing/responding other outside of herself, so if she didn't feel pain then neither did the worm she was 'hugging', nor did the butterfly trapped in her backpack. It's unfair to call this behaviour 'egocentric' as this implies that there is an ego to be aware of while for Bambi at this age, 'self' and the 'other' had yet to be fully culturally defined; she was still learning these boundaries and what they mean. Bambi when handling the worm was trying to demonstrate care for it as she has been cared for herself, by hugging it. She was not hugging the worm for selfish reasons rather she was trying to address the needs of the worm, assuming it would appreciate a hug as she did. Her inability to feel the pain of the worm resulted not because she was so wrapped up in her own concerns or lacked the ability to properly care because she was too young but because she had yet to learn how to recognize what the other creature was communicating/experiencing. Thus, it appears that Bambi entered the school seamlessly connected with the natural world and still learning various tools that might help her to make sense of it. Rather than "egocentric", her behaviour is "prepersonal" as Kleinberg Levin (1999) puts it, literally grasping at relation but not yet knowing what that should look like yet according to our culture[29].

[28] Aboriginal as used here refers to 'from the beginning' or the 'origins' of our lives.

[29] I'm not denying the influence of bloodlines or language or other possibilities which act to inform our lives in addition to culture, just suggesting that we are more ontologically flexible than is commonly thought. In other words, we are not entirely determined by culture *or* biology in young childhood.

Thus, I see moral development along the lines of what Kleinberg-Levin (1999) derives from Merleau-Ponty's work where there are three rough "phases" (p.230). Early childhood is characterized as the "prepersonal" experience described above, when there is a sense of fluid ontology and self and other are not yet defined. Then, he argues that through the next phase the child is socialized into the larger culture which is guided by traditional development models promoting self-preservation and self-interest. As a result, the child becomes ego-centric, not inherently in regards to its development as other theorists argue but as a product of modern western culture. Finally, he offers a third potential stage where individuals may begin to recover traces of the "prepersonal" experience that was suppressed, alienated and/or forgotten during socialization. He clarifies this here.

> I certainly do not want to suggest that adults should undergo a regression to identity-confusion, regression to a mode of experiencing prior to the formation of ego-logical subjectivity, but rather that there is a need for vision to reestablish contact with chiasmic experience, with the intertwining of gazes, with the "universal flesh" out of which it emerged, so that an historically new form of subjectivity and a different way of looking and seeing, neither that of the prepersonal nor that of the egoic, might— perhaps—come into being. (p.229)

Kleinberg-Levin (1999) argues that by changing our perception to consider the agentic possibilities of the more-than-human world we may begin to get rid of dualistic 'subject-object' understandings of the world and, instead, move toward a morality[30] that senses the subjectivity of the other. In this manner, Merleau-Ponty asserts that "true philosophy consists in relearning to look at the world" (1962, p. xx). Alongside this reestablishment of subjectivity in the third stage, we should be actively trying to keep open possibilities that arise during the first stage, this is what the coming chapters will be devoted to addressing.

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[30] Let me be clear that I do not conflate morality with ontology. Different moralities are possible within the same ontology and similar moralities are possible given differing ontologies! However, I argue that certain ontologies/epistemologies are more conducive to keeping certain axiological frameworks possible. The ways of knowing and being that we 'pay attention' to and cultivate as educators help to create and/or reinforce boundaries around what has moral worth, in terms of voice, value and agency and thus, what we care for.

This type of pre-orientation to the world is so fluid that it allows any individual human the possibility of being in the world in potentially an infinite number of ways (Blenkinsop and Piersol, 2013). Merleau-Ponty writes "in so far as I have sensory functions, a visual, auditory and tactile field, I am already in communication with others" (1962, p. 353). We are born relational, "eco-logical" beings before we become "ego-logical" as Kleinberg-Levin (1999) puts it. As it is a uniquely flexible position whence all ontological possibilities might arise, it represents a crossroads of sorts in terms of eco care. As we see with Bambi, she was receiving cues from the world around her as to where the line should be drawn regarding ontology. Her teachers could be seen hurrying her up at times, increasingly telling her to focus on the human world during lessons, while the natural world continued to address and invite her to take notice. The hope is that if we remain keenly aware of this fluid potential as educators, parents and community members then the phases that Kleinberg-Levin (1999) describes above may no longer be relevant as there will be less socialization away from the natural world and more relation to it. As adults, we will not need to relearn how to look at the world but, instead, can work to maintain an ontology that honours the potential for caring relations with the more-than-human. Some may deem this idealistic, however I'm not trying to imply that children can somehow escape the dominant culture rather I'm curious as to how students, and the adults that help to educate them, might keep open possibilities for ecologically sensitive ways of being in the world and concurrently resist ecologically destructive aspects of the culture.

With this in mind, let us consider an educational approach where instead of learning to solely separate, we learn to relate and become aware of the ways in which the more-than-human might inform us of other ways of knowing and being in the world. As educators we influence what our students attend to and how that subject under attention is treated; whether we pause for consideration or hurry along, all signals to the students what does and does not have value in our opinion. In this regard, during the prepersonal stage we help form boundaries around what has agency and what is worthy of care/consideration. This period in early childhood helps form what Noddings (2013)

calls "the ethical ideal" where "memories[31] of being cared for and reflections on such care constitute the early material of the ideal. Then, as the child learns to care for others, new memories are added to the developing ideal." (p. xvii).

Noddings (2013) makes a useful distinction between 'natural caring' and 'ethical caring' in relation to this ethical ideal. Natural caring may require a great deal of effort physically or emotionally but not morally, in this type of caring 'we act out of inclination, not out of duty or concern for the status of our character" (Noddings, 2013, p. xv). She argues that this is the condition "toward which we long and strive… the motivation for us to be moral. We want to be moral in order to remain in the caring relation and to enhance the ideal of ourselves as one-caring." (Noddings, 2013, p. 5). Whereas, when one does not feel like caring, Noddings suggests we must draw on our ethical ideal (our history of caring and the high value we place on ourselves as carers) and partake in ethical caring, acting out of moral duty. Thus, she emphasizes "everything depends upon the nature and strength of this ideal" for this "realistic picture of ourselves as one-caring" is what guides us through our moral decision making (Nodding, 2013, p.5). Early childhood is such an important time in this regard as interest in the wild others, the arbutus tree, the ground beetle, the garter snake, takes the form of natural caring; the child is often fascinated by the more-than-human and for the most part does not seem to need artificial motivation or principles to guide them towards this care. Here, they are developing their ethical ideal in relation to the rest of the natural world. However, as cultural influences seep in, environmental educators seem to rely on ethical caring in attempts to relight the natural care. It is important to note that Noddings (2013) emphasizes that ethical caring is always "risky" as attention moves away from the cared-for to the one-caring's own ethical self or the principle they are following (p. xxiii). As a result Noddings (2013) emphasizes that 'the primary aim of all education must be nurturance of the ethical ideal" (p.6); she argues "our priority… is on natural caring, and our efforts at ethical caring are meant to establish or re-establish the more dependable conditions under which caring relations thrive" (p.xxiii). As we will see in the coming chapters I will draw on my research to illustrate how young children are forming this

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[31] The 'memories of being cared for' in the description here refers to human modes of caring that we are presented with as children.

ethical ideal and ways that educators can help nurture it in regards to the natural world. This is critical because care for the natural world can be educated out of their ethical ideal quite easily in the current school system guided by patriarchal cultural narratives.

The adult educator who is in phase three, according to Kleinberg-Levin (1999) is entirely dependent on what Merleau-Ponty refers to as "practice of the self" (p.230). Kleinberg-Levin (1999) describes what is required at this phase:

> the willingness of the ego-locical subject to work on itself and undertake a process of radical self-deconstruction, whereby it would return to make contact with and retrieve (if only in the form of a certain tracework) the pre-personal experience of chiasmic vision (p.231).

This in turn involves

> the adult citizen's participation in a deliberative community of principled sociability built on a true reciprocity of gazes-gazes which look with respect at one another and would be capable of reversing their point of view to identify it with that of the other (Kleinberg-Levin, 1999, p.231).

He reiterates that this means understanding our responsibility to be morally responsive "beyond the realm of being we call 'human'" (1999, p.218).

In conclusion, nurturing natural caring for the wild other in the early years helps strengthen and establish one's ethical ideal for eco care that will help guide them in later years. It is during this time where the child begins to understand what their caring can and should extend to and what that will look like. This is a moral crossroads where children as relational, "eco-logical" beings are just starting to learn the boundaries of self and other. If we remain attentive to the ethical starting points that each item in the natural world has agency, intrinsic worth and that we are interdependent with them and therefore should act with caution, then as educators this means creating space for the child to build positive relations with the more-than-human, creating relational memories, strengthening their ethical ideal. This is essential as even if the child moves through a Western ego separation stage, this ethical ideal remains as something to build on thereafter. This helps keep the possibility for eco care open and moral distance decreases. If instead, we treat the natural world as a series of lesser objects which are not capable of completing the care experience, as Noddings herself suggests, then the

possibility for eco care narrows and moral distance increases. Thus, as educators of young children in a time of ecological crises, we need to be vigilant as to the boundaries we help to create around what has voice, value and agency and therefore, the potential for moral consideration. Given this, I aim to describe the various ways in which 'natural' caring for the more-than-human unfolds for these students such that within these experiences, we as educators might find ways to maintain and deepen sensitivity to our more-than-human relations and work to create a flourishing ethical ideal inclusive to both our students and the rest of the natural world.

3.6. Intrinsic Valuing

Ecosensitivity appears to have three roots which are absolutely essential for its growth (see Figure 4.1). The first of these roots is an intrinsic valuing of the more-than-human other. In the psychological literature, major antecedents to empathy have been shown to be: 1) perceiving the other as 'in need' 2) valuing the other's welfare 3) perspective taking (Batson et al., 2007). I wish to first focus here on the second antecedent of welfare. Valuing of the other's welfare has been shown to precede and assist with perspective taking, often evoking empathic concern (Batson, 1991; Batson et al., 2007). Although, these studies focused mainly on humans, I draw attention to the parallel results of my findings. Within the early years of childhood it is crucial to keep open the possibility that all members of the natural world have intrinsic value. It is intrinsic value here which I wish to highlight as opposed to simply valuing the welfare of the other. If a child understands the intrinsic value of another being this can open the door for the child learning to value its welfare as well. However, learning to value welfare does not necessarily imply that the other has intrinsic value; we can care for the welfare of chickens because we want them to be plump, juicy meat for us, for example. An understanding of the wild other's intrinsic value is absolutely necessary in order to establish a care that is receptive to the more-than-human other as a particular, agential subject; otherwise the relationship will remain instrumental and thus, one is unable to truly care for the other. I will describe how the students that I worked with had a sense that particular more-than-human others had intrinsic value and then detail how they expressed ongoing concern for the other's welfare. From this I suggest that if children

are encouraged to understand a wren or a slug as having intrinsic value, they are more likely grow in their concern for its welfare and their empathy towards it, moving towards eco care. Childhood is a crucial time as the boundaries around what should have value are not yet fully fixed so the child can learn to understand the more-than-human as having worth outside of human systems of judgement or they can learn that they have the power to ascribe this value. As educators we need to be cautious in order to keep open the possibility that the more-than-human has intrinsic worth. If we assume the other to be 'lesser than' for whatever reasons, empathy is hindered and thus, care is as well. As a result I devote some time to arguing why ecosensitivity should be rooted in an intrinsic valuing of the self, the other and the lessons learned through the two in relation.

3.6.1. Intrinsic Valuing and Concern for the More-than-human Other's Welfare as Roots for Eco Care

The students that I worked with were open to the possibility of the intrinsic value of the more-than-human other and this also seems to be paired with a concern for the welfare of the other. As it is impossible to truly get into the heads and hearts of the students that I worked with, my words will act as a finger pointing at the moon (Rajneesh, 1987) showing hints of their valuing rather than direct 'proofs'. I will highlight examples from the students in terms of valuing and expressing concern for the welfare of various members of the more-than-human world and how this might translate into eco care.

Both of the older students that I worked with demonstrated care for the welfare of the more-than-human other on an ongoing basis. Raven for example, saw the intrinsic value of the plants that she ate. Her mother Amber commented

> Putting food into the garbage, there's a part of her that's like…ahhh, when trying to throw something out. Or she won't speak negatively to the food, if someone says 'Oh I don't like it' she'll say 'Don't speak like that to the salad, you don't have to eat it but don't talk like that. It gave up its life for you'.

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This sense of an intrinsic value in the more-than-human other is also apparent one day when I question her about the tree that she often sits with, I asked "Is it someone's property, does someone own it?" She answered:

> No I think my tree is very free, it actually owns me because we are guests to the earth…Somebody might think that that tree is just a tree, we own this land, it's ours… but the tree is like a person except it has no face. We as humans don't really control it …like the trees control themselves.

She struggled here in attempting to put words to this but she was consistently strong in her conviction that items in the natural world have intrinsic value. When I asked her why she cared for the natural world she responded:

> What we are doing to our environment, global warming for instance, it's horrible, we don't want that because it's just common sense. It's the same thing with protecting the plants at school, because that is someone's habitat, like a bug's habitat, a home, you don't want to destroy that home.'

Throughout my research term, she possessed this sense of intrinsic value of the more-than-human other. This was paired with a deep concern for the welfare of the entities in the natural world around her, and concern for its welfare. Her step-dad Jasper shared "She has a huge amount of empathy for the natural world. Everything around her she cares for, she doesn't want to see anything get harmed whether it's a plant or an ant walking across the floor."

This type of valuing and concern for others in the natural world was also present for Ecoboy. One day I asked him why he called a certain tree "his" tree he answered "Well, I've looked at it more than other people but it doesn't really belong to me, it belongs to the forest around here and to the ground and….a little bit of me…" "How so?" I asked. "Not like it's mine, but that he [the tree] knows that this is his home and that I come and visit." When he subsequently suggested that the tree might wonder why we as humans cut trees down I asked "Why it would matter if a tree was cut down?" He answered "Most trees are like, hmm, they do have feelings but people cut them down and break branches. They do have feelings, even stuff that's like non-living, not human has feelings of sorts." "Could you describe that a bit more?" I asked. He elaborated

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> Even though it's not human, it still has feelings. Like if a rock is moved from its home, it wouldn't be the same I guess. You've got to treat it with respect, not be snapping branches and pulling them back. It's not like feelings like a human but it still has feelings to be respected.

It's hard for him to communicate this as it was for Raven but there was the sense that items in the natural world, living and non-living have intrinsic value and are to be respected. Like Raven, he possessed a deep concern for the welfare of the wild other. Ecoboy has cared for the natural world, particularly 'animals', since infancy according to his parents. His parents and the school staff had many examples of this pre-existing care. A teacher described "he wouldn't want to kill anything, he never goes about stomping on even a beetle or something like that, he'll look at it, he'll put it off to the side, there's certainly a respect he has." Another staff member shared

> It's in what he doesn't do; he never rips branches off like some of the other students. When we come across a salamander on our walk, he gets down there and he watches it, uses language like 'isn't that pretty?' or 'isn't that beautiful?'…That's something I've noticed from him.

Both of these students seemed to believe that the members of the natural world have value in their own right beyond human terms and this appeared to be paired with a concern for their welfare.

The psychological literature has drawn a clear connection between how intrinsic valuing and concern for the other's welfare could be connected. Such literature suggests that when we value another's existence we are motivated to think about how the other is affected by events in their lives (Batson et al., 2007). We place positive value on events that will bring them pleasure, satisfaction, safety or relief and negative value on events that we think will bring pain, sorrow, discontent, danger or disappointment.[32] Such valuing encourages us to respond to events that might affect the other's welfare much as we might respond to those that affect our own. This also

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[32] As mentioned before, there is the risk of anthropomorphism here, signaling the challenge of actually assessing what the other is experiencing however, I argue that this should not stop us from the attempt to try to understand (see chapter six for more on this).

seems to lead to vigilance; we start to be on the lookout for things that might affect the other's welfare (Batson et al., 2007). In this way, valuing the other can lead us to spontaneously adopt the other's perspective. In the act of valuing the other's welfare, the other's pleasure and pain[33], all have become part of our own value structure, therefore we are primed to imagine how the other thinks, feels about or could be affected by experiences in their own existence. I argue that if a child is encouraged to understand that the rest of the natural world has value, then their field of care for it can grow in this fashion. As I have mentioned, the child is open to this possibility of the more-than-human other having intrinsic worth and over time that can either be educated out of them or they can be supported to understand that it does have such value.

I will provide some examples of Bambi that speak to the concern for welfare emerging out of a sense of intrinsic value. I have chosen to focus on Bambi here because she is the youngest student that I researched and thus, could provide insight into whether such valuing and concern for the other could be present at the very age that Piaget deems 'egocentric'. A pre-existing valuing of the other was regularly exemplified and stated by Bambi. She was inspired to try to mitigate pain for the wild other but seemed to lack the tools and experience to best know how to do this. Instances of her expressing the other as a valued entity which she is concerned about are numerous as the following examples from her mother's journal over the course of a year will illustrate:

> I'm happy to report Lucky the caterpillar is still alive and we set him free today. After swimming in paint, having a bath and being taken care of by doctor Bambi for the past 4 days he's alive and doing well. She cried when we set him free.

> We were watching T.V. when out of nowhere she says 'Mommy guess what? I kissed a worm.' 'Why did you kiss him?' I asked. 'Because I really loved him.'

> Bambi said 'Look at all the robins in the yard, they're looking for worms. I don't want them to eat the worms. The worms make the dirt healthy. We need them. Mommy, go out there and stop the birds. I don't want the worms to die because I love them.'

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[33] Or in the case of non-living entities, their own terms of existence and acts that work to counter that.

> She [Bambi] takes carrots, lettuce and apples out of the fridge and puts them in the compost bucket and says 'We need to take the compost out *right now*!' I ask 'Why what's the rush? There's snow on the ground and the slugs, snails and worms won't be able to find food. We need to give them food RIGHT NOW or they'll die, quick hurry.'

> The other day I was picking her up, she started screaming 'mommy, mommy, there is something precious!' … I'm like 'what?' She yelled, "Don't step there!" I looked and there was a little worm. She was standing there guarding the worm and all the kids were running around. She was like 'everybody stay away… it's a worm, don't step on it!" She was guarding it, probably like 10 or 15 minutes after school until all of the kids left and then we were the only ones standing there, I had to reassure her that 'ok, we are the only ones left no one is going to step on it now.'

Bambi was often described by others as having a "one track mind", "she's always thinking of the natural world", "she's fully immersed in it, always aware of it" as some of the teaching staff commented. She was constantly interested in and tried to respond to things that could have affected the welfare of the more-than-human other. One can see in the above comments how she was personally concerned and affected by events that might be negatively impacting things she cared about in the natural world. Despite developmental and axiological frameworks that suggest that Bambi should be all about 'me' and 'mine', she demonstrated ongoing empathic concern for the more-than-human. All of these children have been described as valuing and expressing concern for the welfare of various members of the more-than-human world since infancy. It is not surprising then, when one of the teachers mentions "with all of them, they seem personally affected when a creature is harmed. They take the time to investigate whether it is ok and whether they can do anything, while the other kids run off onto the next thing." There is a sense that the welfare of the other is somehow intertwined with their own, Raven wincing when someone wastes lettuce, or Bambi shrieking at the thought of a worm dying. These children remain open to the possibility of the intrinsic value of the more-than-human other and as the psychological literature suggests, this seems to allow them to enter into relation such that the concern for the other becomes part of their own field of care.

3.6.2.   **Value as Boundary Maker for Care**

Our preconception of what does and does not have value is integral in terms of what we are able to truly care for. When students lack this sense of intrinsic value of the more-than-other, educators often suggest a perspective taking exercise. For example, at the school under study some salamanders were picked up and handled roughly by some students, a teacher in response remarked to the students "Imagine if someone came in and ripped the roof off of your home, then came in and trampled it'. This type of imaginative exercise was offered regularly at the school after student impact on the more-than-human world. While such perspective taking has been shown to increase empathic concern as will be discussed in chapter seven, one can adopt another's perspective and still have little empathic concern. For example, Batson et al. (1997) found that individuals led to adopt the perspective of a convicted murderer were shown to possess far less empathy given that person's background context than the empathy they possessed when perspective taking for a neutral stranger. Thus, presumably, a convicted murderer's welfare is valued 'less than' that of an average stranger. I emphasize this here to reiterate that our perception as to whether the other has intrinsic value plays an important role when it comes to the possibility for empathy. If we assume the other to be 'lesser than' for whatever reasons, empathy is hindered. The same is true for the more-than-human world in dominant western culture as its welfare is often not considered to be as important as human well-being. Most value judgments of the natural world happen on a hierarchal level with doe eyed mammals taking the top spot (but still 'lesser than' human) and non-living entities the lowest. For example, in society today calling someone a 'dog' or a 'beast' acts as an insult and demonstrates that hierarchy quite clearly. This has major implications for the quality of care available to be offered to the natural world. If a member of the natural world is not seen to have intrinsic value in its own right, then a major antecedent for empathy, as described above, is missing. If we are unable to acknowledge the intrinsic value and agency of the members within the natural world, then we cannot seriously care for their needs or hear their perspectives. This is why childhood is such a crucial time for narrowing moral distance regarding the natural world.   In the early years of fluid ontology there exists the possibility for the child to see the more-than-human world as valuable on its own terms as we see within the students described above. Very young children have not yet fully

learned to pull back in revulsion when they see a snake or to squash a spider under the foot. While they may respond in this manner, the actions have not become sedimented as the only way of reacting, meaning the 'value' of the other has not been concretely determined either. As soon as the educator and/or the student starts to devalue the welfare of the wild other they begin to increase moral distance and reduce the chance to properly care for it. They are hindered in accessing the perspective of the other as it is thought to not even be capable or worthy of having needs of its own, hence its needs are subsequently ignored or inadequately met. In this way, one also strips away the first aforementioned major antecedent to empathy, 'perceived need'.

3.6.3.   Caution Needed in the Move to Assert Value

Interestingly, in the move to articulate the value of the natural world, I saw the students and teacher try to put into words some of the same shifts that have been made in other anti-oppression movements. Each of these different shifts works to assert the 'value' of the other under oppression however, we also need to trouble the wider moral implications of these efforts. For example, when I questioned the students at the beginning of the research term about what should have 'rights' in the places we visited, all three students insisted that various members of the natural world should have 'equal rights', a similar stance to the move for equality in the African American civil rights movement or first and second wave feminism. Yet, this push for equality, while emphasizing the value of the other does not highlight difference which is also essential in learning to understand the other on its own terms.

A second wave movement, which aims to draw attention to difference, is also problematic as it can create value loaded dualisms. Historically, Rousseau, the Romantics and Transcendentalists such as Emerson and Thoreau defined nature as 'not man'[34]. Rousseau (1762), for example, strongly believed that children are born into a natural state of essential goodness, threatened by the corrupting influences of society, or what he referred to as the degenerative "hands of man" (p.1). Taylor (2013) and other

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[34] A similar move occurred in second wave feminism, where women were also described as 'not man'.

poststructural feminists argue such a move perpetuates false dichotomies of nature and culture or in the case of feminism, men and women. It's important that as environmental educators we remain wary of this binary move for the implications it can have regarding the value. For example, some parents of students at the school under study were worried that the school was reinforcing a dualistic view of nature as positive 'escape' from society rather than preparing their children to be active and thoughtful citizens within the dominant culture. Ocean, the teacher I researched, said he could understand this concern that the school was acting to position nature versus society,

> I worry sometimes that I am swinging too far to one end of the pendulum, so I'm trying to navigate through to finding my sense of balance. I know how deeply the culture of a place affects students and how they learn.   I want their experiences here to help them fit different situations; you know some of them may wind up working in a cubicle. I don't want to toss everything out, so that balance of how much should be guided or how much should be directed, and are there particular topics that the students should have to get? Things like that…I want to make sure that I'm not just rejecting everything from the dominant culture and the traditional school system. We learn from our history, some things start out valuable and valid and somewhere along the line, things aren't as usual or the world changes and it's no longer in line but there will still be parts that are valid and useful for us.

 Here, we can see that he is cautious about creating a divide for his students between nature and society. Such vigilance around dualistic thinking in education is important. It helps students understand that binary ways of perceiving the world can act as dangerous illusions that set the stage for hierarchal assumptions (Plumwood, 1993). In these instances, usually the value and welfare of the other at one end of the false dualism ends up being seen as 'lesser than', this type of thinking only works to separate and divide. Thus, the positioning the natural world as 'better than' or 'the opposite of' culture is not a useful way to assert value either.

What is also intriguing to me is that the two older students in the descriptions shared previously in this section, make a move to consider the 'personhood' of the natural world, akin to third wave feminism's push to move past false dualisms. We see this in the statements made by the students such as "A tree is like a person except it has no face" and regarding the tree it has "not feelings like a human but still has feelings to

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be respected". There is a sense of the agency of the other as well, reflected in the comments "it doesn't belong to me… it belongs to the forest around here…this is his home and I come visit", "we as humans don't really control it …like the trees control themselves" and "I think my tree is very free, it actually owns me because we are guests to the earth…". Of course, as mentioned one has to be careful in this shift toward 'personhood' not to strip away the other's particularity, moving away from the simple push for equality because a tree is indeed not a person and therefore, should not be treated the same as a person. Here we need to be wary of assimilation of differences that eats away intrinsic value of the other (they are valued for their similarity, not for their own worth). Nor is the tree to be valorized as in the historical push to consider it 'not man' as this reverses and perpetuates false dichotomies which often position one side as lesser in value. This brings us to a third wave of "nature-culture" hybrids as Latour (1993, p.104) describes, where nature is not reduced to culture or culture to nature but that the relationships between are what should inform us. This is why I have insisted that the more-than-human other, the self *and* the relationship are all valued within eco sensitivity. If we position one of these over the other, then eco care is diminished.

The false self/other dichotomy manifests itself on a larger scale in terms of nature/culture. I'd like to emphasize here the potential for value to become skewed when 'culture' is blurred with the 'nature' in efforts to avoid the prevalent false, nature culture dualism. On one end, there is a real danger here that we need to be hyper aware of, that we risk assimilating nature into culture, seen in what McKibben (2006) and Cronon (1998) deem the 'end of nature'. Mick Smith (2007) reminds us that while little of nature remains untouched, "there are clearly places that are relatively wild in the sense of not being under constant human surveillance, regulation, and control, where non-human life continues *relatively* unhindered" (p. 479). In what I am calling this 'third wave' of more-than-human anti-oppression work, honouring the agency and autonomy of the more-than-human is critical to avoid a flattened social constructivist view of nature being a cultural construction. Otherwise, everything becomes culturally mediated shutting off our chance to consider the intrinsic value of the more-than-human on its own terms.

I also agree with Taylor (2013) that we need to avoid a biological essentialist account where nature swallows culture and devalues it. She points out

> Child-animal common worlds are leaky, messy, challenging, dynamic and transforming. They are about as far as you can get from the hermitically sealed, pure and perfect child-animal worlds manufactured by Disney…they seriously consider the geo-historical specificities that constellate to produce queerly heterogeneous and configured child-animal common worlds in particular times and places,…characterized by their own discursive political and ethical challenges. (2013, p. 88)

Although there exists a space of fluid ontology early on within the children that I researched, the dominant cultural influence which denies that the more-than-human has value also happens early on. This can be seen through an ethical dilemma that I posed to the students to see how they would respond.

The Dilemma

You are building a housing development and have the option of three parcels of land
1) On a spot where a man lives in a small house already and refuses to leave even if the bulldozers come in
2) On a rock face which you will have to blast with dynamite in order to secure the foundation of the house
3) On a forested lot that contains various plants and animals that you will have to clear to build Where do you build and why?

I intentionally wanted the children to be confronted with the choice between human, living and non-living to see if they had a pre-existing, embedded hierarchy of values.

The Response

When I asked the students this at the beginning of my research all three told me they wouldn't want to choose any of the options. Bambi, five at the time, reasoned that she wouldn't want to live in any of those spots, that she would rather live in a tree. Ecoboy, nine at the time, told me that he thought everything living and non-living should have equal rights so it was an unfair question. Raven eight at the time, said she wouldn't want to hurt the human, trees or the rocks, so she wouldn't build the house. A year and a half later, the responses had changed. Bambi now started by saying she'd rather live by the water but would choose option two, because "it would be kind", explaining that

she didn't want to destroy anything living. Ecoboy also chose option two because he didn't want to disrupt the man or hurt the animals and this would cause the least amount of damage to living things, reasoning out a justice oriented approach to solving the problem. Raven decided "

> First, I would talk to the man who lives on the property and explain to him my choices and the effect on the environment from number 2 & 3. If he was still not willing to move, I would chose number 3. Then I could replant all the trees and the vegetation I had to remove. I would even transplant some of the plants to the land around the building. For the animals that ran away such as birds, deer, and small rodent things, I would try and bring them back by: putting nuts out for the rodent things, and birdhouses and feeders for the birds, and in the winter I could put out salt licks and hay for the deer and elk.

She immediately chooses a relational approach to solving the problem in trying to talk to the man. Then, interestingly does not choose between living or non-living but rather takes an instrumental approach to solving the problem akin to some of the solutions (replanting, restoration of habitat islands) used to mitigate impact at the school under study.

This change in response reflects the dominant cultural attitudes toward the more-than-human, including a deeply embedded hierarchy of value regarding the living and non-living and an instrumental approach to solving environmental issues. Some might suggest that the students were actually taking a more mature response over time rather than a fantastical child-like position; this type of response fits with traditional moral development theory and cultural assumptions that emotional concern for rocks is silly, illogical or unrealistic, a position that I argue against throughout this dissertation. In these responses we can also that the student view shifts considerably from arguing early on for equal rights and a 'personhood' of sorts to a stance tempered by cultural norms. As a result, for two of the students their consideration of the welfare of the non-living items such as rocks appears to have changed, they have learned to place such items as having 'lesser value', thus affecting their ability to have empathy and develop care for

these non-living others[35]. Raven lists ways in which she would tend to the welfare of the constituents of the place and interestingly, remains strong in her valuing of the non-living by refusing to choose option two. However, school culture has likely induced a simplification of the perceived need of the other for her. The teachers' repeated emphasis on 'resilience' has likely influenced Raven to flatten the complexity of the situation. She has been taught that nature will heal itself, the underlying message that she receives is that even though humans might have an impact on place, it can be easily fixed. This oversimplification of perceived need on behalf of the more-than-human other then can act to reduce her ability to empathize and properly care as well. If the students are unable to consider the more-than-human other as having worth or complex, independent needs of its own then the type of care available to be offered can never actually meet the needs of the other and thus remains incomplete. The point here is to emphasize that early on, culture influences how these students value the rest of the natural world. A standpoint where nature assimilates culture avoids the messy, subversive ways in which culture influences our values and thus, our potential to care. On the other hand, as described, a standpoint where culture assimilates nature, denies that the particular more-than-human is capable of existing on its own terms and thus, is unable to have intrinsic value. Both of these examples demonstrate why if either the self or the other are surrendered for one another, eco care is sacrificed. In our culture self/other, nature/culture are often positioned as oppositional, such that in order to care for one we must sacrifice the other, when in fact it's necessary to see both as valuable entities in order for care to target both difference and relation. Thus, it is important for educators to push past the first wave move for equality, the second wave distinction into false dualisms and instead, enter a third wave which seeks to avoid assimilation of difference while also troubling binary thinking such that the other is valued as distinct yet interconnected.

In conclusion to this chapter, we are all born 'prepersonal' grasping at relation and full of ontological and epistemological possibility. As educators we must push back

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[35] It is worth pointing out that Bambi adopts this position at a young age whereas, Raven who is older still resists it, this may have to do with differences in terms of belonging as discussed in chapter nine. Raven has a strong peer and familial group that would include rocks as having value whereas, Bambi does not.

on ways in which the dominant culture positions the child as an egocentric self and instead aim to keep possibility for relation open. This means that instead of learning to separate, we need to sensitize ourselves to the ways in which the more-than-human might inform us of other ways of knowing and being in the world. As consideration for the welfare is a key antecedent for empathy, we need to take this seriously as educators working with children in the early years. For these young learners the possibility that all constituents of the natural world are valued as particular, agential subjects to whom they are intimately related is what will allow them to develop empathic connections and a type of care that truly attends to the needs of the other. In the third wave of anti-oppression work regarding the more-than-human this means considering the other's particularity, complexity as well as, the context of our own meaning making, ridding ourselves of false dualisms that reduce the agency of culture or the natural world as well as, self or other. To avoid both assimilation and separation, as educators we need to help our students value the more-than-human other as both distinct and related to us. This in turn requires us to attune ourselves to the context of the other and then to our own and the various ways in which these are informing, impacting one another. This felt attention to self, other and relation forms the basis for eco sensitivity which works to reduce the moral distance between self and the more-than-human other.

For students that are already culturally conditioned to deny the more-than-human other of intrinsic value, the first step in establishing eco care is to attempt to trouble this or the care will always remain incomplete. Batson et al. (2007) have found that if we can increase valuing of others' welfare then empathic concern and the motivation to care that it produces will also increase. The goal of eco care is to increase the intrinsic valuing of the more-than-human other.   Strategies to increase valuing include working on ways to reduce prejudice, preconceived assumptions and then strategies to increase opportunities for more positive experiences and relations with the more-than-human other. I will now speak to ways in which we can attune ourselves to the agency and worth of the more than human, remaining aware of important particular differences and our relatedness, thus, keeping open the possibility for eco sensitivity and care. I will devote a chapter to each of the remaining roots and shoots that were identified as important in cultivating this felt, receptive awareness of comingling contexts. They include: 1) Cultivating Awareness: Attending to the Other, Ourselves & Our

Relations 2) The Natural World as an Active Communicator 3) Perspective-taking as Felt Answerability and 4) Avoiding Abstraction and Universalism through Particular Contextualizing.

