

**ECOFEMINIST PEDAGOGY:  
FRAMEWORK FOR ECOSOCIAL JUSTICE IN  
EDUCATION**

by

Lara Jean Harvester  
Bachelor of Arts, Simon Fraser University, 2006  
Bachelor of Education, Simon Fraser University, 2007

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

In the  
Faculty of Education

© Lara Harvester, 2009

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Spring, 2009

All rights reserved. This work may not be  
reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopy  
or other means, without permission of the author.

# Approval

**Name:** Lara Jean Harvester  
**Degree:** Master of Arts in Education  
**Title of Thesis:** Ecofeminist Pedagogy: Framework for Ecosocial Justice in Education.

**Examining Committee:**

**Chair:** **Name**  
[Correct title – Consult your Grad Secretary/Assistant

---

**Dr. Sean Blenkinsop**  
Senior Supervisor  
Correct title – Consult your Grad Secretary/Assistant

---

**Name**  
**Dr. Heesoon Bai**  
Correct title – Consult your Grad Secretary/Assistant

---

**Name**  
[Internal or External] Examiner  
Correct title – Consult your Grad Secretary/Assistant  
University or Company (if other than SFU)

**Date Defended/Approved:** \_\_\_\_\_



SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY  
LIBRARY

## Declaration of Partial Copyright Licence

The author, whose copyright is declared on the title page of this work, has granted to Simon Fraser University the right to lend this thesis, project or extended essay to users of the Simon Fraser University Library, and to make partial or single copies only for such users or in response to a request from the library of any other university, or other educational institution, on its own behalf or for one of its users.

The author has further granted permission to Simon Fraser University to keep or make a digital copy for use in its circulating collection (currently available to the public at the "Institutional Repository" link of the SFU Library website <[www.lib.sfu.ca](http://www.lib.sfu.ca)> at: <<http://ir.lib.sfu.ca/handle/1892/112>>) and, without changing the content, to translate the thesis/project or extended essays, if technically possible, to any medium or format for the purpose of preservation of the digital work.

The author has further agreed that permission for multiple copying of this work for scholarly purposes may be granted by either the author or the Dean of Graduate Studies.

It is understood that copying or publication of this work for financial gain shall not be allowed without the author's written permission.

Permission for public performance, or limited permission for private scholarly use, of any multimedia materials forming part of this work, may have been granted by the author. This information may be found on the separately catalogued multimedia material and in the signed Partial Copyright Licence.

While licensing SFU to permit the above uses, the author retains copyright in the thesis, project or extended essays, including the right to change the work for subsequent purposes, including editing and publishing the work in whole or in part, and licensing other parties, as the author may desire.

The original Partial Copyright Licence attesting to these terms, and signed by this author, may be found in the original bound copy of this work, retained in the Simon Fraser University Archive.

Simon Fraser University Library  
Burnaby, BC, Canada

## **Abstract**

Why have environmental education, critical pedagogy, and anti-oppressive education been unable to reach their goals of societal change? This thesis examines some of the shortcomings and oversights of these frameworks through an ecofeminist lens, and then offers ecofeminist pedagogy as an alternative framework for educators who want to see education become a more powerful source of social and ecological justice. Ecofeminism calls for ecosocial justice, which acknowledges the links between social injustice and environmental degradation. For educators to see social and ecological justice occur, they must link the two together instead of keeping them separate. This thesis includes an analysis of the Social Justice 12 course offered by the British Columbia Ministry of Education, and offers Ecosocial Justice 12 as an alternative.

**Keywords:** ecofeminism; ecofeminist pedagogy; social justice; environmental education; critical pedagogy; anti-oppression pedagogy.

## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to Josh and Colton, who patiently put up with hearing “I have to study” for the past nine years.

## **Acknowledgements**

If I were to thank all the people who have influenced me along the way to this thesis, the list would be longer than your average awards show acceptance speech. That said, a special thanks has to go to Sean Blenkinsop, whose ubiquitous questions will be missed. He gently pushed me to think carefully about my assumptions, and pulled off the tricky balance of assisting without controlling throughout the writing of this thesis. Sean was an example of what it might mean to teach in the spirit of ecofeminism.

Heesoon Bai encouraged me to reflect on my life experiences and let them lead me to the questions that I felt most passionate about trying to answer. This played a significant role in the choosing of this thesis topic. I am thankful for her encouragement and support.

My family and friends have offered moral and practical support throughout my education, including the writing of this thesis, making all the difference in this journey.

# Table of Contents

<b>Approval</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>Dedication</b> .....	<b>iv</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>v</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	<b>vi</b>
<b>Chapter One Questioning the Social/Ecological Divide in Education</b> .....	<b>1</b>
Problems In Education.....	11
Summary .....	22
<b>Chapter 2 Ecofeminism: A Philosophy of Ecosocial Justice</b> .....	<b>23</b>
A General Description of Ecofeminism and its Main Tenants .....	26
Ecofeminist Philosophy.....	30
Ecofeminism and Ecosocial Justice.....	35
Ecofeminism, Anti-oppressive Education, and Critical Pedagogy.....	38
Summary .....	42
<b>Chapter 3 Ecofeminist Pedagogy for Ecosocial Justice</b> .....	<b>44</b>
Preparation.....	47
What About Power?.....	51
Embrace power? .....	53
Problematic aspects of challenging <i>power over</i> relationships.....	54
Authority and Power.....	57
Moving away from domination .....	58
Dialogue .....	59
Dialogue in the Educational Context.....	62
Dialogue with More-Than-Human-Nature.....	66
Consciousness-Raising and Embodied Knowing .....	71
Ecofeminist Pedagogy and Racism .....	74
Summary .....	78
<b>Chapter 4 Ecofeminist Pedagogy in Action: Social Justice 12 Becomes Ecosocial Justice 12</b> .....	<b>82</b>
Introduction .....	83
Social Justice 12 to Ecosocial Justice 12.....	85
Curriculum Organizer “Defining Ecosocial Justice” .....	88
Curriculum Organizer “Recognizing and Analysing Ecosocial Injustice” .....	92
Curriculum Organizer “Moving Toward an Ecosocially Just World” .....	94
The Earth Charter as a Framework Document .....	96

Creating Space for Dialogue.....	102
Assessment .....	105
Ecological Design and Education.....	110
Summary .....	115
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>116</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>121</b>
Works Cited .....	121
Internet Sources Without Authors.....	129



## **Chapter One**

### **Questioning the Social/Ecological Divide in Education**

“That's just the way it is. Some things will never change” states a racist old man to the younger man who questions him in Bruce Hornsby's song “The way it is” (1986). The singer replies, “Hey old man, how can you stand to think that way. Did you really think about it before you made the rules?” Hornsby's song has always struck a chord with me. I find the idealist in me questioning “the way things are” in the world, especially in relations to issues of injustice. For most of my life issues of social injustice dominated my concerns, but over the past five years my awareness about the ecological crisis facing the world has caused me to explore how to address both issues as they relate to my roles as a citizen, parent, and educator. In the mainstream educational system in North America, despite movements for social justice and environmental education, it seems as if “business as usual,” or “some things will never change,” is the predominant model. This thesis is my attempt to investigate a framework to challenge “The way things are” in the educational system when it comes to issues of social and ecological injustice.

Given that environmental education and pedagogies that address social justice in schools have not produced the desired improvements in schools and the wider society, I believe educators need to ask where we have gone wrong, and what we can do to change direction. As Orr says, “We are in need of an educational perestroika” (1994, p. 17).

O'Sullivan argues that the fundamental educational task of our times is to make choices that lead to ecological sustainability and social justice, which will require “a radical restructuring of all current educational directions” (1999, p. 45). In this thesis, I argue that ecofeminism offers a potentially transforming framework for a pedagogy that brings together social justice and concern for the environment (ecological justice), and addresses possible reasons why radical pedagogical projects centred on social justice and the environment have to date not realized their goals. The basic starting point of ecofeminist philosophy “is that the dominations of women, other human Others, and nonhuman nature are interconnected, are wrong, and ought to be eliminated” (Warren, 2000, p. 155). I critique environmental education because it is the site in education that was supposed to change society's attitude towards nature, and nurture future generations that would live more ecologically sustainable lives. This has not yet occurred in a substantial enough way to halt the ecological crisis. Anti-oppression pedagogy and critical pedagogy are the focus of my critique in regards to social justice projects in education. I chose these social justice approaches because the literature admits things have not improved substantially in regards to social justice in education, and these are the social justice pedagogies I am most familiar with, have some training in, and so can talk about with some understanding. It is not my intent to denigrate the contributions of environmental education, critical theory, or anti-oppressive education, but to suggest that all three have weaknesses that may be addressed through an ecofeminist lens. I agree with Greenwood (2008) who argues for a critical synthesis between critical pedagogy and pedagogies concerned with improving human relationships with each other and nature. Greenwood

encourages educators to invite relationships, which is “sound ecological thinking, and sound pedagogical and political strategy” (2008, p. 340). I see ecofeminism as one framework that encourages this relationship building while encouraging a linking of social and ecological justice.

I come to this investigation having been raised in a white rural community. My upbringing included a steady ethical diet of social justice with a religious slant. This meant that not only was it important to treat other humans with respect and compassion, but one ought to also care for their eternal soul. Later in life my understanding of the supernatural changed, but I did not lose my belief in social justice. However, my basis for believing it was important was no longer based on a Christian worldview. Concern for the ecological crisis only really started once I began my undergraduate degree, which included a minor in biology (focus on ecology). Still, my concern for social justice remained more important in comparison to my concern about the ecological crisis. I definitely held an unquestioned anthropocentric conceptual framework. As I worked my way through the social justice centred course work in my education graduate studies, I slowly became aware that a piece of the puzzle was missing for me. Eventually I realized it was that my concerns about the ecological crisis were not addressed in the social justice literature I was reading. This realization led me to start asking why social justice and the ecological crisis had not been linked together in any of my formal university training (or my religious upbringing). I wanted to find a way to bring them together under one umbrella, to create a more cohesive framework for myself as a parent, citizen, and educator. This process led me to select this particular thesis topic.

What do I mean by social and ecological justice? Social justice is most often understood as the fulfillment of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and is concerned with distributive (who gets what and who bears burdens for) and retributive principles (how people are treated during social transactions) (Capeheart & Milovanovic, 2007; Warren, 2000). Social justice includes addressing discrimination, marginalization, and oppression in the form of sexism, racism, classism, ableism, and ageism (for example). Marginalized populations of students, those experiencing the above mentioned “isms”, receive the most attention in educational social justice literature. In educational discourse, social justice is largely meant to help students achieve academic success so that they can have the social capital needed to gain economic security after graduation, participate fully in the political life of a nation, and reach full attainment of human rights (Bell, 2007). This involves enabling

...people to develop the critical analytical tools necessary to understand oppression and their own socialization within oppressive systems, and to develop a sense of agency and capacity to interrupt and change oppressive patterns and behaviours in themselves and in the institutions and communities of which they are a part (Bell, 2007, p. 2).

In chapter two I will articulate an ecofeminist understanding of social justice, which includes the above notions but goes beyond them to incorporate ecological justice.

Ecological justice is defined in a variety of ways. In some contexts, it is used interchangeably with environmental justice, which refers to the equitable distribution of environmental harms and resources (Taylor, 1997). Others see ecological justice as

justice for more-than-human nature, and creating conditions for the flourishing of ecological communities (biotic and abiotic).<sup>1</sup> The term “ecojustice” (Bowers, 2001) encompasses social justice and justice for more-than-human nature, emphasizing that the former cannot be achieved without the later. In other words, there can be no true social justice without a fair and equitable relationship with more-than-human nature. Furman and Gruenewald (2004) call this idea “socioecological justice.” I prefer the term “ecosocial justice” because it puts the eco first, symbolizing how the social is embedded in the eco, and so justice for humans must take place in conjunction with justice for more-than-human nature.<sup>2</sup> As Shiva argues, “Restraint on resource use and living within nature's limits are preconditions for social justice” (2005, p. 50). My interpretation of ecosocial justice is based on the declarations of the Earth Charter (2000) and encompasses notions of social and ecological justice in the spirit of respect, compassion, peace, and democracy. It includes the understanding that humans are part of nature, and in a relationship of interdependence and partnership with more-than-human nature and with other humans (Earth Charter, 2000). As I discuss in chapter two, these are also key principles of ecofeminism. Ecosocial justice is not ecosocialist justice. Although

---

<sup>1</sup> I am choosing to use the term “more-than-human nature” rather than “non-human nature” because I believe the former is more respectful and perhaps even more accurate than the later. I take the term from Abrams (1996). I mean no disrespect to the rest of nature by putting it under one big “more-than-human-nature” category. Please remember the diversity of beings embodied in this term when you read it

<sup>2</sup> When I looked up the term “ecosocial” on Google, there were hundreds of thousands of potential websites. The term is used in a variety of contexts to link the social realm with the natural realm. For example, the Gai University offers a Bachelor of Science in Ecosocial Design, which aims for “ a balance between ecology and all aspects of human society and design to underline our primary goal of bringing as many people as possible to a place of empowerment from which they notice that the behavior, structures and institutions of societies are the products of human thinking and efforts and that by rethinking the memes and redirecting our efforts we can reconfigure societies” (www.gaiuniversity.org). Or, ecosocial could refer to the goal of determining “the association of individual ecosocial conditions (low income, housing insecurity, childhood abuse, violence, alcohol & drug use, depression) with prevalent STI and traditional behavioural risk factors; determine if multiple ecosocial factors compounds risk” (<http://cdc.confex.com/cdc/std2006/techprogram/P12162.HTM>).

ecosocial justice, like ecosocialism, retains a concern with the material results of capitalism, it does not use a Marxist framework.

Environmental education is education for, about, and through more-than-human nature, and has political activism as one of its goals. As we shall see, this later part of environment education has been eroded over the years since the Tbilisi Declaration of 1978. The international conference at Tbilisi called for critical thinking about environmental issues, the formulation of a moral code about these issues, and a commitment to act within educational institutions (Stevenson, 2007). In British Columbia, the Ministry of Education describes environmental education as “Education about, in and for the environment providing students with opportunities to learn about the functioning of natural systems, to identify their beliefs and opinions, consider a range of views, and ultimately make informed and responsible choices for themselves, their families and communities” (BC Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 1). Currently, environmental education is most often linked to science education, where students learn about ecology and our responsibility for managing natural resources (Stevenson, 2007). Education about (not in, through, or for) the environment is the dominant model.

Anti-oppressive education aims to work against various forms of oppression in educational settings by first understanding the dynamics of oppression and then articulating ways to overcome it. There is no one approach to anti-oppressive education, but all agree on one thing: that oppression is a situation or dynamic in which certain ways of being (e.g., having certain identities) are privileged in society while others are marginalized (Kumashiro, 2000). Anti-oppressive education grew out of a notion of

multicultural education that linked racism with sexism, classism and other forms of oppression. It is based on many activist and academic traditions, including feminism, critical, multicultural, queer, post-colonial, and other movements for social justice (Kumashiro, 2004).

Oppression is understood as harm that is experienced by “Others” (those that are other than the norm, such as students who are not heterosexual) resulting from either discrimination, harassment, violence, exclusion or isolation (Kumashiro, 2000). Sexism, racism, and other expressions of oppression are seen as linked, and because of this they must be addressed simultaneously. Anti-oppression educators speak of disrupting metanarratives by making them visible so they can be broken down and replaced with discourses that are based on mutual respect. This approach has direct links to Bowers’ (2001) notion of root metaphors and ecofeminists’ analysis of conceptual frameworks. The main difference is that anti-oppressive educators do not cross the invisible boundary between humans and more-than-human nature due to the inherent anthropocentrism of social justice theory. Humes, in considering this invisible boundary, asks “Could it be that there is resistance, even among those educators committed to going to the uncomfortable and most unknown places: to interrogating and destabilizing one aspect of their identity – their human-ness?” (2008, p. 77). Is this a deliberate oversight on the part of anti-oppressive and critical educators? Russell (2005) argues that this does seem to be the case, as these educators use Haraway's (1991 in Russell, 2005) ideas about “situated knowledges” but ignore her obvious call for engaging with the world beyond humans in what she calls “naturecultures.” Humes observes that the absence of this connection to

more-than-human nature in anti-oppressive education is “perplexing because they seem in some ways to contradict Kumashiro's or other anti-oppressive educator's own theories of multiplicity. In particular, they seem to be at odds with the belief that failing to work against various forms of oppression is to be complicit with them” (2008, p. 78). Here Humes has hit the nail on the proverbial head. Despite the good intentions of anti-oppressive educators, their deliberate oversight of the connections between the oppression of humans and more-than-human nature makes them complicit in the very oppressions they are working to break down. Surely the obvious connections related to the use of language would give anti-oppressive educators pause. Women referred to as “bitches, cows, pussies, dogs” and people of colour as “animals” reveals a discourse of animality that has “traditionally been used as a tool for subjugating and exploiting people of colour...” (Wolfe, 2005 in Humes, 2008, p. 79). I do remember one masters class where we discussed how in the media African American women are often dressed in animal-themed clothing such as tiger patterns, and how this was an example of stereotyping and connecting this group of people to a less-than human identity, creating a discourse that allows for oppression. But the analysis ended there. The human/non-human dualism, and the larger implications of a discourse of animality were not fully addressed. The invisible boundary between human and more-than-human nature was not crossed. As Wolfe argues, the stake for social justice educators “is to realize that as long as the foundational discourse of animalization and animality remains in place, it remains an unquestioned tool in the exploitation of the very populations they are interested in” (Wolfe, 2005, in Humes, 2008, p. 80). This is where ecofeminism has something important to offer, as it



addresses animality, and the theoretical and material connections between the oppression of humans and the more-than-human world. It could help anti-oppressive educators take that philosophical leap over the perceived divide between the human and more-than-human.

Critical pedagogy is based on the work of American educators such as Henry Giroux, Peter McLaren, and Michael Apple (to name but a few). These men base critical pedagogy on political science, philosophy and sociology as understood by the Frankfurt School in Germany, and the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools website). These are the theorists I became familiar with in my education masters coursework at Simon Fraser University, in the Inclusion and Diversity module. A critique of hegemony, power, and knowledge is at the heart of critical pedagogy. The status quo of elites in power remains, according to critical pedagogues, because these elites control the rest of society through hegemony in order to keep their economic and social benefits. Hegemony allows elites to keep their status without having to use overt mechanisms of domination, because the oppressed see their way of life as normal and not oppressive. Hegemony makes inequitable situations seem like common sense (Apple, 2004). Critical pedagogy theorists see schools as “agents of cultural and ideological hegemony” partly because it is the elites in education who get to decide whose knowledge is legitimate - theirs (Apple, 2004). In response, critical pedagogies advocate for social transformation through educational theory and practice that challenges the oppressive effects of hegemony. Anti-oppressive education is one such response. Critical pedagogues call for radical democracy, freedom from oppression, and the fair distribution of social and

economic capital, achieved partly through the processes of *conscientization* and *praxis* (Freire, 1970). *Conscientization* refers to a type of learning which is focused on understanding and exposing social and political contradictions, and includes taking informed action (*praxis*) against oppressive elements in one's life. In this way, students become aware of their oppression, and then make decisions and take action to change their lives, and the larger society in which they live. This is a great strength of critical pedagogy, but the critiques applied to anti-oppressive pedagogy hold true for critical pedagogy as well. Specifically, despite the good intentions of critical educators, their deliberate oversight of the connections between the oppression of humans and more-than-human nature makes them complicit in the very oppressions they are working to break down. Additionally, as Rasmussen argues:

Freire had little quarrel with the Euro-American civilization that spread the ideology of possessive individualism, the civilization that spread the notion of language as non-silent, the notion of knowledge as print-based product, the notion of education as having a monopoly on knowledge-production. Freire constructed his pedagogy as a life-preserver for the oppressed, but he treated the oppression as a *fait accompli*; he never seemed to take aim at the poisons that dissolve rooted societies in the first place" (2001, p. 112).

Bowers (1995) offers a similar critique, adding that critical pedagogy's notions of freedom, based as they are on Enlightenment ideals, do not value traditions that Euro-Americans would do well to heed in this time of ecological crisis. I take this up again when discussing ecofeminist pedagogy's interactions with culturally-relevant teaching.

For a more comprehensive summary of critical pedagogy, its history, practices, and scholarship, see Darder, Baltodano, and Torres (2003). There are many critical pedagogies, making it difficult to discuss one “pure” critical pedagogy. Yet the general critique of critical pedagogy being founded on anthropocentric notions holds.

### ***Problems In Education***

Anti-oppression and critical theorists and researchers argue that schools are still oppressive places filled with sexism, racism, classism, ableism, and ageism (Dei, 1996; Apple, 2004; Ghosh & Abdi, 2004; Lynch, 1992, McLaren, 2007). While there has been some improvement in addressing these issues, they are still a significant concern. Schools are a microcosm of the larger society, and in Canada issues such as racism still need to be addressed, not denied. Calliste and Dei note that:

Racism, patriarchy and colonialism continue to dominate power relations in North American society and within institutional settings it appears few resources have been allocated to supporting forms of intervention that are not merely reproductive of the alienation, oppression, marginality and exploitation of marginalized groups” (2000, p. 15)

Furthermore,

“Political movements for equality over the past few decades have succeeded in challenging some of the most glaring abuses of power. Yet, although advances have been made, the basic relations of domination have been remarkably resistant to change and surprisingly resilient in adapting to new forms. General patterns of

inequality recur, even in the face of deliberate efforts to change them, through entrenched norms, practices and policies” (Bell, 2007, pp. 10-11

A quick perusal of academic journals focused on education reveals that anti-racist education, a form of anti-oppression pedagogy, is still a long way from reaching its goals. There is “overwhelming evidence that visible minority students are marginalized in and by school policies and practices” and that among white administrators “racism is often overtly and emphatically conceptualized as a phenomenon that happens in other times and places” (McMahon, 2007, p. 684).

With the current focus on the academic underachievement of boys in Canadian schools, one might conclude that sexism is no longer a problem in schools or the wider society. After all, girls are apparently experiencing more academic achievement than boys these days. This “gender gap” has brought on much hand-wringing among educators, policy makers and parents, but also contributed to a feminist backlash where female teachers, single mothers, and feminists are blamed for the underachievement of boys (Froese-Germain, 2006). In British Columbia, the on-going controversy surrounding the content in the ministry approved course, “Social Justice 12” demonstrates that sexism (in the form of heterosexism), is still alive and well in our society (Guenther, 2008). The debate over the “gender gap” and the Social Justice 12 course are only two of many examples which demonstrate that gender is still a salient category in education, and that (hetero)sexism is still a very relevant topic for educators in Canada.

Although there is growing recognition that western society is structured in ways that are contrary to a just and equitable society, there has not been a significant move

towards doing what it takes to see the necessary changes in institutional practices (including education), social processes, and relationships (Dei & Calliste, 2000). A study done in 1994 found a high level of resistance to multicultural and antiracist pedagogies among educators, perhaps due to the stability of the teaching culture, depoliticized teacher training programs, and the ideological perspective of education in general (Lund, 2006).<sup>3</sup> Obviously, there is still significant room for improvement when it comes to achieving the goals of social justice education. Perhaps all that is needed is more time for the work of social justice advocates to take effect. On the other hand, there are some that argue more than just time is required. I agree with the later for reasons already discussed in connection to anti-oppressive education. More reasons are explored in the coming pages.

Studies have found that in North America the more environmental awareness one has, and the higher the income, the bigger the ecological footprint (Jucker, 2002). The goal of environmental awareness has been somewhat achieved, but the needed changes in behaviour have not materialized. Why has environmental education produced a generation of ecologically irresponsible, but relatively well-informed citizens? Russell, Bell and Fawcett observe that “Whether environmental education does transform norms and values is an open question. For some, much environmental education seems entrenched in business as usual and explores only those topics which do not necessitate fundamental changes” (2000, p. 206). Chapman (2004) argues that environmental education has not been effective in the ways that count because it does not confront the

---

<sup>3</sup> Although this study was done over a decade ago in 1994, Lund argues the need to refer to them due to the “relative paucity of in-depth studies into teachers' understandings of the complexities of formulating and enacting social justice pedagogy in actual Canadian schools” (2006, p. 203).

issues that bring about environmental destruction, and therefore it is actually supporting the status quo. Furthermore, he proposes that “even attempting to conduct environmental education through schools may be to act against the environment by continuing the illusion that schools are agencies that act in the common good” (2004, p. 105).

Gruenewald (2004) agrees with Chapman, arguing that environmental education has been institutionalized to the extent that it actually legitimizes, rather than challenges, the educational practices that created the need for environmental education in the first place. Included in his list of problematic practices are content integration of environmental education into other disciplines, supporting academic standards and testing, and the general norms of education (similar critiques also apply to social justice education). For example, environmental educators have tried to legitimize the existence of environmental education by claiming they can close the achievement gap. Educators that are working for social justice also get caught up in this conundrum when they reduce educational achievement to a dubious system of standards and testing instead of resisting a system that guarantees winners and losers (Furman et al., 2004; Gruenewald, 2004). By doing so, educators working for environmental and social justice reinforce the legitimacy of the system they claim to be challenging. Gruenewald points out that “adjusting particular teaching practices to improve test scores does not constitute a movement for peace, justice, and environmental care” (2004, p. 246). Kahn takes an even stronger stand, arguing that

environmental literacy has not only been co-opted by corporate state forces and morphed into a progressively-styled, touchy-feeling method for achieving higher

scores on standardized tests like the ACT and SAT, but in an Orwellian turn typical of the Bush-era it has come to stand in actuality for a real illiteracy about the nature of ecological catastrophe, its causes, and possible solutions” (2009, p. 529)

Stevenson (2007) notes that the rhetoric-reality gap in environmental education (and I would add, social justice education) is not surprising considering the traditional purpose and structure of schooling aims to maintain the present social order. Kumashiro argues that there are some “educational practices, perspectives, social relations, and identities that remain unquestioned” and act to unconsciously conflict with educators' desire to work for social change (2002, p. 2). In this situation, educators end up reinforcing the status quo in schools and society while working to disrupt the same. Gruenewald (2004) argues that the disciplining power of the dominant discourses around environmental education may be making it difficult, if not impossible, for teachers to effectively meet the original goals of environmental education. Environmental education (and critical pedagogy) suffer from “double binds” that make these approaches part of the problem rather than the solution (Bowers, 2004). The strong link between science education and environmental education provides one example of a double bind as this link promotes the efficient management of and restoration of ecosystems, but students are not asked to explore the deep cultural assumptions (root metaphors) that lead to environmentally destructive ways of thinking and acting. Bowers connects the failure of environmental education to the failure of universities, “where many faculty still reject the evidence of multiple ecological crisis, and most maintain a state of self denial that the

cultural assumptions underlying their courses and writings contribute to overshooting the sustaining capacity of the Earth's natural systems” (2004, p. 225). Those calling for a “new paradigm of total liberation pedagogy” (which includes humans and more-than-human nature) wonder if their efforts have been blocked from formal educational circles in part “because it has critiqued the ideological blind spots of much that is considered legitimate educational discourse” (Kahn & Humes, 2008). The same can be said for education in general, which is not surprising as teachers are trained in universities and so will be prone to repeating the oversights and blind spots that Bowers (2004) and Kahn and Humes (2008) are referring to.

Another important reason why the goals of social justice and environmental educators have not been met is because the causes of, and solutions to, both problems have not been connected in any systematic way. There is education for social justice on one side, and environmental education on the other, and “never the two shall meet.” As Gruenewald observes, “Too often ignored in education...is the fact that culture and environment, or humans and nature, are inextricably connected and that our educational policies, structures, theories, traditions, and academic journals continue to operate as if this were not the case” (2006, p. 206). This is a clear example of speciesism, which is when one species (humans) considers themselves superior to all other species based solely on genetic characteristics. Wolfe (2003) argues that we need to consider speciesism because the institution of speciesism allows humans to oppress other humans by referring to them as animals. Therefore, if one desires to see the end of human oppression, you must address the discourse of speciesism. This is because speciesism “can be used to



mark *any* social other, (therefore) we need to understand that the ethical and philosophical urgency of confronting the institution of speciesism and crafting a post-humanist theory of the subject *has nothing to do with whether you like animals.*" (Wolfe, 2003, p. 7). Critics of racism, sexism and all other -isms, including critical and anti-oppression pedagogues, have remained locked in the framework of speciesism.

Bowers (2004) argues that it is necessary to reframe issues of race, gender and class in ways that have a smaller adverse ecological impact, and that this has not yet happened in educational contexts. For example, if education for social justice only aims to allow oppressed groups of students to fully participate in a society that is ecologically destructive in nature, then it needs to rethink its goals and assumptions to take this key oversight into account. My own eight years of post-secondary education mirror Bowers' observations. Especially relevant to my own experience is my master's coursework which focused on social justice, as understood by anti-oppression and critical pedagogy, and did not make any sustained connections to the environmental crisis. The growing body of academic literature which critiques critical pedagogy through an ecojustice lens, and provides an alternative conception of critical pedagogy, was not acknowledged.<sup>4</sup> My experience, according to Russell and Bell (1996), was not a one-off occurrence. In their own education graduate studies, they found that discussions of classism, racism, and sexism were the focus, and that their concerns about anthropocentrism were only

---

<sup>4</sup> For example, the very new "Green Theory & Praxis: The Journal of Ecopedagogy" includes discussions that link critical theory to ecological concerns, Gadotti from the the Paulo Freire Institute writes about ecopedagogy, and the most recent edition of "The Critical Pedagogy Reader" includes a chapter entitled "Towards ecopedagogy: Weaving a broad-based pedagogy of the liberation for animals, nature and the oppressed peoples of the Earth" by Richard Kahn (also the editor of "Green Theory & Praxis." There is a growing amount of ecosocial literature for educators familiar with critical pedagogy to draw on.

“politely tolerated.” Humes, in her masters studies, looked in vain for a field that “attempted to holistically examine the common roots and manifestations of human, ecological and animal oppressions and the role education could play in working against those oppressions” (2008, p. 65). If these connections are not made in universities, teacher training programs will also inevitably contain this oversight, which is then carried into teaching practice.

Despite an acknowledgement of this neglect by critical pedagogues McLaren & Houston (2004) and Gadotti (2003), the field as a whole has not taken up questions about human treatment of the natural environment. Fortunately, the 2009 edition of “The Critical Pedagogy Reader,” an anthology of critical pedagogy, includes one chapter entitled “Towards Ecopedagogy” by Richard Kahn. This chapter was not in the 2003 edition, which leads me to believe that the field of critical pedagogy is starting to take the ecological crisis more seriously. He starts the chapter with a quote from Freire, who writes that “I do not believe in love between men and women, between human beings, if we are not able to love the world. Ecology takes on fundamental importance at the end of the century. It has to be present in any radical, critical, or liberationist educational practice” (Freire, 2004 in Kahn, 2009, p. 522). Kahn encourages educators committed to radical educational change to make alliances with critical pedagogy because it has the ear of most educators working for educational and societal transformation. Better to educate the critical pedagogues about the ecological crisis, and show how addressing it will help them to better reach their goals of social justice, than to reject critical pedagogy as too anthropocentric and problematic.

To summarize thus far, the social justice discourse, as exemplified in critical and anti-oppression pedagogy, is characterized by a critical-humanist perspective, a focus on school achievement and economic well-being, and the narratives of the Western Enlightenment tradition (Furman et. al, 2004). The critical-humanist perspective critiques the inequity of current educational practices and institutions, where marginalized populations are not given the same opportunities and advantages as other students. Social justice discourse calls for radical changes in education in order to address these injustices. Often this reversal of injustice is framed in terms of achievement test scores, which is counter-productive to the call for radical changes in education as it equates justice with conforming to the expectations of an unjust system. As King, an ecofeminist and peace activist has said, “we are not interested in an equal slice of a rotten pie” (in Plant, 1997, p. 128). This system is based on the Western Enlightenment tradition and the Industrial Revolution (now embodied in “globalization”), with a focus on individual emancipation and economic advancement: Two things, Bowers argues, that work against forming an ecojustice perspective, both of which contribute to a worldview that nurtures ecologically destructive behavior (Bowers, 2001). As social justice discourse is calling for individuals to experience greater social and economic distributive equity within this worldview, it inadvertently contributes to further ecological destruction and environmental injustices towards humans and the more-than-human world, calling into question the legitimacy of the educational system (Bowers, 2001; Gruenewald, 2004). According to Furman et. al., “The educational discourse of social justice, without careful attention to its own assumptions and metaphors, runs the risk of reinforcing the very assumptions (e.g.

individualism, competition, consumerism) that underlie and help to reproduce the current unjust political economy” (2004, p. 53). Bowers (1995) argues that the root metaphors of the Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution need to be made visible and critiqued if the goals of critical pedagogy and environmental education are to be met.

Bowers (2001) asks, “Why do we in the west find it so difficult to change our behavior in light of the growing ecological crisis? What is it about our culture that reinforces illogical behavior towards nature?” Bowers (2001) argues that it is because our culture's root metaphors promote ecologically unhealthy thinking and behavior.<sup>5</sup> Root metaphors are mythopoetic narratives and powerful evocative experiences that differ from culture to culture. According to Bowers (2001), the root metaphors of modern western civilization include anthropocentrism, patriarchy, mechanism, Cartesian individualism, progress as linear in nature, and more recently, evolution. A culture's metanarratives influence the schema that people use in conventional, everyday, thought and speech. The process is the same across cultures, but the metanarratives are different, and so then, are the schemata and the conventions (Bowers, 1995). These root metaphors exert so much influence in part because they are hegemonic in nature, considered common sense, and therefore not questioned by the majority of people. Bowers argues that our ways of thinking are bound closely to our language, through which the root metaphors are expressed. Therefore, if we want to change how we think, we also need to change our language. First we need to interrogate our language and how it affects our thinking and our behavior. If educators wish to confront social and ecological injustice,

---

<sup>5</sup> By “our” culture, I am referring to modern western (Euro-American) culture.

looking closely at how language has contributed to these problems will be key.

Ecofeminist philosophy looks carefully at how language reveals and maintains systems of oppression, including notions of anthropocentrism and androcentrism. Bowers argues that “The ecological crisis, in effect, now confronts us with the challenge of reconstituting our guiding ideological and epistemological frameworks” (1995, p. 38). Bowers' conception of ecojustice and his discussion of root metaphors (especially patriarchy) are very compatible with the main tenants of ecofeminism. In many respects, ecofeminism is ecojustice with an emphasis on how gender affects relationships between humans, and between humans and more-than-human nature.

Furman and Gruenewald (2004) propose that the landscape of social justice be expanded in education by embedding the social justice discourse within a larger, ecological narrative. Note that it is social justice, the human sphere, that is to be embedded within the ecological sphere, and not vice versa. This ordering acknowledges the fact that humans are embedded within more-than-human nature, and implicitly argues that humans exist in a state of dependency upon this nature. To put it simply, there will be no social justice if the natural support system on which humans depend can no longer meet our needs as a species (Bowers, 2001; Shaikh, 2000). To focus solely on social justice, or make it the priority, is to put the cart before the horse. Although there is a growing body of literature that links social and environmental concerns, this is not yet a majority view or common practice among educators (Wenden, 2004).

## *Summary*

To summarize, education for both social and environmental change has not been effective due largely to the restraints put on them by being subsumed in the dominant model of schooling, which has rendered them politically ineffective. This is not to say that environmental education and education for social justice have been completely ineffective. But educators from both camps have admitted that there are still many problems, and that the goals of both have not been met. Educators advocating for social justice and/or lifestyle changes that are ecologically sustainable have not questioned the cultural roots of these issues in any sustained fashion. The combination of being disciplined and not challenging the dominant notions of schooling, not seeing the connections between social injustice and environmental destruction, and not addressing root metaphors are three important reasons why the goals of these educators have not made significant inroads. This thesis is my attempt to address these problems by providing an ecofeminist framework for educators committed to social justice and healthy relationships with more-than-human nature.