Chapter 4.   Cultivating Awareness:
Attending to the Other, Ourselves & Our Relations

4.1. Introduction

Each of the students that I researched still actively had an ear, eye, hand or nose oriented toward the natural world despite being repeatedly told by culture and by the many adults around them to focus back on the human realm and I was thus intrigued by this consistent attending.   This skill of maintaining the natural world as an active presence in life seemed to act as a strong root for developing eco care in these students.   This ability to attend to the more-than-human counters the dominant way of being in Western culture.   Bai (2009) talks of a "psychic numbing" that prevails in society: a disembodied, insular perception that as Bonnet (2012) describes, undermines a more empathic, participatory, understanding of the world.   If we remain numb to the natural world, it's very likely then so do the children steeped in our culture.   What we attend to as educators underscores what we consider as having value and voice[36] in the world and this in turn, influences our students' own ethical navigation.   If an open awareness of the natural world is lacking, so too is the opportunity to receive what the more-than-human other is offering.   Sewall (1999) points out that "the experience of 'paying' attention is the flip side of psychic numbing" (p. 97).   Western dominant culture tends to ignore or dismiss the natural world as the context for human lives rather than an active participant within it. It therefore seems that a fundamental part of learning to value the welfare and voice of the more-than-human other is to become aware of it.   Thus, eco sensitivity needs to be rooted in an attentiveness that aims to listen to earth others on their own terms and in their own context; a non-manipulative receptivity[37].   It also

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[36] 'Valuing' and 'listening to voice' act as the other two roots of eco sensitivity

[37] These notions of receptivity and non-manipulation will be covered in further in depth in future chapters.

requires an awareness of how you may be impacting the more-than-human world, alongside the reverse: how it may be affecting you ontologically and epistemologically[38].

To illustrate how I came to this understanding, I will first describe several different types of attention that the students embodied when within the natural world. I will then draw on these examples to illustrate how educators and students might actively learn to listen to the needs and perspectives of the more-than-human other, on its own terms, in attempts to provide appropriate[39] care. Finally, I will end by suggesting that we also need to pay attention to our own context and meaning-making as humans, not for solipsistic aims but rather to reflect back upon our own values, relations, acts of attention and how they may be influencing our students' moral conceptions.

4.2. Attending to the Other

Here I provide three different portraits to illustrate the unique ways that each child attended to the natural world. Though this I wish to emphasize how various modes of attention result in quite different modes of knowing and being in the natural world. Afterwards, I will discuss key similarities, differences between these approaches and the larger educational implications.

4.2.1. The unnoticed

The first week of school has been filled with long golden lit days, blue skies and verdant green leaves rustling in the wind. Today we are walking the boundaries of the park to give the students a chance to orient themselves. I climb over a log in the forest and position myself to help some students move over the uneven ground. From behind I hear someone yell loudly and clearly out to me "Laura, look!" I turn back to see Bambi tagging along at the back, she has a 'Dora the Explorer' t-shirt on and her long brown hair is pulled back from her face and I'm still surprised when I see her because of how

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[38] I will expand on this notion of reversibility in chapter seven.

[39] By 'appropriate' here I mean care that intentionally attends to the context specific nature of the other in itself.

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tall she has grown over the summer. "What is it?" I call back, she holds up a feather that's she has picked up from the trail that I just passed. I've never seen a feather shaped quite like it before, long frilled barbs, it's a soft grey, about twice the length of her small fingers. I admire it and one of the other students comes in to take a closer look.

Figure 4.1.   Bambi with Found Feathers

We keep walking and bodies move fast along the trail except for Bambi who veers off the gravel path and lays her body on a tilted, old tree stump. Her hand tightly clenching the newly found feather, she uses her elbows to inch her way up to something. "Bambi, come on, we've got to keep up with the rest of the group." I tell her. She grabs something and then runs up the trail to meet me, her clothes now covered in soil. "What is this?" she asks. She has a strong grip on a smooth, grey ribbon. I examine the exposed end. "It's a part of a wasp's nest." I say as I grab her hand to help her climb up the steep hill in front of us. "What's a wasp?" she asks. I describe it as a black and yellow insect. "And it makes a nest?" she asks. "Yes it actually makes that paper in its stomach and then spits it out, pretty neat eh?" "It does?" she asks. We catch up with the rest of the group and they are talking about boundaries. As we continue walking along a wide gravel road, I notice Rosie, a support teacher, carrying Bambi's water bottle so Bambi's hands are free for gathering. Three of the older boys run up to ask me a question and I lose track of Bambi for the rest of the walk. When I turn back I see her at the back of the line tugging on Rosie's hand to go closer to the forested side of the side

of the road. When we come to a resting place and I turn back to see that Rosie, is holding three feathers now for Bambi along with the piece from the wasp's nest. "Look what we've got here…a heron feather, an eagle feather and another small one." Rosie shows me and then hands them back to Bambi whose eyes remain on the forest edges of the path. I silently marvel at how much Bambi has found along the seemingly empty gravel road when the rest of the class passed so quickly through, not even thinking to look up and around.

Early in my research, I asked her mum, Feisty Ferret, to reflect upon Bambi's current relationship with the more-than-human world and she responded

> Her attention to details allows her to discover things that would go unnoticed by others. For instance a group of kids goes walking through the forest like they do every day, the same trail, the same scenery, they walk past the same trees and plants. For them it becomes a familiar routine. All the leaves begin to look the same and they walk right past the snails, slugs, caterpillars, and other insects as they go unnoticed because they're taken for granted. We see these tiny creatures every day, they all look the same, there is nothing new or exciting about them so we walk on by. Then eventually along comes Bambi ever so slowly taking her time to enjoy all the scenery has to offer that the others have ignored.

After a walk with Bambi, I'm left with a sense of how much wonder can be found in a small patch of grass so I'm curious about the family approach to exploring the more-than-human world. I ask Feisty Ferret to explain what it's like when they are on a hike and she responds,

> Sometimes, you know… we're in a hurry but then sometimes if we're stopping every ten feet then we're going to be stopping every ten feet because I'd rather her get to experience it right and have fun instead of just walk, walk, walk. I recently did the West Coast Trail and there was one day where we sat there for probably two hours, just sitting there watching the whales and it was just like if you're going to do something you have to experience it. Take the time. [Bambi]'s the same way. She's gotta look at everything and that's just it… you don't learn anything unless you're actually like taking the time to look at it.

I can see that Bambi is always intently focused on the happenings in the natural world, in fact it takes a great deal of effort on behalf of the teachers to draw her attention away

from it and onto human relations. Constantly examining the ground around her, she's very reluctant to turn her attention away from it so she resolutely remains aware of what is happening in the natural world despite what is happening in the school lesson. This detailed awareness and persistence to keep it in the foreground of her attention make her the go-to person when children are looking for partners for bug hunts; she's often the first person to notice a slug or bird or millipede entering the scene. In this way, she becomes a vocal ally for the natural world, constantly reminding the group to look up and around at what the place is presenting.

4.2.2.   Soaking it up

Raven and I are sitting in the sunlight in some tall grass with bees zooming by us, she's twirling some grass blades in her fingers and I give her the prompt 'When I'm outside…' for her to finish. She answers

> I look around, I'm aware of what is around me. Like today I feel warm and hear the birds, feel the wind and hear the wind and look at the clouds. This morning I saw three wave clouds that were going like this and then like this and like that. One was here, here and here.

She describes for me showing the pattern with her hands against the sky. "Oh neat, so it looked like waves?" I ask. "It looked separate but it was all part of one cloud." She responds, then she calls my attention to the clouds above, we take time pointing out shapes and animals in them. I'm interested that she answers this prompt by mentioning awareness so I ask Raven what it means to be 'aware' for her, she answers "Like feeling or awakening to everything. You're awakening to the things around you, you're actually like absorbing." I ask her to describe her awareness when outside, 'I'm aware of the plants and the trees and the bushes and the clouds, everything around me and I like to absorb the things around me and focus on everything." This is an interesting match to some staff members' descriptions of her, "Sometimes I think that she actually *feels* fall." one says. "The season?" I ask. "Ya, the falling of the leaves, the coming of cold, the coming of weather as she stands there and thinks." Another staff member mentions that "I see her so peaceful, so at peace with her environment, she kind of just soaks it up". I find it fascinating how both Raven and her teachers describe her awareness as an act of "absorbing" or "soaking" things up. The staff describe it as an openness and receptivity

in terms of attending to the natural world. I like that Raven describes it as an 'awakeness' this is a good descriptor of how present she seems when in this state. I encourage her to elaborate on this a bit more 'it's like the world is just there waiting for you to wake up to it' she says. I'm struck by how similar to this is to Buber's notion of becoming aware, or Horowitz's (2013) description below,

> Part of normal human development is learning to notice less than we are able to. The world is awash in details of colour, form sound –but to function we have to ignore some of it. The world still holds these details. Children sense the world at a different granularity, attending to parts of the visual world we gloss over, to sounds we have dismissed as irrelevant. What is indiscernible to us is plain to them. (p. 26)

Another staff member comments 'she's always aware listening, letting it in.

> We've talked before in the past about that ability to understand because you are able to listen… if the place is an educator that means you have to be ready to listen to that education, she's one of those people that I think can definitely participate in that.

Raven is aware that the world around her is communicating (see chapter six for more details around this) and as a result, in a space full of the more-than-human she often takes on the role of listener.

Figure 4.2.   Raven Finding "Grounding Time" by the River

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Her attending is different than Bambi in this regard, instead of sensory, tactile engagement I often see her head with her head tilted like a robin, in a space of active listening and receptivity to what the world has to offer. "Her connection and her development of care is different than other people's' a teacher describes, 'it's not necessarily one thing she's focused on, it's almost like she is connected to hundreds of things all at once". Again, this matches up with Raven's description of her own connection "It comes from here [and she points out to the forest in one direction and then brings that hand back into the centre of her chest], and then here [and she points in another direction and brings that hand in] and then here... here... here... and here [she moves her hands in a flurry]." She reflects on the first year at the school

> I learned how to connect and I learned how to be at peace with myself. Like we all have our own trees, we get to talk with our own trees and we're connecting with that tree and we're connecting with the natural world.

I have often seen her ask teachers for time alone at school so she can 'ground' and she will find a quiet spot to sit. One of the staff describes

> She plays with older kids and younger kids and yet she has this pausing time where she needs to be with something else or be with herself and just let all the engagement go and become engaged with something else quieter, softer.

Another staff mentions, "She'll often, with her group of friends, they'll find a little secluded, quiet place, and she seems very comfortable in it [the natural world]. I see her quietly contemplating." Like Bambi she takes a proactive role in carving out the space for this kind of attending or grounding even when it's not provided in the school lessons of the day.

4.2.3. Casting our Attention Back

It's a chilly day in early November and the river is raging. Gulls circle overhead, drawn to the salmon like Eco Boy. He's got his toque, a plaid red and black wool overcoat, jeans and hikers on. Today we go down to the river and he says "There have been lots of changes here lately. A couple weeks ago the water was this high" and he

touches the sandy ground about two feet up from where the water is now. "Wow" I respond. "I think it was because there was lots of rain." he explains. As we walk along the river, he pauses to take some photos. The river is loud and fish splash in the current. As Ecoboy rounds one corner of the riverbank ahead of me, a fish darts away startled; a black form pumping itself straight under the waving current. Both Eco Boy and I pause to watch it swim. "This is where I usually fish" he shows me a long straight section of the bank where the river is quite wide across. He points across the water to a branch sticking out above the water. "The river was so high that on that log there is a dead fish stuck on it." "Why do you like this spot to fish?" I ask while he takes a photo. "It's a big open spot" he responds. We crouch down by the river. "Why do you like fishing so much?" Not having fished a lot in my own life I'm genuinely curious. "It's great." He says smiling. "I like the feeling of the fish when you are holding them and they are pretty good tasting too. And it's fun too." "What's it like when you are actually standing in the river, what does that feel like?" I wonder out loud. "It feels pretty calm and you're waiting for something cool to happen, like a heron or a bear or getting a bite." he says. I'm struck by his description of calm when we are next to this quick moving water and surrounded by shrieking gulls. "How long do you usually have to wait before you get a bite?" I ask thinking maybe the calm comes from waiting. "Umm, it depends *where* you are fishing and how many there is in the river, now it would probably take a while because there isn't a lot in here." he gestures to the river. I scan the water and only see a couple fish. "Because this time of year, they are starting to die off?" I ask "Ya", he says, "they're starting to die, there's some…" he says pointing to a few dead salmon on the side of the bank. We glance over at them. He continues "But it's kind of good that they are flowing down because then the bears are more over there and not really in the way, so you don't really have to stop coming here. Look there's another one," he points out a dead one floating down the water. "There are tons here!" I say. "There's another one up on the log over there," he points to a bloated fish across the way from us. I'm still curious about this feeling of stillness that he described. "You've talked a little bit about this but what does it feel like when you are fishing?" I ask. "It feels very like calm" he says again and then adds "just exciting because you're standing there and then tense." "You feel tense?" I ask. "Like… when am I going to get one?!" "Ah, anticipation!" I remark. He nods. I have to think about this feeling of calm some more, whenever I am down here at lunch or recess there are kids everywhere and it

feels anything but calm, but Eco Boy is usually in his hip waders quietly focused on the river. I think of this as I continue chatting with him, he starts to speak but stops, leaning over to look at the river, he points out another fish and says "I think that's a Coho." He gets up and walks closer to see if he can tell. "Is it?" I ask. "Ya, you can kind of see that it's a wider one" he nods.

Figure 4.3. Ecoboy Fishing in the River

His eyes wander up as he is talking, "Just looking at the trees here, there's all these bobbers in the trees." I laugh, "That's a good point, do you think these are mainly from the school kids or other people too?" "Other people too, there is some of ours. I still see some from last year. Ya, I got one stuck up in there and I think Carson's [a friend] is right there." He says pointing way up high above my head at a green float." "Whoa that's high!" I remark laughing still. "Ya, you just cast out and you never know if you're going to get it up in the tree or not, sometimes you get lucky and it comes out, sometimes you don't." I look down at some of the questions that I've written down that I want to ask him and realize that no matter what I ask Eco Boy keeps drawing my

attention back to the river or the riverbank. Again, he's focused intently on the water, the fish… the nuances of this place seem to tug his thoughts. "There's another one." he points out, casting my thoughts back into the river "It's a chum eh?" I ask. "Ya, we've got mostly chum in here but after these guys go or die, I think we get Coho". "So this is a good spot to cast? I ask. "Ya, it is and so is that spot right there," he points to the right of us where there are many rocks in the river "because the rapids will wash it down. Look, that one is still alive!" He points out another fish.

Then I really begin to wonder about his fishing abilities, whether he knows it or not, Eco Boy is teaching me about fishing by the way he handles the conversation. He seems to keep casting my attention out to the river and I dangle there, hooked briefly by a fish or the current. Then he reels me back into something he was saying only to throw my gaze back outward again! And the crazy part is that the whole thing is calming! I laugh and think of the other day as one of the teachers was wrapping up their lesson I could hear Eco Boy say very quietly to no one in particular "I wish I was fishing right now." Today I think I began to understand some of the reason why. He describes that when he is outside he's always watching out for animals and everything around him.

> My eyes go everywhere pretty much. I'm always looking around everywhere trying to find something so I'm not bored just not seeing anything. I'm listening to the birds, the water, everything around me too. If I see the slightest movement I'll know what it is, like if it's a squirrel and then I'll turn so I can just see it, just its tail or the movement.

We continue talking and at one point I turn my head to follow his eyes noticing that a crow is very close to us. "I had no idea it was there!" I remark and we laugh given that we had just talked about his keen observation skills. "Ya, I saw it out of the corner of my eye." Over time I realize that Ecoboy like Raven, enters a place with a wide open receptivity, his senses are alert to the world around him. Early in my research, his teachers and parents all reflect that he is always keenly observant outside and is often one of the first ones to point something out. Like Raven, this receptivity seems to come from an awareness that the world around can offer lessons, I ask why he is so much of an animal lover, he responds "Because they are cool and interesting and you learn stuff from them every day pretty much." He echoes this many times throughout the research,

when I ask him early on who he learns best from he answers "my surroundings". I ask him to clarify and he says 'Like through this grass,' pointing to the ground beside us, "you can just go up to it and look at it and feel it and smell it. See if it was cut, if there are trails or homes in it, you can learn quite a bit from it." There is an ongoing noticing and sense that he will always be presented with something new to learn from.

4.2.4. Reflections on Ways of Attending and Possible Educational Implications

Through these three short portraits it is clear that each of the students had a different quality to the attending that they were doing. Bambi was actively sensing out the small details and nuances of the world around her. Her modes of attention involved all the senses, deeply somatic and focused. Raven tried to remain "awake" to what the world is offering, quietly taking it in. Rather than actively pursuing discoveries, she waited and listened to what was around her, keeping an eye on the larger picture. Ecoboy was busy watching out and listening for what his surroundings might teach him. He was frequently moving and seeking different tracks, signs from the more-than-human, actively trying to decipher what they might be telling him. Each way of attending here presents potential strengths and like any ontological/epistemological orientation there is also room for growth. For instance, if Bambi remained so focused on the details, she has the potential to miss out on a larger field of awareness which might reveal the hawk before it swoops down to the tree branch or the heron waiting downstream for the fish she is focused on. Similarly, if Ecoboy continued to move his body in an effort to keep exploring and discovering, he might miss out on what can appear when sitting still, like a deer getting very close. If we look close, each of these students has a quality of attending that we can learn from and try to incorporate into educational practice. I offer these portraits as a range of ontological and epistemological orientations when it comes to attending that can provide useful lessons in terms of eco care.

I will draw out some of the educational possibilities given these different approaches to attending below. First, I'd like to emphasize what was consistent in each of these portraits and that was that the students' attention was rapt on the natural world whenever they were in it. Even when a human directed lesson was happening at

school, in my early research I saw Ecoboy, Raven and Bambi all scanning the world around them, seemingly with one foot in a very human focused world and the other seeking what the more-than-human had to offer, learning from it, yearning to learn more. Thus, it seems this is a logical first step in understanding intrinsic value or becoming aware of the agency of the more-than-human, to realize *it is there…* present around us always as Raven says "waiting for you to wake up to it." Currently, for the most part the rest of the natural world sits outside of that awareness and therefore, cannot enter into genuine communication with us, "The waves of ether roar on always, but for most of the time we have turned off our receivers" (Buber, 1947, p.13). As a result, 'we need to pay attention to awareness' (Scott, 2011, p.139). I find Feisty Ferret's comments useful in this regard, as adults and even as students, many things become so familiar or routine that we cease to notice them. As an educator I do an exercise with students where I ask them to describe a sea gull to me; they often list it as having orange feet, a white body and a yellow bill. In the field, they soon realize that many common gulls in the area actually have pink feet, dark spots on their feathers, a red spot on the beak, some have pale eyes others dark and then there are the differences between species. This search for what we might take for granted or ignore takes us out of the "armour" that Buber insists prevents us from noticing the world around us (1947, p.12). Horowitz (2013) lends some insight here:

> When we are growing up, we learn to bring attention to certain elements and to ignore others. By adulthood, we all agree on what is 'out there'. But let's focus on what we ignore: so much! The patterns of pebbles embedded in asphalt, the pitch of a radiator's hiss, our own heart beating tangibly in our fingertips and temples. The infant has a mind untrammeled by experience: he has no expectations, so he is not closed from experiencing something anew. In not knowing what is interesting and what to attend to, he also does not know what we all consider uninteresting: whatever the bottom of the chair looks like; a blank stretch of wall; the corner of a picture frame…nor is he yet inculcated in where one is 'supposed to' look and where one is 'not supposed to' stare. (p.27)

When I first starting researching, the three students were indeed still looking where they were not supposed to during school lessons; they had yet to solidify what was interesting or worthy of attention according to cultural norms. Each were still actively including the more-than-human in their field of consideration as for them, it still had something to offer. Although I agree with Noddings (2013) when she claims that

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caring is ethically basic, cultural influences happen from infancy onward so children often quickly learn to treat the more-than-human world as a backdrop for human centered activity and thus, opportunities for care and empathy with it are limited. In this regard, not all students will be as receptive as the ones mentioned in regards to keeping the natural world in the foreground of attention and care. However, as I have argued, children are still open to new ways of knowing and being in the world and this is why educators should also take the role of actively bringing attention back to the constituents of the natural world in the first place. Without a pro-active attempt to attend to it, it's easy for us to ignore how it is actively shaping our ways of knowing and being in the world. This ability to stay focused on things that the culture is not paying attention to, is difficult. Thus, educative practice around attention needs to also be paired with work around 'belonging' as described in chapter nine, such that the child does not lose the confidence or the courage to attend to that which is typically ignored. The quality of attention itself is also important as a gaze can easily be intrusive or detached; in the future chapters, drawing on my research, I will describe an embodied, receptive and non-manipulative type of attention that acts to receive the more-than-human other as they are on their own terms, with a willingness to be transformed by this. This prevents us from sliding into an instrumental or manipulative mode of awareness.

From the portraits above we can also glean some advice for educators in terms of expanding awareness: look at the edge of the path, up at the canopy or attend to areas we typically walk by as Bambi does; intentionally listen to the soundscape around you and what it is communicating as Raven showed; involve the senses in attending to the details- feel the underside of the leaf; turn the ordinary into the extraordinary by learning more about the other- yes the ant we see so often crossing the floor has two stomachs and started farming long before humans did; remain watchful and listening to the bigger picture like Ecoboy and Raven; find the *time* to experience the more-than-human as Bambi does, to dwell with it, return to place in various seasons and different times of day. This sort of thing is not rocket science, environmental educators have been at it for years, still this sensory, receptive and non-manipulative attention allows students over time to refine their conceptions of the various more-than-human others with whom they share the world. Careful attention is essential in recognizing and appreciating particular differences and is also part of learning the various ways in which

the natural world may be speaking to us. All of this in turn helps us to provide care that is appropriately attuned to the welfare of the other. If we are truly committed to this notion of expanding our awareness and increasing student care for the natural world this also means asking deeper questions about what we value as educators.

4.3. Attending to Ourselves and Our Relations

We also need to turn attention back to our own human context and how it might be impacting and impacted by the more-than-human other. This enables us to consider ourselves in context, to draw on our own experience, learn from it and apply it to enrich the relationship. As well, we should be regularly reflexive regarding the ways in which our views may be influencing our students' perceptions regarding the value and voice of the more-than-human other. Questions that can assist with this include: What are your own embedded value systems in regards to the natural world and how are they part of the hidden curriculum of your practice?; What ways of knowing and being do you privilege and what do you ignore? Who is dominant and who is absent in the class/spaces you teach/lessons you deliver? How often are your students attending to what the natural world has to offer (note: this is different than attending to what *you* think that the natural world is offering)? In what ways are you getting in the way of what the natural world has to teach? In what ways can you work with it? Ocean, the teacher who I studied, described a change for himself over three years at the school,

> Before being out in the natural world was a kind of peaceful time but I was trying to control enough circumstances so I could be out there but I didn't feel like I was as much a part of it as I do now. I'm much more aware of my impact on my surroundings. I want to be a part that fits in as opposed to somebody just there observing it. Even though I thought I was pretty 'environmentally friendly' I realized that when we took the kids to cut down alder trees and were calling them 'weeds' in front of the kids and you and Peter [another researcher] pointed out our language and that you disagreed with that kind of labelling, before that I was thinking 'oh these trees don't really matter but now I realize that they are still a living thing and my view is rather egocentric and not as truthful to the kids as it should be.

He had courage here to attend to some of the assumptions he may have carried toward the natural world, seeing it previously as a "playground", there mainly for him to use.

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This preconception will result in a much different educational practice than attempting to teach as though we are "part of it", the latter requiring more room for listening and quiet as Ocean described. He also mentioned how he's become aware of how the language he uses and how that can reflect ecologically destructive ways of viewing the world. This is something to be keenly aware of as the metaphors we use can have powerful impacts on students' understandings of the world (Bowers, 1993). Ocean's final statement is a frank concession that although he was teaching the children in ways he thought were "environmentally friendly" that he was not necessarily embodying them. In this way, he's starting to chip away at his own perceptions of the natural world and what it might mean for his practice. In terms of attending, he's switched from always actively doing something in place to sitting on side of the lake "just as an experience of being there, listening." His focus appears to have changed from concentrating solely on himself in place to now include what the place might also be offering him.

This type of reflection, helps the educator understand how they might be skewing or occluding the perspective and needs of the more-than-human other. For example, by presenting the trees as "weeds" Ocean implied that they are virtually useless, this shuts down some of the possibility for students to understand them as valued, particular or having voice and agency within themselves. Once the trees are given this derogatory label it makes no sense to consider their perspectives or needs because they are assumed to not have value. It is easy to see how the act of attending is blocked here, as the alders are deemed to be not noteworthy in the first place so we divert our attention elsewhere and they dissolve into the background. As educators we need to be vigilant on how our acts of attention or inattention remove or create barriers for what the natural world has to teach and thus, for our ability to care.

In conclusion, the students that I researched all had their own way of proactively attending to the natural world despite the cultural 'backgrounding' of it (Plumwood, 1993). Through receptive, felt and non-manipulative attending to the more-than-human other, we work against psychic numbing to instead explore how we might 'wake up' to new ways of knowing and being in the world. These in turn can act to inform us of the perspectives and needs of the other, sensitizing us to potential ways in which we can provide appropriate care. Educators can play with sensory exploration, scale and

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perspective to invite students to open these doors of wonder within the natural world. In addition to finding ways for students to draw their attention back to the more-than-human world, educators also need to turn their attention to trouble culturally tempered conceptions of the natural world which strip it of agency and intrinsic value, otherwise major antecedents to empathy and care will be missing.

Thus far I have emphasized the importance of actively attending to the natural world and troubling assumptions that may diminish its intrinsic value or agency as essential roots in growing eco sensitivity. I will now elaborate on the how acknowledging and listening to the myriad more-than-human voices can also aid our ability to attend to the needs, perspectives and welfare of wild others.

Chapter 5.   Natural World as Active Communicator

5.1. Introduction

How does one come to know the natural world as having agency? As previously mentioned, part of this is what Buber terms "becoming aware" (1947, p.12). This is a process whereby the other is seen as an active, distinct subject which "says something to me...speaks something that enters my own life." (Buber, 1932, p.192). All of which requires an acknowledgement and understanding that items in the natural world are capable of communicating, 'speaking'; that they have voice. Unfortunately, our dominant mode of communication as a species when relating with the rest of the natural world is what Buber describes as an "*I/It*" relationship (1970, p.53), where the 'other', in this case, the natural world, remains an object, an "*It*" unconnected to the self, the human or the "*I*". In assuming this position alone, we silence the rest of the natural world. Buber describes: "I contemplate a tree ... I can assign it to a species and observe it as an instance ... I can dissolve it into a number ... Throughout all of this the tree remains my object" (1970, pp. 57-58). The relationship takes the form of a classic monologue; although Buber observes the tree he is not listening, caring or responding to it as a co-participant in the relationship. In contrast to this dominant western ontology, the students that I worked with seemed very receptive to the offerings of the natural world.

While the students I studied were keenly aware that the natural world was offering them something to learn from, the *way* in which they saw it communicating varied student to student. As a result, each student seemed to occupy a different understanding and orientation within the world (Blenkinsop & Piersol, 2013). These distinct orientations don't appear to be 'linear' or 'developmental' in nature. Rather, they are characteristic positions on being and knowing in the world that have subsequent consequences for the potential to communicate with and care for the more-than-human world.

In this chapter, I will emphasize how listening to more-than-human voices forms the third root out of which eco sensitivity grows. First, I will describe how the way in which the students perceived the various constituents of the natural world then subsequently affected the students' ability to listen to them. This in turn affected: a) how each student understood the needs of the wild other; b) student ability to care for and assess the welfare of the more-than-human other; c) student ability to listen to the potential perspective of the other. This is important as these are also three main antecedents for being able to empathize with it. As children enter the world in a prepersonal state still determining what can and cannot speak, they all have the potential to understand the more-than-human as a complex, agential subject that is capable of literal communication. If this possibility is kept open they are then more likely to hear the wild other's needs and perspectives outside of human projected meaning and thus, provide more accurate[40] care.

5.2. Varying Orientations on More-than-Human Communication[41]

The natural world is constantly communicating and yet the ability for humans to understand this gets shut down by cultural notions of what a mature ontology/axiology should look like. I want to be clear here that I'm not suggesting that the world only communicates if you adopt a certain ontology that supports that. Rather, communication from the rest of the natural world is ongoing and certain ontologies/epistemologies are useful in helping us attune to this and make sense of the more-than-human other on its own terms while others actually get in the way. I hope to demonstrate this by outlining different ontologies/epistemologies that each of the children occupied and describing how this then affected their perception of what was being communicated to them by the

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[40] Throughout this dissertation I will use the words 'more accurate' or 'appropriate' to refer to care that genuinely attempts to attend to a wild other on its own terms. The opposite of this would be care that does not reach beyond projection and will thus be labelled 'incomplete'. Of course, this is difficult to measure but the presence of roots and shoots of ecosensitivity can help an educator assess if the care is moving away from projection.

[41] The orientations that I provide here are in no way a comprehensive list of possible views on how the natural world communicates, just the ones that the students embodied.

rest of the natural world. This will offer a glimpse into ontologies/epistemologies that remain attentive to the more-than-human and the possibility that the wild other has intrinsic value and voice. Through these students I have seen how these roots take shoot such that axiologically, the child grows in care for the other, as opposed to growing away from it, where slugs are no longer noticed, let alone capable of communicating.

Each of these students occupied understandings of the natural world as 'communicator' (Blenkinsop & Piersol, 2013). Bambi, during the ages of five to seven, occupied an ontologically fluid orientation, a kind of preontology, a flexible position from whence all ontological possibilities might arise. It was clear that she was still learning what was seen culturally as capable of communication and what wasn't. She believed that animals could communicate on a rudimentary level through direct encounter and response but she would not yet say that plants or non-living entities were capable of communication. Ecoboy from the ages of nine to eleven, occupied the orientation of an "immersed practitioner" (Blenkinsop & Piersol, 2013, p.47). He was adept at reading signs in the natural world- he knew the shallows in the river where one was most likely find fish and from past experiences he made good guesses at the identification of tracks or the type of animal that might live in the hole that we had found. He said outright that he didn't think that trees could literally speak but that they could communicate though signs such as drooping leaves or gushing sap if they were sick. Raven, during the ages of eight to ten, occupied the orientation of "the literal being in place", believing that the natural world literally spoke to her in many different ways (Blenkinsop & Piersol, 2013, p.52). She clearly explained that she felt like she could directly communicate in different ways with the various constituents of the natural world. An important part of this process was "clearing her mind" and actively listening to what the other was offering.

It is important that educators aim to be aware of such varying orientations that students might occupy in relation to what the natural world 'can' and 'can't' communicate as it helps to situate each relationship within its own context and thus, helps the teacher to meet the student where they are at, finding ways for each individual to keep the voice, agency and intrinsic value of the more-than-human as a possibility. I will now offer some examples of how these different orientations affected each student's ability to listen and as a result, what they were able to 'hear' in terms of the wild other's needs and

perspectives. Different orientations will be described along with potential educational considerations for each and then broader educational paths forward will be discussed given this.

5.2.1.   The Adept Explorer: Reading the Signs

Ecoboy thought that the natural world could communicate through signs that were up to us as humans to interpret and while he was always scanning the forest for these signs. While observing the landscape he was constantly picking up clues as to the needs and indicators of well-being of the other. A sign confronts at every step: the pink blossoms emerging on the salmonberry bushes speak of spring and warmer weather, the waxy yellow beacons of skunk cabbage tell him there is water nearby, fresh coyote scat lets him know that it recently ate a tiny mouse. All of this helps him gain knowledge of the intricacies of place.

Figure 5.1.   Ecoboy's Photo of a Rabbit Hole

However there is still a sense of an observer, watching out for these clues and signs but not necessarily a part of them. Ocean, the teacher also spoke to this difference in himself when he said "I'm much more aware of my impact on my surroundings. I want to be a part that fits in as opposed to somebody just there observing it." So while Ecoboy was learning basic signs that might inform in terms of the other's needs, welfare and possible perspectives (such as what time of year squirrels may nest, what they like to eat best etc.), he didn't seem quite aware of his own

implicatedness in relation to these nor did he seem to have a full grasp on the potential agency of the other. He was unclear as to how his own subjectivity played into understanding the other's needs or his potential impact on the other's welfare. This was demonstrated early on through his desire to humanely trap squirrels. He told me he cared for them and really wanted to be close up to them to see what he could learn but he was not quite aware that the learning was under his own human terms, that a squirrel in a cage removed from its context will present a mainly human centered view on its possible needs and perspectives. Undoubtedly, he can learn and observe different things through the experience, for example, the extent of the fine whiskers around the nose, the way the tail bends over the body to protect it, the curved claws that might otherwise go unnoticed. However, the squirrel nested in relation reveals even more: how those sharp claws increase vertical agility on tree bark or how the tail swinging side to side helps it cross a branch. Such details that enrich empathic care might be sacrificed if we significantly impose our perceptions of what the wild other needs without first listening to it.