This chapter laid out the goals of this thesis: to articulate an ecofeminist pedagogy that brings together social justice and concern for more-than-human nature, and addresses a few of the possible reasons for the failure of pedagogies committed to social justice and ecological sustainability. Definitions were laid out, related problems in education outlined, and a variety of pedagogical approaches briefly discussed in order to give context to the following discussion of ecofeminism, and the development of ecofeminist pedagogy.

## Chapter 2

### **Ecofeminism: A Philosophy of Ecosocial Justice**

Why would I choose ecofeminism as my theoretical framework for this study when there are other very good options, such as place-based education (Gruenewald, 2003), peace education (Wenden, 2004), humane education (Hargraves, 1999; Selby, 1995), and/or ecojustice pedagogy (Bowers, 2001) that bring together social and ecological justice to varying degrees? Firstly, ecofeminism is largely compatible with all of the above approaches to education, and would bring valuable insights that could strengthen each of them. Secondly, ecofeminism resonates with my own personal experiences as a woman. Thirdly, there is empirical evidence that it is women and children of all races who suffer the most from poverty, human rights violations, and environmental destruction, making an ecofeminist approach to these issues very relevant (Sydee & Beder, 2001; Warren, 2000; Merchant, 2005). Fourthly, some argue that every site of social change is also a site for struggles over gender relations (Harding, 1998; hooks, 1989). Patriarchal domination is the form of domination most likely to be encountered on a day-to-day basis, everybody experiences gender socialization, and so feminist struggles to end this domination are of primary importance (hooks, 1989). Additionally, “some of the Western ideologies that underlie the conception and domination of nature are male-gender biased in ways that are distinct from other sorts of

bias” (Warren, 2000, p.2). That women and children suffer the most human rights violations, sites of social change are very often also struggles over gender relations, and that the domination of nature and women (and other marginalized groups) are linked, especially within the western worldview, makes a framework like ecofeminism a very fitting way to address issues of social and ecological injustice.<sup>6</sup> Warren argues that “the promise and power of ecological feminism is that *it provides a distinctive framework for both reconceiving feminism and for developing an environmental ethic which takes seriously connections between the domination of women and the domination of nature*” (2000, p. 325, italics in original). Sturgeon believes that ecofeminism's most radical potential is found in this linking of dominations through a critique “of the ways in which various raced and gendered concepts of 'nature' naturalize social inequalities and ecological crisis” (1997, p. 19). Although ecofeminism starts with gender analysis, it includes other -isms which concern social justice advocates in a theory of multiple and intersecting oppressions. For an ecofeminist pedagogy, “gender serves as a starting point from which women undertake the educational task of transforming ecologically uncongenial cultural practices” (Li, 2007, p. 367).<sup>7</sup> Finally, I chose ecofeminism because it brings together my primary concern in this thesis: the links between social injustice and the ecological crisis, and why current approaches in education have not brought about the change they aim for.

---

<sup>6</sup> Although ecofeminism began in a western context and its critique of the connection between the domination of nature and oppressed groups of humans is based on an analysis of modern western worldview and root metaphors, it has global relevance due to the influence of western civilization around the world through colonialism (both past and present) and globalization.

<sup>7</sup> I would not limit ecofeminism to female teachers as Li seems to have done in this quote.



This chapter is concerned with describing what ecofeminism is and how it relates to education. This includes a discussion about how ecofeminism might interact with critical and anti-oppressive pedagogy. It is important to understand what ecofeminism is before exploring its pedagogical implications. Whole books have been written on ecofeminism, so I will not be covering every aspect of ecofeminism.<sup>8</sup> Only those aspects of it that are most relevant to this thesis will be addressed. These include a philosophical discussion of the logic of domination (a “master narrative”), dualisms and centrism, and ecosocial justice. The importance of these to the ecofeminist pedagogical project outlined in this thesis will be discussed in detail the following chapters, but also mentioned briefly within this current discussion. I have chosen these areas of focus for a number of reasons. The philosophical discussion concerning the logic of domination, dualism and centrism is important because it gets at the root of why we continue to see social and ecological injustice in the world, and opens the door to changing current ways of thinking about social and ecological relationships. The educational context provides many opportunities to embrace such discussions. As this thesis is concerned with finding ways to bring social and ecological justice together, an examination of ecofeminist approaches to and theory about ecosocial justice is also a key consideration. Ecofeminists do not use the term ecosocial justice to describe the linking of social justice and the ecological crisis, but my understanding of the term encompasses ecofeminist thinking on this matter. As outlined in chapter one, ecosocial justice is based on the declarations of the Earth Charter (2000) and encompasses notions of social and ecological justice in the spirit of respect,

---

<sup>8</sup> For an overview of ecofeminism, its history, and main types, see Howell, 1997 or Merchant, 2005.

compassion, peace, and democracy. It includes the understanding that humans are part of nature, and in a relationship of interdependence and partnership with more-than-human nature and with other humans.

The previous chapter stated some of the problems in education in terms of social justice and the ecological crisis. These problems are embedded within a larger, problematic, cultural framework that ecofeminism critiques. Ecofeminism as a movement and theoretical approach is relatively new, especially within academia. It is a very diverse field, ranging from earth-based spirituality such as neopagan Wiccanism, Christian theology perspectives, socialist, cultural, and philosophical critiques of rationalism and patriarchal capitalism, with many points in-between. It would be more accurate to say there are ecofeminisms, rather than one monolithic ecofeminism.

### *A General Description of Ecofeminism and its Main Tenets*

Ecofeminism looks different depending on the class, race, and physical context in which it is theorized and enacted (Ruether, 1996; Russell & Bell, 1996). The different ecofeminisms should be in solidarity with each other, not molded into one universal ecofeminism, in order to deal with the diversity of cultures and situations (Plumwood, 1993). Although ecofeminism is diverse, there are some presuppositions shared by all ecofeminist theorists, with some variation in different cultural contexts. These include a belief that social transformation is necessary for ecological survival, and that dominant conceptual patterns must be transformed to better reflect nondualistic and nonhierarchical systems of relations between humans, and between humans and more-than-human nature

(Howell, 1997).<sup>9</sup> Biological and cultural diversity are considered valuable and necessary to these conceptual and social transformations. Continuing with the idea of nonhierarchical relations and diversity modeled on nature, ecofeminists argue for an acknowledgement of our interdependence with, and dependence upon each other and nature (Howell, 1997; Warren, 2000; King, 1989). Mies and Shiva note that “Ecofeminism is about connectedness and wholeness of theory and practice. It asserts the special strength and integrity of every living thing” (1993, p. 14).

All ecofeminists agree that there are connections between the domination of women and the domination of nature. As Hallen notes:

In uncovering the social and ecological manifestations of the logic of domination, ecofeminists make explicit how the structures which keep women oppressed are the same structures which reduce fertile wetlands to toxic wastelands. And it is argued that the failure to identify and work on the twin exploitations of women and nature will result in the further deterioration of both (2000, p.159).

Historically, in western societies, women were identified with the physical, bodily, realm through art, literature, and philosophy while men were identified with culture, reason, and the mind (Warren, 2000). Despite this emphasis on gender relations, ecofeminists add race, class, ageism, and other categories of human identity to the list of possible places where oppressions occur, because they come from a common distorted conceptual framework (Warren, 2000). Ecofeminists, especially when ecofeminism first appeared,

---

<sup>9</sup> When speaking of hierarchy, I am referring to the version of it that is entwined with the logic of domination, oppression, and bureaucracy. Other notions of hierarchy are not problematic, such as the ordering of cell, tissue, organ, organism, or the idea of a hierarchy of needs where one needs the basic physical needs of food, water, shelter met before one can expend energy on other pursuits.

often argued that the first, or primary, domination is patriarchal and that all others stem from it. Therefore, sexist oppression must end before other oppressions can be eradicated (hooks, 1989). But those who experienced racism, for example, as their primary oppression argued against the primacy of patriarchy and called for a deeper analysis of the structure of domination, to see how all forms of oppression are linked (hooks, 1989; Smith, 1998; Warren, 2000). In current ecofeminist literature, there is more emphasis on frameworks of analysis that address these linked oppressions, including naturism as anthropocentrism as an important -ism in the mix. Despite this call for addressing linked oppressions, the feminist part of ecofeminism still calls for special attention to gender relations and patriarchal domination because “it is the form of domination we are most likely to encounter in an ongoing way in everyday life,” and “unlike other forms of domination, sexism directly shapes and determines relations of power in our private lives...” (hooks, 1989, p. 21). Ecofeminism, and thus an ecofeminist pedagogy, uses a gender lens as the starting point for analysis and description, and then branches out to show how gender is connected to race, class, nature and other places where oppression can occur (Warren, 2000; Li, 2007).

Another central claim of ecofeminism is that if we are to behave in an intelligent, logical, and caring way to more-than-human nature we need to overcome our need to dominate. The illusion that we can dominate nature is a major contributor to environmental degradation, and the compulsion to dominate is one of the hallmarks of patriarchy (Hallen, 2000; Warren, 1993). The logic of domination is structured so that “For any X and Y, if X is morally superior to Y, then X is morally justified in

subordinating it” (Warren, 1993, p. 488). For example, if X = men and Y = woman, then men are morally superior to women and thus justified in subordinating them (sexism). Ecofeminists also put nature as Y and humans as X (anthropocentrism), non-Europeans as Y and Europeans as X (eurocentrism, racism). Ecofeminist pedagogy should also consider that children are Y and teachers are X in the current educational context. A logic of domination is a moral premise that places X in a place of superiority over Y, justifying Y's subordination and exploitation. Ecofeminists set themselves two principal tasks: to expose this logic of domination and to seek alternatives that replace this destructive way of relating to each other and nature (Hallen, 2000).

To summarize thus far, ecofeminism argues that although sexism is of primary concern, it is conceptually linked to naturism, racism, classism, ageism and other forms of oppression. Therefore, any hopes of ending oppression need to address the roots of these linked oppressions through an analysis of the logic of domination and its material and behavior effects on human relationships and human interactions with more-than-human nature. To put it simply, ecofeminism aims for ecosocial justice. This includes working for nonhierarchical relationships that recognize our interdependency with fellow humans and more-than-human nature, alongside a commitment to cultural and biological diversity.

Having outlined some of the main tenets of ecofeminism, I now focus on those aspects, already touched on above, that are most important to an ecofeminist pedagogy that addresses the linked concerns of social justice and ecological justice. First I will discuss the most pertinent aspects of ecofeminist philosophy, followed by a consideration

of an ecofeminist understanding of ecosocial justice, and then finish with a brief discussion of how some ecofeminists turn theory into action. Chapter three considers how these translate into ecofeminist pedagogy.

### *Ecofeminist Philosophy*

Ecofeminists examine the conceptual roots of the domination and exploitation of women and nature that are closely linked in modern Western thought through the logic of domination (Warren, 2000; Plumwood, 2002). They argue that because the roots of social and ecological injustice are linked, that one cannot be overcome without addressing the other, and that this linkage occurs on two levels: ideological-cultural and socioeconomic (Ruether, 2005). Ecofeminist philosophy deals with the linkage at the ideological-cultural level, working to make visible this linkage by tracing the historical and cultural roots of the logic of domination. Ecofeminism focuses on anthropocentrism and androcentrism as the main root metaphors responsible for creating conditions where the mutual oppression of women, other marginalized populations, and nature can occur (Warren, 2000; Plumwood, 1993). Bowers' notion of root metaphors, discussed in chapter one, is analogous to Warren's conceptual frameworks. Warren argues that a conceptual framework "is a set of basic beliefs, values, attitudes, and assumptions which shape and reflect how one views oneself and the world...It is affected and shaped by such factors as sex-gender, race/ethnicity, class, age, affectional orientation, marital status, religion, nationality, colonial influences, and culture" (2000, p. 46). Some of these conceptual frameworks are oppressive, and so function to maintain and justify relationships of oppressive domination and subordination. Ecofeminists start with patriarchy as a key

oppressive conceptual framework and then expand their analysis to include other frameworks, including racism and anthropocentrism.

Warren (2000) describes the five common features of oppressive conceptual frameworks, of which patriarchy (as androcentrism) and anthropocentrism are examples. They all involve value-hierarchical thinking, encourage oppositional value dualisms, see *power over* relationships as necessary and positive, create and maintain the practice of privilege for those at the top of the hierarchy, and sanction a logic of domination that justifies domination and subordination of those lower down in the hierarchy. Value hierarchical thinking and oppositional value dualisms combine to create thinking where male/female, white/black, rational/emotional, mind/body, and culture/nature dualisms are assigned superior/inferior values, with the first half of the dualism being superior to and dominating the second half. The logic of domination gives privilege to those higher up in the hierarchy, and justifies it by considering the higher-ups as superior. For example, in the logic of domination men are superior to women because men are rational and women are emotional, and culture is superior to nature because culture is based on reason, whereas nature is not. Other related dualisms include independence/interdependence, heaven/earth, mind/body, and white/non-white. The logic of domination and its associated oppositional value dualisms have created a situation where women, non-European races, and nature are considered inferior, able to be exploited, and in need of management and care. The transformation of this mindset into one that eliminates these dualisms is one of the main goals of ecofeminism (Warren, 2000). One way this could be accomplished is by breaking the pattern of faulty belief systems (such as patriarchy) that

feed into impaired thinking (such as the -isms of domination) and dysfunctional behaviors such as oppression and exploitation (Warren, 1993). Ecofeminist philosophers focus on disrupting faulty belief systems as expressed through the root metaphors of patriarchy (androcentrism) and anthropocentrism.

At the core of the logic of domination is the idea of centrism, which puts an all powerful and important subject at the centre, and constructs Others as inferior and powerless. This is common to all forms of centrism that are used in the logic of domination, and allows for cultural variation and different political responses. According to Plumwood (1996), the structure of centrism is common to oppressions based on sexism, racism, classism, colonialism and naturism.<sup>10</sup> She argues that modern western culture is androcentric, euro-and ethnocentric, and anthropocentric (Plumwood, 2002). These centrisms are built on the foundation of oppositional value-dualisms, which create a sharp, ontological break or discontinuity between the group identified as the privileged centre, and those they subordinate. Full-scale dualisms have the following characteristics: radical exclusion, homogenization/stereotyping, denial/backgrounding, incorporation and instrumentalism. Radical exclusion posits nature as a radically different Other, and humans as hyper-separated from nature because humans have reason and agency where nature does not. Groups associated with nature (for example, women and non-Europeans), are seen as inferior to the privileged center and marked for separate and inferior treatment. Homogenization and stereotyping create a mindset where nature is

---

<sup>10</sup> The notion of centrism need not be associated with the logic of domination. For example, is biocentrism also oppressive? It could be, if infused with the logic of domination. But it could also be lived out in a way that is not oppressive and acknowledges that humans and nature need to live harmoniously together, with the concerns of all of nature at the centre of our thinking.



ignored and denied, and its complexity underestimated and replaced with a mechanistic model. The marginalized Other is seen not as an individual, but as a member of a homogenous group. There is no recognition of diversity. Once the other is marked as separate and inferior, the next step is to deny dependence upon this other. When nature (or women, or colonized people) is backgrounded, it is seen as inessential and lacking in agency. Thus nature can be systematically omitted from consideration in decision making (Plumwood, 1996). Backgrounding appropriates then denies the contributions of subordinated Others to the success of the more powerful individual, who considers themselves to be autonomous from these Others who provided the resources required for the individual to succeed (Plumwood, 2002). In the case of nature, humans deny their dependency upon it for life and ignore the contributions it makes to our survival. For example, something as simple as the bees needed to pollinate crops is not acknowledged in the price of these crops. Backgrounding of nature means humans see it as having no agency or autonomy of its own - a resource without limits. This is an important aspect of anthropocentrism. The current crisis in bee population decline and the collapse of the cod fishery have given humans a wake-up call. We background nature at our peril. At the economic level, the GNP does not reflect what we take from nature to meet our needs, or take into account the unpaid labor of housecleaning and parenting. In colonialism, the colonized (their labor and land) are effectually backgrounded by the colonizers, who take all the credit for any riches or advancements that came from colonialism (Plumwood, 2002). Backgrounding is a denial of mutuality, interdependency, and symbiotic relationships. This is a key part of anthropocentrism, which has at its root the domination

of nature, a denial of our reliance upon it, and the conviction that humans are superior to it (Russell & Bell, 1996). Plumwood asks us to remember that

racism, colonialism and sexism have drawn their conceptual strength from casting sexual, racial and ethnic difference as closer to the animal and the body construed as a sphere of inferiority, as a lesser form of humanity lacking the full measure of rationality or culture...to be defined as 'nature' in this context is to be defined as passive, as non-agent and non-subject, as the 'environment' or invisible background conditions against which the 'foreground' achievements of reason or culture provided typically by the white, western, male expert or entrepreneur take place (1993, p. 4).

Plumwood (1993) argues that anthropocentrism plays an analogous role in ecological philosophy to androcentrism in feminist theory, and ethnocentrism in anti-racist theory. There are parallels between the domination and exploitation of nature under anthropocentrism, that of women under patriarchy, and non-white ethnic groups under racism.

Ecofeminist philosophy addresses the linkages between social injustices and ecological destruction at the ideological-cultural level, and aims to deconstruct this linkage through consideration of notions such as the logic of domination, root metaphors, centrisms, and dualisms that inform the modern western worldview. This effort includes attempts to disrupt the patterns of dysfunctional social systems, especially patriarchy, by confronting these faulty belief systems. These faulty beliefs include, for example, the belief that humans are superior to the rest of nature and independent from it, and that men

are superior to women. The results of this way of thinking are oppression and exploitation.

### *Ecofeminism and Ecosocial Justice*

The idea of ecosocial justice includes justice for humans based on a shared understanding of human rights linked to justice for more-than-human nature. Ecofeminists argue that the logic of domination, with its distorted conceptual frameworks such as patriarchy and anthropocentrism, creates the linked oppression between women and other marginalized groups of humans, and that experienced by more-than-human nature. Naturism, speciesism, racism, sexism, classism, ableism, and ageism all stem from the distorted conceptual frameworks of the logic of domination. Because they are linked, social and ecological justice cannot be solved independent of each other. If sexism is blamed on the conceptual framework of patriarchy, and anthropocentrism and sexism are conceptually linked, then dismantling the conceptual framework (logic of domination) will end both sexism and anthropocentrism. An ecofeminist philosophical project gets at the roots of the logic of domination, but more is needed to move beyond these problematic ways of thinking. Ecofeminism insists that social transformation is necessary for the sake of the basic survival of humans and the achievement of ecosocial justice, and that this requires that reciprocity and mutuality replace the power-based, hierarchal relationships that currently exist between humans and between humans and more-than-human nature (Howell, 1997). It is not enough to simply confront faulty belief systems. One must offer an alternative.

Within ecofeminism, an important piece of this project of social transformation is a commitment to social and ecological diversity. In the social realm, ecofeminists talk about multicultural ethics and respect for different world views. Within educational discourses dealing with social justice (such as anti-oppressive and critical pedagogy), the notion of respecting difference and allowing subjugated knowledges to challenge the dominant discourses mirrors the ecofeminist commitment to multicultural ethics. In a multicultural framework, these subjugated knowledges include indigenous and non-European knowledge. Within education, the idea of culturally relevant teaching aims to value knowledge that is often outside the formal curriculum so that students can become empowered to work for social change and the attainment of human rights. While these are valuable efforts under the umbrella of social justice, ecofeminism argues that they must be embedded within a larger framework of ecosocial justice, and push against the anthropocentric tendencies of social justice and human rights. The anthropocentric frameworks of anti-oppressive and critical pedagogy were critiqued in chapter one as one of the problems in education.

In light of the logic of domination, the oppression of humans, and the destruction of ecosystems, what do ecofeminists suggest we do? In order to work effectively at creating a more just world, we need to have those committed to social justice and justice for more-than-human nature work together towards the common goal of dismantling the social and conceptual structures that support the logic of domination and its unjust outcomes. Bowers (1995), Plumwood (1993), and Warren (2000) all argue that what is made visible can then be deconstructed and replaced with something else. Until the logic

of domination and its associated root metaphors are made visible, they will continue to be hegemonic, taken-for-granted, and therefore powerful. Ecofeminists expect that social transformation must include an intellectual transformation (Howell, 1997). This is a philosophical project that aims for what critical pedagogy terms *conscientization*, or developing a critical consciousness (Freire, 1970). What needs to come next is *praxis*, where theory turns into action. A philosophically focused ecofeminist *praxis* uses philosophy to increase awareness about the roots of oppression by developing a critical consciousness. This process of developing a critical consciousness might need to occur before more practical embodiments of *praxis* can occur (such as environmental justice actions), or it could occur while people are working for social and ecological justice. Warren (2000) argues that to qualify as ecofeminist a project (philosophical or activist), and the theoretical base on which it is built, must lack domination (such as sexism, racism, naturism, or classism), champion marginal voices, and emphasize identifying oneself in relation to others (both human and non-human). Rather than “atomistic individuals whose claims to respectful treatment exist independent of any social, historical, material, geographical, and cultural contexts” we should see ourselves as being embedded within these contexts (Warren, 2000, p. 142).

Ecofeminist praxis links the development of critical consciousness about the logic of domination and its social and material effects with a commitment to formulating an alternative, ecosocial justice framework. Any project of social transformation that is based on ecofeminism will lack domination, champion marginal voices, and nurture notions of interdependence between humans and between humans and more-than-human

nature. Anti-oppressive and critical pedagogy also call for dismantling oppressive systems, giving voice to marginalized students, and understanding the social, historical, material, geographical, and cultural contexts in which we live and interact with each other (Kumashiro, 2000; Apple, 2004; Dei and Calliste, 2000). Ecofeminism shares these commitments, but demands that we add more-than-human nature to the analysis of the problem, and to the making of new projects of social change.

### *Ecofeminism, Anti-oppressive Education, and Critical Pedagogy*

In chapter one I briefly introduced anti-oppressive education and critical pedagogy, and critiqued their anthropocentric assumptions and reliance upon the Enlightenment worldview. As these approaches fall under the larger umbrella of education for social justice, I also argued that they have not been effective in significantly improving the level of social justice in education because they have missed the link to the ecological crisis and the roots of the logic of domination. Despite this significant oversight, I argue that it is possible to infuse anti-oppressive education and critical pedagogy with an ecofeminist framework to create an ecosocial justice paradigm for education. While I could simply ignore previous work for social justice in education, and start from scratch, I believe trying to create bridges with social justice educators is key to an ecofeminist pedagogical project, and that an important part of that is being able to show how their pedagogical frameworks can be enriched and challenged by an ecofeminist perspective. In the following chapter I outline my version of an ecofeminist pedagogy, the social justice side of which has been informed by anti-oppressive and critical pedagogy in addition to ecofeminist ideas of ecosocial justice.

A number of pedagogical approaches are informed by critical pedagogy. Anti-oppressive education provides an over-arching framework for these approaches, as its goal is to end oppression, and it recognizes that students and teachers experience multiple sites of oppression. Falling under the umbrella are anti-racist (and postcolonial) (Dei, 1996), culturally relevant, (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and feminist pedagogies (Larson, 2005) (to name the ones I came across most often in my graduate studies). The acknowledgement that (hetero)sexism, racism, classism, ableism, and ageism are linked and that any number of them can be experienced at different times over the course of one student's life provides a significant link to ecofeminist thought. Like ecofeminism, anti-oppressive pedagogy is committed to challenging the status quo by analyzing how certain groups are privileged and others marginalized. The main difference is that more-than-human nature is not included in the anti-oppressive analysis, and so the interconnected roots of the logic of domination are left inadequately questioned.

David Selby, a global and humane educator, has called for anti-racist, anti-sexist, and humane educators to form alliances because all these approaches are concerned with countering discrimination and injustice (in Bell & Russell, 1996). Humane educators focus on how humans and animals are both threatened by systemic oppression and domination, providing the closest thing to an ecofeminist approach I could find in education. However, in practice, humane education is marginalized and focuses primarily on treatment of pets and critiques of vivisection in schools (Selby, 1995). It also fails to conduct an analysis of human oppression, and does not offer strong arguments for why anti-oppressive education is important to lessen animal oppression (Humes, 2008). This

is a significant oversight and prevents humane educators from making potential allies with social justice educators. Humane educators will find much in common with ecofeminist pedagogy, especially as many ecofeminists have been active in the fight against vivisection and factory farming. There is also a set of ecofeminist literature that deals specifically with vegetarianism, with much debate over whether an ecofeminist should eat meat, considering how the subjugation of animals so often mirrors that of women (Warren, 2000; Houde & Bullis, 1999). Certainly ecofeminist pedagogy would engage in such discussions with students, and in this regard humane educators would find kindred spirits in ecofeminist circles. That humane education remains marginalized in education is a clue to how difficult it can be to confront anthropocentrism in education. While humane educators share with social justice educators a commitment to end oppression of all sorts, the correlations of human and nonhuman oppression goes against the very notion of human rights, which is based on the belief that humans are unique and thus deserve special consideration (Bell & Russell, 1996). This is a significant reason why humane education has been marginalized. The challenges associated with enacting ecofeminist pedagogy will be dealt with in more detail later in this thesis. For now, I want to concentrate on seeing how ecofeminism might possibly build bridges to anti-oppressive pedagogies (and perhaps humane educators might find this discussion to be of special interest). This discussion carries on in chapter three as well.

Critical pedagogues McLaren and Houston acknowledge that “critical educators can no longer ignore questions of ecojustice” (2004, p. 27). They still retain a Marxist perspective and focus on schooling as a site of environmental injustice, analyzed through



an ecosocialist lens.<sup>11</sup> While they address important issues like the toxic risks children are exposed to in schools (especially marginalized populations), an anthropocentric perspective is retained through their centering of class exploitation as the key concern. To be sure, global capitalism is considered by ecofeminists to be another manifestation of the logic of domination, and so here they find common ground with the critical pedagogues' critique of capitalism. Clearly ecofeminist pedagogy is also interested in having “teachers recognize their embeddedness in globalized social relations of exploitation” and helping students see the connections between capitalism and the ecological crisis (McLaren & Houston, 2004, p. 36). Although I have not discussed it in this thesis, there is within ecofeminism a body of literature that engages with socialism. Approaching critical educators through this particular ecofeminist lens may help critical educators make the conceptual leap across the perceived human/not-human divide.

Gadotti (2003), director of the Paulo Freire Institute, proposes a “pedagogy of the earth” to replace the “pedagogy of the oppressed” usually associated with the work of Freire and the critical pedagogues who build on his work. He describes an eco-pedagogy “born in the bosom of the Earth Charter initiative” and becoming a global alternative project (even, in his words, a utopian project) of social, economic and cultural change (2003, p. 9). Eco-pedagogy, as it evolved out of the Paulo Freire Institute, has developed some general principles, one of which reads as follows:

Ecopedagogy is anti-racist, anti-classist, anti-sexist, and anti-speciesist. It is against the ranking of oppressions, and instead seeks to understand the complex

---

<sup>11</sup> This ecosocialist lens is not the same as the ecosocial justice lens I have been using. The former is strongly Marxist, whereas the latter is not associated with Marxist ideology.

ways in which various forms of oppression co-originate or intersect due to common causes. Yet, it also recognizes that in any given instance, some forms of oppression may be more primary than others, and so understanding how multiple levels of oppression arise or take historical precedence is equally important (<http://ecopedagogy.org/index-1.html>).

This particular principle aligns very well with ecofeminist thought, and makes me hopeful that opportunities for solidarity with critical pedagogues might occur sooner than later. For the moment, I am pleased that some critical pedagogues are even starting to address ecojustice issues even though they retain a problematic anthropocentric framework (Bell & Russell, 2000).

### *Summary*

This chapter outlined the basic premises of ecofeminism and discussed how ecofeminist philosophy makes visible the logic of domination and centrism, allowing us to see some of the roots of ecosocial injustice. The need for an ecofeminist perspective is based on the fact that women of all races suffer the most social injustice, which is often linked to ecological destruction. Furthermore, every site of social change is also a site of struggle over gender relations, with gender based subordination and socialization being the kind everyone is exposed to from day one of their existence. The linking of women and other groups of people who are oppressed under the logic of domination with the abuse of nature is a key insight of ecofeminism. Revealing this linkage shows that in order to achieve social and ecological justice they must be addressed simultaneously through an ecosocial justice framework. Infusing social justice pedagogies such as critical

and anti-oppressive pedagogy with an ecosocial framework based on ecofeminism will help these approaches to broaden their praxis and thus be better equipped to reach their goals of societal transformation. With this information in mind, we now turn to an articulation of ecofeminist pedagogy within the context of Canadian education.

## Chapter 3

### Ecofeminist Pedagogy for Ecosocial Justice

As concerns for nurturance and empowerment are woven through mutually supportive themes of relationship, pluralism, inclusion, and transformation, we are supported in our attempts to create a world both responsive to children's needs and receptive of their contributions. At the same time, to the extent that ecofeminist philosophy and activism engages in the mutually supportive projects of promoting just and compassionate relationships among children and adults, men and women, and humanity and nonhuman nature, the beauty and power of ecofeminist philosophy is enhanced” (Kurth-Schai, 1997, p. 208)

The following articulation of a nascent ecofeminist pedagogy is my own, based on the information I gathered for this thesis. Others may very well have a different interpretation of how ecofeminism might influence pedagogy. Since one of the core values of ecofeminism is diversity, different pedagogical interpretations would be welcome. There is very little (less than a dozen articles) pre-existing ecofeminist pedagogy literature to draw on, so this chapter is exploratory and tentative in nature and as a result many gaps are to be expected. Where applicable, I will discuss how ecofeminist pedagogy can be enriched by, and enrich, anti-oppression and critical pedagogy. This articulation of an ecofeminist pedagogy is my contribution to the emerging ecology movements which “represent incipient attempts at a fundamental restructuring toward justice, sustainability, and Earth Democracy” (democracy for all life, not just humans) (Shiva, 2005, p. 62), and a piece of the puzzle that is a “much larger

project (involving) deep philosophical work and substantially extended practice (Blenkinsop & Beeman, 2008, p. 85).

An ecofeminist pedagogy needs to have a theoretical base that lacks domination, champions marginal voices (including that of more-than-human nature), and emphasizes identifying oneself in relation to others (both human and more-than-human). Teaching through an ecofeminist lens means that issues of social and ecological justice are paramount, thus ecofeminist pedagogy is ecosocial in theory and practice. Ecofeminist pedagogy must be critical in orientation if it is going to address social and ecological injustices. To be critical involves problematizing “the taken-for-granted assumptions, and unjust outcomes, of conventional educational and cultural practices” (Furman & Gruenewald, 2004, p. 58). Ecofeminism provides a place from which educators can question dominant discourses and practices, and interrupt hegemonic power relations in schools (Houde & Bullis, 2000). Ecofeminist educators set themselves two principal tasks: to expose the logic of domination and to seek alternatives that replace this destructive way of relating to each other and nature (Hallen, 2000).

There is certainly no lack of places where ecofeminist pedagogy can start to challenge the logic of domination in education. Deciding which places would provide the most fertile ground for change would be a start. These places would be different depending on the teacher, school, students, and political climate. Wherever an ecofeminist educator decides to start, they act “in the hope that the resultant splash and ripples cause a dissonance that impels the larger pool of education to change shape in response” (Blenkinsop & Beeman, 2008, p.85). To work for change is an act of hope, a

trust that the process will bring about the desired results. I feel a deep need for this hope, especially when trying to change deeply entrenched ways of being-in-the-world that are undergirded by a logic of domination. This thesis is, in part, an act of hope for me: hope that approaching education from an ecofeminist, ecosocial justice, perspective will help me be a positive agent of much-needed change in education. I would aim to be one of hopefully many “nuclei” for a new system, where these nucleus act as attractors for a new system which then grows in influence. Eisler argues that fundamental change is possible, even within a relatively short timeframe, when enough “nodules for change come together as the nucleus...for a new system” (2000, p. 249). These fundamental changes need to be mostly second-order change, which alters the ways in which education is put together, including new goals, structures, and roles (Steen, 2003).<sup>12</sup>

This chapter is divided into five sections: Preparation, what about power?, dialogue (including dialogue in the educational context and dialogue with more-than-human nature), consciousness-raising and embodied knowing, and ecofeminist pedagogy and racism. The first takes into consideration the mental and emotional preparation an ecofeminist teacher would be well-advised to undergo before engaging with students. “Dealing with Power” is the next section. It addresses issues of power and powerlessness in education, the effect this has on teacher-student and student-student relationships, and how these effects can be ameliorated. One of the ways in which teachers and students can work together for change is through dialogue, which is discussed in the next two sections following the discussion of power. An ecofeminist pedagogy combines dialogue with

---

<sup>12</sup> First-order change only involves improving the current system through improving things like efficiency and effectiveness of current practices and policies. The fundamental nature of the organization is not changed (Steen, 2003).

consciousness-raising and embodied knowing (the next section) when working with students to help education and society become more ecosocially just. Throughout these sections runs a thread of paying attention to relationships. Having laid a basis for ecofeminist pedagogy, I move into a discussion of ecofeminist pedagogy and racism where I attempt to show the connections between ecofeminist and anti-racist pedagogies as an example of ecosocial justice. This chapter provides the basis for the more practical chapter four, which introduces the Social Justice 12 course reworked as Ecosocial Justice 12. This is an attempt to put ecofeminist pedagogy into practice, albeit within the confines of the current and problematic educational system, making second-order change more challenging.

### *Preparation*

Before discussing what sorts of practices I would employ as an ecofeminist teacher, I would like to address some issues that I believe need to be sorted out before the students even show up for class the first day of school.<sup>13</sup> I believe that, in order to not become discouraged or disempowered, and to also be an agent of positive change, a teacher needs to always be in the process of thinking through their way of being-in-the-world, their world-view and pedagogical theory, and how this might affect their practice. Their practice needs to be intentional, flexible, and responsive. This allows a teacher to have somewhere to look when they ask themselves “Why am I doing things this way?”

---

<sup>13</sup> For now I am assuming that the basic notion of “school” is intact, and that I am working within the confines of this system, however problematic that may be. Ecofeminist pedagogy could advocate to do away with school and start over with a completely different model of education, but this is not the project I am taking up in this thesis. I intend to try to implement ecofeminist pedagogy in a traditional high school, while still working towards second-order change.

The process of reflecting on these things is especially important for educators who plan to challenge the status quo in education because they will meet with pressure to conform to the status quo.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, ecofeminist teachers need to be prepared to explain their pedagogical theory and practice to fellow teachers, administrators, parents, students, and community members. This was one of my reasons for choosing this particular subject for my thesis. I felt a need for a theoretical base for my practice: One that would give me the knowledge to meet the challenge of enacting ecosocial justice in a system that I feel is very problematic. As I do not have very much teaching experience, it seems important to figure out from what philosophical place I would teach from so that I did not fall back on the dominant model for lack of something better. Also, it seems to me that if I intend to do things very differently than the status quo expectations of teacher practice, I should be prepared to explain myself.

Ecofeminism, and thus ecofeminist pedagogy, aims to disrupt hegemonic power relations. Doing this invites questions and perhaps conflict, partly because people may have a sense of duty to the prevailing system and so defend it against detractors (Leppanen, 2004). Conflict and crisis should not take the ecofeminist educator by surprise. It is to be expected. Ecofeminist, anti-oppressive, and critical pedagogy are all overtly political and deal with controversial issues, and are thus likely to invite criticism from those desiring to uphold the status quo. Those committed to this course of action may face opposition, or at the very least, questions about their chosen theory and practice. Hence the need, for me at least, to feel adequately equipped to answer these

---

<sup>14</sup> It is important for all teachers to ask themselves these questions. This is an important part of changing an institution like education. Part of my role as a colleague looking for change would be to challenge my fellow educators to ask themselves these questions, and model it by asking them of myself.



questions, using the writing of this thesis (as a culmination of all that I have learned throughout the masters) as a starting point. While writing a thesis and then working for change in one's classroom might seem like a solitary activity, the building of cooperative and supportive alliances with other educators has been, and will continue to be, a key part of the process of examining my world-view and its effect on my theory and practice as an educator.