Figure 5.2.   Ecoboy's Squirrel Trap

There is the potential within this orientation for Ecoboy to shift back into the dominant norms of western culture which presuppose that the more-than-human world is ours to manipulate, of lesser worth and only capable of communicating through simple signs. Blenkinsop (2005) warns "If the child only discovers I/It without I/thou she/he receives a dangerously non-mutual notion of I, since tools, animals and even humans

become mere objects without dialogue and the whisper of possibility." (p.296). To prevent this from occurring educators working with students in this orientation should be mindful of the ways in which they may be presenting a resourcist approach in their practice such as the way in which Ocean realized his part in such a portrayal. Part of the shift is acknowledging as adult educators that "we are the environmental crisis" (Evernden, 1993, p.128), we have chosen the *I/It* stance to dominate our existence on earth and so we live in a world of 'objects' rather than speaking subjects. Evernden (1993) reminds us "whether we listen or not, the world continues to speak" (p.101). As a result, we should aim for our students to understand that their voice is only one voice within the rich and varied landscape of conversation taking place. For example, an expert birder I know says "the more I learn the less I can ignore… the calls, the songs, communication is happening all around me, I can no longer block it out… instead it draws me in."

In addition, the student in this orientation needs experiences that help them understand not just the signs and symbols but how we are interdependent on them, how they impact us, shape us and can inform us *and* conversely, the ways in which we are impacting their lives. Carefully framed listening exercises would be helpful with students in this orientation in order to honour the potential for the agency of the natural world, such that they begin to realize that the world is imbued with meaning already outside of the human attempt to ascribe it. At the school under study, such an exercise took place where the students were instructed to listen to the sounds in their own microsites for several weeks. Afterward, one student commented "I never thought of looking past the human teachers to learn. Now I realize that I'm learning from everything around me, the salmon, the river, I realized that they also have things to teach." This helps us shift into a receptive, listening space instead of one of projection.

5.2.2.   The Ontologically Fluid: Open and Immersed

As previously mentioned, Bambi's orientation to the world was detailed and immersed. She was not only learning how to read the signs in the natural world but she appeared to have a growing sense of relatedness to those symbols. She was learning to listen to and be aware of the effect she could have and likewise how the other might

affect her. Little details were picked up and these provided clues as to how to act or speak such that near the end of the research term she began to act with increased caution. For example, Bambi became insistent on picking slugs up off the trail so they didn't get hurt. As we made our way through the forest, she was acutely aware of her footprint regarding certain things. In contrast to the other students this means she moved through the place differently, slowly and watchful, but I also think that this meant that she had a different knowledge of it as varied and full of life. One day she yelled at a boy in front of her who was standing on a decaying log. "Get off of that!" she complained. "Why should I?" he demanded. I asked her why it was making her so upset. "It's alive." she told me. I argued back that it was an old tree that was now dead. The boy hopped off and she reached over and pointed at the green moss that was trampled under his feet. As she grows older, Bambi seemed to intuitively know that the natural world was a 'home' for other creatures and her possible impact on that home has changed the way she walks on it.

Bambi picked up the slug knowing that it would get hurt if someone stepped on it but she did not feel that hurt herself yet as Raven might. She was still learning about the potential of the other to communicate and the boundaries in this regard were fuzzy for her. Again, with this orientation the educator can play an important role. For example, Bambi has recently been 'taught' the notion of an 'other' that has the capacity to feel things that she cannot know. The adults around her have explained this to her repeatedly and in different ways. We now see her sorting out this realization by moving the slug on the trail. Previous to this she would've picked it up and "carried it for over an hour with slime oozing out of her little hands," as her mum describes. This means she's started to realize that there is an 'other' with needs, perspectives and factors for well-being that are very different than her own. She was acting in a sympathetic manner, expressing compassion and pity if something was hurt but was still not fully clear on the lines between self and other, she was commiserating but not yet able to understand the other on its own terms. This move to acknowledge the other in its own particularities and agency is essential for educators to address in order to help students start to move away from projection of needs/perspectives/welfare and thus, incomplete care. Educators should also be mindful of the limits they put on what is able to communicate at this early fluid orientation as this will impact what deserves to be listened to in the

student's opinion. It is clear with Bambi that she was starting to separate out communicators by whether they were living and thus able to 'speak' or non-living and therefore, inert. Finally, Bambi began to regularly practise 'felt attention', as will be described in chapter six, such that lines of 'self' and 'other' began to blur so that when a slug was stepped on or the moss was squished she began to wince herself, this felt connection really heightens our sense of relation, which is key for eco sensitivity.

5.2.3.   The Literal Listener: Direct Communication

For Raven, the whole world around her was communicating and worthy of listening to; she knew that others might perceive her as 'crazy' for this. One day, after she mentioned that she felt like she could 'talk' to plants I asked her to describe this in more detail.

> Laura: So do you *hear* the plant?
>
> Raven: Yeah, but you have to hear it through your heart.
>
> Laura: I was going to ask where you hear it… do you hear it in your heart?
>
> Raven: Little words curl into your mind. You have to know that you're not thinking.

Another day I asked her again what the process of listening to the natural world was like for her,

> Raven: This sounds funny, you're focused on something but you're not actually thinking about it. If you're thinking than you're not really listening. See I can't do it now when I'm talking.
>
> Laura: Do you feel like you have 'conversations' with the natural world?
>
> Raven: It's not exactly like that, it's not 'speaking' it's more like energy or signals. You don't hear it out loud. It's something that your mind and only your mind can understand because nature is that open to any language. So if you were just thinking, not even in your language, just showing pictures, it would still work.
>
> Laura: The conversation you mean?
>
> Raven: Yes, it doesn't have to be 'speaking'.

Laura: So you mentioned 'energies' and 'signals' what did you mean by that?

Raven: Well see you speak your way, they speak different ways, like thousands of different ways. Billions. It's like the birds with those signals, like when you see a bird flapping up in the sky and a flock of birds how they all move at the same time, it's because they tell each other like through mental speaking.

She appeared to be aware that the natural world was communicating in a different but a direct way, when the words "curl" into her heart and mind there wasn't a need for translation, she told me that she understood it immediately[42]. In fact, Raven pointed out that it could occur in the absence of human 'language' as we know it. For Raven, her boundaries of 'self' were intermingling with the more-than-human world (see chapter six) and subsequently, what was understood as 'speech' for her was different than the other two students (though Bambi appeared to be developing this) as there was not a separate sender or receiver. This means that she felt directly implicated in the welfare/perspective/needs of the other but, she was also clear that she could never understand these fully, as the wild other was indeed different from her. In this way, Raven had a felt awareness and understanding of the perspective of the other while still acknowledging her own, experiencing empathic connections with the more-than-human

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[42] Let me be clear here to avoid the potential for eco fascism, I argue that there are understandings of what the natural word is communicating that are closer to and farther away from the intended meaning just as there are regarding human communication. This type of knowledge and relation in the world comes from years of cultivating attunement and awareness around the needs of the more-than-human other. Thus, it is possible to discern whether someone is misinterpreting members within the natural world or not. While this can be difficult to assess, it is should not prevent us from attempting to correct students in this regard, again humility is a useful principle here. If a student says the 'tree told me to kick Johnny back for kicking it', the student is not taking responsibility for their own personal involvement in this choice, using the tree as an excuse to be violent. The teacher here can work to get the student to realize their embodied reaction (anger/sadness) when Johnny kicked the tree and emphasize that they had a choice in making the decision to kick the other student. The educator can provide other suggestions on how to express this anger and think of ways to point out that a misanthropic viewpoint can actually work against care for the tree, angering Johnny, potentially diminishing his ability to form healthy relationships with the natural world and creating a false divide between the environment and humans. As with human voice, we need to take responsibility for our involvement in interpretation of more-than-human communication and make a commitment to go back to the source, repeatedly if needed, for clarification.

world regularly.   If we take this possibility for literal communication seriously educationally, that would mean making an attempt as part of the day-to-day pedagogical practice to listen to the more-than-human as an active voice and co-teacher thereby moving from human teachers/researchers speaking *in* and *about* the more-than-human towards communicating *with* and listening *to* it.

5.2.4.   Educational Paths Forward

Here we have three students in various orientations to the world: Ecoboy observing and carefully watching the slug moving through the forest, Bambi picking up the slug to move it off the trail so as to protect it and Raven, moving herself off the trail away from the slug.   Raven demonstrating the blossomed form of eco care, the other students building roots and shoots to get there.   Ecoboy was aware of the potential for communication through basic signs.   Bambi was drawing on her previous experience to shape her ways of being such that they were more mindful of what the wild other might be offering her while still learning what can and cannot communicate.   Raven felt a direct literal communication happening that she realized her culture did not accept.   My goal here is to emphasize that for these children these orientations have not yet solidified.   At this point for these children there is still the possibility of being in the world in potentially an infinite number of ways and this is true for all early learners.   As educators, we need to carefully attend to children at this age such that the boundaries and understanding of communication are not limited to our species alone.   This means, within pedagogy and curriculum, we begin to work *with* the natural world as a co-teacher rather than solely asserting our meaning upon it.   In this way we can keep open the possibility for literal communication for students.   However, we currently mainly occupy the direct encounter and interpretation orientation regarding the more-than-human world within the conventional school system (Blenkinsop & Piersol, 2013).   It's hard to build the nuanced skills of reading signs and symbols or to begin to understand the natural world as literally and directly communicating if students don't have ample time and experience within the natural world.   And, it's very unlikely to feel an expanded sense of self with the rest of the natural world if we inculcate students into the dominant norms of modern western culture, which deem nature as something 'far and away' or as a resource for human use.

At the school that I researched however, shifts are occurring for some of the teachers in this regard. Ocean, one day, near the end of my second year of research, told the students that he woke up in the middle of the night thinking about whether rocks could have "life energy" and "voice" as an herbalist, who had been a guest speaker at the school the day before had suggested. This got Ocean thinking about how other things 'speak' not necessarily in the same way that we do but "nonetheless they are speaking". He told the children that this then made him think about how when we are talking at school, "we are actually talking over top of other conversations happening all around us". After sharing this, he pointed out a bird and encouraged the whole school to be quiet to listen to it. It called out some soft trills and he facilitated a brief discussion about what it could have possibly been saying. A week later, I asked Ocean about this chat he had with the students and if he could elaborate on this possibility that the members of the natural world can communicate. "It's not how I communicate with another human being but I see meaning in so many things." he commented. He continued,

> I don't think the rock has 'life' as [the guest speaker] suggested but I think there is meaning in where this rock came from, how old it is, what stories it has to tell; all these different things that I think we miss and don't pay attention to. Also, if teaching is a form of communication then yes, I`m constantly learning from everything around me...in that way I feel communicated to all the time by my surroundings.

I was intrigued by his comments around 'meaning' and he clarified that he felt like the natural world has meaning outside of us as humans that we can tap into. I asked him if he would have thought all of this two years ago before the school started "No way" he said laughing. He continued "since I was a teen I've been learning from my surroundings but I would not have seen that as communication until recently, there's been a big shift there." This seems to be related to the previous discussion around attention, as Ocean shifts from seeing the natural world as a 'playground' for human centered activities to instead positioning himself in the background as quiet listener, he's been able to start to see what it might be offering. I see this reflected in his pedagogy as he begins to incorporate more time into lessons for listening and learning from the natural world. Near the end of my research term he asked the students to quiet their

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bodies and also their minds before going into this listening space on walks and solo sits. In little ways he's starting to make room for voices of the more-than-human to be in the foreground of a lesson.

Understanding that the more-than-human is capable of communication on a literal level and is thus, capable of 'speaking', demands a radically different approach to education as we currently know it. I've offered some suggestions for each of these orientations as to how to keep the potential open for the student to consider the intrinsic value and agency of the wild other thus, preserving the potential for deeper forms of communication that are not limited to our species alone. Eco care is extremely diminished if we aren't able to see the more-than-human other as having voice as we end up ignoring the 'billions' of languages, as Raven suggests, that could be informing us as to how to properly attend to them. As we see with Ecoboy and Bambi there is a high potential for the care for the natural world to take the form of 'projection' or 'sympathy' alone in a culture that does not acknowledge the voice of the wild other. These forms of care do not actively intend to understand the other on its own terms and thus, the care is always incomplete. This means we need to re-position ourselves as listeners and learners within our teaching practices. Instead of solely asserting our meaning upon the natural world, we need to seek ways to work with and include the voice of the more-than-human as a co-teacher. This in turn helps us to more accurately attend to the other on its own terms as we learn to listen to its particular needs and perspective. The next chapter will explore how such perspective-taking grows out of the roots of attending, listening to voice and valuing, allowing eco care to blossom.

Chapter 6.
Perspective-Taking as Felt 'Answerability'

~One who attempts to ignore or climb above human affect at the heart of
ethicality may well be guilty of romantic rationalism~
(Noddings, 2013, p. 3)

6.1. Introduction

Intrinsic valuing, voice and attention are roots out of which the shoots of eco
sensitivity grow. As Batson et al. (2007) point out, perspective-taking is one of the main
antecedents for empathy and it was also a sub-theme that arose for the students that I
researched. From my research, within this chapter I will describe how each child helped
me to understand perspective-taking as an act of three-fold attention with an eye to the
self, the other and the relation. Such a split in attention can help one avoid a key danger
in the attempt to care: the assimilation of differences through projection. As well, this tri-
fold attention helps one avoid another potential hazard - the act of complete 'othering'
whereby solely focusing on difference we ignore the chance for relation and end up
distancing ourselves from care. Instead, a main focus of perspective-taking in this
chapter is on how the human self acts in relation with the more-than-human other.

Perspective-taking is not a guarantee for empathic concern, however it has been
shown to be a powerful trigger for it (Coke, Batson, & McDavis, 1978; Batson 1987,
1991; Batson et al. 2002). Of particular interest, are psychological studies which have
shown that induced perspective-taking has been effective in improving attitudes towards
the marginalized or oppressed, for example, homeless individuals and racial or ethnic
minorities (Batson et al., 1997; Finlay & Stephan, 2000; Stephan & Finlay, 1999). This
demonstrates that there is precedent for using perspective-taking as a tool to help us
move away from damaging, instrumental preconceptions which is essential in order for

eco care to blossom. Perspective-taking also has the potential to help us resituate ourselves as humans into more of a listening role, aware that we are surrounded by unique furred, flying and slithering outlooks on life. This opens up opportunities to learn from long forgotten and ignored ways of knowing and being in the world.

This chapter will begin by outlining key factors that helped the students to reach moments of three-fold attention. I will first describe how such perspective-taking grows out of the roots of intrinsic valuing, listening to voice and attending. This involves 1) Valuing- recognizing that the other's existence matters in and of itself and therefore, helps us to realize that a perspective exists in the first place 2) 'Listening to Voice'- drawing our awareness to the other perspectives around us 3) Attending- helping us to recognize the perspective of the self, the other and how they interact. Regarding this last root of 'attending', I will describe how humble and embodied attention led to a sense of the self as informed by wild other, which in turn has the potential to narrow moral distance. Merleau-Ponty's (1964) notion of reversibility will also be used to illuminate the children's experiences and the importance of a shift from an instrumental gaze to a relational understanding. I will conclude by emphasizing how these factors collectively work to reposition the more-than-human as an active agent and thus, situate us as humans as ethically answerable to the multitude of perspectives that western culture has for so long ignored.

6.2. Perspective-taking: A Definition

To begin with, perspective-taking as it pertains to the notion of eco sensitivity must be distinguished from 'identification' (as previously defined) as there is no abdication of the self involved in the process. As Coeckelbergh, 2007 puts it, "it is still me who imagines and I am aware of myself as imagining, so there is no identity shift" (p.66). The goal is to attend to what the other's needs and perspectives might be while also still holding one's own, while 'identification' as previously defined may involve a loss of self.   This is also different from 'projection' as previously defined, as within

perspective-taking "I try to look at the world from your perspective[43], not from my perspective while using your body" (Coeckelbergh, 2007). Gruen (2009) emphasizes that projection can be a serious problem particularly with non-verbal others,

> …even when individuals are genuinely attempting to take the perspective of another, when they are mindful of the dangers of substituting their own frame of reference, their own interests, desires, or beliefs about the good for those with whom they are empathizing, there is always the possibility that they have not adequately distinguished self and other. I do think this concern can be overcome, or at least mitigated. (p.32)

Conversely, there is also the danger of assuming full alterity in perspective-taking where complete 'othering' occurs. This creates a type of distancing because there is little attempt to understand the other. This is often the case with the more-than-human world as one often assumes there is no way we could understand the perspective of a cedar tree or a spotted towhee, let alone if they have a perspective in the first place. In this way the responsibility of morally considering the other is pushed aside as 'impossible'.

Nussbaum (2001) therefore offers an alternative of perspective-taking as an "imaginative reconstruction" of the other's experience (p.327). Noddings (2013) describes this process

> We have to "look lovingly" as Murdoch put it, listen receptively, exercise some moral perception, and go over what we hear and see in a sort of re-enactment to get a clear picture of what the other is going through-to obtain empathic accuracy. (p.205)

This entails a "two-fold attention", imagining the experience of the other while remaining aware of the difference between ourselves and them (Nussbaum, 2001, p.328). Goldie (2005) uses the term 'dramatic irony' to refer to this split between the two perspectives. In drama, the audience knows things the character in the drama does not always know. Similarly, in the real world both the person attempting to offer care and the other receiving it will know things that the other does not. Given this, in my definition of

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[43] In this sense, looking at the world from another's perspective still involves acknowledging your own.

perspective-taking, the one offering care should strive to reach a place of three-fold attention: (attending to the other) - imagining how the other is affected by his/her own situation -all the while involving one's own personal perspectives (attending to the self)- in order to do their best to attend to how they may be influencing the other's welfare, perspective and needs (attending to the relation). Nussbam's (2001) two-fold attention which emphasizes distinctions between the self and the other is useful in assisting us in preventing the assimilation of differences possible through projection. However, I also want to draw attention to the relation; being open to realizing how the self might be affecting the other and vice versa, in efforts to thwart simply 'othering' and avoiding the responsibility to care. With this in mind, I will describe how such perspective-taking is informed by the various roots of eco care- valuing, listening to voice and attending. Below I will address five factors for the students which worked together to create this type of three-fold attention.

6.3. Factors Contributing to Three-Fold Attention

6.3.1. Intrinsic Value and Recognizing Perspective

As mentioned, Batson et al. (2007) suggest that caring for the welfare of the individual can result in 'automatic' perspective-taking because when you care, the other's well-being has become part of your own concern and you are primed to imagine how the other thinks or feels about experiences in their lives and are on the lookout for things that could affect the other. Bambi exemplified this automatic perspective-taking, stemming out of pre-existing care for members of the natural world, over and over. For example, early on in the research an older classmate Jane was telling a story about wasps and when she mentioned that she was stung, the rest of the conversation turned to the students discussing how 'mean' wasps were. Bambi interrupted and said "But when do they sting you? It's when they are hurt or afraid right?" in her own way considering the perspective of the wasp. In another example, while observing fish in the river, she commented "they probably get scared when they hear us", this type of consideration for the perspective of the wild creatures around her happened for her on a daily basis. A teacher commented "She loves huge and her mind seems to always be

on the creatures in the natural world around her, such that she helps us remember to consider the slug or the snail too". As pre-existing concern for the welfare of the other is indeed shown to elicit automatic perspective-taking, educators should be aware of the importance of keeping open the possibility for the natural world as having intrinsic value. For example, in the example of wasps above, the educator might respond to the story by sharing facts about the wasp's defensive strategies, visits to wasp homes in the area, role playing activities where the student imagine life from its perspective and relating this back to how the students might move through the woods in a respectful manner, in this way showing that they value the wasp. This in turn, aids the student in seriously considering the perspective of the wild other as a part of their ethical compass as it is still within their field of care.

If the educator or student has discounted the possibility for intrinsic value amongst some or many of the members of the natural world then the ability to perspective-take will be subsequently diminished as the idea of the wasp, rock or the tree being capable of having a perspective may already sound ludicrous to begin with[44]. In this case, the educator must first try to trouble these prejudices, through activities to regain awareness of the agency and value of the more-than-human (see possibilities below and within other theme sections). In the case of the wasp this could mean sharing with the students that frantic movements on our behalf will likely disturb it and cause it to be frenzied itself. Thus, helping students to take deep breaths and stay still when the wasp is around can all help to mitigate our understanding of it as an angry, aggressive creature to be feared. In this way, valuing is intertwined with our ability to consider the other's perspective and as educators we can play with this notion of valuing to counter societal norms which work to demonize, ignore or silence the more-than-human other.

[44] I acknowledge here that it's possible to consider something as having intrinsic value and yet not being aware of it having a 'perspective' and it's also possible to consider something as having a perspective but not intrinsic value. My point is that there seems to be a correlation between having the sense of the other as having value in and of itself and the ability to listen to the perspective of that other as something unique and important on its own terms. Thus, I see valuing as a roothold for being able to perspective-take. Considering the perspective of the other while at the same time denying it basic worth on its own terms is a dangerous pursuit as projection or full 'othering' can occur as described.

6.3.2.   Voice in Perspective-Taking: Learning to Listen

Perspective-taking is also rooted within learning to see the natural world as a communicator as previously discussed in chapter five; if the more-than-human is seen as capable of only offering basic signs, then the perspectives of these wild others may also been construed as 'lesser' than human. Remembering the ethical starting points is helpful in this process and thus asking, does this perspective that I am imagining honour the wild other's agency, particular context and intrinsic worth as well as my humility when it comes to forming it? This may help us reflect on our own part in shaping the perspective all the while endeavoring to hear the other's voice. If the answer is 'no', I argue that attending to each of the larger themes (Valuing, Awareness, Listening to Voice, Perspective Taking and Particular Context) is a useful place to start.

6.3.3.   Humility in Attending and Inquiry

Interestingly, Bambi who was normally quite assertive and definite was often tentative when perspective-taking, using words like "probably", "maybe" or asking frequent questions, in this regard there seemed to be an awareness that her guesses were approximations because she didn't quite know the other's perspective entirely. Such caution is essential when attempting to perspective take as it can help temper the instinct to essentialize or project. Bambi still 'projected' frequently in the effort to take the other's perspective (see chapter seven) as she learned along the way. Thus, as we encourage students to engage in perspective taking, humility is necessary; this helps us move into a space of listening to the other rather than imposing upon it. Even if we think we have a good understanding of the other, we need to acknowledge that we can never truly know all it is thinking and feeling. Raven articulated this humility often when I would ask her what she thought the fish would think or the tree would say, she'd always preface her response with saying "Well I don't really know entirely" or "I can't quite say" and then she'd add "because I'm not a tree" or "I'm not a salmon". As mentioned in the introduction, we cannot escape our human perspective or experience yet this does not mean that we should abandon the endeavor to consider the perspective of the dragonfly or the whale. We can never really know the human other's perspective either and yet this does not stop us from trying as we know that it can assist us in making ethical,

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caring decisions, the same is true for the more-than-human.   This is in line with Noddings (2013) view:

> When my caring is directed to living things, I must consider their natures, ways of life, needs and desires. And, although I can never accomplish it entirely, I try to apprehend the reality of the other. (p. 14)

With this in mind, although Bambi was often 'automatic' perspective-taking for creatures in the natural world, she was also still clearly learning how the other's perspective might actually differ from her own. Thus, although automatic perspective-taking is useful it is not always correct and educators should help the student attend to ways in which they might increase their accuracy, otherwise efforts to care for the other will be misguided, inappropriate and inadequate. A possible way into this as an educator is learning to be humble and cautionary around claims made regarding the other, as well as, openness to the fact that the other will always present something new to learn from. To demonstrate this, here is an example of Bambi's perspective taking at the age of five when I first started research with her,

> Bambi: If I were a fish I would get those things for Alan [a teacher]. I
>   would find lots of hooks in the water.
>
> Laura: But wait, would you want to get hooked?
>
> Bambi: Oh, right I wouldn't want to get hooked.
>
> Laura: If you were a fish where would you live?
>
> Bambi: I'd live on the side where all the hooks are.
>
> Laura: Why? Isn't that's scary, you could get hurt, wouldn't you?
>
> Bambi: Right and they wouldn't know what to do if there was a hook
>   on them?
>
> Laura: Ya.
>
> Bambi: Then I'd live here where it's dark and no humans can find me.

Here we can see she is projecting her own perspective onto the fish, not because she is egocentric and cannot think beyond herself as traditional moral development theory postulates, rather she is still learning what a fish is, what it might need or want. She doesn't yet understand that a hook would hurt the fish and that the fish would not necessarily be able to unhook themselves. As an educator I step in here as a mediator, guiding her when she is clearly headed towards projection, encouraging her to consider

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the fish as an 'other' with different needs and perspectives. We can see her openness to learning new things about the fish's perspective as she takes in the new information piece by piece trying to understand and then changing her stance based on what she learns. A year later here is an example of her perspective taking when she is six, we were watching a gull by the river,

> Bambi: Ohhh, he's going to eat something, he's going to eat something!
>
> Laura: You think so?
>
> Bambi: I think. Look at him!
>
> Laura: He seems to be finding a good spot...
>
> Bambi: He got something. He *is* eating!
>
> Laura: What do you think it's eating?
>
> Bambi: Silence.
>
> Laura: Fish?
>
> Bambi: I think little teensy weensy eggs.
>
> Laura: Things that are smaller than salmon?
>
> Bambi: I think it's eating salmon eggs because that's easier to swallow. He's still a young guy [the gull].
>
> Laura: You think the salmon might be too big for him to eat eh?
>
> Bambi: Ya, but they can cut them too I guess, with their beak.
>
> Laura: Yes, have you seen them do that before?
>
> Bambi: Yes, I think it would be hard without hands! How do they do that?

Here, we can see her applying some of her previous knowledge to further her perspective taking here. She watched the gull find a spot near the water and saw it watch the river and then bob its head under the surface; she's seen this behaviour before, knowing now to associate it with eating (I ask her this afterward to confirm). Then she thinks of how big the gull is and from this what it would be capable of swallowing. She doesn't exclude the fact that she might be wrong because she's applying other experiences of having seen gulls use their beaks to cut. This is a more nuanced example than the projection she was doing a year before.   While the perspective of the gull is not discussed outright, she attempts to see the world through its eyes (what it would possibly like to eat and why) while not forgetting her own experience (what she has previously seen it eat and how). Through her openness to

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learning new things about the other's perspective she's able to keenly attend and inquire, taking in all the little details which develops her ability to understand what the other's perspective might be.

Leesa Fawcett (2000) calls this the "loving eye" which does not view an object to consume, possess, or fear but rather views the complexity of the other as something that "will forever present new things to be known" (p.139). As mentioned before perspective-taking with this idea in mind should seek as Goethe did, the "intensive depth of the phenomenon", gaining perspective from multiple angles, return visits and multiple perceptions all helps to add depth to the perspective (as cited in Sewall, 1999, p.146). Noddings (2013) points out "in everyday life, the arousal of empathy usually requires the exercise of attention" which takes time and practice to develop (p.205). Here she draws on the work of Simone Weil to emphasize the ongoing work of becoming attuned to another's perspective

> The capacity for attention grows along with the ethical ideal. As we are cared-for and learn to care for others, we become more and more capable of asking the question, What are you going through?, and through the answers to that question, of constructing an accurate picture of what the other feels. Skills in doing this requires practice, and all children- girls *and* boys-should have continuously supervised practice in the exercise of attention to other human beings and the evaluations of its results. Later in life, they will of necessity draw on the ethical ideal established through this practice. Through the process of building and drawing upon our ethical ideal, we become stronger in our capacity to care and to enter each new encounter prepared to care. (p. 205)

As educators we can encourage this by presenting the more-than-human world as a wonder filled place and guide students toward resources (including more time to learn from the natural world itself, guide books, local human experts etc.) that will help them increase their ability to move away from projection and towards a more accurate approximation of what the other's perspective might be. All the while, we must be mindful to foster that sense of the other as forever unfolding that keeps our humility intact.

6.3.4.   Felt Attention

Often perspective-taking is seen as a cognitive process of 'imagining', Ecoboy for example, often thought from the perspective of the fish in the river so he would know where the best potential sites to catch them were. As de Waal, pointed out in chapter two perspective-taking doesn't always precipitate care, as it can be used for harmful purposes. I argue that for Ecoboy in this instance, although cognitive perspective-taking is happening, the desires of the self are overriding the ability to listen or truly consider the other. This is why an embodied attention or the practice of 'feeling with' the other is also necessary within perspective-taking[45] in order for eco care to occur. An example of this type of felt attention is illustrated through Raven's experience of drawing. She described:

> When I am drawing the river it makes me feel watery and thirsty. If there is something missing on the drawing, I get a little feeling [tilts her head] like I've got to do that [add something]. I feel it in my body if something is missing and then I add it. When I draw a tree I feel squiggly. I feel like a tree, like if I need more branches I don't feel so good and then I just put some branches on.

She is explaining here how drawing allows her to feel in part what it would be like to be a tree or a river. On another occasion, while she was drawing her tree she remarked,

Raven: It would be kind of hard to be a tree.

Laura: How come?

Raven: I don't know…because you'd have a lot of fear in you.

Laura: Why?

Raven: Because of all the logging around here.

Laura: Ya.

Raven: To 'see', in a way, all your friends and family die, it would be
      so hard to live like that.

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[45] This is connected to valuing and attending as well. For example, if one 'feels with' the other but still considers them of 'lesser' worth than care is shut off. As well, if one 'feels with' the other, considers them to have intrinsic value but cannot properly attend to their needs, then care is incomplete as well.

Laura: It would eh…

Raven: And to see all of that and be stuck in the ground where you are, so you can't run away from it, do you know what I mean? So you are forced to experience it.

This shows Raven's ability not just to cognitively understand the tree's potential perspective but also consider it emotionally. Her concern paints a horrifying picture to consider which is consistent with her belief that trees have intrinsic value (as previously described). It also shows her ability to fit the context into the perspective she is trying to understand, an essential element to consider (see Chapter Eight). This fits well under the definition of empathy I've set up here, she is not just thinking with the tree but feeling with it as well. Obviously, there is the danger of anthropomorphism here, just as discussed with Bambi, the educator should work as a mediator here encouraging the student to consider that the other is ultimately unknowable, thus claims about their perspective should be made with caution. At the same time the educator can also point towards particular characteristics that help the child to understand that the other's experience/perspective will undoubtedly be much different than ours. This caution around anthropomorphism should not prevent the educator or student from endeavouring to understand the other however, as this would act as an abdication from the potential to care.

Ecoboy also demonstrated this type of felt attention one day down by the river. He watched as a man nearby roughly pulled the fish from his hook and then kicked it along the shore until it was back in the water. Upset by this he told his teachers who had not noticed or were turning a blind eye, that he thought the man was treating the fish unfairly. When I asked him about this he explained,

I just felt what the fish might feel. It's not nice to the fish because it's not fair, most fish with catch and release live a long life unless people do that. The man was kicking it and there was blood on the ground, they were almost like dying. There is a 'Handle with Care' sign by the river now…I like that.

Ecoboy explains it well here, he 'felt what the fish might feel' and doing so, he was motivated to speak out against this violent act.

Bambi was also very sensorially engaged with her environment. One day when we were walking in the mud and she yelled "Hooray for mud! Hooray for mud!" and put some of it on her face, she encouraged her friends to try "Look! Feel it!" The school staff described

> She'll experiment too, she's curious, if there's mud, she'll put the mud on her face, on her arms, I think it's like all her senses become involved. Not just seeing, smelling, touching, hearing, she'd play with taste if it was available to her. I think that's who she is, even if she wasn't at this school she'd be in the backyard wanting to know.

I like their use of words here, as she appears to be experimenting with trying on what it is like to be mud or rain as much as she was playing bird or bunnies. I was walking along the trail with her one day and I turned back to see her faced upturned to the rain; she had a big grin and told me "I like feeling how it moves on my face". This bodily engagement with the earth was so fluid with Bambi that it was not a stretch in my early research to say that she felt the earth as she did her skin, what Merleau-Ponty (1964) refers to as a "universal flesh" (p.181) and what Kleinberg-Levin (1999) terms "ontologically significant prepersonal interconnectedness" (p.225).

Figure 6.1.   Bambi Taking Mud's Perspective

In these examples, we can see how our eyes, ears, noses, tongues, and hands are 'windows' which allow the world to come into being for us. Interaction is possible only through our bodies "and the precise conditions of our embodiment have everything to do with the nature of those interactions" (Rolston III, 2005). In this regard, Sewall (1999) mentions "cultivating our perceptual capacity is fundamentally related to both the quality of our personal lives and restoring the quality of life on the planet." (p.14). By connecting to sensory experience, we gain (or regain) awareness of our embodied relatedness with the world. The more-than-human aspects of place invite us to enlarge our conceptions of self if we open up all of our senses to listening as noted by theorists such as Abram (1996) and Merleau-Ponty (1964). While many will argue that it is impossible to 'feel with' or attribute emotion to a rock or a tree, as Abram (1997) mentions "we must begin to speak of sensuous surroundings in the way our breathing bodies really experience them as active, animate and alive."[46]. Somatic involvement with these relations really helps the child to feel how their breath and their bodies are in relation with the earth all the time.