Ecofeminist, anti-oppressive, and critical educators all aim for social and political change. This will not happen unless people recognize their own involvement in systems of oppression and find different ways to relate to each other (hooks, 1989) and more-than-human nature (Houde & Bullis, 1999). Coming to terms with this fact and doing some self-analysis before entering the classroom is a key part of preparing to teach within an ecofeminist pedagogy.<sup>15</sup> Consider hooks: “If we do not change our own consciousness, we cannot change our actions or demand change from others” (1989, p. 25). Furthermore, “Deep personal and political change requires more than an interruption of hegemonic power and rituals of resistance. It also entails recognizing one's own involvement within those systems of oppression and finding alternative practices that help people to live transformationally” (Houde et. al., 1999, p. 151). As an ecofeminist teacher, I need to think deeply about how I act out the part of oppressor towards other humans and more-than-human nature, and then work towards appropriate changes in thinking and behaviour. As the Buddha is quoted as saying, “First, cease to do evil; then learn to do good.” The first step for an ecofeminist teacher is to take time to see where s/he might be

---

<sup>15</sup> This process could happen partly in solitude and partly in community with fellow humans and more-than-human nature. We are never really alone, and so self-analysis involves interaction with others.

“doing evil” by acting under the influence of the logic of domination. Then do everything s/he can to stop that behaviour. Only after this first step has been taken should one begin to “learn to do good” by enacting an ecofeminist pedagogy which aims to break down the logic of domination and offer an alternative framework that does no (or at least as little as possible) evil.

A key part of ceasing to do “evil” would be to consider how the logic of domination plays out in schools today. It is everywhere. Consider this short sample list: anthropocentric, sexist, and eurocentric curriculum materials (Selby, 1995), institutional policies and rules that rigidly enforce *power over* hierarchies (Kreisberg, 1992), the alienating and ecologically unsustainable physical structure of schools (Orr, 1994), the privileging of written literacy over oral communication and art (Rasmussen, 2001; Betcha, 1998), and assessment practices that are unfair, arbitrary and maintain “high status knowledge” as the only legitimate source of knowledge (Apple, 2004). In the high school context, the teacher as both intellectual and moral authority who acts as a (sometimes) “benevolent dictator” is, for me, an example of “doing evil” because it reinforces the logic of domination. Ceasing to do evil, then, would be to work towards *power with* relationships with students in a democratic ethos that recognizes the knowledge of students as valuable, and the teacher as student (notwithstanding their own area of expertise which they can share with students when needed), while simultaneously re-envisioning human relationships with the rest of nature. An example of this would be working with students to decide what we will learn, in what ways they wish to learn, where we learn, how we can connect with more-than-human nature, and how they will be

assessed (within the unfortunate confines of the educational system which lays out certain prescribed learning outcomes and demands teachers give students a final grade). It might also be transformative to engage in trying to envision what assessment would look like outside of the educational system. As the next section makes clear, issues of power and relationship are at the core of a pedagogical project that aims to disrupt and replace the logic of domination in education.

### ***What About Power?***

I am concerned that as a teacher I will use power in a negative way, will be guilty of indoctrinating students to my way of thinking, and will be part of a system that creates feelings of powerlessness in students. In my work as a teacher-on-call and during short stints of full time teaching, I have used my power as a teacher to enforce rules, policies and practices that I disagree with, and felt frustrated and hypocritical while doing so.<sup>16</sup> The instructions left for me by teachers, and advice I have been given on classroom management is based largely on domination, coercion, manipulation, and false bargains. For example, to make sure that students are paying attention to a video (especially a boring one), have them make notes on what they learn, and then tell them the teacher is collecting it. Do not say it is for marks, but let that be implied by the fact that you are collecting it. Otherwise, they will not bother making notes (marks as reward and motivation for producing work). The justification for this coercion and manipulation

---

<sup>16</sup> Not to mention being complicit in the oppression of my own two children by supporting the school policies and teacher practices that I feel are not very ecosocially just or good for authentic learning. I can't afford to take them out of public school. How do I help them cope with this system without at the same time being complicit in the system itself? I really do not have any solid answers at this point.

(even trickery) is that it keeps students “accountable.”<sup>17</sup> There is something deeply problematic about a system that needs to coerce and manipulate students so that they will be “accountable” for their learning.

Pedagogy, argues Gore (2002), is the enactment of power relations. These relations are normalizing and limit the effects of radical pedagogy. Reform efforts to rid education of power are thus ill-informed and doomed to fail. Gore (2002) argues that reform efforts in education have done little to change actual practice because these reforms did not address power relations between teachers and students. These reforms may have brought in new classroom practices such as collaboration, journals, and other student-centred approaches, but they did not address power relations. They were first-order changes. Schools are institutions, and any pedagogy enacted in them will be endowed with the power of that institution, including the influence of the overarching logic of domination. Perumal (2008) argues that this limits the extent to which radical teachers can divest their classes of power. In schools, ecofeminist pedagogy must look with a critical eye on all practices that are normalized to see how they might be supporting the continuance of the logic of domination with its negative use of power. Teachers may “perpetuate the 'isms of domination' unknowingly, unconsciously, unintentionally, and covertly” (Warren, 2000, p. 101). Due to the pervasiveness of *power over* relationships in our culture, students may arrive at school accustomed to it, and conditioned to respond to it with passivity, subversion, resistance and/or submission. Students “often feel so powerless, mistrusting, and cynical that creating a supportive

---

<sup>17</sup> These were the instructions left for me by a teacher recently, when I was a teacher-on-call.

context with transformed power relationships is a struggle for both teacher and student” (Kreisberg, 1992, p. 179). In regards to teacher-student relationships and relations with more-than-human nature, “We must find new modes of relationships which are not based on domination and submission and are not organized into hierarchies of the powerful and powerless” (Kreisberg, 1992, p. 17). An ecofeminist pedagogy needs to have a theoretical base that lacks domination, it must champion marginal voices, and emphasize identifying oneself in relation to others (both human and more-than-human) (Warren, 2000). These foundational commitments echo the call for *power with* relationships.

### Embrace power?

What then is an ecofeminist teacher, dedicated to non-hierarchal and nondualistic approaches, to do? Gore (2002) and hooks (1989) argue that teachers should embrace power and use it knowingly. Part of this knowing is realizing that power is not good or bad. Which root metaphors inform particular expressions of power, how power is used, for what effects, and with what results, are the key concerns. hooks (1989) argues that teachers can use power, but in non-coercive ways, by letting go of the idea of teacher as all-knowing but still letting students know we are there as the teacher. This is a possible solution to the dilemma of politically committed teachers who “want to serve the common good with the power we possess by virtue of our position as teachers, and yet....are deeply suspicious of any exercise of power in the classroom” (Bizzell, 1991, p. 54 in Buffington, 1993, p. 6). I am not sure how this tension will look in practice, but I think that ideas about dialogue and flourishing will help. Both these concepts are taken up later in the chapter.

Kreisberg (1992) calls for relationships characterized by *power with* dynamics, which include notions of equality, diversity, interconnection, sharing, mutuality, collaboration, synthesis, and interdependence. These relationships are in direct contrast to *power over* dynamics which are indicative of relationships constructed on the logic of domination. Power, in this case, is not ignored or rejected. Gore's (2002) argument that power cannot be escaped and should thus be embraced is reflected in Kreisberg's call for a change in power relations, where students and teachers share power. While the realities of school mean that eliminating *power over* relationships is unlikely any time soon, it is possible to cultivate increasing levels of *power with* dynamics as a part of working for systemic change – causing ripples in the pond, as Blenkinsop and Beeson (2008) describe actions that cause the larger system to respond and adjust.

#### Problematic aspects of challenging *power over* relationships

Systems change is hard work, and to be consistent and persistent will be qualities teachers need when trying to undertake radical educational change. In the beginning, Kreisberg suggests, teachers may have to resort to *power over* modes of relating in order to create a space in which *power with* can be cultivated. Using thoughtful and careful *power over* dynamics to “create conditions in which mutuality and empowerment could occur was an important, if usually distasteful, responsibility of the teacher” (Kreisberg, 1992, p. 181). This is a fine line. I worry that using *power over* relations to construct *power with* relations is an example of what Lorde cautions against: “*For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house*. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change” (1984, p.

112). This is a tension I do not yet feel able to resolve. What does it mean that I am analyzing the logic of domination within the confines of the university system, which epitomizes *power over* hierarchies and the fruits of a culture gone wrong (Orr, 1994)? Or that I am trying to enact ecofeminist pedagogy in a school system that is based on a logic of domination? Have I placed myself in a double bind? I think so, but does that mean I should give up and not try to enact a pedagogy that is ecosocial and radical? Welch (1990) in Cook-Sather (2002) says that educators must embrace a “feminist ethic of risk,” which involves being willing to take steps, however small, towards changing oppressive practices even if it means that large-scale change may be unattainable in the near future. A key part of this change is reconceptualising power relations between teachers and students, and considering how this intersects with human and more-than-human relations.

While ecofeminist pedagogy aims to disrupt hegemonic power relations and work towards ecosocial justice, there is a concern that this approach could merely replace one type of “authorized” approach with another, expecting students to conform to another adult agenda, however enlightened the adults think their approach is. In this case, I am arguing that ecofeminist pedagogy for ecosocial justice is a better pedagogical framework for relationships than the current western framework based on problematic root metaphors such as anthropocentrism and androcentrism that result from the logic of domination. I am caught in an internal conflict, where I feel a certain sense of urgency in having students adopt more ecologically and socially just world-views for their own sake, and the sake of the rest of nature, yet I do not want to turn this urgency into another example of imposing a set of values on students. Kumashiro (2004) also struggles with

this problem, asking if it is not problematic that he was aiming to prepare students to respond in a certain way to statistics about social injustices. Was it not problematic, he asks, that he was requiring students to respond in ways HE wanted them to respond, ways he had already predetermined were the better ways? Kumashiro (2004) argues that this tension means teachers need to embrace uncertainty, and expect that students will have unexpected, contradictory responses to teachers' attempts at anti-oppressive teaching. These should not, he argues, be seen as barriers to education. The barrier to anti-oppressive education could very well be “the notion that good teaching happens only when students respond in ways we want them to respond” (Kumashiro, 2004, p. 114).

It may be that students of ecofeminist teachers will have to negotiate between this different way of teaching, and the traditional model that their other teachers are using. Is it fair to put this burden of negotiation between different teaching models on students? What if the consciousness-raising process engaged with in one class makes the oppressive teaching practices in their other classes even more unbearable? If youth are still without much power in society, would this “enlightenment” lead to more feelings of powerlessness? What if students speak out and ask their other teachers to engage in ecosocially just education? Am I prepared to answer for myself, have some colleagues upset at me, and somehow support students who are frustrated and/or ready to take action that disrupts the status quo and its power dynamics? I believe that if a teacher opens the proverbial Pandora's Box, they should be prepared to deal with the consequences and take responsibility for them. Although these consequences may be challenging, they



might better be seen as a welcome part of the process of educational change that an ecofeminist teacher is aiming for.

Despite the tension of trying to figure out how to negotiate and change power relations in education while working for ecosocial justice, one hopes that as trust and hope emerge between students and between students and their teacher (and hopefully between teachers), moving forward to create counter-hegemonic groups and classrooms as “base camps” of social change can start to occur.<sup>18</sup> The concept of counter-hegemony is a feminist pedagogical idea which is more organized than simple resistance. It is “the creation of a self-conscious analysis of a situation and the development of collective practices and organization that can oppose the hegemony of the existing order and begin to build the base for a new understanding and transformation of society....(it means) a lived experience of how the world can be different” (Weiler, 2009, p. 235-236). Later in this thesis I will imagine how such a base camp can be established in the Social Justice 12 course currently on offer in British Columbia.

### Authority and Power

Ecofeminist pedagogy teaches for, in, with, and about nature. Teaching for nature is political and involves moving away from the status quo expectation that teachers will be neutral. The worry is that if teachers are not neutral, they will be engaging in indoctrination and abuse their position of authority and trust. This approach does not question the problematic power relations inherent in the term “position of authority and

---

<sup>18</sup> The idea of a base camp is often associated with military operations, but it can also be a launching point for adventures in the outdoors, such as a base camp from which a mountain climber might set out from. It symbolizes a place to get set up and get ready for a larger, often difficult but rewarding, adventure.

trust,” or break down what authority actually means in different contexts. One can be an authority-expert on a certain subject, and/or one can be in a position of authority and enact practices associated with top-down power. Russell and Bell believe that “In teaching for the environment, we aim to help students understand the cultural and historical specificity of various attitudes and behaviours toward the nonhuman. It is not a case of indoctrinating students; quite the contrary, it requires bringing to their attention choices and possibilities which are otherwise hidden” (1996, p. 177). Could an educator not be an authority on bringing attention to “choices and possibilities otherwise hidden” in a way that is not supportive of the logic of domination and its *power over* hierarchies? Ecofeminist pedagogy says this must happen. This kind of authority is connected to being an “authority” on a particular subject due to education and experience, and can be enacted in a way that does not recreate dominator relationships. Ecofeminism calls for non-hierarchical, power-with, relationships while still allowing for authority in respect to knowledge and experience.

### Moving away from domination

A central claim of ecofeminism is that if we are to behave in an intelligent, logical and caring way to each other and more-than-human nature, we need to overcome our need to dominate. In order to overcome this need to dominate, Gardner and Riley (2007) believe that ecofeminist pedagogy must eschew traditional formats, pedagogies, and hierarchical classroom structures, many of which duplicate the logic of domination. In their case, they believed team teaching helped to do this, as it removed the teacher as the sole source of authority and disrupted the traditional hierarchies inherent in education,

especially as each teacher took a turn in taking the role of student and questioned the other teacher. There are many possible ways to move away from traditional formats, pedagogies, and structures in education. One hardly knows where to start. Everything from classroom set-up, assessment strategies, school policies and norms, and curriculum materials (to name a few) are suspect and in need of revisioning in an ecofeminist pedagogy. The whole notion of school needs to be questioned, but for now I am focusing on what to do while working within the current educational context. I will consider some concrete examples of this revisioning in chapter four, including a discussion of assessment.

Concerns about how to handle power dynamics between teachers and students is an important part of ecofeminist pedagogy because one of the key positions ecofeminism takes is that unequal power relations, and the root metaphors that inform them, are at the foundation of social and ecological injustices. Finding ways of transforming relationships is therefore an eminently important goal of ecofeminist pedagogy. While there are many ways this could be approached, I will focus on dialogue as an important dynamic in the transformation of relationships between all beings. Why that is the case should become clear in the following discussion about dialogue.

### *Dialogue*

Those advocating for ecofeminist pedagogy emphasize the role of dialogue in enacting new relationships between humans and between humans and more-than-human nature (Houde et al., 2000; Li, 2007; Gardner & Riley, 2007). What is dialogue? Can one dialogue with nature? Why is dialogue so important to ecofeminist pedagogy? In the

following paragraphs I will attempt to work through these questions, but I do not offer conclusive answers. I am not so sure there are any to be found when it comes to dialogue.

According to Buber (1965), dialogue can occur without speech. All it requires is an acknowledgement of an Other (a being through which the self is defined). This understanding allows for dialogue between humans and the rest of nature. Having a conversation does not mean dialogue is necessarily occurring, and having a dialogue does not mean both parties are working towards consensus or agreement. The aim of dialogue is understanding, but this may not always occur. The hope is that even if understanding of the other does not occur, at the very least it ought to produce a deeper acceptance of the other being. This is especially important when imagining dialogue with more-than-human nature, where understanding may be especially hard to come by, but a deeper acceptance of the other, and their right to flourish, is nurtured.<sup>19</sup> The concept of flourishing includes notions of autonomy, well-being, holistic health, and thriving.<sup>20</sup>

According to Buber (1965), genuine dialogue only occurs when two beings meet in an I-THOU relationship, which is when two meet and know the other in their concrete uniqueness and not just as a content of one's own experience. An I-IT relationship, where

---

<sup>19</sup> I am coming at this from a human perspective, where I am trying to dialogue with nature and hoping to understand it better, and maybe even commune with it, or a specific organism. But is this other organism trying to dialogue with me? Are they trying to understand me like I am them? The whole concept of inter-species communication is fascinating and could shed some light on this concept. Unfortunately I don't have space to take it up in this thesis.

<sup>20</sup> The concept of flourishing can be problematic in some cases. What and who should be allowed to flourish? Invasive species? Bacteria that make organisms ill, interfering with their ability to flourish? What if the flourishing of one person's career means that another's (i.e., a wife's) cannot flourish? Have not colonizers flourished at the expense of the colonized? I like the positive aspect of flourishing, but it needs to be balanced with a more complicated understanding of ecology and environmental ethics. These are the sorts of discussions that would be welcomed in an ecofeminist classroom. See Code (1999) for a fuller critique of Cuomo's (2001) concept of flourishing. She asks if there are people, plants, places and animals that should not be allowed to flourish, and if so, who decides?

I see the other person or being as a mere object, is a situation where dialogue cannot occur, only monologue. The I-IT relationship is not necessarily bad, and is often how humans usually relate to each other. If everyone was always in a state of I-THOU, not much would get done in the world, similar to the opinion that if everyone was always in a state of infatuation then the world would stop functioning. Buber (1965) allows that technical dialogue, the sharing of information, occurs in an I-IT relationship. This is a part of life, is expected, and need not be frowned upon. However, if the only relationships we have are characterized by I-IT, then there is an increased opportunity for humans to be disconnected from each other and more-than-human nature. True reciprocity can only occur through genuine dialogue.

Genuine dialogue, according to Buber, is characterized by inclusion, which has three elements: a relation of some kind between two beings, a shared experience in which at least one participates, and being able to enter the standpoint of the other being without losing oneself (Roberts, 1999). In a dialogue each person is simultaneously autonomous, entering into the relationship freely, and attempting to understand the experiences and feelings of the other, while acknowledging the uniqueness and autonomy of both parties.<sup>21</sup> Buber offers the metaphor of an embrace, where both parties keep their own personhood while embracing the other with an open heart and mind. At the heart of this relationship is not earned respect, but respect based on the intrinsic value of the other

---

<sup>21</sup> My understanding of autonomy is based on Bai's conception of autonomy as one "that celebrates and promotes the individual capacity to think for oneself and to enact such freedom is an indisputable human good" instead of the problematic conception that posits autonomy in an atomistic and individualist manner (2006, p. 8). I would like to expand Bai's concept of autonomy to include more-than-human nature, where individual organisms are also free to make their own decisions for their own well-being and flourishing, and this is seen by humans to be an indisputable good. Additionally, the concept of autonomy needs to take into account the interdependence of humans with each other and more-than human nature.

being. It is an acknowledgment of interdependence tempered with the autonomy of each being. There is an element of humility in this acknowledgement. When ecofeminists speak of transformed relationships, they are presupposing that these relationships are based on the acknowledgement of human interdependence with each other and the rest of nature (Merchant, 2005; Warren, 2000). They reject the hyper-individualism and alienation of the Cartesian world-view, which ecofeminists would argue is based on a larger project founded on the logic of domination. While I do not recall the ecofeminists I have read referring to respect, my understanding of ecofeminism is compatible with Buber's argument for authentic dialogue based on respect for, and communion with, other beings.

### *Dialogue in the Educational Context*

In the teacher-student relationship, it is most often that an I-IT relational dynamic occurs. This is when the teacher (I) sees the student as an object (IT). One cannot have dialogue with an object, only with an autonomous and respected THOU. Buber (1965) argues that the I-IT relationship is inevitable and even necessary at times, but that it should not be over-emphasized or prioritized. The aim is for an I-THOU relationship as much as possible. When the teacher is a spectator, judging the thoughts and work of a student, only an I-IT relationship is possible, and dialogue cannot occur (Adkins, 1999). The I-IT relationship is built on dualisms, where one of the beings is superior to, more powerful than, the other. It is based on the logic of domination. Racism, sexism, ableism, and naturism (for example) all make dialogue impossible because they involve objectification and seeing the other as inferior.

In a classroom there are people from different cultures, genders, and abilities. The power relations between the teacher (who is in a position of authority no matter their gender or ethnicity) and students, and between students, come into play when trying to create conditions where dialogue can occur. The classroom is not usually a place where there is the liberty and freedom required for authentic dialogue. The students and teachers do not choose each other or the curriculum, and attending school is compulsory. In addition to this lack of freedom, Buber (1965) argues that only a limited kind of dialogue can occur between teachers and students because the student is not able to enter into the experience of the teacher, and therefore inclusion (a prerequisite for dialogue) cannot be mutual. However, on the way to true dialogue students may experience an intellectual awakening which hints at the possibility of relationship through dialogue as they acknowledge others (human or otherwise) (Blenkinsop, 2004). Another step towards true dialogue occurs in the “asymmetrical relationship” where teachers act as both teacher and student while simultaneously creating opportunities for students to grow in their understanding of the world and relationships. The teacher, due to life experience, can understand what it is to be a student, but the student cannot understand what it is to be a teacher. The responsibility of taking both experiences into account therefore falls with the teacher. If a time comes when the student is able to cross the bridge and experience from the side of the teacher, Buber argues that the relationship is no longer that of teacher and student, but of friendship. At this point, the teacher has worked themselves out of a job, as there is no need of a more mature teacher at this point in the student's lives, only a friend (Blenkinsop, 2005).

Although Buber might have argued that concrete conditions cannot necessarily be created because dialogue is not found by seeking for it, but as a matter of grace (Smith, 2000) I wonder if teachers might try to create a community where grace could flourish? I am not sure how an atheist, or someone from a non-Judaic, non-Christian background might conceive of the idea of grace. Buber believed in God, and so the idea of grace grows out of his faith. Perhaps radical teachers, including those who turn to ecofeminism for inspiration, might see grace as a certain faith in the process of working towards a deeper understanding of relationships that allow both humans and more-than-human nature to flourish as interdependent and autonomous beings. According to Blenkinsop (2005), when Buber spoke of grace (and that dialogue could not be forced or willed) he was also making the point that something as profound as dialogue requires deliberate thought and action. Dialogue does not just happen spontaneously. Most of the time both parties need to have prepared the ground ahead of time by being present in the moment, non-judgemental, and open to other beings (keeping our arms open as to welcome others into our embrace through dialogue).<sup>22</sup>

Blenkinsop (2005) proposes that a teacher who is prepared to engage in dialogue with students will push, support, and challenge students in whatever direction he/she feels will be most helpful for the student, while at the same time acknowledging that the student responds out of their own free will. The attitude of being committed to assisting others on their own path of personal growth while maintaining an attitude of humility,

---

<sup>22</sup> I am not sure how this translates into dialogue with more-than-human nature, except that non-humans are likely far better at living in the moment than humans are. But is more-than-human-nature non-judgemental and waiting with open arms to dialogue with humans? Buber's (1965) sees nature as an expression of God, and as our teacher, waiting to instruct us with open arms.



and being committed to allowing students to choose their own path, helps to guard against the dangers of indoctrination and propaganda. According to Bowers, Buber encourages teachers to “confirm the distinct otherness of the student, trust in the unfolding of dialogue, and be a co-participant in ways that avoid manipulating the student's self-image and thoughts” (2001, p. 192). According to Yaron (2000), Buber sees the teacher as a filter that sifts through the information and experiences available to students and discriminates what will be the most helpful to each student on their individual journeys of discovery. This could be helpful in regards to my previously stated concern that my sense of urgency in regards to ecosocial justice might turn into an imposition of my values onto students. Buber does see education as change toward a certain direction, one informed by a set of ethics (Yaron, 2000). Yet these ethics cannot be imposed on the student. Rather, they can only be transferred indirectly from the teacher to the student through a relationship of trust, where the student is sure that the teacher is not manipulating them but providing an example to follow should the student so chose (Yaron, 2000).

The outcome of this process of working and waiting for dialogue is not known, but there is hope that it will lead to relationships that allow for mutual flourishing. Taking these notions into account along with Buber's articulation of dialogue and the I-THOU relationship, I would like to propose that an ecofeminist pedagogy aims to create an environment where teachers and students can increase their chances of engaging in dialogue with each other and more-than-human nature because they are humbly committed to the flourishing of all (while keeping in mind the shortcomings of the

concept of flourishing). The special responsibility of teachers in this process is to be continually thoughtful about the world they are presenting to students, and to experience what it must be like to be their students and how their actions impact them (Blenkinsop, 2004 & 2005). Is it also important to maintain a questioning attitude that always asks if the world teachers create helps students grow closer to the ability to dialogue with other humans and the rest of nature. In chapter four I will explore practical ways that a teacher might engage students in creating such an environment.

### *Dialogue with More-Than-Human-Nature*

Ecofeminist pedagogy aims to promote moral agency in oppressive contexts, and in order to do so one must become a speaking subject, not merely an object that can be oppressed (Li, 2007). This is an important part of becoming a being that is autonomous. While anti-oppressive, critical, and feminist educators also call for the nurturing of speaking subjects, they do not include nature in this category.<sup>23</sup> This is a significant oversight on their part. Haraway observes that “Nature may be speechless, without language, in the human sense; but nature is highly articulate” (1992, in Houde et. al., 1999, p. 151). The ability to dialogue with nature in an I-THOU relationship involves a great deal of listening on the part of humans, and a revisioning of what we count as language (Wolfe, 2003).<sup>24</sup> In light of scientific work on animals, language, and cognition the question is not about giving speech back to animals by making them subjects rather

---

<sup>23</sup> Humane educators do include animals as speaking subjects.

<sup>24</sup> Wolfe (2003) discusses how much of language is not spoken, which has implications for how animals communicate with each other and with other species. There is no denying that humans communicate with other animals. The point, Wolfe contends, is that language is not a matter of difference in kind so much as difference in degree.

than objects, but rather a rethinking of the relationship between language, ethics and species itself (Wolfe, 2003). The need to learn to listen to, and communicate with more-than-human nature is most evident in western cultures, and those cultures greatly influenced by western culture through colonialism and globalization. There are cultures that possess a world-view that welcomes communication with the more-than-human world, and that believe this world communicates quite clearly with humans. Many aboriginal cultures, for example, hold this view.

The idea of inter-species communication, and the implications of this communication, would be readily taken up in ecofeminist pedagogy. Ecofeminist pedagogy would engage with the question of how nature speaks, what it means for us to listen, and what language really is. For example, when teaching science from an ecofeminist perspective, an approach that asks students “what is nature (or a particular organism) saying here?” would challenge the western science approach which sees nature as a passive object without voice, or in the case of animals who have had their vocal chords cut before vivisection, silenced so that the experimenter does not have to hear the screams of sentient animals (Everden, 1993).<sup>25</sup> To undertake this approach to communication with nature inside, mostly through the use of written texts, would be difficult. Ecofeminist pedagogy requires direct contact and communication (and hopefully dialogue) with more-than-human nature. Students who have pets or experiences with animals may have some insight here. At the very least, expanding our knowledge of

---

<sup>25</sup> Would an ecofeminist pedagogy support the use of dead animals for dissection in science class? I do not believe so. This situation would be an opportunity for teachers and students to discuss why it is morally problematic to use animals for research, even if the cow eye comes from a cow already slaughtered for food. Then comes the next question: is the agricultural industrial complex moral?

animal emotions and communication, through the reading and discussion of books such as “When Elephants Weep,” (Masson & McCarthy, 1995) would be helpful.

Abrams (1996) writes about how we hear and experience nature through our senses. This means we probably need to get outside. For days when this may not be possible for a variety of reasons, an ecofeminist teacher would have to be creative in finding ways to let nature speak for itself. Recorded nature sounds? Pictures? Plants? Visiting animals? (A limp plant is saying “Hello, I’m thirsty”). Perhaps we could hold a “Council of All Beings?”<sup>26</sup> This might be the place to introduce nature writers, who attempt to express nature’s voice through literature, while keeping in mind the dangers associated with anthropomorphism. Humans have enough trouble “giving voice” to their fellow humans, let alone other animals and beings (Russell, 2008). Despite these complex issues, humans need to do the best we can do while acknowledging our limitations. Ecofeminism takes up this challenge by trying to envision alternative conversations about human and more-than-human nature, specifically “democratic discourses in which a variety of different relations to nature are validated and sustained, even if none of them is the whole truth” (Sandilands, 1999, p. 180). However useful activities like the Council of All Beings might be for building alternative conversations, there is no real substitute for

---

<sup>26</sup> The Council of All Beings is a sort of ritual where people take on the concerns of specific animals and attempt to speak for them, in the hopes that empathy and connection might be increased. I understand this is not an unproblematic activity, as it is questionable if humans can speak for animals without anthropomorphizing them.

direct contact with more-than-human nature.<sup>27</sup> Get outside with students, as often as possible. This act in itself, as simple as it seems, challenges the status quo with its accompanying separation of humans from the rest of nature, especially in the high school context where going outside is even less likely to occur than in elementary school.

Another simple counter-hegemonic act related to dialogue is the use of speech over the written word. Ecofeminist pedagogy would do well to turn to oral learning and sources of information for a number of reasons. The written word, according to Abrams (1996) has worked to alienate us from more-than-human nature by creating distance. Some students struggle with written language and so providing them with the opportunity to explore philosophy and relationships through conversation would allow them to participate in a richer way than if the focus was on written work. Many cultures whose knowledge has been subjugated preserve much of their wisdom in oral traditions, many of which may contain valuable information about how to live in harmony with more-than-human nature. Finally, since written knowledge is often seen as superior, “high status knowledge” and more likely to be true, focusing on oral dialogue is in itself a counter-hegemonic act in education. However, one might keep in mind that in western culture even orality is embedded in a cultural sea of written literacy, so “escape from the written” is not really possible, or even desirable. I am suggesting that we approach

---

<sup>27</sup> In this context I have created an outside/inside dichotomy that is problematic in that it is hard to define a line where outside becomes inside. Humans and other animals carry the “outside” inside on our shoes and paws. The outside comes inside through our windows. The plant we have growing inside came from a seed grown, in all likelihood, outside at some point. The bean seed my son planted in a cup and put on the windowsill at school was brought home and planted outside in our garden, where it flourished I might add.

written literacy with a critical eye, and give oral literacy more prominence in a quest to challenge high-status knowledge.

Moving away from written communication also opens the door to communication with more-than-human nature. Taking things a step further, even speech itself can be problematic as it is often seen as a special human trait, making the reliance on speech evidence of anthropocentrism. Sandilands (1999) argues that if we want to extend the concept of democracy to more-than-human nature, we need to remember that speech can be a way of avoiding human relationship to the rest of nature. Bringing nature into democratic discourse, then, requires humans to acknowledge the limitations of speech (oral and written). In regards to dialogue then, Buber's (1965) notion of it being an encounter that does not necessarily involve speech leaves room for finding alternative ways of communicating with each other and with more-than-human nature.

Thus far I have explored how educators wishing to enact ecofeminist pedagogy must first do some serious thinking about their theory and practice, including examining how they are situated in terms of power relations in the classroom. The key is to examine how the logic of domination is expressed in schools, and between students and teachers. Part of this process is imagining how *power over* relationship patterns can be replaced with *power with* relationships in schools and beyond. As ecofeminist pedagogy challenges the hegemonic status quo, teachers should be prepared to encounter questions and resistance from a variety of sources. This situation calls for intentional and mindful practice that does not impose new ways of being-in-the-world on students, while simultaneously providing opportunities for students to see other possibilities beyond what they are

accustomed to experiencing and believing. Everything done within the framework of ecofeminist pedagogy must aim to reduce domination, champion marginal voices, act to value cultural and biodiversity, and nurture the knowledge that we are in relationships of interdependence with each other and with more-than-human nature. One way of doing this is to work towards building a community in the classroom where students and teachers flourish and engage in dialogue. Once a community of trust is formed and the possibility for respectful, authentic dialogue is possible, teachers and students can begin to inquire into the roots, histories, and current social and material effects of the logic of domination. This part of an ecofeminist pedagogical project can be nurtured through consciousness-raising and embodied knowing.

### ***Consciousness-Raising and Embodied Knowing***

An important part of the ecofeminist educational process is consciousness-raising, a term first employed by feminist educators in the 1970s and later used by Freire who used the Spanish version, *conscientization*. I have used *conscientization* in the first part of this paper because it is the version of the term anti-oppressive and critical educators are most familiar with, and I am trying to connect with them. There is one aspect that differentiates between consciousness-raising and *conscientization*. Where Freire's notion of *conscientization* calls for cognitive reflection, a feminist pedagogy employing consciousness-raising adds reflection based on emotion, where “the feminist classroom is decisively one in which tears, anger, silence, joy, and enthusiasm co-exist and are normalized as part of the learning process” (Larson, 2005, p. 138). In terms of expanding the goals of feminist pedagogy to include ecological justice, the valuing of emotion and

personal experience is considered a key part of engaging students (and teachers) with the more-than-human world (Russell and Bell, 1996). We experience nature through our senses, and this requires direct experience (Abrams, 1996). Anti-oppression pedagogy also calls for the displacing of rationalism as the only legitimate source of knowledge (Kumashiro, 2000). Both feminist and some environmental education also value embodied knowledge and question the hegemony of rationalism. Weil argues that an ecofeminist pedagogy values “ways of knowing beyond the patriarchal view that rational thought is the only basis for knowledge” (1993, p. 311).<sup>28</sup> An embodied notion of knowing breaks down the false mind/body dualism, showing that they are not separate, but interdependent with each other.<sup>29</sup> Ecofeminist pedagogy would nurture embodied knowing in part by engaging with the wonder of life through the idea of teaching with and through nature. This basically involves getting outside and counter-acting what Louve (2005) calls “nature deficit disorder.” Pye (1993) argues that of personal alienation from nature is one of the great causes of the ecological crisis, and that people who do not have experiential knowledge of nature will not care for it, making them far less likely to conserve it. Plumwood concurs with Pye and Louve:

Special relationship with, care for, or empathy with particular aspects of nature as experiences rather than with nature as abstraction are essential to provide a depth and type of concern that is not otherwise possible (1991, p. 7).

---

<sup>28</sup> Since western philosophy has a strong tradition of commitment to rationalism, ecofeminist philosophy takes a critical approach to philosophy and what counts as philosophical inquiry and knowledge. See Plumwood, 2002 for a detailed analysis of this issue.

<sup>29</sup> This philosophical attention to the breaking down of the false mind/body dualism is supported by recent scientific studies that show that it might be more accurate to “refer to the whole system as a psychosomatic information network, linking *psyche*, which comprises all that is of an ostensibly nonmaterial nature, such as mind, emotion, and soul, to *soma*, which is the material world of molecules, cells, and organs. Mind and body, psyche and soma” (Pert, 1997)



Linking this in and through nature approach to embodied knowledge is enriched by the philosophical project of breaking down the dualisms that create conditions favourable for oppression to occur. For example, the mind/body and culture/nature dualisms are broken down as both sides of the dualisms are engaged interdependently through first-hand experiences with more-than-human nature, hand-in-hand with the critical thinking required in philosophical work – work that helps us change our minds as we work through how our world-views affect our ethics and behaviour towards each other and more-than-human nature. The mind and body, culture and nature, become integrated. Engaging in this type of educational work also helps to dissolve the long-standing denial of dependence inherent in the logic of domination. Ecofeminist pedagogy would try to make visible our reliance upon each other and more-than-human nature through offering alternative ways of “being-in-the-world” which recognize our dependency on nature (Hallen, 2000, p. 160). Indigenous world-views and the science of ecology have both shown quite clearly that we are embedded in, and dependent upon the earth's ecosystems. The human/nature dualism is a false construct, and it is illogical to continue denying our dependence upon each other and more-than-human nature. Immersing ecofeminist philosophy in the living world nurtures an ethics of reciprocity between inter-dependent living systems (Hallen, 2000). Consciousness-raising and learning through nature work together to help teachers and students engage in embodied knowing that helps break down the dualisms that keep us alienated from each other and stuck in delusions of independence and superiority learned from the logic of domination.