> There's really no realm of our experience, no layer of reflection so rarefied that it definitively breaks free of the Earth's influence. No artifact that has not also been authored, or at least enabled, by the curious mix of minerals, winds, and waters that comprise this wild planet, no "virtual" reality so virtual that it is not tacitly informed by the tastes and textures of *this* reality. (Abram & Jardine, 2000, p.169-170)

Thich Nhat Hanh (1991) describes this as "interbeing: 'To be" is to inter-be. We cannot just *be* by ourselves alone." (p.95). Through awareness of such "inter-being" one is deeply interconnected with the other and responds not out of necessity or deemed responsibility but out of compassion as one is aware that its very existence is intertwined[47] with the well-being of the other (Hanh, 1991). 'Do you think you can separate sunshine from the green colour of the leaves?' he asks in example (1988, p.10-11). Deep, active, felt attention in this sense leads to an awareness of our human

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[46] Electronic source, no page number.

[47] It's important here to emphasize that the type of 'inter-being' which I am emphasizing is an important part of eco sensitivity is not the same as a deep ecology sense of wholeness or oneness. Instead of the self and other being conflated, I emphasize the interplay of how the two are informing one another here.

bodies as semi-permeable. Lawrence Buell describes this as "the more radical relinquishment" where we are able to "forgo the illusion of mental and even bodily apartness from one's environment." (as cited in Gessner, 2005, p.126). Through this type of somatic immersion and participation in place, we come to listen not just to the voice of the more-than-human but to how we are a part of the place and it is a part of us.

This awareness of inter-being was well articulated by a friend of Raven's who, when she heard moss being ripped off a tree, said to her it was like the sound of bones crunching. When assisting our students to 'feel with' the other in this regard we must be cautious as the more-than-human is oppressed, marginalized and colonized on a massive scale so its members will undoubtedly be suffering, compromised and in pain to varying degrees. As Raven so clearly described, 'feeling with' others in this type of situation can quite easily evoke sadness, grief and concern. With this sense of felt connection there comes a visceral reaction if the more-than-human is harmed as the students I worked with experienced (see chapter eight). I am reminded of a recent experience of my own. In this moment, I'm in a large lecture listening to a distinguished guest speaker as she talks about compassion. She speaks about listening and truly being attentive to the 'other'. Above her head a moth is repeatedly bashing itself against the overhead lights. I am sitting near the front row so I can hear the buzzing wings punctuating the spaces between her words. I wince as the speaker talks about trying to see things from the other's perspective. "Sizz". "Sizz", a furred body meeting a hot bulb. Just as I think about switching the lights off, sending a confused audience into darkness, the moth plummets and lies convulsing on the floor. The speaker then asks us to put ourselves in the place of another. While the speaker continues unaware, I'm unable to shake the hurt I feel when considering the plight of the moth, it weighs on my heart.

Thus, as students work on activities such as drawing, journaling, role playing, sensory exploration that can promote felt attention to the more-than-human, educators should also create a safe environment for discussing and processing feelings that arise as a result. Ideally, this would be paired with possible ways that the students could affect meaningful change to mitigate such suffering on behalf of the more-than-human. For example, one educator at the school under study commiserated with the student when they spoke about the moss and collectively they approached the teaching staff to

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have a discussion about the impact the students were having in the forest and what could be done differently.

The act of attention that focuses not only on what the other might be experiencing on a cognitive level but also on what it could be 'feeling', can result in a deep sensitivity regarding things that may be getting in the way of the other's well-being. This type of felt attention is such that one's own value structure intermingles with the other; the lines of self blur in a sense but are not lost entirely. When the fish or the tree was hurt Ecoboy and Raven also felt that hurt themselves, they knew they experienced it differently than the wild other but they felt along with it. These experiences also fit in with research on 'perceived need' as an antecedent to empathy, Batson et al. (2002) confirm that if another is perceived to be oppressed or in need empathic feelings that include sympathy, compassion and tenderness arise. Perceiving need in another is a complex process that involves assessing the other's emotional and cognitive state as well as the context of the situation (as we will see in chapter seven); my intention here is to show how felt attention can help us remain sensitive to what the emotional state of the other might be and thus, help us gain a deeper sense of perspective and perceived need.

Raven stated that drawing has helped her gain this embodied sense of her tree and Ecoboy attributed his ability to feel with the fish to hours spent in the river feeling the water himself. Again, felt attention is a skill that requires time and experience to develop accuracy. I saw this regularly with Bambi who projected her experiences of human forms of care onto the creatures in the world around her. Initially although she thought she was 'feeling with' the banana slug or the worm in assuming it would want a 'hug' yet she was still learning how its feelings may differ from hers and thus, what care should look like for it.

Role playing was also key in developing felt attention for Bambi. Her teachers described her as always engaging in imaginative play, one of them commented,

> She'll be a crow or a puppy, you'll see her on a stump pretending to be a dog and she'll be barking like a dog. I think it's normal for her age, but it is interesting that she never pretends to be a princess or a fairy it's always an animal even if the other kids don't want to do that she'll

continue on, she likes that, even if the other kids are doing something else, she gets into that mindset of I'm a puppy for long periods of time. She'll do the sounds of the animals.

The other staff and her mother agreed, "it all has to do with the natural world, all the time! Her art and drawings are the same topic, I've never seen her actually draw about something else!" one of them stated. As described, she often got so engrossed in the role of the animal that she wanted to continue it for hours; her mother described "so last night she decided to take markers and draw all over herself, her face, neck and arms were covered. She wouldn't wash it off and this morning she added more to her masterpiece. She said she was going to school as a rabbit." Like Raven, this type of role play allowed her to imagine what it could feel like to be a dog, a rabbit or a bird as described below here. In this scene she has a toy bird in her hand and we are at a large upturned tree stump with lots of roots exposed,

> Bambi: Let's play, want to come Laura? I've got a birdie too and he flew right here and then he got stuck for a second and …he got worried that he would fall……
>
> Laura: But he can also fly?
>
> Bambi: She [her change in pronoun] can't use her wings if she falls down because she's tired.
>
> Laura: Hmm so what's she going to do?
>
> Bambi: This is her nest and she wants to know where she is. Maybe these leaves could be better because these ones are too prickly.
>
> Laura: The cedar ones are prickly?
>
> Bambi-Yes, the cedar ones. Tada! [She stands up]
>
> Laura: What happened to the bird?
>
> Bambi: She flew back up to her nest [newly created]. But pretend Tweety couldn't fly that far because it's too high and she couldn't fly that far because she's tired.
>
> Laura: So what's she going to do?
>
> Bambi: She could fall to the next branch. [She swoops down to the next branch with the bird, she starts to create a new nest.]

Here we see her trying to imagine life from the bird's perspective and even how it might feel ("worried" or "tired") on its flight. She expresses this shift in perspective as

she tries to find leaves for the bird's nest which will not be too 'prickly' and uncomfortable for the bird.

Again, there is the potential for play to replicate and reproduce the norms of dominant culture but as Edmiston (2008) points out, by joining in the play educators can help children try out different scenarios in a safe setting, "playing with different possible selves and exploring possible ethical identities" (p.12). Edmiston (2008) encourages adults to participate in play with children as a way to help guide them in exploring ontological and epistemological possibilities,

> When adults play with children they can likewise enter those worlds not to observe but to participate with children, not only to listen but to interact ad shape meaning, and not only to enter imagined space-times but to explore possible ways of acting and identifying with other people in the world. (p.12)

I would also add that it helps children to explore ways of knowing and being with the more-than-human as well. For instance, repeatedly Bambi's imaginary play with animals involved situations where animals were trapped or kept in a pound or sold. By engaging with her in this play, together we explored some ethical dilemmas and cultural norms,

> Bambi: The pound puppy [commercial toy she is basing this on] had little ears that looked like pony tails and she is a grey puppy and she lives with you with your pet rat.
>
> Laura: The rat is not my pet, it lives in the backyard and does its own thing and takes care of itself. It also looks much different than that [I point to the toy]. It has small bright eyes and thick waxy fur.
>
> Bambi: Yes and there is a rabbit called 'Fluffy' that also has small eyes and is very quiet and she can live in the backyard too and 'Julie' she's a cat that lives with you. They all have diamond collars that glow in the dark and some of them are pink, green and yellow.
>
> Laura: Would the rat and rabbit have collars if they are wild?
>
> Bambi: Just the kitty and puppy have shiny collars. All the animals got stuck in a tree and there was a trap. There was an old old guy who was trapping the animals, it was your father. Your father doesn't like the animals so he kept them in a cage. So you let one of them out, Charlie the cat. I passed

> her down to you. Here. [She passes me an invisible cat and I pet it].

Laura: What will my dad say?

Bambi: He will try to trap them again but you have to tell him it's wrong. Go tell him.

Laura: What should I say to him?

Bambi: Tell him the animals should be free and that it's mean. Tell him, hurry!

Laura [I come back after pretending to speak to my father]: I told him.

Bambi: Yes, he opened the trap but we have to be quick because he might shut it again. I'm passing the animals down to you now, here is the rat…

Markus & Nurius (1986) emphasize that pretend play allows people to explore possible ways of knowing and being as they imagine "what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming." (p.157).   In this case, Bambi explored the role of animal advocate which fit well with her desire to become an "earth ranger" when she grows up. Edmiston (2008) states that "When children play they have very high agency because they continually improvise in their interactions" (p.21). In this way, play has the potential to be empowering as children such as Bambi explore ways that they might actually make meaningful change. Such opportunities are important in a society which typically denigrates or trivializes children's capacity to make moral decisions and in which standing up for the natural world is also dismissed as 'radical' or 'flaky'.   Thus, chances for pretend victories could help strengthen skills in communication, negotiation and perspective taking when real world scenarios arise.

I intentionally pushed back on Bambi regarding her depiction of the culturally cute 'pound puppy' with its big eyes and human physical traits like the pony tail ears. I find it intriguing that she adds a rat to the story so I emphasize some characteristics that aren't conventionally 'cute' and emphasize that the rat 'does its own thing' beyond my control to get away from our cultural role as 'controller'. Finally I suggest that the wild animals should not have collars. This is similar to Edmiston's (2008) approach with his son,

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As I played with Michael, in imagination we entered into the worlds of narratives that Michael had read or viewed. In doing so we embodied and used the language of multiple ideological positions and discourse that could then be tested as we interacted and ethically evaluated characters' actions as right and wrong. (p.18)

Bambi goes with these suggestions that I make, I'm not trying to take away from the fun, just trying to complexify it, adding alternative possibilities for how we attempt to understand these animals. I strongly agree with Edmiston (2008) when he argues that "play as ethical pedagogy must be grounded in active caring relationships among adults and children." (p.185). I had built up a relationship of trust with Bambi such that her mother and the school staff told me she felt emotionally and physically safe around me; this is essential in using play as pedagogy as Bambi must feel free to express herself. Although the child/adult relationship will have unequal distribution of power at times as the adult may intervene if they feel something is unsafe or harmful, educators should aim to share power as much as possible in order to support children's ethical explorations through play. In this way, the child and adult can collectively negotiate ethical dilemmas in play and collaboratively reach decisions on possible actions (Edmiston, 2008). In this scenario, together, Bambi and I navigate our way out of an oppressive situation where the animals are being trapped to finding ways to be their allies. Imaginative play in this regard has the potential to help us consider scenarios and possibilities where the perspectives of the more-than-human are at the foreground of concern despite its marginalization in western culture. It is also helps Bambi try out the different epistemological/ontological possibilities amongst humans themselves; what could it feel like to want to trap animals or to have animals that you love in a cage? As educators we can help students orient themselves to ways that are more ecologically sensitive as they experiment with these possible roles in the world, following the lead of the child and troubling dominant assumptions, thoughtfully and carefully as they arise.

Thus, the emotive aspect of perspective-taking, of not just imagining cognitively but also learning to 'feel with' the other is essential in the move toward eco care as it helps us to remain sensitive to the possible emotional state of the wild others which will in turn assist us in providing meaningful care. It also helps us acknowledge how the more-than-human world constantly enters and informs us through our senses and thus, how its health and well-being is so intimately intertwined with ours. In our work as

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outdoor educators and curriculum designers we need to keep this in mind as we try to embrace a whole body, active listening. We can learn from water striders in this regard; one day I watched some in the still pool along the shore of the river. I saw one balance on the fine tips of its feet as it cleaned its abdomen with its back leg. Then, I craned to listen, the sound much too quiet for me to hear. How wondrous then that each step it took rocked the whole surface of the pond, its silent footsteps so loud. The rain drops started hitting the water and I watched the water strider's whole body rock back and forth. Such a delicate and responsive existence. As educators, we can aim to remain aware of how the falling rain ripples and rocks our bodies, treating emotional sensitivity to these wild others as a strength to be developed. As Plant (1989) points out

> Our pain for the death of the forest is simply, and most fundamentally, compassion for the senseless destruction of life. This compassion that we feel is the essence of a new paradigm which ecofeminism describes in detail. Feeling the life of the 'other'- literally experiencing its existence-is becoming the new starting point for human decision-making. (p.1)

Such felt connection narrows our moral distance regarding the more-than-human and thus, can help bring it back into the foreground of our moral concern. Felt attention practised through activities such as role play, drawing and sensory exploration can help students learn to value the perspective of the wild other as an active, enmeshed subject within our lives.

6.3.5. Reversibility and being Answerable

It is important to emphasize that the child's desire to know and feel can supersede the more-than-human other's needs. Regarding Bambi, a staff member commented "she just can't help herself, she wanted to hold it and feel it; she wanted to collect it" another one mentioned "even the plant, ripping off leaves, it's more about her need. She has such a strong curiosity but that curiosity has been trumping careful handling." Bambi during the early part of my research was still very much craving sensory engagement with the world not understanding her potential impact on the other. Over time, a factor that has led to her more careful approach to the wild others around her seems to be Merleau Ponty's notion of reversibility, "The chiasm, reversibility, is the idea that every perception is doubled with a counter-perception… one no longer knows

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who speaks and who listens" (1964, p. 318). Kleinberg-Levin (1999) elaborates on the concept,

> …this is a "mirroring" which actually, in effect, double-crosses the reflective "narcissism" that Merleau-Ponty discerns. This is not the narcissism of Descartes, Freud or Lacan: not at all the self-absorption or self-aggrandizement of a monadic ego, but rather the beginning, in fact, of a deconstruction of ego-logical subjectivity. For while it is true that the others whom I see reflect my bodily presence back to me through their eyes, so that, when I look at them, I am able to see myself, this passage of reflection through the gaze of others also obliges me to see myself in dispossession, in a condition of decenteredness: I recognize myself as another for an other, and I am obliged to acknowledge that there are other perspectives. (p.228)

We see Bambi regularly being caught in this reversal of 'gaze' in the few following examples,

> Bambi [holding a worm]: Laura! Watch it! It's looking at me I think.
>
> Laura: Is it checking you out?
>
> Bambi: Ooohoowoo! He's touching me! I can feel him touching me.
>
> Laura: Be careful touching it.
>
> Bambi: I'm not touching it, he's touching me!
>
> Laura: How does it feel?
>
> Bambi: It tickles. Want to try?
>
> Laura: That's ok.
>
> Bambi [Catches the worm when it crawls off of her]: Can it feel my arm as it climbs?
>
> Laura: What do you think?
>
> Bambi: Yes, I bet I'm sticky! Look! [It climbs toward her elbow].

> Mother's journal: She called me up to her bedroom and said 'there's someone living outside my bedroom.' I'm like 'What??' She pointed to a wasps nest right outside her window. I told her not to open her window and that I would get someone to move the nest. Well she freaked out and said 'No one's allowed to touch it. We can't take their home away from them. They built it beside my room so I could protect them.' We've had a couple conversations in the past about how people are clear cutting the forest and constantly taking the animal's homes away and that people don't respect the animals. Now won't I be the biggest hypocrite if I myself take their home and do not

respect them? She won the argument. The wasps get to stay as long
as she agrees to keep her window shut.

These examples show Bambi learning to consider herself as another to the other.
Instead of her touching the worm, she feels it touching her and wonders how she might
feel to it. Regarding the wasps, the human inhabitants of the house are decentered in
her line of reasoning when convincing her mom to think of the wasp's perspective of the
nest, 'no one's allowed to touch it'. This flip of being the one under gaze of the wasp or
the foot being felt by the ground as Abram (1996) puts it, helps us not just remain aware
of the other but also how their perspective and experience will vary from ours. This is
helpful in avoiding a care that is anthropocentric, fitting human needs and perspectives
alone. This also helps us to understand a larger sphere of potential beings to which one
is ethically 'answerable'.

Bakhtin (1990) argues that a person's actions are ethical when they are
"answerable" to the one who "addresses" them. It must be emphasized that he uses this
in a literary context and highlights how language and words are dialogic, always
affecting a response and thus, the discussion is limited to the human world. However,
his theory can in part help us think through dialogic relation with the more-than-human
world as well. Being "answerable" according to Bakhtin (1990) is more complex than
being responsible, rather than simply accepting one's part in a scenario, being
answerable means one's actions are open to being affected and changed by another
because one has allowed themselves to be "addressed". In other words, they have
been open to the possibility that the other might change their own worldview/perspective.

Thus, if we take Raven's perspective seriously, that the more-than-human world
also communicates and is always addressing us, offering a perspective that might bump
up against ours, how do we 'answer' as humans? If we are open to truly attending to the
perspective the wild other offers and to how it might experience us (ie. in the case of
Bambi and the worm, 'large', 'sticky' and 'dangerous' were all possibilities articulated),
then there is potential for letting that perspective change the way we know and act in the
world. In this regard, I would like to extend the "dialogic imagination" (Bakhtin, 1981) to
include felt consideration of the perspective of the more-than-human, such that we begin

to ethically evaluate our actions from the viewpoints of the multitude of wild others that are always already addressing us.

6.4. Conclusion

With Raven and Bambi it's easy to see how drawing, sensory attention and imaginative play all help to contribute to a felt awareness of the other's perspective, yet with Ecoboy perspective-taking didn't appear overtly at first as a theme. I realized that with Eco boy his perspective-taking could be seen in all the little acts of what he did not do: he didn't break tree limbs as his friends did, or kick at logs, whack away at the ferns nor he didn't rip apart the stump searching for bugs as his classmates were. A staff member describes Ecoboy,

> A lot of kids…can be self-absorbed or if you watch their behaviours and the way they interact with each other or the way they go up to a tree and whack it or break the branches off without even thinking, he doesn't do mindless things like that. He does things with an awareness of how something else is going to feel or how somebody else is going to possibly respond, there's an awareness.

I see this awareness of the other's perspective very clearly in his dealings with friends as well. Two students labelled with very complex behavioural issues became close friends with Ecoboy and one of the staff explains "he's the kind of kid too that if someone were new into the community who they would gravitate towards…because they just know that they would be safe, does that make sense?" and another comments "sometimes it saddens me, maybe it's too much, when his peers cause problems or have difficulties he has a hard time saying no because he realizes that these people need help too". He's very aware that the other has needs, and perspectives that are different from him but equally valid. The same can be seen in his ethical reasoning around the natural world. For example, when we were talking about his tree, he mentioned that he even thought that non-living things such as rocks had a value to be considered and when I asked why he answered "If you were a rock you would want to be respected." "So you kind of put yourself in the place of the thing?" I asked. "Ya" he responded. His ability to consider things from the view of the other whether that be a rock or a tree or a human seems to

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have a large part in his 'gentle', 'kind' and 'sensitive' demeanour with the natural world and with his peers.

However, although his behaviour with the squirrels that he trapped or the fish that he caught could be described as 'gentle' and 'caring' his own perspective/needs/welfare were all in the foreground in these instances and he was often shutting down his ability to fully consider the other on their own terms in these cases in order to meet his desires of seeing and feeling the animal up close. Like Bambi, he was also still learning what the needs of the other on its own terms are and to recognize what 'fear' or 'hurt' looks like for them. This may be hard to develop given a dominant cultural human centric perspective on the world in which we are blind to the myriad more-than-human perspectives that are always addressing and informing us on a daily basis. It becomes increasingly difficult to have three-fold attention in this regard because the focus remains on the human self. We neglect to notice that which we have been culturally conditioned to block out- that the fish might have a perspective worth considering.

Thus, perspective-taking that targets this cultural inattentiveness will address the factors I have outlined here 1) the understanding of the other as having intrinsic value – an increased ability to see the fish as having a 'perspective' worth considering in the first place 2) an awareness of the other as having a voice -the realization that the fish is already and always communicating 3) humility that one can never quite understand that perspective entirely and should therefore approach the endeavour with caution, attention and inquiry -a sense that the fish has more to present that is already known 4) a felt awareness of how the other might feel – the consideration for the pain and stress a hook in the lip could cause 5) the reversibility of agency and positioning ourselves as ethically 'answerable' -the consideration of oneself under the gaze of the fish and how we would respond if taking this seriously. By seriously considering these factors, we shift into three fold awareness where the other, the self and the relation in between, all play an important part in our ethical choices. Here we can see how the roots of valuing, listening to voice and attending help lead to a more nuanced perspective that works to include the more-than-human as an active collaborator in our own meaning making and works to

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decenter[48] the human self as the sole locus for moral concern in western culture. This helps us to resituate our perspective as one among a multitude of crawling, slithering, winding ways of knowing and being in the world. It also requires us to be open to the myriad potential ways in which the more-than-human is actively addressing us and to the fact that the way in which we answer is a moral decision that demands care[49].

Ocean is starting to see the value of this within his own practice as a teacher. When I asked him about what he means when he says he's come to see the natural world "not just as a topic of study but as something to learn from", he commented

> It's like when we ask the kids 'what would a tree say in this situation?' I never asked that before. Previously, we learned a bit about logging through reading and that was our resource unit, whereas to go out here and…begin to question into the life of an ant or a slug is much different…As we start to take the perspective of other living things you begin to understand and see life somewhat from whatever you take the perspective from, this helps you begin to develop relationship with it and a connection. I see that happening when we ask those kinds of questions.

While, the perspective-taking he is experimenting with is happening mainly at a cognitive level, he has undergone a substantial change in switching to consider the natural world as a 'topic' to now seeing it as a source of varying perspectives to learn from and relate with. For Ocean, this has been a change that has occurred over time, and involves some of the factors listed above, as he starts to listen to the 'voices' of the more-than-

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[48] Note here I'm not suggesting we can abandon our human experience rather arguing that we attempt to examine through the perspective of the more-than-human other.

[49] Some could argue that worms are sado-masochistic and love being squashed to death and that fish are macho nut bars who take lip-rips as a sign of toughness; the same interpretation problem besets care with humans, we can never know what the other truly desires and sometimes we will assess those needs as immoral. However, the aim of the care is not to relinquish one's own morality to meet the needs of the other, the goal is instead to keep open the possibility for care. Thus, in the case of sado-maschostic worm, an eco care works to protect and enhance its wellbeing as determined not only through the perspective of the other but also through the self as the one-caring.

human more, there is an increased sense of humility in terms of all that they have to offer him. Educational work that continues to attends to the aforementioned factors helps us to better imagine how earth others might exist in the world, be affected by different situations and this in turn, strengthens our own experience attending to their welfare and needs. Learning to actively listen to and consider the more-than-human other's perspective in this regard is an essential antecedent to the eco sensitivity needed for cautionary eco care.

Chapter 7.   A Context Specific Ethic

7.1. Introduction

The gathering of particular, situated and context specific details in the natural world was a sub-theme that came up during my research with the students. In their own ways the children were building a specific and nuanced understanding of the natural world which in turn, seemed to help them in forming appropriate decisions regarding care and increased their empathic accuracy. The more they learned about the complex needs and perspectives of the other, the more they were able to recognize the nuanced details of the care that such needs required. From my research it became apparent that such attention to particular context also needed to be paired with a stance of open listening to the perspective of the other, such that the voice of the more-than-human other is actively involved in the process of moral decision making. This helped the students move away from caring that takes the form of projection solely and into one that acknowledges and tends to the particular wild other.

This notion of the particular and contextual that I learned from the students becomes central to cautionary eco care. Like care and virtue ethicists I intentionally avoid the creation of universal 'principles' to guide eco care. Principles have their importance in helping to outline how we should behave ethically at times, yet I agree with Noddings (2013) when she says "when a real conflict arises, the principle is of little help. We have to dig behind the principle to see what deeper value has engendered it" (p.xv). She provides the argument that most of us would not remain honest on principle if lying to a would-be-murderer could save the life of another, "instead we ask who might be hurt, who might be helped by our lie" (2013, p.xv) as we would likely consider the specific context of the situation. While some may argue that the ethic of eco care I am proposing here is founded on the principle: 'to do one's best given the context to build appropriate caring relations with the more-than-human world in a way that honours the

ethical starting points of agency, intrinsic value, interdependence and humility'. Like Noddings (2013), I stress that this is a descriptive principle informing us of what can be encountered during the move toward such relations. It is not a useful prescriptive principle, "people who care usually do so naturally and directly because they want to respond positively to those addressing them" (Noddings, 2013, p.xxiii). This natural caring as suggested comes from the "ethical ideal" built during early childhood, which again is a descriptive principle. Thus, this dissertation might be seen as a descriptive account of the ethical ideal regarding eco care.

Within my research, relation, context and particularity were all essential factors in considering each student's ecological care and thus, I am avoiding prescriptive, universal principles which gloss over these factors. Instead, I draw on the descriptions of each student's lived experience such that provide lessons regarding natural caring and moral development in relation to the natural world. Portraiture helps in this regard as the aim of this methodology is not to instruct others of what to do when faced with an educational problem, rather to offer examples which might help others to reflect on their own lives, school, teaching and context and to see it in a new light, offering future possibilities (Hackman, 2002; Haller & Kleine, 2001).

Within this chapter, drawing on my research, I will first discuss the move to assimilate differences that can occur in the attempt to care. This helps to highlight why attention to particularity is so vital to the growth of eco sensitivity and care. I will then describe how the shoots of particular relation grew from the roots of attention, intrinsic valuing and voice. As I will describe, the three children valued small details in the natural world, seeing them as potential 'teachers' worth listening to, valuing was a clear root here. They also participated in non-manipulative, receptive attending, to the often ignored minutia of the more-than-human world (the spores on the back of the fern, the hairs of the caterpillar) developing an intimate understanding of the particular details of the natural world around them. Through this ongoing attending (second root), the children were left with a sense that the wild other may forever present something new to learn from; there was an expanded sense of 'voice', the third root. Out of these three roots the children grew into particular relation, beginning to understand each wild other as distinct and particular and thus, deserving of context specific, unique care (see Figure

3.1). Here lessons learned through valuing, listening to voice, attending into particular aspects of the natural world came together for the students such that they began to understand how one cedar tree could be different from another and how much diversity exists. I will argue that such situated, localized knowledge is essential within eco care.

7.2. Assimilation of Difference

Many of us have experienced situations where there is an attempt to care without empathy being present. In these circumstances 'projection' usually occurs: the one-caring attempts to help by doing what they would want done if they were in a similar situation. There are many examples where Bambi exhibited projection as a form of care during the research. She was still learning that the wild other has needs and perspectives that differ from her own. Using the rationale of "this is what I would want if I were them", she often took creatures home with her. Wanting to care for them, she provided them with hugs, kisses, food, water and shelter in the ways she has been cared for as a human. One day her hand was wrapped tightly around a cedar sapling; she was about to rip it out the ground to take it home and care for it. I stopped her and asked why, she replied 'it's winter in this forest and it gets very cold at night, it might die here. I would love it if someone picked me up so I could survive the winter." Her mother frequently observed such instances of Bambi's care towards animals taking the form of projection; here is one example from her journal

> Driving to school she yelled 'Stop the car!' I quickly pulled over, turned around and asked her what was wrong. 'Look, there's a baby squirrel on the fence and he's all alone we have to bring him home.' 'No we can't bring him home.' I said. 'But he's just a baby and he has no one to take care of him.' 'He has a mommy.' I said. 'No, he doesn't he's all alone but if I was his mommy I would never leave him alone. I would be the best squirrel mommy ever.' 'I know you would but we can't catch a squirrel.' 'Yes we can, all we have to do is get some nuts and he will come to me.' 'By the time go get some nuts he'll be gone.' I said. 'But that's why we have to keep nuts in the car.'

The school staff generally concurred that Bambi's need to collect was both out of her attachment issues, the need to have something physically close for her own comfort,

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mixed with her own concern for the wild other. Bambi herself wasn't quite sure why she felt the need, she asked her mother one day "Why is it a rule that you're not allowed to take animals home?" "Because they need to stay in their own homes." her mother answers. "I know" Bambi responds, "but I feel like I need to take them home, I don't know why I feel like that, but I do. I just want to take them all home." In these situations, she was attempting to care without considering the particularities of the cared for and what might be best given these details. A staff member described the result,

> She's either picked it, taken it out of its habitat, it's dried up or she can't feed it… there is a collecting and gathering that is in the name of caring and about being interested in something but that it actually engenders what would be the reverse of that, what would be deemed irresponsible when it comes to caring about things.

This is a major danger of care in the form of projection, as it ignores the needs and perspective of the other, it can potentially cause harm instead of assistance. Future research would help shed some light on whether projection in this manner forms the beginning for eco care as it seems to in the case of Bambi. Again, for Bambi this did not appear to be an 'egocentric' type of projection rather a prepersonal form of projecting where she had not formed definite boundaries on where the self/other begins or ends.

Feisty Ferret described that as Bambi has learned more about the different needs of members of the natural world over time she has realized that care for members of the natural world could look much different than care for humans. Her mother commented

> The biggest change I've seen is that she's learning to put the animals back in their habitat; she's learning that their habitat is better than hers. We had a long talk as to why the animal mommy is better than her. I told her that the animal mommy knows how to take care of them, what they eat, where they live and everything else. She got that, that's been a big change in her over time. It wasn't instant; over time she's been learning to put them back.

Slowly Bambi has been learning that sometimes the best way to show care for something is to leave it alone, "are you still picking up animals and putting them in your pocket?" some of her teachers asked at the end of the second year. "No, I know not to do that now" she replied quietly. Earlier that day we had come across a worm and she

had just crouched down to look at it, when someone tried to pick it up she let them know that "this is its home". "How do you take care of plants in the wild?' her teachers asked. "I should leave them alone" she answered. Again, she was learning in her own way to care for plants where she found them and was aware of the ethos that some adults were trying to convey- to leave the plants alone, yet projection was still definitely evident. One day we were out in a clearcut to check out cedar saplings that the students had protected plastic cones, earlier in the year, so the deer would not eat them. Bambi was excited to show me a tree which she looked after the year before:

> Bambi: Laura, this is my tree, can you help me get the sticks off of it? Like this big, bad stick here. [I help her remove a large branch that was crushing the sapling]. We'll have to come back in the spring when they aren't covered in snow and frost. Look how cute mine is. This pine tree is mine, before it was skinny. Kendra's was somewhere here right beside mine, ahh here it is…that's hers. Maybe next time I will take it home.

> Laura: Why would you want to take it home?

> Bambi: Well I already rescued one from somewhere that could have made it sick.

> Laura: Do you think this spot is not good for this tree?

> Bambi: Ya.

> Laura: Because?

> Bambi: The sticks here, last year we had all of the sticks moved away…At least mine survived right?

> Laura: Once it gets bigger it will get stronger and actually push some sticks out of the way and some trees actually bend around them. Have you seen that in the forest before?

> Bambi: Ya, my tree that I rescued was bent.

> Laura: They do that so they can get the light no matter what.

> Bambi: Melissa! [Calls teacher] Come over here and see it. Mine has no cover and it survived! Without a cover!

> Laura: Do you remember which was the deer's favourite to eat?

> Bambi: Cedar. [The sapling is a pine]. I'm still going to put a fence around it so deer can't get through.

> Lucy: I'll help.[Together they gather sticks to make a sharp fence around the tree. Lucy curves branches softly around the base of the tree.]

> Bambi: No Lucy, remember we are trying to make it poky so the deers can't swallow it ok? Then when the deer swallows it, it will

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> spit it out and won't do it again. [They work diligently on creating a fence that goes all the way around the sapling.]

Bambi: That will be good enough. We just need to mark it so we know where it is next year because I almost forgot about where it was. [Lucy adds some more large sticks]. That's good, don't do anymore Lucy, it [the deer] could trip and fall. [We sit down and they admire their handiwork].

Bambi: Can you move over a little Lucy so it can get some light?

We see her concern regarding the plant taking many forms here: moving the large sticks off the tree so it is not being crushed anymore, wanting to relocate the sapling for fear it's not the best location for it, creating the fence around it to protect it and wanting to make sure it has enough light. In these ways we can see her trying to imagine the plant's perspective and she clearly cared for its welfare but she still lacked some key details to know how to best care for this plant in this location (eg. what type of pine it is, what might graze on it, what its water/space/light/soil requirements are, etc.). This situated knowledge is essential in empathizing with the other because all the antecedents for empathy (the perspective of the other, their welfare and needs) will depend on the particular context. There of course will be times when we are short on this knowledge and, in these instances we must take even more caution in decision making, doing the best of our ability to seek out as much information as we can. If we are still short and a decision must be made then we must accept the responsibility that the response is by definition limited in its potential to offer care.