### *Ecofeminist Pedagogy and Racism*

In chapter two I suggested that because ecofeminism addresses notions such as animality as an expression of the logic of domination, and connects the social and ecological aspects of justice, ecofeminism could help anti-oppressive educators make the philosophical leap from anthropocentrism to a worldview that is moving towards being ecosocial. One way to approach this is to consider how ecofeminists might address racism, a key concern of anti-oppressive educators, in an educational context. Ecofeminism is committed to both social and biological diversity as a key aspect of ecosocial justice and a new earth friendly paradigm. Ecofeminists would agree with Bowers (2004) that it is necessary to reframe issues of racism in ways that have smaller adverse ecological impacts, and simultaneously value cultural diversity (which often supports biodiversity as well). For example, an ecofeminist pedagogy would not simply try to help students experiencing racism succeed in the current educational model because this model produces citizens who behave in ecologically illogical ways, and is based on one cultural model (modern western civilization). Ecofeminist pedagogy does not aim to give marginalized students a piece of the rotten pie that is our current western paradigm based on *power over* relationships and mindless consumerism (to name a couple problematic aspects of western culture). Rather, it aims to empower marginalized students so they can perhaps value those parts of their culture that promote the values of the Earth Charter, which includes their right to live economically viable lives like

everyone else, but within the confines of what is ecologically sustainable (A standard that should be expected of all citizens).<sup>30</sup>

Culturally relevant teaching methods and theory provide a framework for ecofeminist pedagogy in regards to empowering students by acknowledging and valuing their cultures and subjugated knowledges.<sup>31</sup> Ecofeminists would take this further by asking how these cultures and subjugated knowledges might help humans live in more ecological logical and sustainable ways (or not, as the case may be). Many cultures around the world have world-views that reflect nondualistic and nonhierarchical systems of relationships between humans, and between humans and more-than-human nature. Shiva argues that “The ontological shift for an ecologically sustainable future has much to gain from the world-views of ancient civilizations and diverse cultures which survived sustainably over centuries” (1989, p. 41). One example of such a world-view is Buddhism, which provides the concept of Ch'i as the basis for a nondualistic ontology (Bai, 2001).<sup>32</sup> Many First Nations also live by ontologies that are more ecosocially

---

<sup>30</sup> Although living in an ecologically sustainable manner should be expected of all citizens, within the framework of ecosocial justice there should be ongoing discussion about how to deal with the issue of material inequity, and how that might affect a person's participation in solving the ecosocial crisis. Indeed, this is a problem acknowledged by many, including Wolfe who writes, “It is understandable, of course, that traditionally marginalized peoples would be skeptical about calls by academic intellectuals to surrender the humanist model of subjectivity, with all its privileges, at just the historical moment when they are poised to 'graduate into it.' But the larger point I stress here is that as long as this humanist and speciesist *structure* of subjectivization remains intact, and as long as it is institutionally taken for granted that it is all right to systematically exploit and kill nonhuman animals simply because of their species, then the humanist discourse of species will always be available for use by some humans against other humans as well, to countenance violence against the social other of *whatever* species – or gender, or race, or call, or sexual difference” (Wolfe, 2003, p. 8).

<sup>31</sup> This does not mean an uncritical valuing of all cultural practices. Patriarchal and ecologically destructive beliefs and practices need to be questioned, no matter what culture they stem from.

<sup>32</sup> Chinese culture has seen the coexistence of sexism and nondualistic understandings of the relationship between culture and nature. Cultures founded on nondualistic world-views can still suffer from sexism and construct hierarchies that may include the debasing of animals and nature. Simply because a culture is ancient or indigenous does not mean it is based on ecosocial justice (Sturgeon, 1997).

responsible because they consider all of nature to be their relatives and therefore worthy of great respect (Betcha, 1998). Bowers argues that “the challenge for the teacher who practices an eco-justice pedagogy will be to overcome the modern prejudices that marginalize and denigrate the importance of traditions that still provide a modicum of self-reliance and resistance to the dominant culture” (2001, p. 185). In addition to this self-examination into the influence of prejudices, teachers (and students) could explore different cultures' world-views, and find out how they may have been affected by colonialism and immigration (basically, by contact with the modern western worldview and its problematic root metaphors). The link between colonialism and ecosocial justice is important because “...the colonization of diverse peoples was, at its root, a forced subjugation of ecological concepts of nature and of the Earth...” (Shiva, 1989, p. 41). When the original Other, woman, was created as a category, it could then be applied to nature and colonized peoples in order to rationalize their subjugation. There are also connections between racism, sexism and colonialism. For example, the Amerindian peoples of North America (such as the Hurons and Iroquois) had more egalitarian societies in regards to gender relations than European societies. After contact with Europeans, when male Amerindians came to see the economic advantage of adopting European culture (including how they treat women), Amerindian women became subjected within their own culture as women, and through colonialism they were subjected due to both their sex and their race (Smandych & Lee, 1995). In the early days of the province of British Columbia there were not enough women to do what in Europe was considered women's work. Chinese men were hired to do this work, and were

described as a “feminine race” by white settlers. This allowed the white men to move Chinese men into the category of woman, justifying things such as denying Chinese men the vote and other rights and privileges normally given to men (Muszynski, 1991). The same thinking was used to justify the inferiority of women and non-white races: brain size, intelligence, emotionality, irrationality etc. (Muszynski, 1991). Due to colonialism Amerindian gender relations, and relationships with more-than-human nature, were changed for the worse. Racism in many different forms was justified in the same manner than sexism was, with this way of thinking extended to include the use of more-than-human nature. This connection can be made as students and teachers work towards understanding how processes like colonialism have affected both indigenous peoples, and the cultures that colonized them, in relation to social justice and relationships with more-than-human nature.

Culturally relevant pedagogy addresses issues of racism and colonialism, and ecofeminism puts both into an ecosocial context. An important piece of this puzzle is to consider, with the students, how their cultural roots and traditions can be a source of empowerment for living a life based on ecosocial justice (Bowers, 1995). Social justice education also values these subjugated knowledges because “truths and insights about the social world that are suppressed (can) define the world and possibilities for human existence differently and offer valuable alternative visions of what is possible” (Bell, 2007, p. 13). Part of what makes this inquiry ecosocial is the willingness to look for and value traditions that not only make for healthier human relationships, but also those that

nurture ecologically wise behaviours which can help us move away from ecologically destructive beliefs and behaviours.

Always embedded within an ecofeminist pedagogy, no matter which -ism we might be dealing with, is a commitment to revealing how the different expressions of the logic of domination are connected. Any discussion of racism would naturally include an analysis of how gender, class, and other salient categories might interact with racism. Not only that, but it would also ask how more-than-human nature fits into the analysis.

Consider the following. In a class concerned with media literacy we might study how African American women are depicted in music videos. Students would likely come up with such indicators as “sexual objects, animals, non-speaking, slaves.” That brings up racism, sexism, and naturism. Where an anti-oppressive educator would focus on the first two, an ecofeminist educator would encourage students to see how all three are linked. They could, for example, draw on historical documents showing how colonizers wrote about the colonized in sexist, naturist, and racist language as part of developing a genealogy of the logic of oppression in this particular scenario. Teachers and students could then explore how what they learn in school might support racism, sexism, and naturism.

### *Summary*

In this chapter I explored what ecofeminist pedagogy might look like. Front and centre are issues of power between students and teachers, breaking down hierarchies, authentic dialogue, embodied knowing, and consciousness-raising of both teachers and students. Being aware of one’s complicity in the logic of domination, especially as

teachers are in a *power over* role in education, is a key part of consciousness-raising. Ecofeminist pedagogy aims to disrupt hegemonic power relations based on a logic of domination, and thus teachers should expect resistance from a variety of sources, and be prepared to argue their case and take risks. Ecofeminism's theory of oppression includes the understanding that there are multiple sites of oppression for humans, including oppression based on gender, race, class, and age. Thus teachers and students can be in relations of domination and oppression simultaneously. Teasing out these connections and their social and material implications is an important part of consciousness-raising. Just as important is connecting these human-based oppressions with naturism, as in the example I provided regarding African American women in music videos. Anti-oppression and critical pedagogy would reach their goal of social justice more effectively if they adopted a wider theory of oppression that included ecosocial justice as envisioned in ecofeminism.

In addition to confronting issues of domination between humans and humans and more-than-human nature, ecofeminist pedagogy aims to provide students with many opportunities to connect with nature. Ecofeminism emphasizes the interdependence of all life, and values embodied knowledge. Getting outside often is a key way to nurture embodied knowledge about interdependence, symbiosis, and mutuality. Regular contact with more-than-human nature can aid in overcoming the backgrounding of nature that occurs when it is understood and experienced through the logic of domination.

Enacting ecofeminist pedagogy is one form of ecofeminist praxis, which means melding theory and practice. As students work through the process of

consciousness-raising in the context of ecofeminist pedagogy they would also have opportunities to put their own philosophy into action. In keeping with the ecofeminist commitment to *power with* relationships informed by ecosocial justice, students would be able to choose their own activist projects that have been informed by the consciousness-raising process, and would not be subject to *power over* indoctrination. Ecofeminist theory is “ideally informative and generative and not one of either prescribing or 'owning' particular actions. Ecofeminist theory advocates a combined politics of resistance and creative projects, but the specific enactment of these is a result of dialogue between the individuals involved and the actual situation or issue” (Warren, 2000, p. 36). It follows that ecofeminist pedagogy also takes this view on how theory affects practice.

In this next chapter I explore how ecofeminist pedagogy would affect the aims and delivery of a course offered in the British Columbia curriculum – Social Justice 12 (which can be taken by grade eleven and twelve students). Although this is only one course, it offers one of the easiest places in high schools to enact ecofeminist pedagogy because it is already dealing directly with one half of ecosocial justice. It would not be difficult to re-envision it with an ecofeminist focus. Teaching science, social studies, and math with an ecofeminist pedagogy would provide more of a challenge. It is my hope that by working through the process with one course, it will be easier to do the same in other courses in the future. This is not to say that simply infusing courses with an ecofeminist pedagogical approach is enough to bring about radical social change. Only so much can be accomplished in an oppressive system. Warren points out that



One cannot make ecologically perfect decisions, or lead an ecologically perfect lifestyle within current institutional structures characterized by unequal distributions of wealth, consumption of energy and gendered divisions of labor. When institutional structures are themselves unjust, it is often difficult to make truly just decisions within them...Sometimes the best we can do...is to support policies and practices that....challenge the very structures that keep intact the unjustified domination of women by men,” and more-than-human nature by humans. (2000, p. 45)

For now my modest goal is to start with one course and then find ways to infuse my whole practice with an ecofeminist framework, and in the process challenge the larger system to adjust to an ecosocial approach to education. I envision a “base-camp” from which teachers and students can build a foundation for living in an ecosocially just way and then branch out into wider society (including beyond the classroom walls and into the rest of a school). Social Justice 12 provides a unique opportunity to build a base-camp within the current educational model in place in British Columbia.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Ecofeminist Pedagogy in Action:**

#### **Social Justice 12 Becomes Ecosocial Justice 12**

Why did I choose to focus on the newly implemented Social Justice 12 course rather than a specific discipline such as science or social studies, or even on larger questions of second-order change? First, the course is manageable and allows me to deal with specifics rather than generalities. Second, it is an excellent example of social justice pedagogy neglecting the ecological dimension. Third, it provides a space in education from which to work for change. The course is already the source of controversy and challenges the status quo through its engagement with issues such as (hetero)sexism, classism, and racism. For a teacher just starting to implement ecofeminist pedagogy, this course provides an excellent testing ground for new ideas about teacher-student relationships and the nature of education. It also invites both teacher and student to challenge the logic of domination, and leaves a lot of room for teacher autonomy in the choosing of curriculum materials and teaching practices. It is a space to build a base camp from which to launch myself and students into the fray that occurs when one challenges the status quo in a quest for educational and social change. Finally, teachers who volunteer to teach this course are most likely committed to social justice and to

helping each other learn. This is a group of colleagues with whom I wish to build bridges, to perhaps help them see the value and wisdom in linking social and ecological justice into an ecosocial justice framework, and at the same time learn from their experiences and thoughts.

There are a few links between social and ecological justice within the Social Justice 12 (SJ 12 from now on) coursework already, so I can concentrate on building on those and expanding the other purely social justice topics. Gardner and Riley (2007) believe that ecofeminist pedagogy must eschew traditional formats, pedagogies, and hierarchical classroom structures, many of which duplicate the logic of domination. Within the confines of the current educational model in British Columbia, the SJ 12 course is a good place from which to challenge these traditional formats, pedagogies and classroom structures because it asks student and teachers to question their world views, change behaviours, and contribute to society. No other course in the current curriculum asks this of teachers and students in such a direct way. The seeds for radical change are in this course, waiting to be watered and fed. The SJ12 course offers one of the most paradigmatically different positions that currently exist in the system, and so provides a good launching point for radical change. But this radical change needs to be connected to ecosocial justice, not just social justice.

### ***Introduction***

This chapter applies the ecofeminist pedagogy for ecosocial justice outlined in chapter three to the SJ12 course offered in the British Columbia curriculum. This is a grade twelve course offered as an elective to grade eleven and twelve students. There is

no provincial exam for this course. It was piloted in 2007-08 in a number of school districts and is now an official course in British Columbia. The course came about as a result of the controversial legal battle between the Correns and the Ministry of Education. In Murray Corren's words, "the Social Justice 12 course is a direct result of our human rights settlement with the Ministry of Education" (2008). The main source of controversy in regards to the SJ12 course is the material on heterosexism, which challenges homophobia and its behavioural results. At the moment, the Abbotsford school board is engaged in controversy over its handling of the course. It opted to take out the material on heterosexism to satisfy complaints from parents who believe the course promoted homosexuality. To date, the debate is still ongoing, with students and community members arguing for the freedom for students to decide on their own what they believe, and that having them discuss issues around homosexuality does not mean it is being promoted. What IS being promoted is the idea of social justice. This course offers an excellent place in the current societal and educational climate to engage with issues of concern to society through a framework of social justice. Where ecofeminism makes its contribution is in challenging the anthropocentric assumptions of social justice educators who wrote this course, embedded as they were in the wider educational milieu.

This rest of this chapter is laid out in five sections: Social Justice 12 to Ecosocial Justice 12 (ESJ12), The Earth Charter as Framework Document, Creating Space for Dialogue, Assessment, and Ecological Design and Education. The section concerning the move from SJ 12 to ESJ 12 discusses what changes would occur to make the current Integrated Resource Package (IRP) conform to an ecosocial framework. This includes a

consideration of the three curriculum organizers currently in place. After discussing some ways the SJ 12 IRP can be changed to reflect an ecosocial framework, I turn to a discussion of the Earth Charter as a framework document that offers something more than the Declaration of Human Rights (which is the framework document most social justice advocates use). In chapter three I discussed the place of dialogue in ecofeminist pedagogy. In the third section of this current chapter I take those ideas and discuss how a teacher might go about creating a space (or spaces) where dialogue could flourish. The section on assessment explores the how assessment might be re-envisioned to have it reflect an ecosocial framework, and includes some practical suggestions for implementing a new framework around assessment. The last section considers how ecological design theory might impact education, including an exploration of how we might go about creating a physical space that nurtures ecosocial justice.

### ***Social Justice 12 to Ecosocial Justice 12***

According to the IRP for this course, “The aim of Social Justice 12 is to raise students' awareness of social injustice, to encourage them to analyse situations from a social justice perspective, and to provide them with the knowledge, skills, and an ethical framework to advocate for a socially just world” (2008, p. 9). Ecofeminist pedagogy would replace “social” with “ecosocial” in this statement. This is the main point of ecofeminist pedagogy and informs my whole approach to this course, which would be renamed “Ecosocial Justice 12” under an ecosocial justice framework such as ecofeminism.

There is plenty of room within the IRP for SJ12 to insert an ecofeminist framework. For example, the course aims to provide opportunities that “encourage students to examine their own beliefs and values and the origins of those beliefs, and to support or challenge their beliefs and values through reflection, discussion, and critical analysis” (p. 9). As discussed in chapter three, ecofeminist pedagogy aims for consciousness-raising, which involves examining beliefs and their origins. In the case of ecofeminism, this involves an in-depth philosophical analysis of the logic of domination, where it came from, and how it has affected our interactions with each other and more-than-human nature. It is an exploration into the root metaphors of our society. In a multicultural classroom, this could include expanding the scope of the discussion to include if and when the logic of domination has touched other cultures around the world either before or after colonialism. Whether or not “reflection, discussion, and critical analysis” are the best ways to undergo this exploration is something to consider. These are notions central to a western way of analyzing problems. There is certainly a place for them, but as they are seen as largely cerebral processes they do not take into account notions of embodied knowing gained through a variety of emotional, spiritual, and physical experiences. Having students “examine their own beliefs and values and the origins of those beliefs, and to support or challenge their beliefs and values” (their root metaphors) should be undertaken in a holistic framework which includes intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and physical experiences and perspectives.

The SJ12 course is divided into curriculum organizers, which include the following categories: defining social justice, recognizing and analyzing injustice, and

moving towards a socially just world. There are more specific Prescribed Learning Outcomes (PLOs) for each curriculum organizer, including indicators which can be used to assess student achievement for the PLOs. Despite the radical nature of this course, it is still limited by its requirements to adhere to Ministry-approved IRPs, and provide final grades. However, within these requirements there is a lot of wiggle room for the educator willing to take risks. For example, although the PLOs are quite specific, the indicators of achievement are described as “may” be used to assess. In other words, teachers can use their judgement in regards to assessment, as long as they provide a final grade at the end. I will not be going through each PLO in this chapter as that would prove to be very repetitious. Instead, I will pick and choose some PLOs to use as examples of the larger picture and offer suggestions for how ecofeminist pedagogy might approach that particular PLO. I will also provide general overviews for each curriculum organizer.

Within the PLOs for SJ12 there are a couple things that suggest an educator with some sense of ecosocial justice was involved in the writing of this course. Whoever they were, their influence was small, but it was there nonetheless. Here is the evidence. Under the curriculum organizer “Defining Social Justice” anthropocentrism is suggested, along with traditional social justice -isms, as a concept that should be understood as part of social justice. Among the suggested curriculum materials, there is a DVD about speciesism. That is the only piece of curriculum associated with anthropocentrism. Under the “Recognizing and Analysing Social Injustice” organizer, patriarchy and environmental degradation are listed as consequences of social injustice. Finally, one of the suggested achievement indicators is to have students “analyse the relationship

between the mistreatment of animals and the environment and the oppression of humans (e.g., how cruelty to animals is linked to violence against humans; how we treat animals is an indicator of how we view 'the other')." Here I see the influence of a humane educator shining through, as this is a connection they often highlight. So here we have three places in the IRP where social justice is connected to more-than-human nature, hinting at a nascent ecosocial justice perspective. Ecofeminist pedagogy would capitalize on these three signs of ecosocial justice and expand them to include the whole course. One place to start is to rethink the three curriculum organizers already in place.