The major potential problem of projection as a form of care is that it ignores the diverse and particular needs and perspectives of the wild other such that the care will always be incomplete. Sewall (1999) emphasizes that without an appreciation of the particular differences that constitute the other's context "we see little of the Other- we do not perceive the Other in depth" (p.147). Projection continues to treat the other as a flattened object rather than an active subject full of its own agency and specific terms regarding its own welfare. Saito (1998) argues that to move away from such behaviour we need to recognize the particularities of the other that can inform,

> Listening to nature as nature, I believe, must involve recognizing its own reality apart from us. It includes acknowledging that a natural object has its own unique history and function independent of the historical/cultural/literary significance given by mankind, as well as its

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specific perceptual features. Appreciating nature on its own terms, therefore, must be based upon listening to a story nature tells of itself through all its perceptual features—that is, a story concerning its origin, makeup, function, and working, independent of human presence or involvement. Furthermore, by not imposing our agenda, whether it be a pictorial frame or an associated historical/cultural/literary facts, we become sensitive and open to the diverse modes of speech nature adopts. Nature, experienced in this way, is never mute with no story of its own to tell, even if devoid of pictorial magnificence or human associations. (p.141)

Here Saito (1998) underlines the importance of "appreciating nature on its own terms" separate from human ascribed significance which requires sensitivity and receptivity to the particularities that the natural world is offering. Each of the students that I worked with expressed this openness in their own way to the possibility that the wild other had something to offer them and this in turn, led to deeper inquiry and more nuanced understandings of the world around them. I will now spend some time outlining some aspects of the attending that were thematic for all three students in growing a sense of particular context of different members of the more-than-human.

7.3. Non-manipulative, Receptive Attending to Particulars

Each student that I worked with had an open receptivity for attending to the details of the natural world. These students were voracious learners[50], readily open to the possibility that the more-than-human world could offer them new things to learn every day. As a result, they were regularly attuned to the small particularities of the natural world that the majority of us as humans often miss, the back side of the fern or the underbelly of the salamander, always wanting to know more and find more. Their acute awareness of the tiniest details in this manner allowed the students to begin to gather a nuanced realization of the 'others' that they share the natural world with, as well as some insight into the diverse, complex needs and perspectives of these individuals. This type of contextual relation building helped the children to move away from an egocentric care to an ecocentric approach, learning to be receptive to the various

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[50] I think all children enter the world with the potential to see it as a source of endless wonder and keeping this possibility open is essential for eco care.

members of the natural world in all the winding, hopping, fluttering ways that they might present themselves. Bonnett (2013) insists that a "non-manipulative" openness and responsiveness to what the natural world presents is "at the heart" of environmental education (p.268). He describes a non-manipulative encounter as one which allows the other to present itself in its own ways and on its own terms. Projection is pushed aside for a space of listening to the already significant and meaningful wild other and what it might already be offering. I will briefly outline what this receptive, non-intrusive, detailed awareness looked like for each student that I worked with and then, point to some of the ways in which this kept open the possibility for the natural world to act as a teacher.

The first thing that other individuals commented on when describing Bambi was her attention to detail. A staff member commented:

> One of the things I love about her is she'll just notice tiny things that no one else would ever notice and then just want to show you them all. She loves to explore and discover and has an eye for the minute detail that most people don't see.

A teacher agreed:

> She has that ability to find these details and gems that seem like a needle in a haystack, it just impresses me. A lot of time that she finds interesting things that nobody has seen and everyone is like where did you find that?!":

Her mum Feisty Ferret mentioned,

> If you walk past something, she'll say 'Mommy, why didn't you see that bug?'... 'Oh, I wasn't paying attention!'"; and finally, another staff member added "she's not just looking at the ground but looking around her...she'll be the one to spot out the banana slug before anybody else; always aware of her surroundings and always looking, always very curious.

It was commonplace for Bambi to be preoccupied with a thin strip of land for hours, examining and studying all she could find. In doing so, she was proactively foregrounding the more-than-human world in all its various shapes, sizes, colours and textures and as the adults around her described, this meant that she spent time

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considering the tiniest details, the chestnut sprouting under the tree or the millipede tucked deep in the moss, that we so often miss or have learned to ignore.

The particularity that she learned out of these encounters and inquiry was often reflected in her play and her drawings. Here are some examples:

1) I drew a picture of a tree and Bambi began to contribute to it as well,

Bambi: Here Laura, I did some leaves on your tree. [She has added to my drawing].

Laura: I might add some bugs. [The tip of my pencil is near the water as I say this].

Bambi: Yes but careful where they go, lots of buggies can't survive the water.

Laura: Good point, these will be 'aquatic' bugs that can live underwater.

Bambi: Ok, here is how those buggies breathe… I've seen those guys under the rocks in the river here [Draws some air bubbles coming out of their back wings.]

2) Bambi described the story of one of her drawings after learning about crows at school,

Bambi [points to a bird she has drawn]: This little birdie fell out of the nest but this crow, he's going to put him back with the crow parents. [Points to another bird] That's the other birdie and that birdie is dangerous for crow.

Laura: Why?

Bambi: Because he's a meat eater. He's an eagle.

Laura: Ah so will he come after crow?

Bambi: No because he has a salmon. That's what he likes to eat best. [She draws one in its mouth, humming while drawing].

Bambi: This is a crow's nest [Points to a tree branch on the page].

Laura: Does it make its own nest?

Bambi: Mmmhm.

Laura: Oh it's got eggs in it! How many?

Bambi [she counts the eggs]: Six! They can lay that many or less sometimes.

Both of these drawings showed her applying what she had learned about crows and insects, down to the details of where they might live, dangers they might encounter (being able to breathe, avoid predators) and specifics such as adaptations to help the insects breathe or the number of eggs that crows are able to lay. They also demonstrated her fascination for the natural world; it was always the subject of her drawings, she never grew tired of what it had to offer her. Her eye for detail could also be seen in examples of her play:

1)

Bambi: We will be mackaws! Kendra [friend] do you know I saw that
on the computer that mackaws are actually parrots that are
red and blue, some are just green and some are just blue,
some can be blue and yellow?

2)

Bambi: Laura we are playing animals, what is your favourite animal?

Laura: Coyote.

Bambi: How about we play animals and we are all animals but we have
to put our bikes away and our helmets off, actually keep
your helmets on, it's raining. Let's get raincoats on.

Bambi: Ok who will you be Lucy [friend]?

Lucy: I will be a fox. I'm a baby. And I have all red fur.

Bambi: Actually, some baby foxes are not even orange. They are
yellow with no white stripe yet. I've seen them in my book.

Laura: No white stripe on their chest?

Bambi: Just a little bit of one. Or sometimes not at all.

3)

Bambi: Laura, let's be snails.

Laura: Ok, where do we live?

Bambi: Well, we can live on land or water…

Laura: I'll be a water snail.

Bambi: I will be the land snail with the yellow and the brown line that
goes like this [draws a spiral in the air]

Laura: A spiral?

> Bambi: Like on some seashells. Laura, also in Australia there are
> snails that will eat your house down!

> Laura: My house as a snail? The shell?

> Bambi: Yes, they eat through it to get you so you would have to hide
> from them. This will be my house here [under a fern] and
> let's pretend it's night time and there are bats out above
> us…

Her attention here is turned towards the small details, all the varied colours of the parrots, the fur of the fox and the patterns and behaviours of different snail species. In these examples, of which there are many, we can see her bringing some context to the play, wanting to share her growing knowledge about some of the particularities of the animals which she finds so fascinating.

As mentioned, Bambi had not yet fully learned what should be worthy of attention and what should not according to modern western culture. As a result, she remained entirely receptive to intricate workings of the more-than-human world. Over time, she has been learning to be less manipulative with her finds, watching or listening instead of grabbing and squeezing. This non-manipulative, detailed attentiveness was clearly apparent on a visit to the beach with Bambi and her mother. She clutched her own camera close to her side and explored the rocks very slowly. Her mum pointed out a shelled creature she that liked, I told her it's called a 'limpet'. We found two old limpet shells and Bambi pointed out the checkered patterns on them; we stared at them for a while comparing them to each other. Her mum commented out the pretty colour of the mussels- especially those losing the black enamel- the purples and blues and whites. Bambi then found a small limpet and tried to move it. I told her if it's stuck it means it's living and to leave it alone, she did and together we continued to look at it. She easily climbed over all the big rocks and took a picture of empty mussel shell on the rock. Then she spent a while framing a photo of the water and later, of geese passing by. "Laura!" I heard her shout excitedly at one point. "Look at this green rock Laura" she said, running her finger gently over it. She took a photo on our way past it and our way back she stopped again at it and bent down touching it again "I just love this rock. See how it sparkles?" she asked us. Her mum says "Yes, it's just like the ocean in the sunlight, look…" and we all took a moment to gaze at the water nearby. I left struck by how a small little walk could reveal so much when carefully attending to all the detail that

surrounds and how she treated each tiny corner as a something worth considering. "Look, look!" was her common refrain, wanting to share with others that there is so much to see that she finds interesting in the more-than-human world. In all that she does the particulars of the more-than-human world are in the foreground of her existence, as one staff member described

> [the natural world] is her reference point, her marker for everything…it's in so much of what she does and talks about, in ways that I would say that for most of the other kids no, unless they are asked to do something but for her it's always…the lens through which she looks, it's always the most significant thing in her work.

This last statement rings quite true for anyone who knows Bambi, all relations for her point back to the natural world. During my research she was daily, actively learning to be receptive to what the wild other might teach.

Ecoboy also had an incredibly keen eye for detail in the natural world. One staff member described Ecoboy's relation with the natural world "that interaction that he has, is a real sense of excitement. He's always developing questions and has a sense of wonder. He's already quite attentive. I think he is a really good observer. I think that he likes to look and gets excited about things." Another described,

> He's so very keen to learn about the natural world. He's always initiating discussion about it even when we're walking, he's talking about the leaves changing… 'Look at this tree how it's going yellow but the maple is red' he was saying. I remember him wondering if other maples go yellow, what that was, you know, talking about the different colours of leaves and 'why do these go yellow and these ones go red?' So he's making connections like that. He was talking about 'why do you think they have different colours when they die?'

His dad also described this acute attentiveness, "He watches a lot. I think he analyzes more than we actually realize. He may seem aloof but if you check later on he's picked up on something." I also noticed this so one day I told him that I've observed that he's quite attentive and has a good eye for detail and asked if he had any thoughts on why he was like that, "I've always like animals and nature and wanted to know more about them so I think that's why." he answered. His parents agreed with this, sharing that neither of

them was particularly interested in animals and in their words, Ecoboy seemed to have an "innate" curiosity for the animal world. His mother Ebony commented

> I think he's had it basically forever, we have photos going back forever…I still remember the first book he choose for himself when he was three was about butterflies, he's never gone to fiction books, he likes non-fiction about the animal world, he's always been that way. It's the whole thing [the topic] that is of interest.

It seemed that he saw the natural world as an endless source of learning, like Bambi, he was constantly pointing out small details to me that I might have missed like the snail near the trail or the squirrel above on the branch. In this way, he also consistently foregrounded the more-than-human and what it might be presenting.

Raven was also described by staff as "quite observant", "very engaged and tuned right in". One teacher commented that the bird raven is an apt pseudonym for her as she is "Bright, inquisitive, sparkly. She steps back and notices". One of the staff described her comfort in the natural world as helping to create this open awareness "it's not something out of the ordinary for her to be outside in the natural world, that's quite a gift". While on an extended visit to Mexico with her family, she writes me an email, excited to share what she has been observing,

> I wanted to tell you all about the creatures that we've found at night. Where we are staying is very high up in the mountain and our house is very open to the jungle. This means a lot of birds, bats and bugs I've never seen before come to visit at night. Me and Hawk [brother] try and find them in the dark with headlamps on, if we're successful we write down what we see and take pictures. Here are some of the things we've seen: Poisonous scorpions, land crabs, huge flying beetles, spotted beetles and more beetles, geckos on the walls, vultures soaring closely over my head, fireflies, beautiful butterflies, glowing eyed dragonflies, crazy flying monkey squirrels and ferns that if you touch will shrivel up and hide, yup, it's a jungle out here!

Due to her travels, she always seemed very aware of the extent of diversity within the natural world, comparing the plants and animals she found at school to ones that she had seen elsewhere, pointing out the detailed differences. Her awareness of the subtleties in the natural world was often described by herself and others in terms of

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'listening', one staff member compared her to deer in this regard 'she's always got her ears open and her eyes open' and,

> She's really thinking about things, all the particularities, she's always making connections about items in the natural world, relating one thing to another, if she finds something she wonders about its habitat or what it eats or what it is thinking whereas some other kids don't seem to be thinking relationally like that, like 'what else is it related to?'

For example, one day she came running up to me and asked me to close my eyes and put out my hands. She ran the mystery item along my palm, then she asked me to feel the texture on one side of it. I guessed that it was bark and she showed it to me. It was a rock with a possible fossil embedded in it. "Look" she said, "I know it wasn't near water recently or for a long time because it is so pointed, unlike this other rock I got near the creek which has been rounded by the water." In this example, she's thinking of contextual details where the rock might be from and how it might have changed over time.

Drawing was a tool which seemed to help her in noticing details and expressing this relational understanding that came with her awareness. She described "I like it [drawing] because I can be creative and I can put down my ideas from my head, I can't talk ideas when they come in a picture." In this way it seemed to help her represent the complexity of things she observed and thought in regards to the natural world. As well, she mentioned "Drawing helps me to notice more detail. Art helps me to listen; when you are focused you find it easier to listen'. Her eye for particularity that came through the listening process was then reflected in her drawings as it is with Bambi, she described one sketch "I made the grass yellowy green here, everybody says the grass is green but look, it's got yellow in it and over here there is actually more moss so I wanted to include that" and another day 'I wonder what type of moss is on the tree? Kind of like old man's beard but lighter, it's hard to capture what it looks like exactly". In this fashion she was learning how intricate the more-than-human world can be. Thus, each of these students were learning ways through reading, drawing and careful attending to listen to the smallest details around them, keeping an ear bent to what the more-than-human might offer if left on their own terms.

Ocean as well, was trying to incorporate this detailed attention into his practice as a teacher because he felt that it could create a 'spark' or 'motivation' for further inquiry. He mentioned one day that despite spending a couple days openly exploring and observing the salamander eggs in the nearby pond, "when I asked about observations, there was very little at all, two-three kids had vague things." So this time he decided to give them a clear specific frame for observing, he began by telling them not to disturb the water as it might upset the eggs and to stay away from friends that might splash into the water, and asked them to "look really closely and spend some time so you really are noticing it". When the students returned they had comments such as: "I saw tiny black parts in the centre of the egg turning to brown and beige and wondered if they were getting ready to hatch."; "The egg cluster is easier to see, there are little cracks in the eggs and the whole thing has blue mist in it." He then asked them to be specific with what size each egg is and some students commented that it was 'the size of three pinheads", "as big as a raisin" and "like the pointy end of a nail". Ocean commented afterward that he was happy with these "rich observations on lots of subtle things, stuff you don't always notice" and mentioned that he wanted to help the students continue to refine this skill of close attending. Another staff member commented

> Ocean is really changing his practice, I see him doing a lot of work with students attending to details, giving them tasks like 'look for something other's might not notice or something smaller than your pinky or bright in colour.' The kids end up finding the small spider web in the sunlight or the tiny mushroom right near our feet. The kids are full of wonder; let's really work on that…I'd love it to break loose.

I also saw him trying to orient the students before they headed out to be more attentive; one day he had them partner and discuss how to be successful at 'paying attention', they came back with ideas of using your senses, stopping more, going slow, looking under and over and in new ways. This is a stark contrast from Ocean's hikes previously where the group would walk quickly along a trail rarely pausing to stop and look around. Like the students, Ocean is increasingly finding ways to hone in on particular details in non-intrusive ways.

Through these examples, I have intentionally highlighted instances that embody a non-manipulative, receptive attending that is different from the trapping or collecting of

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traditional nature study. I'm not denying that many things can be learned by observing things up close and in hand rather, I'm insisting that learning more about the other on its own terms, requires us to "provide the space and occasion for the significance of things to stand forth...a receptiveness to what is other" (Bonnett, 2004, p.124): the yellow highlights in the grass that Raven notices, the glassy, round air bubble on the back of the aquatic insect that Bambi discovers and the subtle difference in fall leaves that Ecoboy wonders about. This gathering of details is intentionally less intrusive and instrumental as it aims to move away from a human manipulated picture of the other to one that attempts to address Bonnet's (2012) notion of a "poetic receptiveness". This entails "an enlarged sense of moral agency: one that is less exclusively pre-occupied with the model of an autonomous rational agent" and

> one that seeks to sensitise us to possibilities of an enabling passivity on our part that properly recognises the play of nonhuman agency (whose intentional character, if any, we might suppose will be quite different to that of human agency). (Bonnet, 2012, p.296)

For adult educators and many students as well, such receptive attention often involves a 'letting go' of one's own agenda, thoughts and worries to get into a space where listening can occur. As Raven commented "you need to clear your mind first, try not to think of anything". Ocean described learning this process for himself,

> For a long time natural world was just an escape, a way of getting away from the things that stressed me out in life. Somewhere in there when I was out escaping, when there wasn`t so much going on my head, I started to look around and go wow, this is neat. I think often we get so many things pushing in that`s it`s really hard to look around and pay attention.

He described that as a teacher he was still learning how to pay attention to the natural world within his lessons,

> I'm trying but I'm learning like mad, I think I need to be open and listening a lot more, looking at my surroundings through different eyes and that's what I am doing more and more but there is still so much to learn. The world as a teacher is a concept that has come for me in the last year and a half... never considered surroundings as teacher before this, it never dawned on me. I always respected and appreciated my surroundings but now I'm much more one to look

around at them and appreciate them for what they are bringing to me as opposed to what I am doing for them. That's really changed a lot.

There is a shift here from inserting his influence on the world to realizing he is being influenced, this 'reversibility' as previously defined in turn allows him to be more aware of the details of the world around him and what they might teach. "…Now as I walk I'm trying listen to the surroundings and ask 'what is the possibility there?" Annie Dillard (1974) describes this process, "I try to keep myself open to their meanings, which is try to impress myself at all times with the fullest possible force of their very reality." (p.140) opening up, as Buber (1970) suggests, to the actuality of the other. This helps us move away from projection alone and into care that is more receptive, situated, particular and "eschews any aspiration of possessive grasping"[51] (Bonnett, 2012, p.299).   Thus, awareness, that is non-manipulative and focused on the nuances, helps us begin to understand and value the myriad potential ways in which wild others might disclose themselves.

In conclusion, each of these students, in their own ways, still remained receptive to what the particularities of the natural world might teach them. "Biologically, the neuronal processes are primed to spot objects that fit your expectation" Horowitz (2013 p. 124) tells us. Thus, if we are trained through modern western culture to filter out the nuances of the natural world as the background to more important human activity, our brain literally grows biased not to notice them. Ecoboy, Bambi and Raven differ however; in the same field which modern culture expects to find empty and 'vacant', these children expected to be full of treasures: worms in puddles, smooth coloured stones, different types of moss and animal tracks in the mud. Horowitz (2013) points out that "expectation magically sorts the world into things we-are-looking-for and things-we-are-not" (p.124). The power of expectation and attention to restrict our field of view is demonstrated well in a recent viral internet video, the viewer is instructed to count the number of tosses between basketball teams and at the end is asked if they noticed

[51] I'm not trying to suggest a developmental model here where we move away from projection and into care, rather that careful attending, listening to voice, valuing the other all work together to help individuals avoid the dangerous assumptions that can occur when projection is happening alone: that the other's reality will be similar to our own and that we can fully approximate what they need based on that.

anything unusual when asked for the final count, as a man costumed in a gorilla suit is shown to be walking through the game. As the viewer was paying such detailed attention to the players, it ends up being easy to miss the dramatically different figure amongst them; Horowitz (2013) calls this 'inattentional blindness' (p.123). I was frequently reminded of this while working with these students, as they would often be bewildered when the adults commented that 'no, they hadn't seen the butterfly or the beetle or the orange rock', when for the students it had been so readily apparent. They have yet to learn to ignore these details as white noise, instead the tiniest things in the natural world leapt out at them. This did not mean that they were ignoring the larger picture rather it seems that, this detailed awareness helps them to quickly notice when a change occured, Ecoboy's hand flies up to point out a crow that has just entered the scene, Bambi's ears perk up at the alarm call of a squirrel. As a result of their detailed knowing of the land, they were also primed to notice when something was out of sorts. These students have grown to know what to expect in the local parks and creeks we visited and thus, a strange colour, movement or smell that was out of context drew their gaze immediately. Sewall (1999) describes this as "acuity", which she defines as "the ability to see change, that which is dynamic, and this can be seen only with an eye toward the entire field, the context" (p. 53). This acuity can end up assisting them in more accurately assessing when the wild other's perspective or needs may be compromised, Bambi runs to the snail with its crushed shell that no one else spotted or Raven mentions that the day has a strange energy as land is cleared nearby.

If we don't expect the natural world to act as a teacher, it won't. If we expect objects in the natural world to be isolated like the furniture in a room, we won't see the potential for relation. However, as the children show us, by entering the world with the expectation that the natural world will always offer something new to learn from that is valuable, the more-than-human remains an integral part of what we are primed to notice. As well, if we expect like Raven, that one aspect of the natural world will be knit with many others, we grow deeper into a sense of relation and humility at the potential effects of our actions. Thus, the goal of the educator here is to emphasize that the particulars of the natural world are indeed essential and worth attending to (here the root of valuing remains connected to the roots of attention). As well, emphasizing that these intricacies are always addressing us in different ways (here the root of attention is connected to the

root of voice). This keeps open the possibility for the small details of the natural world to act as ongoing teachers, which in turn immerses the student in the nuanced context needed for an eco sensitivity.

7.4. Following Pathways of Non-manipulative, Receptive Curiosity, Inquiry and Lateral Thinking

This ongoing, detailed interest in the natural world was what would lead the students into deeper inquiry: the more they noticed, the more questions they had, the more they appeared to learn. There was the sense the learning was limitless and this boundless source of fascination kept drawing them further in[52]. With this came a sense of humility when considering the complexity involved in the process of learning to know and care for the other. Again, I will use examples from each student to point out this open, eager inquiry and how it allowed the student to meet the more-than-human other as something that will forever offer something new to learn. I will end by discussing how Ocean attempts to foster this type of receptive, detailed inquiry with his students as a way into discussing possible approaches for the educator.

Early in the research with Ecoboy, there was a type of curiosity toward the particularities of the natural world that seemed boundless. It also seemed very broad in scope, I observed him to be just as interested in a fern or a rock as a salamander; it seemed that anything that was part of the natural world tugged his curiosity. A staff member commented on this keen attitude "I'm fascinated with how much that kid wants to learn! There are other kids in the school that don't really care about learning. They do what they have to do. Ecoboy wants to learn, *wants* to." When I asked him over the course of two years what he wanted to learn about, he was never at a loss for words, sometimes it was more challenging academic projects but in general it was about the

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[52] I'm aware that this thirst for learning more about the natural world is not a universal position for all children. However, this keen curiosity and ability to see the natural world as a teacher seems to be a key component in the growth of eco care for these students that I researched. Thus, I attempt to describe the experiences of these children who do possess this type of curiosity to underscore its potential importance and suggest that educators consider actively finding ways to engage and motivate students who for whatever reason aren't as interested.

natural world, "I would really like to learn about all the animals that live around here like the bears and the deers, what they like about this place, why they're here."; a year later, "I'd like to learn more about the earth, the places that we've discovered… go and do research on them or go look around more."; still later "I'd like to learn more about this place [names the park] near [the river], like what it was before it was a forest and before we came here". His best friend described him as "driven", and his teachers commented on how he always took projects to the next level, "He's one who will take things home even though we don't really do 'homework', he'll create his own inquiry projects just because he's that interested in it." Ecoboy regularly demonstrated this persistent, watchful keen attitude to learning more about the natural world and the places that he was in. "You can always learn something from your surroundings if you listen to them" he told me one day. For Ecoboy this endless potential to learn new things from the natural world is peppered with a dose of humility "You can never know *everything* about the natural world but the more time we spend here I'm pretty much learning more and more, like the different types of ferns and trees." he remarked. He seems to have the humble sense to know that he is just scratching the surface in terms of what the natural world has to offer him.

I've also witnessed Bambi's countless observations and questions regarding the natural world. In one of our visits with a worm last year she asked "Is this dark part, its eye?", "how do worms breathe?", "Why does the worm dig faster when I touch it on the tail?", "Is it hiding because it is scared?" This steady stream of questions was typical when she found something in the woods. One teacher described "she always wants to know things about it [the find], if it's a slug she'll ask 'why is it so slimy and sticky?' and 'why would it make so much slime?' Her mother also observed this steady inquiry, reflected in a note from her journal,

> Almost late for school today because between the front door and the car she found a snail. For the next ten minutes she examined it and noticed it was all yellow. Then came all the questions like 'why does it look different from all the other snails?' and 'why hasn't she ever seen any other only yellow snails?' 'Where did it come from?' and 'How did it get all yellow?'

Another staff member commented

> Bambi has a desire to learn and to be empathetic to the creatures, she studies them like I do, from that perspective of the mystery of the whole planet, I really feel that with her, like she's as intrigued as I am! The life journey of trying to figure out how all of this came together… not so much the people aspect, she's really interested in how nature came to be, how it is in what she sees before her. She's totally fascinated with it.

She was voraciously curious about her encounters with the more-than-human world and in this way I saw her grasping at learning opportunities.

As I started research with Bambi, I found it interesting to see how broad the scope was regarding this curiosity for the natural world; she would spend hours looking at stones just as she did seeking bugs. For her, there was no aversion yet to the things which many find uninteresting or downright gross such as slugs or spiders. One of the staff members also picked up on this:

> I'm struck by her fascination for little creatures, little things, even the slugs. I gotta say one of my favourite things was the slugs the first year she was with us. So you know here we had big boys who would just stomp the heck out of them as unworthy disgusting creatures and there is Bambi, finding them to be the most amazing little things, with little things that stuck up like eyes and how they could really slime up in her hands, showing me, … so natural like one of them, no disgust, no desire to harm, just I love you so much and could hold you so tight.

She hadn't yet learned what culturally was 'disgusting' or 'unworthy' so she still considered each find interesting and worthy of her time and wonder.

Raven's step-dad Jasper also commented on how she was always asking "very interesting and challenging questions" regarding the natural world. She shared these with me as well: "does sound have a temperature?"; "How many galaxies and dimensions there are beyond this?"; "Is there an end point to the universe? Is it dark matter? If there is an end, does it have a colour? Does that colour represent something? Is it dimensional?" "She's always studying things, she's a learner." one of her teachers commented. Another staff member described Raven's regular line of inquiry regarding the natural world "she's always into asking questions about things that are a little bit more into relationship focused". This fit with her attentiveness which was

also described as 'relational' in nature; they gave the example of some of her questions "What kind of moss is this? And why does it like growing on bark? What else lives in it? Does anything eat it?" I experience this deep, relational and complex inquiry that she was doing when she asked the question "Is there a new colour out there? I really, really, really want to find out." To help her answer this, we did a collective photo essay taking photos of colours that were unique that we found on the trail and on our walks. At the end of this she says

> I know why I can't discover a new colour because it will only be a different shade that's already been discovered. See we see lots of green right now that's because our brains are comprehending green but try to think of a different colour…

I respond "it's very hard." She answers, "You can't because your brain can't comprehend it." "Why not?" I ask. She responds,

> I think it might be partly because of our experience so if it's like 'think of a new colour' I can think of all the colours I've seen but I can't necessarily experience a whole new colour because I just think of all the ones I've seen, so I actually have to find one. So do you think that you can do that? Find a whole new colour you've never experienced before? It seems I can only find shades of the colours we already know.

This type of reflection reveals the tangled complexity and vibrant curiosity that was often present in her thoughts. Things are not as simple as they seem according to Raven and there was a depth to each thing in the natural world for her, this in turn grants her a sense of humility. Her teacher one day asks "Why are questions more important than answers?" She answers:

> Because if you know everything what's the point of life. If you have questions, life's ten times better and if you have no questions there's no point. If you have questions you start to wonder and if you wonder, you learn.

This open and eager approach to learning allows her to constantly be gathering more and more lessons about the natural world and like Ecoboy this is tempered with a sense of humility "I will always have so much to learn from the earth" she tells me one day.

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Raven thought laterally quite easily; like Ecoboy and Bambi she saw many potential questions in one specific thing. To illustrate this here is an example from her school work, the teacher asked the students to make a list of potential things they could learn from a car,

1. Electric circuits
2. Diff. kinds of engines
3. Air pressure in tires
4. What creates rust
5. How metal is made
6. History of cars
7. How automatic doors work
8. Diff types of cars
9. What cars might look like in the future
10. How they start
11. How the gas petal and brakes work
12. How to make a hijrogine engine
13. How to highjack a car
14. How to weve, sew or knit a seat
15. How to print okay
16. Car wastes
17. Lights
18. Gas pump
19. How glass is made
20. How to tint wndows
21. Designing
22. Reflections

Time runs out and she still wanted to write, able to see the potential learning opportunities in so many regards and as mentioned, the same is true regarding the natural world. Sewall (1999) calls this way of seeing "granting interiority",

> We reach to make sense of what we are perceiving, tugged by wonder.
> We recognize a form of dimensionality in the Other, the rock of many
> ages, the universe…But the picture is beyond our immediate experience,
> both almost unseen and somehow revealed. (p. 171)

There is an awareness here that the other [the members of the more-than-human world in this case] has a depth that we are unable to possess or understand fully. This is not so much about 'granting' interiority as recognizing it. This gathering of details and continued inquiry helps feed into what Buber calls 'confirmation' of the other, which Scott

(2011) defines as "the profound recognition even though it appears obvious and mundane-that the other is essentially not me and I honour that otherness and wish it to exist and remain" (p. 141). As these students accumulate detailed knowledge about the natural world through their inquiry they are learning to know the coho or chum salmon and the winter wren as distinct and particular others who have separate, unique needs and perspectives from their own. There is also the humble sense that the other will always present something new. Thus, confirmation of the other and curiosity are intertwined and feed into one another.

When thinking of Bambi's slug encounters over the research term she's found albino ones, black European ones, tiny and huge banana slugs, even learned about 'hot pink' ones in other countries; she's held them [too tightly in some cases], let them crawl up her sleeves, observed them curling into balls, and eating plants; her questions have ranged from "why do some slugs have spots and others don't?" to "what makes the slime so sticky?" to "aren't the colours on this one pretty?" She takes in all the answers such that when I ask her what she knows about slugs she talks to me for five minutes straight rattling off facts

> Do you know that they can make your tongue numb? And they have slime to help them move and so things don't eat them and do you know that I've found the baby slugs this big?[shows five centimeters with fingers] and that some slugs are black and others are camouflaged? And…

As a result of this keen awareness of particularities, the other students and teachers at the school have come to know these students as 'experts' of sorts when it comes to all things animal or nature related. This 'expertise' actually can represent a fundamental change in how they see and relate with the world. Horowitz (2013) interviews a geology 'expert' about his daily walks in the city, "every rock has distinctive characteristics: minerals, grain size, the overall look…and so you come to know them like friends…When I walk by myself, I pass these places and they greet me." (p. 43-44). His expertise leads him to notice the cornerstones on buildings and fossils in concrete steps that most people pass by. Horowitz describes that walking with him is like "a whirlwind tour through eons" and that "he can never walk down a block and not see its geology" (2013, p.55). In the same manner, early in the research these students

appeared unable to walk a section of trail without seeing all its particularities and different relationalities. Horowitz (2013) describes this expertise 'changes what you see and hear and it even changes what you attend to. Neuro-imagery shows how expert and naïve brains look when attending: Fundamentally different." (p.47).   She provides the example of expert chess players who are estimated to remember 50-30 000 arrangements of a chunk pieces on a board and 100 000 opening moves (p.49). This she contrasts with the novice who sees a "jumbled arrangement of black and white pieces" who might remember a couple squares of the board (p.49). The difference being…

> …the scene is meaningful to the chess master but not the novice. To the expert, every piece relates to the others, and every arrangement of pieces on a board relates to previous boards the player has seen or made. They become as familiar as the faces of friends. Fusiform face area of the brain responsible for our perception and recognition of faces, active when playing chess, helps to process visual scenes at which we have become expert lookers. (Horowitz, 2013, p. 49)

She emphasizes that we all have our own version of this expertise, something with which we are intimately familiar (2013, p.47). Each of these students at the early stages of my research was developing an expert way of knowing the more-than-human world, such that there develops a somatic, contextual and particular understanding of all things slug or forest. It's hard for them to walk the path without noticing the details around them, the more they learn, the increasingly eager they are to learn and the more context they bring to their understanding of the natural world. As Horowitz (2013) suggests, 'expertise leads to the ability to acquire more expertise' (p.48), in other words "wonder into wonder, existence opens" (Lao Tzu, 1994, p.31).

This non-intrusive, receptive attending and inquiry into the particular aspects of the more-than-human world has for these students contributed to a contextual, particular and relational understanding of the wild other that, as described, is necessary for an eco care that truly attends to the other on its own terms. This means that it is useful for educators to consider ways in which they can spark, facilitate and deepen these paths of detailed inquiry as they grow out of the roots of attending, valuing and voice. While the students are always learning particular ways in which they can properly care for and honour this 'otherness', they are always learning that there is good reason to be humble

in assuming we know how to properly care. As we have seen both Ecoboy with his traps and his fishing, and Bambi with her trapping and collecting have taken a manipulative approach to inquiry at times and while I emphasize that sensory experience is important, I again emphasize that the educator should help guide the inquiry and curiosity to allow the wild other to continue to act on its own terms. This means choosing less intrusive approaches to attending such as hands-free observation of the other in its own context, gentle handling (along with clear reasons for this softer approach), listening and smelling. Thus, the inquiry into knowing the particular other becomes an exercise in care itself.

7.5. The Approach as an Educator

How we approach this inquiry as educators either opens or limits the possibility for continued receptive, non-manipulative, detailed attending. This in turn, impacts the students ability to recognize and appreciate the needs and perspectives of the other as unique and particular and therefore, deserving of contextualized care. Here we must return to the roots of attention, voice and valuing, considering ways that we can foster these as educators, as well as ways in which we might be limiting their establishment. For example, one of the staff at the school described Bambi as "too distracted" by her finds in the natural world yet, for her the human voice seems to be the one that was distracting her from her encounters with the natural world. Although these encounters with the natural world were helping Bambi to become a detailed expert regarding the natural world, this is sadly seen as "slower processing" by some of the staff. Another staff member commented on this

> I'm a little saddened to see that all the little observations that she makes um... maybe not as recognized as important when she shares them. Maybe they think she has to grow up …I want her to still be appreciated for that quality that she has, I encourage her to show others, yes, there's a time and place but you know...

Another staff member suggests that "as she becomes more familiar with everything, the memories and the understanding, the piecework will be there that comes back with a

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picture/image so the interaction can happen faster" when I ask them to clarify this they explain

> If she's walking by something and she sees a slug she should have all the memories of that slug with it but if she needs to re-visit to re-build that relationship, it shows slower processing but if she's had enough and she can look at a slug and say 'I have a relationship with slugs and I don't need to stop now to look at it or protect it because someone might step on it, I build on those other things that I've had and I just walk through and still have all of that'.

This implies that as she develops she will learn to pass through places without needing to interact as that is what a mature relationship with the natural world looks like. Given what I have outlined and the research I have done I would instead suggest that her stops to revisit the slug or the cedar sapling are essential in helping her to develop a more nuanced relationship with these wild others. It seems that as she learns more about slugs, Bambi does not pass by the slug with the assumption that she 'knows' slug, or that she has seen and experienced it before and therefore doesn't have to pause anymore rather she and the other two students as well, treat each find as though it has a depth and particularity that might present something new each time. This also seems to be an excellent start for a pedagogical approach that aims to inspire continued receptive inquiry regarding the more-than-human world.

The pedagogical responses described above which treat Bambi's discoveries as distractions limit her potential for further inquiry as she may be told to hurry up or that such attending is a waste of time. Instead of rushing by each tree assuming once we know one cedar tree, you know them all, educators can also learn to embrace the small details that make each one particular as well as those characteristics that signal similarity and in doing so, pause to make each encounter less abstract. There are key people on the staff who recognize the importance of Bambi's encounters in building a sense of particularity and relation, one mentioned "I think people need to, when she finds something, spend that extra five minutes with it, so she knows that what she is doing is ok. In a busy world, it's hard, they are trying." Some of the staff understand the learning potential, one describes it as "her way of teaching herself a lot of things", they add

> The thing itself, the interactions, the place, the experiences when she's got those relationships that thing then teaches her a lot of things, hard to identify what is taking place but still needs quiet time with her things whatever they are, a leaf, a snail, an ant.

In this way, the educator can start to honour as well as, make space for attending and developing inquiry and such expertise which in itself shows a sense of valuing the wild, particular other; when we make time to listen to the more-than-human, to chase down wonders that we might have about it, this signals to our students it is indeed worth our while.

Ocean mentioned that he was trying to incorporate the student's expertise in his teaching "I also like going to the kids if they have that information [answers to a path of inquiry] and then they feel like the expert, it raises their confidence." It seemed to also encourage students to continue down those inquiry paths on their own as I saw him work with the students in this manner. I watched Bambi smile a bit bashfully when Ocean asked the group to get into "Bambi mode" for their upcoming hike, as he wanted the students to pay detailed attention. Later, she asked me if I think she's an 'expert' when it comes to nature, I nod and add "yes and the great thing is that you are still always learning new things", I then saw her take this persona on throughout the year, helping others to find creatures or showing them the proper way to handle them that she's been learning. Instead of her learning to feel like her interest is a waste of time, some of the adults around her were helping her maintain the confidence to pursue it. This type of confidence building around receptive, non-manipulative inquiry related to the natural world is essential for students enmeshed in a cultural context which denigrates the value of such pursuits. Another day, after the class discusses an insect that they've found a student approaches Ocean to tell him about his experiences finding the same insect at home. Ocean later reflects "It makes me wonder why he didn`t share that in group, I'm going to encourage him to do so because I want him to feel confident in sharing things that he`s experienced too." As educators, making time to honour these particular encounters orient students, such as Bambi, to the possibility that the natural world offers a rich source of learning that is valuable in itself and worthy of our consideration.

Ocean was attempting to do this as an educator as he learned to see the natural world in more of a teaching role himself. Like these students, he was keenly interested in the natural world "there's a song called 'I was born to wonder' and that's always been a mantra within my life, was that searching, wondering about the next thing." he stated. I found it interesting how the outcomes of this inquiry were similar to the students. Similar to Raven, the more he learned the more he gained a sense of the complexity embedded within the natural world, "There's so much to be discovered on so many different levels" and "I`m fascinated by what I don`t know and by the complexity of our universe and the things around us, you know a simple rock has all these complex ways that it was formed, it amazes me from an evolution perspective that such a random collection can come together in such an organized fashion." As with the students, this seems to also be paired with a sense of humility; near the end of my research term he told me

> I look at teaching a lot different now, just how much there is to learn from your surroundings, at first I saw the surface that was about five feet off the ground, now I just keep looking at how much more there is and how much more there is. I get smaller and smaller realizing how much I don`t know.

After his inquiry unit with the students on moss, this humility was apparent again when I asked him "what have you learned from moss?" He answered

> I guess one thing that really caught me is that there is no way on earth that I can know all of what is out here; I will barely even know a thimble full at the end of my life, maybe a drop. You know so there's that aspect where it makes me understand how much more I have to learn myself so I can help guide them but also how at times I have to step back and continue to point them in the right direction but let them make the discoveries because I can't deliver all the information that's there.

He was quite open about this inability to know it all with the students, often answering "I don't know, let's look into that" or asking the others around him if he didn't have the answer. In this way, he helped reaffirm that 'boundless' sense that Raven, Ecoboy and Bambi felt in regards to possible learning opportunities. His keen attitude for learning more seemed to in turn motivate some students who previously did not have the same spark of interest that Bambi or Ecoboy had for the more-than-human world. These other

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students confided in me that they would have never considered that moss could be so interesting until Ocean persisted in encouraging them to slowly learn more about it.

Ocean also frequently referred to the natural world as a 'motivator' when it comes to inquiry which is directly in line with what I have suggested here regarding the students. He commented on it as a teaching partner

> [The natural world]'s far more motivating than I am! [laughs] Before, I'd be going 'I gotta teach structures how am I going to do this??' I want it to be fun, hands on and engaging, so we'd build popsicle stick bridges and within that we'll look at whether a triangle is stronger than an x, you know all these different things. I was always searching for the motivator to make the work interesting…' I think that's answered here more often by the natural world. My hope is that my students become intrigued with their learning and the world around them… I hope they can step back and look around and see incredible potential for things to know and enjoy and to relate with.

He shared that as an educator he thinks role modeling was essential in this regard so towards the end of my research term he really began to share some of his inquiry process with the students and how he was learning from the natural world. "I realize it`s making them aware of [the natural world] and pointing at both of the questions and the input that they are getting from it and getting them to look around." In this regard, Ocean was modeling his teaching on some of his own recent experience of learning to see the natural world as a teacher, as full of things that can spark learning. For him this came about as a result of having more time and space to listen to it, becoming aware of what it had to offer as well as, his place in relation to it. His goal here is to find ways (such as the ones that have worked for him) to let it become a motivator for learning as it has with Ecoboy, Raven and Bambi. The hope is that the natural world will draw students in, the more they learn, they more they can wonder and the greater the potential learning opportunities. Thus, Ocean was working both in the more conventional sense encouraging his students to delve into sustained, detailed inquiry and also trying to find ways for the natural world to invite students into such receptive attending.

I observed Ocean attempting both approaches with two subjects he has become intrigued with at the school: moss and salamander eggs. Ocean explained his interest in trying to incorporate moss as source of inquiry,

They [older students] were naming different species and they all said 'moss' as one of them and that's what made me go 'well, I remember picking up samples of them last year and there was like thirteen different kinds'. They don't get that moss isn't a species but a descriptor of a whole bunch of species. So I thought I'd aim them in that direction to explore a little bit and maybe nothing comes out of it for any and they all go 'great can we get off of this topic now?'

Indeed, at first, one of the students asked 'why the sudden interest in moss?" Ocean told him how he was amazed by how diverse it was and wanted them as students to get a glimpse into that. He has the students do some sensory exploration of various different patches of moss in the forest. He explained afterward,

When I got those kids looking at moss it took a couple days for them to figure out what moss they had and what they might learn from it but when they came back, there was a group of them who were like 'can we learn more about moss?' In the end for some of them, there was a catch, where they went 'I want to know more about this.

He told me this as we walked along a trail along the river several weeks later,

It's the ability to learn from the natural world, like those two ducks we just saw on the way today, I think are acting like that [flapping wings and noisy] because they have a nest around here somewhere and if the kids were with me how that could leap off into this whole new thing of learning. Thinking like that as I walk has changed.

We see here how Ocean has begun to see the natural world as a possible teacher and while he's still learning how to navigate the move he desires where moss isn't just 'a topic of study' but an active subject to 'learn from', he's helping the students to gain a more nuanced, detailed sense of 'moss' that he hopes will spark continued learning. He commented

The more I`m out here the more that I find things that I want to learn more about and I`m off and chasing them down. For some of the students it's helping them find that spark of wonder and once they`ve found it, helping them focus it, because it`s easy to go…what do I do with this? So I try to help them start picking pieces up.

Here we can see a blend of approach, where Ocean is trying to make space, through sensory exploration, for the moss to invite the students into wonder and deeper inquiry

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and then he as an educator tries to pick up and encourage this thread once it has been established. Allowing the inquiry to stem from the natural world itself helps the student to understand the more-than-human other as a potential, particular teacher and source of relation instead of positioning Ocean as the sole source of these things.

The sense of wonder that can be sparked by the natural world directly was apparent as Ocean's students were directed to observe some salamander eggs in the pond,

> Student observations: "Why are [the eggs] green?"; "Maybe they've gone moldy"; "I think they are a sac that didn't get fertilized"; "Could be dead."; "Look I see another caddisfly behind there, those eggs are still alive!"; "It almost looks like they are feeding on the eggs!"; "Look there are three egg sacs still out there…one is floating up to the surface"; "[Parent] says they do that when they are going to hatch…"; "the eggs over there are dead for sure, they are all split apart and are dusty brown so why one brown and one green?…"; "I think these are still alive.."; "So what is the green stuff?"; "and what are the caddisflies doing?"; "I think they are eating the eggs look how they dive right into the sac.."

They are focused and full of questions within five minutes of close attending. Ocean commented that he realized that his tone as a teacher directly affects the student response,

> So now when I look I don't just say 'oh look', I add 'this is beautiful and amazing!...So with the kids the way I try to facilitate it is that I try to point things out and then share my heart for it, I'm trying to be aware of the language to share how deeply I'm affected and interested and touched by it and hopefully they will gather some of that.

Ocean was quite honest that the sense of wonder doesn't always catch on, especially, he observes, when it comes to the older students "Sometimes it's like leading a horse to water…" but here is where the natural world can come in again as a 'motivator' for inquiry, educators can make time for receptive and detailed attending to more-than-human relations such that the spark of wonder is relit. Of course, there is an element of cultural conditioning here as well, for the younger children there is still wide potential for the world to be a source of wonder as Ocean sees it, whereas, the older students are

more steeped in a society that prioritizes human connection over anything else. Thus, educators should recognize the early years as influential in this regard and act to let the students wonder for the natural world "break loose".

In conclusion, Ocean mentioned that with both approaches where he acted as a motivator for further learning and also tried to make sure that the natural world did, that he hoped that there would be an increased awareness of the particularity and diversity present within the natural world; that once students became intrigued by an aspect of the natural world, moss or salmon, that through continued receptive inquiry they would come to know individual moss or salmon as distinct and particular others. Ocean thought this would give the students a sense of limitless wonder[53] and result in a type of transference, eg. if we can learn so much from moss, the same is true for salamanders or slugs. He wanted students to see the learning potential in everything around them, to evoke the type of lateral thinking that Raven and Ecoboy embodied. I argue from my experience researching the students that this in turn, can assist students in learning to *care* in a particular, contextual relational sense for these individuals. The students come to know moss not just as a diverse, interesting species but through non-manipulative, receptive, detailed inquiry begin to see it particularly and relationally. I will expand on this below.

7.6. Moving away from Abstraction: Particular Relations with Distinct Subjects

Noddings (2013) points out that preserving the uniqueness of the encounter is essential for meeting the other morally as so much depends on the particular subjective experience of those involved,

> Variation is to be expected if the one claiming to care really cares, for her engrossment is in the variable and never fully understood other, in the particular other, in a particular set of circumstances. (p.24)

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[53] Cultivating 'wonder' in this manner is at the root of Ocean's educational philosophy, he sees it as feeding into a desire for learning that can be self-sustaining for students.

This is essential to keep from the type of moral distancing present in the dominant anthropocentric view which strips subjectivity and particularity from the natural world, making it easier to treat it instrumentally. The danger here is that caring can turn into abstract problem solving, when ignoring the particulars of the situation "there is…a shift of focus from the cared-for to the 'problem'' (Nodding, 2013, p.25). This happened at the school under study, the teachers, instead of concentrating on the specific skunk cabbage and trilliums that were being trampled by students at times or the salamanders being squished under foot, discussed with the children the more abstract problem of whether or not the swamp was being impacted. This can be dangerous if it remains the dominant approach as Noddings (2013) points out

> As we convert what we have received from the other into a problem, something to be solved, we move away from the other. We clean up his reality, strip it of complex and bothersome qualities, in order to think it. The other's reality becomes data, stuff to be analyzed, studied, interpreted. All this is to be expected and is entirely appropriate, provided that we see the essential turning points and move back to the concrete and personal. Thus, we keep our objective thinking tied to a relational stake at the heart of caring. When we fail to do this, we can climb into clouds of abstraction, moving rapidly away from the caring situation into a domain of objective and impersonal problems where we are free to impose structure as we will. If I do not turn away from my abstractions, I lose the one cared-for. Indeed, I lose myself as one-caring, for I now care about a problem instead of a person. (p. 36)

And here I would of course add that we end up caring about the problem instead of the more-than-human other as well. In the example already mentioned, the teachers move from skunk cabbage to swamp and the particular, very real damage to the plant gets lost. In contrast to this, these students that I have described are so keenly attuned to the particular and are learning to value the natural world as a communicator such that instead of seeing a blackberry thicket as a "jumbled mess" as one teacher at the school commented, Bambi found it a treasure trove of surprise, a place to watch salamanders climbing through ferns, striped snails tucked in tree roots, trailing blackberries that stain the fingers and big leaf maple seedlings pushing their way up. The land instead is filled with particular subjects that each offer something new,

> …if A takes the view of one-caring, she will attempt to visualize concrete subjects. Instead of 'average subjects' she will consider real persons about whom she cares. And she will look at the situation from two

perspectives: How might C, a known and loved other, react to the proposed deception? How Do I feel about C's being thus deceived? This kind of thinking keeps A in contact with the particular, the concrete, the personal. (Noddings, 2013, p.54)

The importance of this type of care that is focused on particular relations with unique subjects is demonstrated for Ecoboy when the teachers designate time in the day for each student to spend time with a tree of their choice. At first, Ecoboy was extremely reluctant to do this activity unsure of its purpose however, over many visits to the tree he eventually described it as "a friend" that he could visit. A staff member observed this as well, commenting

He was pretty reluctant and didn't enjoy when we did tree time at first, whereas, later on he'd be asking 'can I go to my tree?' I noticed that somewhere in there whether he was finding a connection to the tree or somewhere in there he was finding some peace and solitude through just sitting and being quiet somewhere in there.

Ecoboy mentioned that he liked noticing all the small changes in it over time, he pointed out the growth of moss, branches and the new animal trails around the base of it. When he hadn't been to the place in a while, he was excited to go back and check on it, a personal, particular relation has formed. He was not alone in this regard, other children at the school openly wept when they had to leave the trees that they have made a connection with at the end of the year. Instead of the notion that 'if you've seen one tree you've seen them all', these students have had the opportunity to get to know a wild other in detail, context and particularity. Bambi also related to more-than-human subjects in this personal manner. Regarding a tree that she had a connection with, Bambi commented "Next year, when it's really hot again forest fires can kill all of these things. Before forest fires happened I would take it [the tree] out of the dirt and take it home." When I explained to her how forest fires while devastating to life can be beneficial in some ways as it helps to propagate seeds of new trees and clear the forest floor for new growth, she said "Ya, but trees die then. I don't want mine to start all over again [as a seed], then it won't be 'pom pom' [her name for her tree]." There is the clear sense here that Bambi's care focuses on 'pom pom' not pine trees writ large; this particular relation was meaningful for her. The teachers' insistence in this lesson that

the trees were worthy, particular subjects to learn from, has in turn led to increased care, "it amazing how attached they've become…to a tree of all things!" a parent commented.

The moss unit that Ocean led also had an interesting effect on one of the older students in this regard. Another teacher told me I should ask Andrea, a grade seven student about 'moss', so we sat down and chatted. I asked her what she had learned about moss "Laura, it's crazy" she tells me, "I think of it almost like a person!" I ask her to elaborate "I would have never said this before, you know me…. [her family is strongly into hunting and she has long been vocal about how she sees the land as a resource]. But, the more I learned about it, I felt like I was learning about its 'culture', like where it came from, what else it was related to…" Curious, I asked "is this about moss in general or the particular sample of moss that you were doing your inquiry on?" She answers, "It's the specific moss that I was studying." She tells me this with big eyes as if she's confessing something ridiculous,

> I felt connected to it after all those lessons. I even wonder why we had to take a sample. There are lots of us as kids, surely that hurts the moss. We could've observed without taking. So I went and said 'thank you for this learning opportunity'.

She laughs, "Do you think I'm crazy?" (see chapter nine for more on this feeling of 'craziness'). Here we see another particular specific relation has developed through this receptive inquiry.

Just as with human relations, by keeping the relations concrete, particular and personal, educators can help foster care that is more accurately addressing the needs and perspectives of the specific more-than-human other. This in further in line with how I would apply Buber's (1970) understanding of 'confirmation'. We first acknowledge that the tree has something to say and move to relate with it but in order to listen to it, we need to let a tree be a tree not only that but let that particular tree be that particular tree … not solely what we imagine a tree to be, otherwise we seek to assimilate it to my world and in that act the relation is destroyed. To avoid, treating the other as an *It* or as extension of *I*, we need to become aware of its distinct presence in itself.

As a more particular understanding of the other develops, there also seems to be a sense of interconnection or interdependence that is integral to understanding the context of the other. Here's an example from Feisty Ferret about Bambi,

> We had a little argument on why I was not allowed to dump out the water that was full of baby mosquitoes. She said that I'd be a 'murderer' if I killed all her baby mosquitoes, 'they're animals and they have to live'. I told her they would grow up and bite her and she said 'that's ok they need to eat.' So I left her babies alone. Then later on she caught a beautiful blue dragonfly (those things are fast, so I have no idea how she caught it) anyways she put it in the bug catcher and wanted to keep it. I told her that he would die in the bug catcher in the house. She insisted that she wouldn't let it. I told her that we didn't know what to feed him, she said 'google it', so I did, live mosquitoes and some flies. I told her we couldn't catch live mosquitoes so we had to let the dragon fly go. This just added to her argument that I was never allowed to kill a mosquito because then her dragonfly would starve.

Many things are happening in this example, but I am particularly interested in Bambi's sense of connectedness, she has repeatedly, emphatically told me when there is a mosquito on her that she is ok with it biting her as she learned that they need the blood for their babies and this is also reflected here. In her attempts to care for the dragonfly she also realizes that they need mosquitoes in order to live and this furthers her desire to protect the mosquitoes. We can see that the more particular information she learns about these creatures (the mosquito's use of human blood, the dragonfly's food preferences), the more she is able to recognize these connections in caring for them. This also means gaining a sense of the complexities of life and death that come with this interconnection, for example, Bambi learned quickly about the particular predator/prey relationship of her cats, one of whom killed her beloved hamster. After this event, she told me, "I know that death can help other things live but it still makes me sad". In this way, Bambi is not learning a romanticized version of the natural world rather she is learning how one individual meeting its needs can result in another not meeting their own. The ethical starting point of interdependence means recognizing that death and life are intertwined, as Dillard (1974) puts it

> I am aging and eaten and have done my share of eating too. I am not washed and beautiful, in control of a shining world in which everything

fits, but instead am wandering awed about on a splintered wreck I've come to care for…(p. 248)

While the needs of the other may conflict with our own desires and often we cannot control how the more-than-human other meets those needs, there is no need for care to completely disappear; the challenge is how to maintain care in the face of such paradox. Again, part of this might be returning to the notion of complexity as educators, the cat is neither 'evil' or 'good', solely 'predator' or 'prey' but all of these in different ways, at different times, full of particular layers which one comes to know over time. Thus, humility and recognition of these paradoxes help us understand that our care itself will be nuanced, not always loving and bright but struggling and dim at times as we wade through relations. Dillard (1974) emphasizes this flux in regards to the ability to discover the new, the mystery, as time passes "the tree with lights in it does not go out; that light still shines on an old world, now feebly, now bright" and I relate this now to the process of care itself.

Situating the other within its layers of context and complexity helps us to understand that care for the particular also involves care for the whole. Bonnett (2013) emphasizes

> this presencing of a particular tree is imbued with the presencing of all that is around it, all that shares that particular place. The birds that flit through its crown, the moss and lichen hat cling to its boughs, the midges that gather as dusk falls. etc.". (p.264)

Ecofeminist Karen Warren (2000) has this sense of interconnection in mind when she proposes a 'care sensitive' ethic in which the "health (well-being, flourishing) of the particular is viewed as intimately connected with the health (well-being, flourishing) of the general." (p. 116). This helps us avoid a narrow minded view by instead always endeavouring to feel/understand how the specific is enmeshed in a wider context. Noddings (2013) describes "My very individuality is defined in a set of relations. That is my basic reality" (p.51) and the reality of all others on earth. This is extremely important to note for as we attempt to help care, we must remember this situatedness of the more-than-human other means there are countless other contextual elements connected to its welfare just as it is connected to a whole other web or relations which rely on it to

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flourish. In this way, Kheel (2008) emphasizes that "caring both originates and is oriented toward the related situatedness of individuals" (p.259). As we gain a sense of these tangled complex connections, it also helps us to understand that once a member of the natural world is stripped of its context, such as Bambi's caged dragonfly it "cannot presence as once it did; part of its 'selfhood' has been destroyed" (Bonnett, 2013, p.265). As well, the environs from which it is plucked will likely be affected in many unknown ways. Bambi has yet to learn that we cannot simply replicate all these minute interconnections in a new setting for they are too many and too complex. This in turn, leads to caution and humility, as Ocean comments:

> When I`m looking at say a centipede to start to consider its interaction
> with the things around it, how that affects me and beyond me, it's just
> amazing to me. So complex, it makes me think of how I can never
> know it all, it`s so interconnected.

Eco care thus requires attention to the subtle connections of the wild other to its habitat in attempt to instill a healthy dose of humility for the complexity this entails. Energy must be directed at caring *in situ*, rather than displacing the other from all the relations that work to sustain it. It also will involve messy and hard decision making such as in the instance of a forest fire and 'pom pom' the tree, here Bambi deeply cares for a specific tree and yet, forest fires can be essential for forest regeneration and future 'pom poms'. Does one take the tree out of its context, 'stripping it of its selfhood' as mentioned, sacrifice it to the fire, or try to manage the fire? Once again, the answer 'it depends' is the appropriate one given the complex and particular context this eco care will entail; the decision maker should humbly do their best to ensure that the human and the more-than-human are collectively involved in the decision making.

Despite this context specific complexity, a relativistic space can be avoided under eco care as decisions regarding appropriate care *are* made and as mentioned before this involves an 'answerability' on behalf of the one-caring, to ethically evaluate our actions from the viewpoints of the multitude of wild others that are always already addressing us. I acknowledge that some relationships are harmful and thus, care and empathy for the perpetrator will not always be correct moral response but this does not mean that a caring approach is entirely absent. For example, in forming decisions

around more-than-human entities such as malaria or the Ebola virus, care or empathy for these entities is inappropriate, I'm aware of Bonnet's (2005) caution here "arguably the rejection of holism here is itself a facet of an underlying instrumentalism - loving only what meets our needs and desires – which in turn is an expression of the metaphysical mastery that has issued in an atomistic domination of nature" (p.5). Instead of simply replicating this logic of domination I emphasize that the care also aims to honour the ethical starting points of the more-than-human's agency, intrinsic value, interdependence and humility. Thus, decisions regarding the appropriateness of care or empathy will then actively be informed not only by the welfare of the humans involved but also by the perspective, needs and welfare of the more-than-human others involved, on their own terms as best as we can approximate as previously described in the discussion on 'answerability'.

Given the vast interdependence and complexity inherent in the more-than-human relations, the appropriate response is one of caution. However, as Bonnett (2013) himself points out "we can-and often do-have a sense of what would count as the well-being, even 'interests' of things in nature" and it would be irresponsible to refuse to engage in tending to the welfare of the myriad more-than-human given this." (p.268). The decision-making is not isolated to the individual human but the human in relation. This process is different from a 'Council of All Beings' in that it does not aim for us to "step aside from our human identity" in order to speak "on behalf of other life-forms" (Seed et al. 2007, p.161). Rather, we need to practice eco sensitivity such that the self, the more-than-human other and the relation all inform ethical decision making. Given this, we need to first listen to the particular context of others involved and our relations with them; what are they directly communicating and offering and how this can change our ways of knowing and being in the world. In the case of malaria, part of what we can learn from it is that there are gross human social and economic inequities that must be addressed. Priscilla Wald (2011) argues that that subpar living conditions and malnutrition all increase the rate at which a virus or parasite such as malaria can spread and calls on the world to "stop asking how we'll survive the next pandemic and ask, instead, how we want to address the problems that fuel it."[54] People living in poverty are

[54] Electronic source, no page number.

less able to afford prevention tools or effective treatment, meaning they are more susceptible to the disease and less able to treat it when it occurs. Thus, while the parasite leads to suffering and often death, human created conditions exacerbate this. If these conditions were addressed there would be not be as critical a need to eradicate the parasite.

Similar to Noddings, (2013) I argue that caring is ethically basic and thus, the onus here is to provide a justification as to why *not* to care, not reasons to care. In the case of malaria, a decision to eradicate it is not one that the sole human makes rather it's a collective decision as best as we can attempt that. Listening to the parasite itself, its needs informs us of important changes we could make in our own lives. Listening to the perspective/needs/welfare of the humans, birds, reptiles and other mammals it is known to infect emphasizes the importance of tending to those affected to ease their suffering. After such listening to the other and to relation, secondly, we should adopt a felt perspective-taking of how it might experience us and the various results of the decision. The parasite sees us as a home/sustenance, a decision to eradicate it will obviously negatively affect it and a decision to let it live will have different results for its own health if we address the inequities discussed. Third, we end up 'answerable' to the decision made. Ethical fatalism is avoided as decisions regarding care *are* made and as mentioned before this involves an 'answerability' on behalf of the one-caring as we evaluate our actions through the lens of our more-than-human relations.

As described, determining when care and empathy are appropriate is highly dependent on context and thus, eco care is not universalizable as an easily applied principle. Cuomo (1998) highlights that

> Caring cannot fully be described without discussing its agent, its object, and the context in which it occurs. Caring, then, is most meaningfully evaluated in situ. Talk of caring and compassion in the abstract, devoid of attention to the object of caring and the context in which the caring occurs, is ethically uninformative (p.129).

Noddings (2013) provides the example of a woman who professes to love animals and yet, takes the animals she finds to the animal shelter where they will most likely die, she asks, 'is swift death the caring approach or is the chance for precarious life?' Her

answer "it depends…on our caretaking capabilities, on traffic conditions where we live, on the physical condition of the animal" (p.13) and I would add the perspective of the animal itself. Such ethical decisions are utterly dependent on the context of the situation,

> What we do depends not upon rules, or at least not wholly on rules-not upon a prior determination of what is fair or equitable-but upon a constellation of conditions that is viewed through both the eyes of the one-caring and eyes of the cared-for. (Noddings, 2013, p. 13)

This allows for flexibility to address particular situations in their complexity, which is especially important regarding our interactions with the more-than-human world as Bonnett (2012) points out that a properly informed ethical response involves "sensitivity to the presence and transcendent character of a natural dimension of the places in which we live" (p.294). Thus, strict principles would not allow the one-caring to properly listen to the particular presence (needs/welfare/perspective) of the wild others nor allow for the caution needed given that the other is never fully 'knowable'. As a result, eco care does not adhere to rigid principles or a litany of what Noddings (2013) terms 'Thou shalts' and 'Thou Shalt Nots,' rather, there is the recognition that moral decision making is context dependent, particular and messy (p.25). This was clearly apparent in my research as each child brought with them their own unique way of relating with the world, and their own constellation of human relations and experiences.

I will now share an example of how the roots of valuing, attending and listening can result in shoots of particular details and context. These specifics, in turn, act to inform us of the wild other's needs and perspectives and thus, move us away from the egocentric care previously mentioned. As Bambi learns more about the particularities of the natural world she's been moving from a manipulative mode of attending to a receptive, listening stance where, as Noddings (2013) suggests, the other puts themselves quietly into the other's presence, in this state "we are not attempting to transform the world, but we are allowing ourselves to be transformed" (p.34). Here are some examples from my field notes near the end of my research term with her,

> I watched Bambi crouched over something today, everyone else was busy playing in the field and ran past her unaware of whatever she was looking at. Bambi scooped the item up and came running to me,

she opened her hands to reveal a slug that a classmate had dumped dirt on. "See how its scared? It's in a ball." she points out its behaviour. Very worried she asks, "Is it going to die Laura? It needs its slime to breathe and it's all dirty. I can't even see its spots!" She tried very gently to brush off the dirt. "It's not working!" she told me in a panic. I suggested we take him to the water tap to get some of the dirt off by washing him. "He's not moving. I don't want him to die" she told me on the way. We splashed it with some water and some of the dirt came off, "I'm going to keep him in the shade now so he doesn't dry out." she sits with it in her lap in the shade watching it carefully. "Look his feelers are out!" she said eventually as it poked its antennae back out and lengthened its body.

Later this afternoon, Bambi sat in the alcove of trees at the edge of the field, oddly still. I went over to see what had happened. In her hand she held a worm, "Cool, where did you find him?" I ask curious as to whether she was back to old habits of collecting. "Here, in the forest, do you see his blood bones are almost sticking out? He almost died." She said gravely while closely inspecting it. "What happened? I asked. "Someone stepped on him. I was watching him and they ran right over him. I don't know where to put him. He's the wrong colour" I noticed that the worm was dark on one end and extremely pale on the other and I wondered quietly to myself if it was dead but then saw it wiggle slightly in her palm. "If I hold him like this he doesn't even try to get up." she showed me, allowing it to be totally flat on her palm, not touching it. "I want to put him somewhere safe but I don't know where" she says again. I stayed quiet to see what choice she would make, she started to lay him on a branch far up high on a tree. "Have you seen worms up there before?" I asked her. She replied "No, I know it could fall here but on the ground someone might step on him." As she talked I felt sad that I too could not think of a single safe spot for the worm given that the students often climbed the trees and ran over every inch of ground nearby. "I will put him underneath a plant" she decided and she made her way over to some bushes outside of the area. She walked slowly holding the worm carefully and tucked it safe into a dark spot of soil.

In these examples, Bambi has changed a great deal from her old, rough behaviour of squeezing worms and slugs out of love into a more delicate, detailed appreciation of what the others needs might be. This nuanced awareness and pre-existing care helped her to notice when these creatures were harmed despite everyone else around her remaining oblivious to the fact that any injustice might have happened. Such an eye for particularity gave her some insight into what context-specific caring for that individual slug or worm might look like. First of all, it helped her to recognize that harm may have occurred in the first place. She saw the dirt on the slug and was aware, based on

countless previous slug encounters, that it is not typical. She also drew on her previous knowledge that slugs breathe though their skin and from this she deduced how the dirt and sun might impact that ability. From experience, she also knew that when slugs curl up they are trying to protect themselves from harm. As well, her awareness of details helped her pick up on small indications that the slug might be recovering, as she noticed it stretching its antennae and relaxing its body. With the worm, she was aware that it was hurt because of the cut on its side, that it was barely moving and the fact that its colour had changed. In turn, she moved her hands slowly and gently in ways to minimize the potential pain, she made an attempt to think of the particular context and perspective of this worm as she tried to find the safest place that she could think of for it. In these ways, Bambi has stepped out of the instrumental world and into the world of relation and we can see how her detailed, receptive awareness was aiding her in this process. This receptive attending is key in this process, as the shift to be willing to be transformed/affected by the other and to suspend one's own agenda in the attempt to truly listen to the other are what help the interaction become more deeply relational. In these examples, we see Bambi suspend her desire to 'hug' or keep the worm, instead she is focused on what it might need or what might be best for its welfare.

Bonnett (2004) describes this receptivity not as an interrogation by which we both "pose the questions and decide the answers" rather he describes it as a "listening to what is on the move" which aims for "a preservation and liberation of things themselves." (p.128).   If we instead inquire in a non-receptive, manipulative or projective manner, we neglect to understand the more-than-human other's context on its own terms, deciding what care looks like for the worm without ongoing awareness as to how those decisions may or may not fit its needs and thus, the relationship stays instrumental. This is common in a managerial or stewardship approach to caring which ignores the agency of the other, 'caring for' without 'listening to'. Cuomo (1998) describes such an attitude

> Regarding interactions with the land and nonhuman species, caring attitudes and actions cannot be assessed without inquiries to determine if caretaking is in the best interest of those objects of care. Indeed, humans need the care of other humans in ways in which nonhumans, especially nondomesticated nonhumans, do not. Like advocates of ethics based on care, proponents of stewardship of the land as an appropriate model of ecological interaction often fail to consider nonhuman 'self'-directedness as a moral goal.

Thus, as students learn to listen to the potential particular needs and perspectives of each wild other, this contributes to a care that can be more accurate, tailored to the context of the cared-for. Often this may mean not intervening at all. It also means that the place and its more-than-human inhabitants are actively informing and influencing our own moral conduct. Gruen (2009) commented:

> to accurately emphathize, one must focus on and take account the specific context of the other, their idiosyncratic desires, and the processes that shaped those desires, their developmental and, in the case of non-sentient beings, their ecological and evolutionary histories, and their distinctive telos. This requires information, reflection, and understanding…When we are empathizing with non-human others in need, ideally, the situation will allow time to gain knowledge about what will satisfy those needs or eliminate risks. (p.33)

The gathering of particularities and details through ongoing receptive inquiry will help these students in this process.

7.7. Conclusion

As Bonnett (2012) points out

> It is not through grand idealisations that our place in nature primarily is given to us, rather through the minutia of manifold intimate involvements we receive the norms that imbue places and learn of the powers holding sway in the world. In this way we sense our active place within the world, learning how to receive what is gifted and gift what is received. In its celebration of alterity, clearly this speaks of a mode of caring that is open to non-anthropocentric impulses and a morality enacted not through the application of abstract principles, but through fitting response to what is arising in its sheer existential autonomy, embracing the ever-changing cadences of the populated (but not simply peopled) places in which always we find ourselves. The metaphysics of mastery runs out of space in the places where the intrinsic value of the non-human shines through. (p.294)

By educating for a particular, receptive understanding of our more-than-human relations, we move away from abstract rules for an eco care and into a contextualized acknowledgment of alterity. This in turn, helps us to more accurately assess what the others potential needs and perspectives would be in the pursuit of a care that attends to

the wild other on its own terms. From my research with the students and teacher, tools that have been useful in this regard are: a) pre-existing valuing of the more-than-human b) non manipulative, receptive attending to detail which opens the possibility of natural world as teacher c) continued non-intrusive and receptive inquiry, that chases wonder, listens to the voice of the more-than-human other and results in the sense that the more-than-human other will always present something new (deep valuing). Thus, attending, listening and valuing work together to create a shift from abstract knowing to relational; here lessons learned through receptive attending to particular aspects of the natural world become felt and specific connections to the voice of the other. Through open listening to what the other presents, there develops a sense of the particular needs and perspectives of the wild other and thus, the context required for accurate care.

Chapter 8.
Ecosensitivity: Honouring Particularity & Relation

8.1. Ecosensitivity in Action

This chapter will describe how the sub-themes discussed in previous chapters collectively resulted in felt, natural caring experiences for a particular and contextualized more-than-human other. Sharing some examples from my research I will illustrate ways in which the roots of attending, listening and valuing have sprouted shoots of three-fold perspective-taking and nuanced understanding of context. Drawing on these examples I will describe how these roots and shoots can work together to help the student more accurately care for the needs, welfare and perspective of the other on its own terms. Along the way I will address the real danger of losing track of either the self or the other in these relationships and ways that this can be mitigated.

I ask one of the staff about a day where the middle grade students were acting carelessly in the forest, kicking stumps, rolling over logs, breaking branches and climbing up rocks ripping off the moss underneath. They reply,

> I recall the emotional impact it had on Raven in particular. She was crying and holding her stomach as she talked to me. She recalled a day not too long before this when she was lying on grass and for the first time noticed the many living things on the ground. She said that the more she watched, the more she saw. It then occurred to her that there was always that many little things on the ground but that she didn't know or didn't think of them. She spoke of the pain the creatures must feel as we walk on them. Now she was beside herself with her own disappointment of causing pain to living things. She made a comment about killing things and not even knowing it .The one quote I can remember is "How could I have been so stupid?" I have the image of her holding her stomach and rolling on the ground telling me that she felt as if she couldn't ever put her foot down…

Another staff member commented,

> Raven felt sick to her stomach that day about the destruction happening around her. She told me later that this was because she could hear the voices that she had never thought of before. And that she could feel their pain.

When Raven is asked about this later she says she now walks 'with awareness', trying to "mind" where she steps to avoid a plant or a creature or its home.

Here we see Raven having several intense eco sensitive moments. First there is the *root of awareness* digging deep as she spies the small creatures in the grass she had previously neglected to notice. *Then particularity forms an off shoot* as she explains that 'the more she watched, the more she saw'. *Then the root of valuing appears* as she expresses deep concern for their welfare, the worry that she has killed them, her regret as she feels 'stupid' for being so careless. *The natural world now communicates* to her in a more expanded sense, digging deeper roots still, as she explains 'she could hear the voices that she had never thought of before'. We can also see her *embodied awareness* clutching her stomach undoubtedly as she *takes the perspectives* of these creatures. In taking a more cautious approach, we see her *perceiving the need* of these creatures for us to be more mindful as we walk. The roots of ecosensitivity with all their off shoots are present here. Raven has a very narrow moral distance from those creatures on the ground at this point; there is a sense that the pain of the bugs and plants being squished around her is also her pain. Her eye is on the other and her relation. Here we can see the danger if she does not also turn her gaze towards her own welfare as well.

She must now realize that she has done her best to care for the more-than-human as she knows it to exist and most certainly will continue to do so. She needs to understand that she is in no way 'stupid' for not recognizing this before, at that time she was still doing her best to care which is what ecosensitivity requires. Many feminists caution that we must not lose sight of the self in the move to care for the other as Cuomo (1998) emphasizes, "Put simply, caring can be damaging to the carer if she neglects other responsibilities, including those she has to herself, by caring for another" (p.129). Hoagland (1991) elaborates on the danger here,

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> Moving away from oneself is one aspect of the dynamic of caring, but it cannot be the only defining element. Otherwise relationship is not ontologically basic, but the other is, …the self ceases to exist in its own ethical right…Certainly we are not individuals who remain essentially isolated and relate untouched. We develop as we interact, and this, as Nel Noddings indicates is what makes relationship morally basic and what is basically lacking in masculinist ethics. Nevertheless, we are in no more useful a position when the one-caring's ethical status and identity is located completely in the other. (p. 255-6)

Raven needs to tend to her own context here as well and not be so hard on herself in order for ecosenstivity to be complete. We see this also in the case of Bambi who as previously noted said she would let mosquitoes bite her because they needed the blood for their babies. While a few bites may be no harm, certainly Bambi must also care for her own self and health as well trying to care for the insects. Scott (2011) points out that Buber's[55] conception of inclusion "has much in common with current affective and cognitive conceptions of empathy" (p.115). We see this through Buber's description of inclusion "this one person, without forfeiting anything of the felt reality of his activity, at the same time lives through the common event from the standpoint of the other". Again, there is no loss of one's own perspective or lived reality. In these decisions where the context of self intermingles with that of the other, the two do not work independently rather there is co-mingling in what Buber terms the 'third space' of relation, such that, care for the self and for the other are not lost but undoubtedly at times may transform or conflict with each other.

Noddings (2013) discusses an instance where the need of the other might conflict with one's own ethical compass,

> We are certainly not moved to assist the cared-for in satisfying needs we assess as immoral or somehow mistaken. I have not said much about such cases except that we should, while denying the need, respond in a way that will maintain the caring relation. (p.205)

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[55] While Buber asserted that he did not believe in empathy, his concern was with the historical definition of empathy, common at the time where one attempted to transpose oneself 'into' the other and this subjugated one's own perspective.

This may sound counterintuitive and harmful given a more-than-human parasite such as malaria, however, Noddings (2013) clarifies

> …we are concerned with the maintenance of ourselves as carers; we must continue to be prepared to care. This does not imply that we must like, agree with, or work to advance the goals of this other. (p. 206)

The emphasis here is that as mentioned before, when justifying why not to care for various entities, care is not entirely absent. Bambi recognizes the need for mosquitoes to bite her yet care does mean allowing a swarm to feast on her. In denying the need of the mosquitoes in order to protect herself, care can still be present. One can apply bug repellant or remove themselves from the situation as initial ways to continue to show care. Yes, the need for blood won't be totally satisfied by Bambi alone but the mosquito has a host of other relations that can also provide this. Cuomo (1998) thinks that we need to embrace this fact

> …identifying one's own complicated, conflicting feelings and interests may be a necessary prerequisite to empathizing with another. If so, then 'ego denial' is contrary to the kind of empathy that allows one to appreciate the oppression or circumstance of another living being. (p.130)

Indeed it is because of Bambi's particular self that she has even come to recognize the insect as having needs, voice and value.

We must be careful here in instances where the cared-for is also culturally oppressed or marginalized as is the case with the more-than-human, that we don't slide back into a stewardship role where the human plays the main role in moral decision making, deciding who should have their needs advanced and has worth and who should not. This only perpetuates the anthropocentric lens at the heart of the ecological crises. Haraway as cited in Taylor (2008) points out that in relation to cross-species queer kin relations, they are "almost never symmetrical' and therefore, require us to live responsively in questioning relationships; "'grappling' with the 'sticky knots' that are thrown up when we commune with differences." (p. 82). We need to acknowledge the unequal power distribution that appears in human and more-than-human relationships. Bambi's concern to care for the lowly mosquito will be seen as ridiculous by some and thus, there is a need to foreground the other in these situations, to highlight their needs

and assert them as worthy outside of human ascribed meaning. The human self does not become forgotten rather it is 'decentered', in a turn of reversibility we must also view our 'selves' as nutrients, food for the other. The needs, perspectives and welfare of the other must play a central role in our choice as to whether we should help advance their needs or not[56]. As previously mentioned, if we take seriously that the more-than-human communicates, offering perspectives which may literally rattle against our own, then we also need to be open to how that might change the way we know and act in the world. Under an ecosenstivity we attempt to honour the intrinsic value of the other, its agency, our interdependence and the need for caution in our judgments and actions. As Plumwood emphasizes, we need to foster a relationship with the natural world acknowledges its "subjecthood, opacity and agency" and remains "open to the play of more-than-human forces" (as cited in Taylor, 2013, p.71). With this in mind, we will do our best to provide appropriate care given the context and if we withdraw care it must be only done under the guise of satisfying vital needs (a basic standard of living that maintains health and well-being). Surely the terms of 'need' and 'want' are nebulous here, thus given the intrinsic value of the more-than-human other when it comes to making the decision to reduce their well-being, we must be 'answerable', that is open to our actions being ethically evaluated from the various viewpoints of our feathered and scaled neighbours. It is to them whom we must justify reasons to withdraw care.

I myself am faced with this justification one day with Bambi. I invited Feisty Ferret and her into my backyard one day to show them my garden. Bambi felt the soft leaves on the anise hyssop and together we watched a bee going up to a raspberry flower. She then pointed out some pill bugs who were feeding on small bits of the fallen raspberries on the ground. We explored some more I showed her some of the squash flowers and the bean plants. Soon we decided to head down to the beach. On our way

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[56] Determining a healthy balance between the needs of the self and other in a relationship takes time and reflection and there is no magical equation to tell us once it has been achieved. The ethical starting points, listening to more-than-human voice and considering our actions through the lens of the more-than-human other can all be useful in determining whether we are addressing the needs of the wild other. Active self-reflection, and a friendly critic perspective from family and friends are potential ways to help us to question whether our own needs are being met and to discern our needs from wants. Both of these practices can help us understand gaps or room for improvement in the relationship in this regard.

out of the garden I grabbed a handful of raspberries and offered some to Feisty Ferret and then to Bambi. Bambi shook her head 'no' and I was confused as I thought she would have loved them. I said "Are you sure?" She shook her head again and gave me funny look as I popped a handful into my mouth. I was a bit bewildered by the strange look she had given me but soon forgot it when we headed off to the beach. A couple weeks later her mum passed on her journal to me and I read the entry from that visit

> After we left your house, we were driving in the car and she asked "Why doesn't Laura leave the raspberries alone?" "What do you mean?" I asked. "Well they are a part of nature and we need to leave nature alone." "Sweety, it's ok to eat the raspberries because if we don't they'll just fall off the bush and rot." I said. "That's good cause the bugs can eat them. The caterpillars, slugs, snails, centipedes they all need food too so we shouldn't take food away from them. People have so much other food we need to leave nature's food for the bugs because that's all the food they have.

Bambi was holding me accountable to the natural world and indeed, I had to be answerable for my choice. This in itself was evidence of ecosensitivity for Bambi, a long way from the bug squisher and plant ripper I had first met. Later, I explained to her that we can share food with the insects and I told her about how some foragers have rules of only taking 20% of the food they find, leaving the rest for the plant and for other creatures. Still, I can't forget the look she gave me it was one of total confusion. I along with the other school staff had been repeatedly telling her that we need to 'handle with care' and 'not pick' and here I was picking raspberries with abandon. All the roots of ecosensitivity were there for her: *receptive, non-manipulative attending* of the bee grazing the flower and the pill bug deep inside the cup of the raspberry. This turned into an offshoot of *particular context*: the raspberry bush as food source for many different bugs. This helps her form a sense of what the *needs* of the bugs might be. Her *valuing* of these creatures is represented as she attempts to stand up for their *voice* and *perspective,* pointing out that we as humans have other sources for food whereas "nature's food is… all the food they have". My ethical choice therefore seemed to run counter to all that we had been learning together. As I thought about this, I got the sense that she was trying to find a logic within her interactions with the natural world, principles to grasp onto such as 'no picking' when as I've suggested each decision will be context specific. Black and white reasoning comes up against a complex situation

that requires her to expand her understanding. It made me think about the importance of being explicit with the choices we make as educators in our dealings with the natural world and the need to share some of the complexity of that is involved such that students gain a sense of the importance of context and the 'sticky knots' we all will inevitably encounter.

Finally, I will outline an example of Ecoboy's ecosensitivity. He was standing next to a nurse log teaching two of the kindergarten students a math lesson. One of them began to pick away at the roots of a hemlock growing off the log. "Hey, leave the roots alone" Ecoboy told her. They went back to the lesson and eventually, she started to fidget with the roots again, Ecoboy went over and pointed out "You see when you do that, it breaks the root [he shows how it has separated out from the soil] and then the plant might not be able to get water; that could kill it. Why don't you come over and sit with me?" He suggested to the girl and they moved away from the log, her focus stayed on the lesson after this. Later when I asked him about this incident he said 'I was just afraid that she was going to wreck it [the tree]… hurt it".

Ecoboy in the above example first demonstrates how he is *attuned to* the tree and *its perspective* as he intervenes. In this way he also shows that he *values the welfare* of the tree, which he also reveals when expressing concern that it will be 'hurt'. A good example of the automatic perspective taking that stems out of valuing as previously discussed. Another researcher was present observing this incident and commented "You know, I didn't even notice that Mary [the kindergarten student] was doing that to the tree!" A staff member described Ecoboy as "acutely other oriented" and continued to say "he's tuned into things in a way that a lot of other kids aren't". This type of awareness helps root Ecoboy in ecosensitivity. He then draws Mary's *attention to the details* of the broken root and how it has been separated from the soil to express what he knows about the plant's *needs*. He points out how these signs *communicate* that it has been hurt. Once again, the roots of attention, valuing, voice and the shoots of particular context and a felt sense of perspective have come together in another example of ecosensitivity.

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It's important to pay attention to Ecoboy's moral decision making here. Here, he demonstrates that sometimes the best way to care for the more-than-human is to let it flourish on its own. Cuomo (1998) points out

> …if ecological 'self'-directedness is valuable…examples of nonhuman flourishing that do not require human intervention are superior to flourishing brought about by human interference in nonhuman processes and lives, other things being equal. (p.76)

This is important to acknowledge as it truly honours the agency and value of the more-than-human other on its own terms.

Thus, the roots and shoots of ecosensitivity work together to foster felt, natural caring for a particular and contextualized subject. Interestingly, the offshoots of perspective-taking and particularity feed back down to nourish the roots. The stronger the shoots of perspective-taking and particularity, the healthier the roots of value, attention and voice are. Learning a new perspective provokes new possibilities for attending. For example, Raven now is acutely aware of the particular context and perspective of the creatures in the grass and thus, she attends to them in a more mindful way. The root of value is strengthened here as well; by adopting their perspectives, considering their context she has included these new creatures to her circle of care. As well, thinking of their perspective and context of these creatures as she walks, she becomes more aware of their possible voice ('careful where you step'). Attention, voice, valuing, particular context and perspective taking as a collective help to create a shift from abstract knowing to the particular, contextual and relational other and in doing so honour the other's needs, perspective and welfare as they stand on their own terms. In this way, one is not stripped of its difference or 'othered' as a loophole to avoid responsibility for caring, rather both particularity *and* relationship are honoured.

8.2. Part 1 Conclusion

In conclusion, a theory of eco care pushes back against moral development models which argue that the child is born egoistic to instead posit that all children are born relational and thus, have the possibility to develop ecosensitivity. I have described

student interactions with the natural world in these past chapters as way of attending to possible roots and shoots for growing an eco oriented care. The hope is that as educators we help children to remain receptive and engaged in the possibility of what the natural world has to offer in terms of relation. Again, this is not intended to be 'step by step' principled approach, rather eco care is a context specific ethic that recognizes the complexity and particularity involved in relations. My aim here is to provide a descriptive account of what ecosensitivity could entail by drawing attention to ways in which empathy for the natural world is developing or is already embodied within these students.

I argue that if an educator diligently works on cultivating this notion of sensitivity, there is the potential for the child's moral orientation not to exclude or background the natural world but rather welcome it as a source of relation. Nurturing natural caring where one acts out of inclination for the wild other in the early years helps strengthen and establish one's ethical ideal for eco care that will help guide them in later years. If we teach along the ethical starting points that each item in the natural world has agency, intrinsic worth and that we are interdependent upon them and therefore should act with caution, this helps keep the possibility for eco care open and moral distances decreases.

In attempts to care for the more-than-human other, projection of human needs, interests and perspectives may occur which involves the assimilation of important differences. At the other end of the pendulum, one may end up 'othering' the natural world and asserting humans as independent separate and superior, unable to truly relate with the natural world. To avoid both this assimilation and false separation, as educators we need to help our students value the more-than-human other as both distinct *and* related to us. This in turn requires us to attune ourselves to the particular context of the other, our own selves and the various ways in which these are informing, impacting one another. This is the basis of eco sensitivity which aims to honour particular differences and context, as well as relation. Thus, in contrast to dominant masculinist paradigm around which some key moral development models are based, eco care aims to reinsert context, particularity and relation. This move is essential in narrowing our moral distance in regards to the natural world as this type of situated knowing and being allows for care which attends to the other on its own terms.

Recognizing the intrinsic value[57] of the more-than-human other is a primary root for the growth of ecosensitivity. If we are unable to acknowledge the intrinsic value of the constituents of the natural world, then eco care is stunted. Care that does not value the other in itself will either take the form of projection (Bambi taking the tree out of the cold to keep it warm) or it will become instrumental through a process of hierarchal separation (why care for it? It's just a bug…). This is a primary reason why childhood is such a crucial time for narrowing moral distance regarding the natural world. In the early years of fluid ontology boundaries around the self and the other have not been solidified. Our cultural legacy of separation from and subordination of the natural world has not yet been made concrete either. Thus, there exists the possibility for the child to see wild others as valuable on their own terms. Without such valuing, the more-than human other is not seen to be capable of having important, distinct needs or perspectives hence, these needs are subsequently ignored or inadequately met. As educators we need to trouble our own assumptions about value, actively work to find ways for our students to dissolve notions of human superiority/separation and increase opportunities for positive relations with the natural world in order to nourish this root of eco sensitivity.

A logical first step in learning to intrinsically value the more-than-human is 'to wake up to it' (Raven). Kheel (2008) points out that

> The connection between the act of attention and caring can be discerned in the use of the words 'careless' and 'careful'. When we say that someone has acted 'carelessly', we mean that they have failed to pay attention to a particular situation or thing; on the other hand, when we admonish someone to "be careful", we are, in effect, telling them to pay more attention to their surroundings. As a society, our social and cultural institutions have tended to promote carelessness, rather than care, for other animals. (p.228)

By consciously attending to the more-than-human and the ways in which we are attending, we can learn to be 'care-full'. The students that I worked with were demonstrating and learning receptive, felt and non-manipulative ways of attending to the natural world. These modes of attention help to reposition students and educators as 'listeners' constantly learning new ways of knowing and being that the snake and

[57] I define this here as the worth of the other in and of itself.

sparrow present. These acts of attention in turn form the second root of ecosensitivity as they collectively inform us of the possible perspectives and needs of the other, sensitizing us to potential ways in which we can provide appropriate care. Within one's teacher practice, we can also adopt a type of hyper vigilance to ways in which we may be contradicting the ethical starting points of agency, intrinsic value, interdependence and humility. Kheel (2008) describes the importance of this

> the presumption of these psychologists is that humans will naturally develop empathy unless thwarted by external forces. But if empathy is a natural response to suffering, why then does it so often fail in our relations to other-than-human animals? Many care theorists have noted that ideological conditioning plays a major role in blocking the natural pathways to compassion. As Donovan notes, 'To a great extent… getting people to see evil and to care about suffering is a matter of clearing away ideological rationalizations that legitimate animal exploitation and cruelty.' (p.228)

In the past chapters we saw Ocean trying to trouble some of his cultural assumptions in this regard. "Rather than attempting to craft a rationally compelling argument for why people should care about other animals, I ask why such feelings fail to arise to begin with" (p. 207-208), here Kheel (2008) offers a question targeting the root of the problem. Questioning and attending to our own values and practices as educators in such a manner helps with 'clearing away' some of the barriers for care for our students.

The third root out of which ecosensitivity will sprout is an awareness of the natural world as an active voice and co-teacher. As we have seen through examples with Ecoboy and Bambi there is a high potential for the care for the natural world to stay at the level of 'projection' or 'sympathy' in a culture that does not acknowledge the voice of the wild other. As a result, our awareness of their potential needs and perspectives are limited and thus, so is our care. Thus, a receptivity to how the 'voices' of more-than-human others may inform and impact us as humans is essential in learning to more accurately assess their welfare. As children enter the world in a fluidly ontological state still determining what can and cannot speak, they all have the potential to understand the more-than-human as a complex, agential subject that is capable of literal communication. If this possibility is kept open they are then more likely to hear the wild other on its own terms and thus, provide more accurate care.

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Perspective-taking was an offshoot of valuing, attending and listening to the natural world as a communicator. This resulted in a felt sense of reversibility and answerability. Bambi flips from touching the worm, to feeling it touching her and wondering how she might feel to it. This sense of being under the gaze and influence of the more-than-human other helps us not just remain aware of the other but also how their perspective and experience will vary from ours. This is helpful in avoiding a care that is anthropocentric, fitting human needs and perspectives alone. This also helps us to understand a larger sphere of potential beings to which one is ethically 'answerable'. Together the roots of ecosensitivity (valuing, attending and listening) create a dialogic space where one values the more-than-human other and thus, when attending to its voice, one is open to being transformed by it. This is along the lines of what Bahktin (1981) calls being 'answerable'- open to how the fly or the heron might experience us and how we might ethically respond in return.

The final offshoot of these main tap roots of ecosensitivity is a felt sense of the particularity and context within the natural world. The goal of the educator here is to emphasize the value in the small details of the natural world, that they are indeed essential and worthy of attention. As we have seen, the natural world itself can act as a 'motivator' for inquiry, as students are drawn into it, educators can help set students off on deeper quests which grant them a feeling of humility given the complex and diversity present in the natural world. We should also open the space for students to listen to the possible ways in which these particularities address them, ever receptive to what they might present such that individual, specific relations may form. As Kheel (2008) describes

> …caring for other-than-human animals can only flourish with the aid of empathy. Empathy, in turn, can be seen as the culmination of many small acts of attention. Cumulatively, these acts of attending can help us to appreciate other-than-human animals as individual beings with subjective identities rather than merely part of a larger backdrop called 'the biotic community', 'the ecosystem' or 'the land'. (p.228)

These many small 'acts of attending' keep open the possibility for specific relationships to develop such as Bambi with Pom Pom and Andrea with the moss. Learning to see the

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natural world as full of particular and diverse subjects in turn immerses the student in the nuanced context needed for an eco sensitivity.

Attention, listening to voice, valuing, particular context and perspective-taking all work together to create a shift from abstract knowing to the particular, contextual and relational. Learning to value the worm through attending to its particular context, perspective and a growing sense of it as an active communicator, the worm is no longer a distant object but a living, breathing other like us. As well, one grows to know it as uniquely different, breathing through its skin in the damp, dark soil with five small hearts. We are also left with a sense of detailed particularities, aware of how each worm is distinct from each other, some longer, some darker and so on. Plumwood (1993) emphasizes the importance of this balance of attending to particular differences and also to relation which is at the heart of ecosensitivity,

> The strength of this awareness of difference and the resulting tension between like and unlike can make experiences of contact with others in nature particularly powerful ones…I see the snake by the pool about the same time as it sees me. We are both watching the frogs, but with different aims…our interaction involves shared expectations (and hence recognition of the other as alike in being a center of needs and striving), but also recognition of difference: recognition of the other as a limit on the self and as an independent centre of resistance and opacity. Recognition of earth others does not necessarily require this kind of intersubjectivity— the conscious sharing and recognition of states of mind—but does require such a dialectical movement to recognize both kinship and difference, that is, mutuality. (p. 156–57)

This move towards inclusion of relation and difference involves both a cognitive element to attending, recognizing voice and value as well as a felt and embodied sense of these roots: Raven's inability to distinguish sender and receiver in communication with the natural world, Feisty Ferret's inability to tell where Bambi ended and mud began and Ecoboy's heartfelt concern for the salmon. By involving both the felt and cognitive dimensions we are sensitized to 'care-about' in such a manner that we can feel an increased responsibility and capacity to care-for. A growing sense of inter-being helps provoke natural caring instead of forced ethical caring. While the modern western ethical tradition offers abstract principles to control inherently egoistic tendencies an ethic of eco care instead works on the premise of maintaining relation through felt and

context-specific acts of ecosensitivity. In this way, eco care seeks to trouble ecologically destructive paradigms of separation, universalism and strict rationalism. Such a sensitizing practice aims to make it possible for the more-than-human other to flourish and inform, essential in this time of ecological crises.

In addition to keeping meaningful relations with the natural world possible, an ethic of eco care also includes ways of fostering 'belonging' and 'resistance' the last sub-themes from my research. The final chapter will focus on ways in which the students found sustenance though both human relations and the natural world to nourish these roots and shoots of eco care. This is crucial in encouraging ecosensitive individuals to remain confident within a dominant culture that is ecologically damaging.

Resistance

Chapter 9.   Belonging as Supportive Resistance

9.1. Introduction

Social psychologist Melanie Joy (2008) calls speciesism "arguably the most entrenched and widespread form of exploitation in human history" (p.17). Ecophilosopher Val Plumwood (1993) has also emphasized the tandem process of oppression of women and nature historically. Yet, we scarcely recognize that individuals who refute the ways in which the natural world is silenced are often also denigrated themselves. Typically discriminated as 'emotionally irrational', 'extreme', 'radical' or 'crazy', they can become the 'green sheep' of their own family. Within research at the school under study we have found that such individuals adopt a kind of double consciousness, similar to that described by sociologist and civil rights activist W.E.B. Dubois. Dubois (1903) described having two consciousnesses as a result of his experience of being a black man in America around the turn of the 20th century. Within this state, the self is separated into two radically different ways of knowing and being in the world that are irreconcilable. For Dubois, one sense of self adopts and accepts the oppression of the black man and the other fights for his liberation.

Several theorists point out a double consciousness in other historically marginalized groups specifically women (Falcon, 2008; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007) and the LGBTQ community (Wallace, 2002). This has led us as a research team to argue that a type of *eco* double consciousness also exists, with one 'self' adopting the ecologically destructive dominant norms of Western culture and the other warring against them. The individual adopts the mainstream speciesism into part of themselves while maintaining another part that is ecologically sensitive and thus, can end up feeling internally divided. To illustrate this, I'll delve into some specific examples of the students and the teacher that I studied. My goal here is to reveal the ways in which the eco-sensitivity discussed in the previous chapters may be undermined by the dominant culture. I then plan to outline how the notion of 'belonging' (the aforementioned second theme from my research) may act as a form of resistance against this denigration of eco sensitivity.

9.2. Eco Double Consciousness

This section will illustrate how each individual that I researched embodied a type of eco double consciousness in their own way. This double consciousness if not addressed may work to counter the empathy and sensitivity towards the natural world that the children have been developing. I will describe how for these students a sense of belonging seemed to help them negotiate this splitting of identity.

Bambi was just starting to understand what an eco double consciousness might entail. As mentioned, she was usually at the end of the line on hikes at the school. What is she like when she's on hikes?" I asked one of her teachers, "She's a pain because she's so slow". "What's she doing?" I inquired. "I have no idea! She's always observing stuff and wanting to show Rosie or whoever is at the back" they answered. "What do you do in those instances?" I wondered. "I tell her to hurry up! She's one of those ones that you can't do much with" they said with a sigh. Bambi continually heard the call to speed up but appeared to be unable to conceive why people would so quickly pass things that were so interesting to her. Her eco double consciousness was just forming; she was gaining a sense that what was culturally expected of her was often different from her own choice. As she was reprimanded for being so slow, I saw her often nod to the teacher when they asked her to hurry up, internally she seemed to understand that this was the 'normal' thing to do but then she constantly was attracted by things on the forest path. One day she asked me if we could head to the back of the line, I asked her why and she explained 'then I can stop more without getting in trouble'. She realized how her behaviour was perceived by her teacher and yet, was trying to find ways to engage in it still, feeling a sense of value and joy in her small discoveries. Over the research term, she eventually hurried me along at times, telling me we should catch up with the group; she stopped but for shorter periods of time, looking at the find and then back to the disappearing group. In these small ways, Bambi felt her attention being torn between what she found value in and what she was told she should leave behind.

For Ecoboy, a double consciousness was quite present in his day to day reality as his peer group did not share his eco sensitivity. He identified himself as an "animal

lover" for the first year of school. I asked him what it's like being an 'animal lover' at the school,

> it can be hard because a lot of us aren't really respectful of our surroundings. Some kids at the beginning of the year were taking down trees for forts, they weren't really watching out or aware and they didn't care.

He told me he felt conflicted watching them do it, wanting to fit in socially and yet, he was worried about the impact on the animals in the place. In another instance, on a school day when a baby squirrel had fallen out of its nest, a group of older students gathered around it. Ecoboy in particular was very keen on watching it even when all the other kids had gone away. His friend shouted at him, "It's only a squirrel!" Ecoboy then trotted away and joined his friend to play sports in the field. Later on, his teacher teased him about caring for squirrels and suggested that they should kill them as they are an invasive species, Ecoboy shook his head 'no' despite the teasing. I asked him in the first year if any of his friends are also 'animal lovers', "Um…not a lot" he answered. Two years later I asked him to describe himself and he responded "athletic". I reminded him of his initial answer and he said that he still considered himself an animal lover but it was clearly not the first term that came to mind anymore. His mum noticed that as he entered into grade six, "he would rather go to the mall than go for a hike through the woods." Ecoboy's friends and one of his teachers reinforced the dominant presumption that his caring attitude around animals was silly yet, he would still quietly and excitedly tell me in detail about the owl that he recently saw in the playing field. Three years ago, he was noted for making remarks such as "isn't that pretty?" or "isn't that beautiful?" regarding finds in the natural world. On a recent hike, I crouched down with another student to look at a salamander while Ecoboy and his friends jostled past on their ipods texting each other, pausing he took a cursory look at the salamander and then hurried up to catch his friends. Still his mum told me she continued to see evidence of Ecoboy's "love for the natural world", citing his ongoing affinity for animals, his ties to the outdoors, and his excitement about going to a wilderness lodge which she mentioned that he had talked about "for months". Regarding his wall of nature in his room, she also commented "while he hasn't added anything to it, it is still something he proudly shows to visitors in our home". Thus, his mother was keenly aware of these two sides of self

that he was holding concurrently, one self which identified as an "animal lover" and the other moving away from that. She commented that "I still believe his love of the outdoors and nature is at the core of who he is", and mentioned that she hoped it would become "less hidden again in the next few years as he gets older." I think her choice of words here is very revealing; she had the sense, as do I that for Ecoboy the animal loving self had not disappeared or been fully abandoned but was in 'hiding'.

This sense of a double consciousness was also present for Ocean. He described a change in himself over the three years at the school. He tried to speak to me about this but I could tell that he was uncomfortable, pausing a lot and finding it hard to choose the proper words to articulate it.

> I just know that I'm a lot more … like I loved being outside before but now I get out there and I think I…relax into it sooner or differently. I get out there and I can feel myself go…anytime. I was always connected to it…but now there is a sense of…before there was a transition time but now I just let go but I don't know if it's because I'm better at feeling my surroundings or not. I listen a lot more too, I stop and I'm quiet and I just listen to what's going on around me.

He took a deep breath after saying this and qualified, "This sounds very airy fairy to me and I'm not that comfortable with it right?" I told him that I could sense that and encouraged him to continue. He added,

> But it's this piece, a letting go time and it's really been kind of neat for me. Before I used the forest I guess, it was like a place, like a playground whereas now I feel… more a part of it I guess…I've become more aware of my responsibility…I don't know…

He was visually uncomfortable at this point, squirming a bit as he described this. "That's hard for you to say?" I asked. "Ya" he answered, "Just because I've tended to be science and math and there is a right answer here and this is much more based on the way it makes you feel and that you are connected to it, you know?" He is quite conscious that this quiet, connected, emotional side could be seen as irrational and weak especially as a male in the dominant culture and I could see that he felt awkward sharing this side, aware of how it may be perceived.

We joke one day as he told me his family thought he was crazy for his recent interest in caddisflies, I can relate recounting many times when friends were bewildered by my fascination with the natural world. I sent Ocean an article on caddisflies after we found some on the salamander eggs at school, he replied,

> That is amazing stuff Laura. I'm all excited about this … so do you think the little things we saw going into the eggs (that we thought the caddisfly were laying) were midges? That was so fascinating to me. It drives me crazy that the kids aren't into this. It could be so cool to study. Maybe I am flogging a dead horse.

We can see here that he felt like he was struggling with getting the students to understand the wonder that he has for the natural world. In this way, Ocean was coming up against dominant cultural notions of what he should and shouldn't care about and trying to navigate his way through.
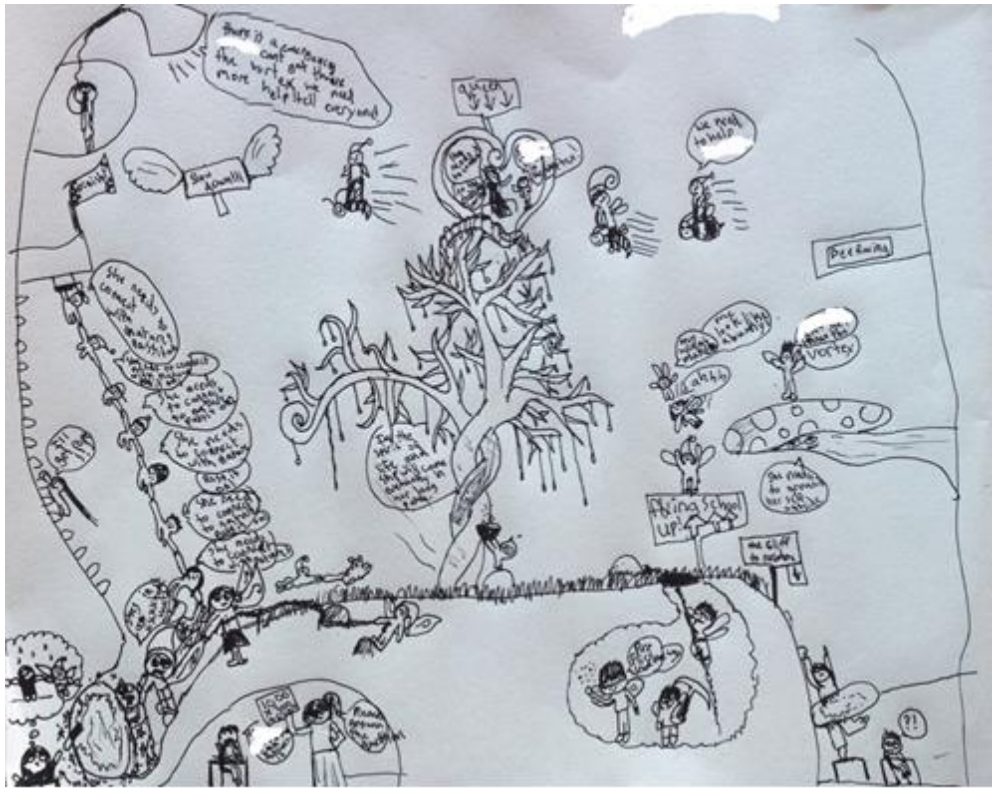
Finally, this eco double consciousness also appeared clearly for Raven. Early on in my research Raven told me that she thought the natural world literally spoke to her. Raven told me that she understood that what she was experiencing and trying to say here could be seen as downright 'crazy'. And yet, she seemed unwilling to choose to not hear, not know and not be that which she was, actively seeking out quiet and separate time during the school day so she could participate in these conversations within the natural world. The process of making sense of her own experiences for others was challenging for her as she had to translate something into a linguistic, cultural, context that which has no anchor for what she was trying to say.

Her mum Amber commented "When the children were younger, both of them would come home and say, "You know Mom, the other kids are just different than us." She continued "In the conventional school you feel like you're putting them into a lineup… like a shredding machine… everything, all the values and stuff that you've given them, they're gone." Her parents here spoke to a double consciousness where Raven felt the need to ignore or mask the ecologically sensitive side of herself. Raven was actively aware how her beliefs might be perceived by the outside world and clearly negotiated two worlds, one where it is safe to 'talk to trees' and the other where this was seen as impossible, one where the natural world was a series of inert objects and the

other where the natural world can act to teach and inform. She mentioned that she enjoyed being at the school because she didn't feel judged like she did at her old school in regards to this. Raven's parents commented on her awareness of when to share that what might be deemed 'crazy' by the larger population, "she'll say 'is now an appropriate time to share this?' Like in the bank lineup…you know so she knows and I'll tell her when it's appropriate for her to be completely candid."

This sense of a double consciousness is clearly depicted in a drawing that Raven has created. Raven and her family decided to move to a new town and the family had to fill out an application for a new outdoor school, as part of this Raven was asked to explain why she would like to attend, she used a drawing to depict what her mum describes as "a crisis scenario of her being pulled by the two worlds". Raven was depicted stuck behind a large boulder and dreaming of the rain falling on her, various caves exist where traditional school is taking place inside at desks, the teacher is holding a sign saying '10 000 x 300' =, asking to a student to answer the question. Various fairies are trying to help her escape, "she needs to connect with nature" they say. There is a clear division between two worlds here that she felt like she was struggling between; it's a concrete representation of this eco double consciousness.

Figure 9.1.   Raven's Two-World Drawing

Dubois (1903) pointed out that a double consciousness can lead to self-questioning and doubt when one's sense of self is already marginalized. Thus, this eco double consciousness if not addressed can work to seed doubt and complacency regarding the denigration of the natural world.   This has direct implications for environmental education; if we are educating to support ecologically conscious students within a larger culture that is ecologically destructive, then we need to consider ways in which we can encourage these students to remain confident in their ecologically sensitive selves. The sub-theme of 'belonging' that I found during my research helps to shed some light on ways in which students and educators can maintain the eco sensitivity that I have argued is so valuable for an ethic of eco care.

9.3. Belonging

If [children] are to peacefully coexist in this heterogeneous world, with differences that often pose ethical dilemmas and if they are to do so

without seeking to dominate, assimilate or appropriate these differences
they will need a firm sense of shared belonging and shared responsibility
within the natureculture collective of their immediate common worlds.
(Taylor, 2013, p. 117)

9.3.1. Human Community as Support Network

The word 'belong' was a repetitive refrain amongst the students and adults that I interviewed. The term was used in two contexts, the first indicating a connection and sense of security amongst the human community at the school and the second, to describe a partial integration of the self with the natural world. In this section, I will use examples from Ecoboy and Raven to describe the importance of this sense of belonging as it pertains to ecosensitivity. I'm specifically focusing on the older students here because due to her age, Bambi's connection with slugs and salmon may still be interpreted as 'normal childhood play' whereas, both Ecoboy and Raven as they entered their pre-teen years were more likely to be confronted with a dominant culture which suggested that they should be growing up and away from a seemingly sentimental relationship with the natural world and into the 'real world'. In this way, they were actively struggling with a sense of two selves and in the face of dominant Western culture, were regularly encouraged to shut away the eco sensitive self. I will describe how for both Ecoboy and Raven part of their confidence came from the human community and for Raven how the strength to remain eco sensitive also came through her connections to the more-than-human community[58].

One day Raven and I stumbled across an inch worm that looked dead, she handled it gently and pointed out a tiny crease in its back, it didn't move at all and we assumed that it was dead. She prepared a small grave site for it and another student at the school came over, mentioning that he did the same thing for a caterpillar the other day; he showed us a pile of stones which he had made as a marker. At this school, Raven was not alone in her eco sensitivity, she was surrounded by friends who were also deeply connected to the more-than-human and sometimes I found them sitting

[58] Each of these students derives strength from *both* the human world and the rest of the natural world, I separate out threads here to highlight their importance not to suggest that the source of confidence comes from one domain exclusively or independently.

quietly in the woods together just taking in their surroundings. Raven commented "with my best friends at school, we can be silent together under the trees and we talk about things that we've noticed in the forest". This friend base helped her eco sensitivity to flourish. Her parents commented

> She really needs to trust and feel stability in the friendship before she will put herself on the line and discuss her connection and views, so in a comfortable situation where she knows she's not going to be judged or that people won't be able to understand what it is that she is talking about, she's completely comfortable and I'm starting to see those relationships deepen, with some of her friends.

I see that as well over the years of research with Raven. After we had built a relationship over a year, she commented to me, "I like how you understand when I say something, you're never like 'What??!!   I didn't understand that.' or 'You're crazy!!'" Her mum Amber commented on this type of human community bond, "It's a trust that she's not going to need to debate her knowing…", "her beliefs" her stepdad inserts, "It's a *knowing* for her, it's not just a belief," her mum countered before continuing

> She has been in that situation before and realized that not everyone sees it this way; in fact, a lot of people don't see it this way. She recognizes the different schools of thought even within our family, she'll ask me if this is an appropriate time to discuss such and such and sometimes it's not, you're just wasting time, it's not going to be heard.

I can see how her mother supports her eco sensitivity here through the intentional use of the term 'knowing' versus 'belief', as she aims to honour Raven as not just having an opinion but having a "whole different way of seeing", a different worldview and epistemology, one where it seems unquestionable that the natural world can also act as community; in doing so, she acts as an ally for her daughter. Having friends and family that understood and supported her then in turn boosted her confidence in her own ways of knowing. "It's like a big family here, I feel free to be myself" she told me in relation to the school. The human community of the school and at home are for the most part, safe spaces for her to come fully into her ecologically sensitive self.

Interestingly, although Ecoboy's peer group was quite different than Ravens and it would be a stretch to call them eco sensitive, he was still building a sense of belonging

that increased his confidence. I asked Ecoboy to finish the prompt 'I feel best' and at the beginning of the research term he answered 'when I see other kids learn, like when they don't get it and then suddenly they do'. This changes little over a year, at the end of the research term he answers 'I feel best when I'm around others… other people, learning with them and helping them.' His parents described him as being genuinely happy for the others around him when something positive happens to them and his teachers describe him as a peace maker, always making others around him feel comfortable and safe. It's clear that he benefited from the human community around him and vice versa. He described the school as 'a big family' and one of the parks where the school took place as a 'second home'. The school staff commented often that he felt a strong sense of belonging at the school, with a best friend that was attached at the hip, "It's weird how we just met each other and we're pretty much the exact same." his best friend told me. They had many similar interests and they finished each other's sentences as I interviewed them; it was hard to tell where one ended and the other began "We became instant friends from the beginning, from the first time we talked" Ecoboy said grinning. When I asked what made their friendship so strong they both agreed that they challenged each other to do new things and were both willing to try something out. "We teach each other and that helps us boost each other up" his friend told me.

This sense of involvement in a strong friendship and wider human community at the school has contributed to an increase in Ecoboy's confidence. All the staff noted a change over the years at school for him in this regard. His teachers described him in the first year of school as 'quiet and non-intrusive'. One of them commented:

> He was voted in at a young age onto the student council and then he became… not more intrusive …but he gained voice. So now it's easy to see that voice and that strength that's coming out of him; he feels really comfortable here.

Another staff member agreed that increased confidence is the biggest change they've seen in Ecoboy over three years,

> Definitely confidence that's one that shows, before he wouldn't really stand out which can be a good thing, don't know if was an overt or deliberate move on his part but he would kind of melt into the background. But now, you know when the clan gathers, his group of

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boys there they stand a bit on the outside and they act more like leaders in the community and very much willing to take that on. There is a quiet confidence and more maturity, he doesn't seem to be as frail, he seems stronger and maybe some of that has come because of those social connections and being supported in other ways and in other places so that it all compliments each other. That is the biggest change.

Ecoboy himself explained that his friends and family were a major support for him regarding this increase in confidence.

> Ecoboy: At the very beginning of school I mostly didn't talk to anyone.
>
> Laura: How did that change over time?
>
> Ecoboy: People started coming and talking to me and that's how basically I got friends. And then I started talking to other people because I was more confident.
>
> Laura: What's helped with the confidence piece?
>
> Ecoboy: Talking to friends and teachers. Getting to know and trust other people. Being outside with the teachers alone.
>
> Laura: Any teacher in particular?
>
> Ecoboy: Alan. Definitely. He talks to me, helps me with things when I don't know how to do them, help me understand it a bit more so I know I can do it.

'Alone' or one on one time with the teacher here has helped him feel more confident. While he was talking in general terms here, he also spoke to me more specifically about how this has provided him motivation to act on his eco sensitivity at times.

> I asked him one day, "If you see someone being disrespectful to the natural world what do you do?" He responded:

> I usually go get a teacher, or…I used to do that, now often I tell them to stop but I will also still go get a teacher. With the kids who were chopping down trees at the beginning when the school started, I just let them be because I didn't talk a lot because I didn't have a lot of friends.

So has there has been a change?" I asked. "Yes, I feel more comfortable speaking up now, it's definitely changed." he commented. "Why is that?" I wondered. "Because now I'm more confident and I also know what's allowed and what isn't." A staff member

commented "as he becomes more secure and more confident, in our school he's been demonstrating more initiative too, he responds in his quiet way as leader or he helps to control part of the group." As Ecoboy gained confidence bolstered by human friends and teachers, he also felt more comfortable to voice his concerns when other students have a negative impact on the natural world; I saw this happening as he intervened increasingly over time however, as mentioned previously his peers also teased him for this. During these times he turned to the adult community for advice. Ocean commented

> If I bring up a topic and say it's an area that's sensitive, he makes sure that he's on top of that too, you see that in him too and he does model it for the kids around him, he'll tell them not to do something if he sees them kicking a stump apart, he'll know that's more than just a dead stump.

It's evident that Ecoboy was looking to his teachers for a sense of "what is allowed and what isn't", their place as role models here was important as even if Ecoboy thought something was unfair or unjust, at this point he still looked to his teachers for reassurance as to when he should speak up. His parents described "he's one that will abide by the rules", they mentioned that if the teachers were modeling a certain way of being in relation to the natural world, Ecoboy would pick up on that and stick to it as a guide for his own behaviour. In other words, Ecoboy was very much still looking to his teachers for limits and boundaries of care/empathy/concern.

How power was situated in the human group was very much a factor for these students as well. One day Raven and I are sitting in the field near the tree she has been spending time with during solo time. She glances up to see a group of older students huddled around the tree.

Raven: Awww.. they are taking stuff off of my tree! They are peeling off the bark and lichen… [Her body tenses up.]

Laura: "So what can you do in this situation?

Raven: I could tell them not to, but I can't because it's not my tree right now, it's only my tree at tree time, the teachers said. I can't tell them not to do that.

Laura: I think it's fair, you have a connection to it, you think it has value.

Raven: Ya, but they are older than me.

There are a couple instances of power at play here, the teachers have told the students that they do not have control over who visits 'their' tree or plays on it during free time but we can see here that this rule is limiting Raven's courage in speaking out for the tree. The age of the students also intimidates her as she is uncertain as to how she will be seen/understand if she speaks out. Again, like Ecoboy she was looking to her teachers for guidance yet, this conflicted with what her heart was telling her. She was also in a reverse situation from Ecoboy where the presence of other human students was decreasing her confidence and causing her to be quiet on a situation where she wanted to have voice.

These experiences suggest that educators working to cultivate eco sensitivity should remain aware of the potential positive and negative influence of the surrounding human community. On one hand, power and hierarchy are inscribed in human communities in subtle and not so subtle ways such that students may feel increasingly marginalized for their ecological sensitivity. On the other, a sense of comfort and belonging in a community that values ecological care can bolster confidence and courage. Thus, ecosensitivity and eco care can grow or remain stunted depending on a sense of human related belonging, inclusion or exclusion. As educators we need to remain vigilant as to the insidious ways in which we or others may be opening up the possibility for care towards the more-than-human world or conversely, closing it and thus, hindering the opportunity for future relations. This also suggests that as humans we can work as allies helping each other to gain the courage to speak with and for the natural world, providing a wider network of support against the dominant view which suggests that it should have no voice.

9.3.2.   A Connection to the Land

Aldo Leopold (1949) once stated "We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we

may begin to use it with love and respect." Since then many ecopsychologists (Roszak et al., 1995; Fisher, 2002) have argued that a sense of 'belonging' to the natural world may be a prerequisite for increasing environmental protection. Roszak (1995) for example argues that "if the self is expanded to include the natural world, behavior leading to destruction of this world will be experienced as self-destruction" (p.12). I observed this in Raven when she would feel nauseous if other students were recklessly trampling in the forest; her health seemed intertwined with that of the woods around her. While the dangers of total assimilation of self with the natural world have already been discussed, my research supports other literature which has found that a sense of belonging with the natural world can influences one's concern and care for it and help inform one's moral conduct.

While others in this study used the term 'belonging', Raven constantly referred to her 'connection' to the earth as a synonym for this. She was acutely aware of when she felt connected or disconnected. Jasper, her stepdad mentioned "this summer [Raven] made the comment that 'oh I need to maintain my connection with nature'." Amber continued to describe

> Well, she had gone out with my mum for seven days camping. It was amazing, they wound all the way up north in B.C., [Raven] came back and after having no influence of technology she just felt so good and I was talking to her and she said 'Mum, I just really want to stay connected', so she's even sensing it.

Raven described this difference that she felt when she was grounded to the earth and when she was not, "When I'm in my house I feel disconnected and I feel very plain but when I'm outside in the ravine by my house I feel more alive and fresh." "Why plain?" I asked. "Manufactured things seem to suck all the living life out, shut off like a light switch." Curious, I asked "So that's how you feel when disconnected? "It's hard to explain", she said, "it's like you don't feel anything, it's more like dull. You know when you are hearing something and it just stops, that's what it feels like, cut off. That's how I feel when I'm disconnected". "What does it mean to connect?" I wondered "To actually feel the natural world, the trees and plants and everything" she said. "Can you describe it?" I asked. "I feel it in my heart as feeling not as like words. Buzzy in my heart…" "When do you feel connected?" I asked her. She answered:

> Sometimes I like to lay in the grass and let the sun warm me. Sometimes I just take some time from recess and go out to the forest like over here. I like to sit at the base of my tree or the bench and look up and imagine all the things that live in the tree and everything else that is borrowing the tree, all the life on the tree. I feel at home when I am grounded.

"Is your tree a place that grounds you?" I wondered. Raven responded:

> Yes, it makes me feel really happy and it clears my mind. All the bad things and good things or something that happened, it just allows me to clear that from my head. When I come here I feel happy and cleared. Cleared is a good word to describe it.

There is a sense that this connection with the natural world helped to rejuvenate, contributing to a feeling of wellness.

As mentioned here and previously, she was proactive in finding space to 'ground' or 'connect' herself to the earth throughout the school day. In this way, she maintained a sense of relationship with the natural world. She used words like 'home', 'comfort' and 'clearing to describe this. It's apparent that in a predominantly man-made environment she felt 'cut off', 'plain', like the 'life is sucked out' of her. As a result, when describing her learning in her previous conventional, indoor school she said she was "exhausted" and had headaches, "I felt kind of trapped in a little box". At the same time, she was certain she was not merged with the earth, losing herself into it, "I belong to it but it's different than me, a tree is a tree and I am not a tree", she said smiling. In this way, she kept a sense of belongingness and separateness that seemed to instinctively impact her as we've seen with her embodied reaction to the realization of what was under her feet as she walked. The staff at the school attributed her mature decision making abilities to this sense of connection or belonging to the more-than-human world. One commented:

> While some kids are ripping off the branches, she never would think of doing that. I feel like this is because she has a broader base of knowing things like the natural world and the interconnectedness that deeper heartfelt real understanding of what is happening around her.

A teacher mentioned "She hasn't picked up on the lack of empathy towards nature that some of the others in the group have." "What allows her to be consistent with that?" I asked. They responded:

> I would think that it is part of her connection with the natural world. She can see different things and understand that there are so many differences in the natural world that keeps that empathy there, an understanding of each other, all our relations, rather than become maybe more selfish and less reflective.

Over my years of research with Raven, I have come to understand that the natural world in many ways actively informed her of right and wrong when it comes to moral conduct. This is not something that I can pinpoint through example as it was an inner process for her, yet there was the general sense that her ethical decision making draws on ways of knowing and being that the place invites into or actively tells her. As it is an active communicating presence in her life, the natural world appeared to act a source of guidance in regards to morality for her. There is an inner knowing, as her mother described, of the land as part of all that she does and all that she is. Another teacher commented:

> You can see her connection to the land in all that she does at school; its concern is her concern. For example, on the student council she's often the one to bring up ideas around caring for the place in addition to the people but it's also in the way in which she carries herself. It's like part of the place is always in her, informing her.

Her stepdad mentions how this can play out ethically for her

> One thing she talks about is how she wants to create an eco day at school because the trees are getting trampled on quite a bit; she wants to bring some dirt in and cover up those roots. You can hear her passion behind that, that's really meaningful for her.

Thus, in addition to looking towards her human community for strength, Raven actively sought out a sense of connectedness in the more-than-human world. This in turn, seemed to strengthen her ability to be eco sensitive despite wider cultural influences as she has developed a felt connection to it as an active communicating presence in her life as well as a home, a place of comfort and belonging.

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The staff at the school all agreed that this is largely due to how Raven's family has raised her; a staff member described

> I think she'll always be grounded in the land and nature itself, that's the way she has been brought up with that connection. Because of the way she's been brought up and who she is I don't think that she really fits the typical consumer child of the city or even our suburbia, as some of the other kids do in this school, even though they come here and interact with us and say what they are supposed to say. She, I don't think leaves here and goes into the place of consumerism and all that stuff. She has a sense of belonging to the land which is the family culture.

This brings us back to the importance of our human community in creating a place where this type of belonging to the natural world can be cultivated. Her mother pointed out that the school human community had been influential in strengthening Raven's sense of belonging to the earth; Amber, described:

> She has a sense of belonging at the school that was not present in her previous school. I think this has to do with the openness in allowing students to connect to the earth in their own ways. I think it's important to connect and through that understand that you are a part of it, you can't expect them to connect if they are learning hands-on only part time. This allows them to connect on their own terms in a lot of ways.

Such observations around Raven's experience shed light on the possible benefits of increasing the amount of time available for students to spend learning from the more-than-human community itself. This underlines the importance of thoughtful planning on behalf of the educator so that students are given the opportunity for longer amounts of time attending to place instead of having short, scattered moments here and there. Amber emphasized how a stable place where Raven could return to was also essential in establishing subtle ways of relating to and knowing the more-than-human (Jardine, 2006). Developing a relationship with a specific place, where the more-than-human is not completely silenced, can work as an act of resistance in a "culture of fast knowledge" (Orr, 1994, p. 36), which is "cut off from its ecological and social context" (p. 41). Amber also commented on how the students were given the space "to connect on their own terms" which is an intriguing challenge for educators to open space for children to interact with the natural world in a range of ways. This is quite apparent with the

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research students as Ecoboy and Bambi connect through hands-on, active experiences whereas, Raven finds a sense of belonging through a more reflective and contemplative involvement.

Overall, it's apparent that a sense of belonging to both a human community which has ecological care as a central value, and the chance to feel deeply connected with the more-than-human community, collectively help to maintain eco sensitivity. These acts of belonging can work as hubs of resistance against the dominant cultural which denigrates such behaviour. The human and more-than-human world at the school under study have acted as a safe haven for Raven and Ecoboy in many regards such that for the most part they were not made to feel as though their concern for the natural world was 'strange' or 'silly'. Their confidence was high and so was their motivation to act or voice their concern for the more-than-human. This suggests that as educators we can help ease the eco double consciousness by fostering a human community that places eco sensitivity in high regard. Making space for students to develop a sense of belonging to the natural world is also essential such that even when the prevailing human voice suggests that concern for the more-than-human is 'crazy' or 'romantic', there is an inner knowing that comes from relation which resists this.

These types of belonging need to happen concurrently. This was very apparent at the school under study where many students were dealing with complex personal issues. Each of the students that I researched had events in their lives including parents separating, a family moving and coping with serious family illness that required emotional maturity. Thus, in addition to the eco double consciousness that I previously described, these young children were dealing with matters that were at times very stressful and full of anxiety and thus, eco sensitivity can appear as an 'escape', a frivolous indulgence, simply not a priority or virtually unattainable given the attention needed in the human realm of care. For example, Ecoboy's mum commented

> I do attribute some of this at least to the struggles we were having at home with Lucky[59] being in hospital for over three months of this year and only one parent being around as one was always at the hospital. It

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[59] Ecoboy's brother

was a time of turmoil and worry which definitely affected Ecoboy and his ability to enjoy his days in the natural world….[this was one factor which] hindered his ability to move forward and truly engage and build on his immersion with the Natural World.

Thus, as educators it's important that we do not dismiss the personal, social context of each child as it is integral to understanding a path forward for them in terms of developing ecological sensitivity. Given this, I asked one of the staff, "Do you think that sense of belonging would be a critical piece on where to begin then, if you're trying to do whatever form of ecological education?" They replied:

> Absolutely. I can't help but think that if you're trying to cultivate a sense of attachment and care for the natural world, this sort of respect, people throw that word around but I mean a healthy respect as a living entity, a cogent entity, entities in their own right …then heal thy self, right?…Until we feel like we matter and we belong as individuals and to each other, then we're banging our heads against the wall, right? Then somebody's not going to care about what happens to that fern or that insect, or the tree bark or the moss…you just don't have the capacity when you either loathe yourself or you're so consumed with anxiety that you feel all day or you're disconnected from any community or your surroundings.

They continued,

> I think for Ecoboy too, the things that are so pressing, that so dominate a child's heart and head, how do you expend the mental and emotional energy to learn to do the hard work of making those connections and holding them and maintaining them especially in the face of such destruction both you know in his family and the possibility of death and the same thing in the natural world right? How do you do that? How do you hang on to that when you are dealing with it yourself, in your own family, how can you possibly have the space to do that? And the strength to do that?

This is where the aforementioned dual sense of belonging becomes so essential, the staff member continued

> If it's a place where the community can hold that for a series of time and maybe being outside does some of that too and shares in that then good, because that would be my first hope for him too, that he can arrive at this place where he has the strength and the courage.

Here they have highlighted the importance of a dual sense of belonging in both the human and the more-than-human community in providing children with the strength to care for the inhabitants of the natural world alongside their own selves and other human relationships. Given the cultural denigration of eco care, this means human communities must actively find ways to support children in developing, growing and maintaining their eco sensitive selves.

Educators seeking to cultivate an eco sensitivity as well as healthy human relations must be constantly aware of the complex context a child can carry, in order to dig the roots of a robust eco care. As in the case of human relationships, for relation with the more-than-human to grow, trust, comfort and a sense of safety must be there. A school staff member commented

> It's such a complex group of kids and parents, their underlying stories are huge, they've left their conventional school for all sorts of reasons. Because of that complexity, there is a huge variety, some kids have demonstrated a gain in terms of their connection to the natural world yet there's the other side of me that says you can't see it yet, that it has to be there because being outside is the first step in becoming connected. Then I hope that when they come here they can learn to relax and know this place is safe, that the natural world here is safe. But how do you feel as you attention grows throughout the day and how do you feel about going home because your mother just got punched? There are deep shadows. Still there are studies from psychologists about how just being out in nature affects people, it's probably affecting them more than they imagine because the kids come here and smile and play.

As we've seen with Raven and Ecoboy, in addition to their connection with the school human community, they referred to the natural world as a 'home' or a tree as a 'friend' and they spoke of an increased sense of 'freedom' and 'excitement' being outside. The natural world was offering them a type of nourishment unique from their human community but not independent of it. Their comfort and sense of belonging in the human community affected their ability to connect to the more-than-human community. As one staff members pointed out

> without a doubt where we've seen the greatest growth in relationships, in trust, in levels of anxiety, in belongingness, it has been all of those things and until they were taken care of and until kids got to the point where some of those things changed for them it didn't matter what we

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were asking them to do, what kind of ecological awareness we were asking them to cultivate or to nurture or how wide awake we were asking them to be… they couldn't until those things were taken care of[60].

Unlike this staff member, I don't believe that this a sequential process, as at times the land can be offering things that the human community cannot and vice versa so that the two working in tandem have the potential to hold and support in a more robust way than one alone. This dual sense of belonging has major impacts for environmental education as alongside the aforementioned practice of caring for the welfare of the wild other, cultivating awareness of it and learning to hear its voice, it's also essential that educators work to build trust, reduce anxiety and increase the student's sense of comfort. This sense of belonging situates the individual in a network of support and nourishment for their eco sensitivity in the face of culture that does just the opposite.

9.4. Conclusion

Through this research I have seen how particular ways of attending, valuing and listening to the more-than-human have allowed these children to develop an eco sensitivity which in turn can blossom into a deep eco care. As educators we need to continue to think into how to foster and nurture these roots of care as there is the potential for the child's distribution of the sensible to include a sense of the more-than-human as a teacher. This in turn expands what is intelligible, visible and possible not only for the child as a learner but for our relations with all earth others. Such pedagogical work around the expansion of 'possibility' should also be paired with a discussion on belonging. This educational work around belonging is essential in resisting dominant cultural norms that may be working against eco care. Together through these offerings of possibilities and resistance cautionary ecological care has the

[60] Conversely, one can also establish strong relationships with the natural world while experiencing negative human relations. The point here is that tandem work to counter destructive human relationships is needed for eco care to flourish. Yes, it is possible to care for the natural world without having much human to human care present however a supportive human community can assist children in deepening and maintaining eco sensitivity in a wider culture that denigrates it.

potential to position the natural world as a locus for moral attention, essential in this time of ecological crises.

The study has truly been generative in terms of areas for further research; questions going forward include: What other factors might influence eco care? How might an educator approach ecological double consciousness? How do cultural conceptions of gender influence eco care capacity and capability? How does compassion differ from eco care? What does eco care look like in urban environments or for marginalized communities? What contributes to ecological violence and how might the educator approach instances of it?   I plan to continue researching moral development in relation to the natural world to see what it might offer the field of education. I'd also like to expand my work on eco portraiture, trying some of the arts and place-based approaches of the methodology with educators to see what that may elicit.

My own distribution of the sensible has majorly shifted through this research, helping me to see how culturally ingrained our conceptions of moral development are and how this in turn limits our students and our teaching. I have taken these lessons and have begun to negotiate and teach into that space right before the fern is about to be plucked out of the ground or the worm is to be stepped on, to strive for the possibility of eco care knowing that avoiding the messiness of the moral dilemma will not make it go away. Another outcome of this work is the blossoming of my care for these students and their families. The boundaries of what I know, feel and think have been greatly expanded due to these children. I can't highlight enough the importance of attending to and honouring youth voice and experience and urge us as educators to seriously think into how it might inform educational design and practice. These children have become some of my most powerful teachers and to think we so often dismiss them as 'students' only, we are tossing away so much. I have also encountered countless more-than-human teachers throughout this study and been forced to deeply examine my own eco care, as well as my own moral decision making process on a daily basis. I continue to delve into education and activism as paths forward to mitigate suffering in this time of ecocide. So I end by wrapping these living narratives in an urgent hope that educators

actively resist our cultural legacy of ecological destruction and embrace the possibility of cautionary eco care.

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Appendix A.

Audio Clip of Fort Exploration with Ecoboy

Creator: Laura Piersol

Description: This audio clip was created during a visit to Ecoboy's fort in the woods at a park where the school took place. The question he was answering was "What are some memorable moments about your fort?" I provide this clip here to contrast the sit down interview answer that he provided in chapter one (see Table 1.8).

Filename: ecoboy-fort.mp4

Appendix B.

Audio Clip of Bambi Exploring the Park

Creator: Laura Piersol

Description: This audio clip was created during Bambi's self-initiated exploration of a park where the school took place. The prompt she was answering was "Tell me about some things you have found in the forest today" I provide this clip here to contrast the sit down interview answer that she provided in chapter one (see Table 1.9).

Filename: bambi.mp3