#### Curriculum Organizer "Defining Ecosocial Justice"

In the SJ12 IRP, this organizer is described as "defining social justice", but I have changed it to comply with an ecofeminist pedagogical framework by replacing social with ecosocial justice (this is true for the other curriculum organizers). Space does not allow a whole rewriting of the three organizers to reflect this ecosocial framework, but I will provide a couple of examples of each change to give an idea of what I mean. While simply changing the wording of an IRP does not seem like significant change, language is powerful. If teachers are legally required to cover the PLOs set out in an IRP for a course, and if the language is ecosocial, then teachers will need to be educated to address the PLOs. They will have to grapple with the implications of the PLOs if they are to fulfil their obligations. At this point it is just me changing the wording for myself, and so the change is not so large scale. But nonetheless, changing this language keeps me on track, provides some direction, and gives me chances to share this modified IRP with other



educators and with students. The harder work is putting the new language into practice. The remainder of this chapter looks at some ways to do this.

This organizer includes looking at concepts and terminology, analysing where we get our values from, how belief systems affect perspectives, and research and critical thinking skills. This effort culminates in the articulating of one's own definition of social justice – or in this case, ecosocial justice. Returning to concerns about indoctrination, is there a correct version of ecosocial justice that students must articulate? Would they be assessed on whether or not their version conforms to certain specifications? Kumashiro (2004) wondered if it was not problematic that he was requiring students to respond to information about social injustices in ways he had predetermined were the correct responses. Kumashiro's (2004) response to this tension is to embrace uncertainty, and expect that students will have unexpected, contradictory responses to teachers' attempts at anti-oppressive teaching, and that this is not a bad thing. Perhaps embracing complexity is another way to see this tension. While I might believe that working for ecosocial justice through an ecofeminist framework is a really good way to approach social and ecological problems, I cannot expect that students will blindly follow that same path (nor would I want them to, as any framework is far from perfect). The goal, when it comes to having students start to work through their own articulation of what it means to be ecosocially just (or not as the case may be with some students), is to have them engage with these larger questions about the world-view they currently hold. If they currently hold racist, sexist and/or naturist views, students will expect these to be challenged. This should be clear in the course outline, so that students are not surprised when this happens.

As well, at the start of the course the teacher and students need to work together to come up with the ground rules for the class in terms of what we expect from each other. This could include such things as respecting the opinions of others while retaining the right to question them.

This is the part of the course where an ecofeminist philosophical analysis is introduced and consciousness-raising begins with an analysis of where we get our beliefs from. The IRP suggests asking students where their beliefs come from, how their personal experiences and identities affect their perspectives and perceptions, in what ways they are privileged and/or oppressed, and in what ways they might be perpetuating the status quo. My own journey of questioning my beliefs began with a book, leading to yet more books, and eventually to face-to-face conversations with people. I cannot assume that books will be how every student comes to question their world-view. As an educator I need to provide students with a variety of experiences, in the hope that at some point each of them will have a moment of questioning that leads to more questions as part of the consciousness-raising process. It may be that this does not happen while they are in class with me, but the seeds planted in our time together might be watered, and then bloom later in their life. This is where a teacher needs hope, and a certain trust that the process they are inviting the students to go through will bear fruit at some point. A variety of experiences are suggested throughout this chapter, including involvement with the wider community in addition to things that can be done at school.

A part of this process could be the task of understanding key concepts and terms such as anthropocentrism, androcentrism, (hetero)sexism, racism, ableism, and any other

-isms that demonstrate the logic of domination at work (SJ 12 IRP, 2008, p. 35). Additionally, concepts like colonialism, consumerism, discrimination, equality and equity, feminism, human rights, animal rights, genocide, globalization, hegemony, oppression, power, and privilege are listed in the IRP. This process could include researching the history of these concepts using a variety of media, including personal experiences and dialogue with other people, interactions with guest speakers and members of the wider community, experiencing the concepts in action (visit a factory farm, law courts, reservation, etc.) in addition to the usual academic sources such as books and media. Again, the idea is to provide students with as many experiences as possible, whether those experiences emphasize intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and/or physical aspects. The Hegemony Treasure Hunt is an activity that asks students to explore their school, and/or community for examples of hegemonic assumptions and oppressions that are embedded in the buildings, landscape, materials, and policies of these places (Fawcett, Bell & Russell, 2002). Students bring back artifacts/treasures, take photos, or simply describe what they saw and share why they think it was an example of hegemony and/or oppression. Fawcett, Bell and Russell (2002) found that some students focused on pedagogical practices like the placement of desks in a classroom, others on curricular materials, yet others on the human relationship to the rest of nature and brought back examples of pesticide soaked non-native grasses, and signs banning animals from buildings.

Here is a sample of how the SJ12 PLOs for this curriculum organizer might look when changed to ESJ12:

SJ12	ESJ12
-concepts and terminology of social justice (e.g., anthropocentrism, discrimination, diversity, equity, empowerment, ethics, human rights, oppression, peace) -creating a personal definition of social justice	-concepts and terminology of ecosocial justice (e.g., anthropocentrism, speciesism, androcentrism, naturism, diversity, equity, human rights, oppression, peace, empowerment) -creating a personal and community definition of ecosocial justice

Curriculum Organizer “Recognizing and Analysing Ecosocial Injustice”

This section of the SJ12 course deals with looking at marginalized and/or oppressed groups. Ecofeminist pedagogy would add more-than-human nature to the list of possible groups. The IRP calls for an analysis of the causes of social injustice. This understanding would build on what the students learned when they worked through what ecosocial justice is and the concepts associated with it, including the logic of domination. The IRP suggests that “maintaining the power dynamic status quo, conflicting values, fear, greed and the unequal distribution of resources” are among the causes of social injustice. These causes are also related to the environmental degradation we are trying to come to grips with. Whether or not the things listed are causes or consequences of social injustice could be a fruitful line of inquiry. It could be argued that fear, greed, and the unequal distribution of resources are consequences (not causes) brought about by the power dynamics of the status quo.

As mentioned previously, environmental degradation is listed as one of the consequences of social injustice (which I would change to ecosocial justice) in the IRP along with poverty, war, patriarchy, incarceration rates, and alienation. Ecofeminists

argue that patriarchy is not a consequence of social injustice, but rather a cause of it. In the IRP, case studies of injustice, the study of history, and consideration of role models are suggested as a way for students to recognize and analyse injustice. This could include an analysis of policy, law, and documents like the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and various Human Rights Codes. I suggest that ecofeminist pedagogy add the Earth Charter to this list, and dialogue about the merits of both charters.<sup>33</sup> Instead of focusing on case studies from far away places, ecofeminist pedagogy would start with students' experiences of injustice and a study of the local history. In British Columbia there are plenty of examples of racism, sexism, and naturism to draw on for both the contemporary and historical context. Additionally, in a multicultural society there is the ability to connect the local and global as students' whose ancestry is from someplace other than Canada (or within Canada) can draw on examples from their multiple and multicultural histories when looking for case studies of ecosocial injustice.

Ecofeminist pedagogy would also ask if there are different understandings of what “justice” might look like from the perspective of more-than-human nature, especially other animals. The human sense of justice is accompanied by emotions such as anger, outrage, and/or compassion. Animals also have emotions (despite the fact that scientists often deny this), and therefore it is entirely possible they have a feeling of what is just or not. Studies with chimpanzees and dogs have revealed what seems to be a sense of justice (Masson & McCarthy, 1995). In regards to animal emotions, instead of asking “Can we prove that another being feels this or any emotion” we should ask “Is there any reason to

---

<sup>33</sup> The new Ecuador constitution is also worth considering. Article 1 says that “Nature or Pachamama, where life is reproduced and exists, has the right to exist, persist, maintain and regenerate its vital cycles, structure, functions and its processes in evolution” (Common Dreams, 2008)

suppose that this species of animals does not feel this emotion?” (1995, p. 225). Taking into consideration the intellectual and emotional lives of animals when trying to understand justice is an act of humility and justice in itself. Digging deeper into the work of ecological, care, and situational ethicists would also help with pushing for the intrinsic rights of the non-human and the implications of this on human behaviour.

When this organizer is infused with an ecosocial justice perspective, it might look this:

SJ12 IRP	ESJ12 IRP
-examples of marginalized and oppressed groups (historical and contemporary, Canada and global) -social justice implications of globalization	-examples of marginalized and oppressed groups (historical and contemporary, Canada and global, human and more-than-human) -ecosocial justice implications of globalization

Curriculum Organizer “Moving Toward an Ecosocially Just World”

In this section of SJ12, the IRP asks that students find ways to envision a socially just world (ecosocially for the ecofeminist version) and consider philosophical and practical ways to address injustice at the local and global levels. Students are to create a systemic analysis that leads to proposed solutions to injustice, and then implement an action plan based on a commitment to lifelong participation in working for justice. The action plan is meant to be transformative, based on research of real needs, and show what students have learned in the course. Too often students have been overexposed to “doom and gloom” in regards to the ecological crisis, and have become either overly anxious or apathetic as a result. The opportunity to do something concrete, that makes a visible

difference, is a way to offer hope to students who often feel powerless and/or apathetic. Simply offering information on social and environmental issues does not change behaviour, and too much information about those issues might very well decrease the desired behaviour changes (Sobel, 2008).

An example of how the wording of this organizer could change is as follows:

SJ12 IRP	ESJ12 IRP
-envisioning a socially just world -opportunities for lifelong participation in social justice	-envisioning an ecosocially just world -opportunities for lifelong participation in ecosocial justice

There are many books, websites, and organizations that offer practical ideas for projects that address social and/or ecological justice. For students who need examples of what others are doing to inspire them, turning to these resources could get them imagining the possibilities, and then thinking about how what others have done could be modified to fit their own schools and communities. Taking time to get out into the community to see what others are doing does a number of things: gives hope as they see what others are accomplishing, plants seeds for their own projects, and nurtures connections to the community. A possible mix of field trips might include a visit to a local community garden where excess produce is donated to the local food bank, followed up by a visit to that food bank. Another possibility could be a tour of the newly built self-sustaining cob house in Victoria, B.C. followed up by time spent with the homeless or those housed in subsidized housing. Both of these combinations could help spark connections between caring for the earth and caring for our fellow humans. All of

these field trips could also be done in a way that has the students actually doing something useful, instead of just being spectators.

The transformation of SJ 12 to ESJ 12 involves infusing an ecosocial perspective and challenging the naturist assumptions of the SJ12 IRP and larger educational and societal milieu from which it emerged. The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights has been influential in shaping the naturalist assumptions of social justice advocates, so providing alternative, ecosocial documents such as the Earth Charter as possible alternatives might prove helpful in nurturing an ecosocial perspective.

### *The Earth Charter as a Framework Document*

Where education for social justice turns to the Declaration of Human Rights for its foundational source document, I believe ecofeminist pedagogy would find the Earth Charter a more appropriate choice when educating for ecosocial justice. The Declaration of Human Rights is problematic because it has been “thoroughly dismantled as a very historically specific relic of Enlightenment modernity” (Wolfe, 2003, p. 192). It ignores developments in cognitive science, ethnology, and other fields that have given us reason to question the species distinction between *Homo sapiens* and other species (Wolfe, 2003). The Earth Charter, on the other hand, is post-humanist in nature and advocates for all species, not just humans. Furthermore, as Corcoran (2004) argues, educators need to pay attention to the Earth Charter because it provides an integrated vision of social justice, peace, and ecological sustainability. If critical and anti-oppressive educators took the Earth Charter as a framework they could be more effective in reaching their goals of social justice by linking social and ecological justice. Gruenewald argues that the Earth



Charter brings together different traditions in the social science because “it embraces a strong ecological ethic within a larger context of cultural conflict by outlining four key areas that deal with social and ecological crisis: respect and care for the community of life, social and economic justice, ecological integrity, and democracy, non-violence, and peace” (2004, p. 95). Consider the following Earth Charter (2000) principles, which demonstrate how it brings together social and ecological justice while calling for appropriate educational responses.

Recognize that all beings are interdependent and every form of life has value regardless of its worth to human beings (1a).

Promote social and economic justice, enabling all to achieve a secure and meaningful livelihood that is ecologically responsible (3b).

Empower every human being with an education and resources to secure a sustainable livelihood, and provide social security and safety nets for those who are unable to support themselves (9b).

Secure the human rights of women and girls and end all violence against them. Promote the active participation of women in all aspects of economic, political, civil, social, and cultural life as full and equal partners, decision makers, leaders, and beneficiaries (11a,b).

Eliminate discrimination in all its forms, such as that based on race, colour, sex, sexual orientation, religion, language, and national, ethnic, or social origin (12a). Provide all, especially children and youth, with educational opportunities that empower them to contribute actively to sustainable development (14a)

The inclusion of social and economic justice, democracy, non-violence, and peace within the Earth Charter should satisfy social justice educators' concerns, and the aims of ecological integrity and respect for the community of life challenges them to cross the invisible boundary between humans and the rest of the nature. The Charter is an ecosocial framework in part because it “views ecological problems as a result of local and global

economic development patterns that are also at the root of injustice, poverty, violence, and oppression” (Gruenewald, 2004, p. 96). Like ecofeminism, it links ecological and social justice issues, recognizes the intrinsic worth of all species and people, and celebrates both cultural and biological diversity. Not only is the content of the Earth Charter ecosocial, the process through which it was written can inform ecofeminist pedagogical practice. Unlike the Declaration of Human Rights, the Earth Charter was created outside an intergovernmental context in a consensual manner, with input from experts, government and civil society leaders, students, indigenous peoples, and grassroots communities (Blenkinsop & Beeman, 2008; Corcoran, 2004). The language of the Earth Charter is also more accessible than that of the Declaration of Human Rights and the democratic process of writing the Earth Charter valued cultural diversity and a wide range of knowledges. It was a bottom-up process. An example of bottom-up change in the spirit of the Earth Charter would be the Green Belt Movement in Kenya, where Wangari Maathai led women to plant trees to rejuvenate lost forests and so enable themselves to gather firewood and food for themselves and their families. She saw the direct link between ecological and human health and well-being, and took direct action to bring them together with a focus on poverty reduction and environmental conservation through tree planting (Merton & Dater, 2008). The Green Belt Movement educates people in Kenya and Africa on women's rights, civic empowerment and the environment. Having students learn more about this inspiring movement could help them to see what needs to be done in their own community to bring health to both human and more-than-human beings, and to give them courage and inspiration to take action.

Using the Earth Charter as a framework means making a paradigm shift in how we relate to more-than-human nature and each other. Taking the Earth Charter and ecofeminist pedagogy seriously means working for radical change. Just the idea of intrinsically valuing all of life is a radical idea, a significant ontological change from the current modern western world-view. It is a shift that opens the door to seeing social and ecological justice as necessarily intertwined so closely as to be inseparable. Documents like the Earth Charter provide a solid reference and rallying point for radical changes.

The Earth Charter Advisory Committee suggests that values education is the key to seeing the Earth Charter put into action in education. Mackey (2001 in Corcoran, 2004) urges educators to engage in consciousness-raising, application of values, and calls to action in light of the Earth Charter. This involves creating awareness about the interrelatedness of social and ecological justice, putting into action specific values and principles that lead towards sustainable ways of living, and to promote values that lead to peace and ecosocial justice (Corcoran, 2004). Putting aside for now the concerns normally associated with “values education” (whose values? for example), an example of a close-to-home group working towards ecosocial justice are First Nations people trying to deal with the impacts of salmon farming. This is an ecological concern and a social justice issue. Coastal First Nations “face disproportional health risks from salmon farms, are marginalized in decision-making processes with respect to the farms and consider their world-view, identities and ways of life are both ignored and at risk from the farms” (Haluzá-Delay, 2007, p. 561). While this is not directly related to education, it is an issue that students can become involved in through working with local First Nations, and/or

other groups who are engaged in the debate over fish farming. Students could visit a fish farm, hear from all sides of the debate (science, farmers, First Nations, local community etc.), engage in research, and then take action.

It is debatable whether or not teachers should remain neutral when facilitating learning on controversial issues such as fish farming. Most teachers believe they should remain neutral so that their position of relative power does not influence students, but Cotton (2006) found that despite this desire for neutrality teacher's attitudes were influential in the classroom whether they recognized it or not. Cotton argues that teachers have to choose between explicitly or implicitly expressing their beliefs, but they cannot be truly neutral. At the high school level, when students are more likely to disagree with teachers or at least be willing to challenge them, it may be a good idea for teachers to say up front what their position on a controversial subject is, instead of having that position come out implicitly through such things as questioning techniques or controlling which students get to speak. There is a place for the teacher in what Buber calls the "raising of the finger, that questioning glance..." (1965, p. 90) that helps students think twice about what they are doing and/or saying. It is the teacher as an informed sounding board that can speak back, so to speak. Ashton and Watson (1998) advocate for critical affirmation, where the teacher advocates a stance along with everyone else in such a way that affirms students and their right to personal views. All views, including the teacher's, are subject to close scrutiny in critical affirmation. The aim, argue Ashton and Watson (1998), is for students to develop wisdom, not simply reasoning skills or sets of information. Part of that process may involve the teacher speaking up when "uninformed, injudicious, and

even damaging or dangerous views may be being expressed. In such situations, teachers are professionally obligated to confront massive prejudice by contributing their own views” (Aston & Watson, 1998, p. 187). Teachers need to “assume the responsibility and authority which must be a part of any mature person's functioning” as there is no point in being mature unless you are willing to share your insights with those who still need guidance (Sobel, 2008, p. 84). There is a fine line, a difficult balancing act, that teachers need to engage in when dealing with controversial subjects and values. The Earth Charter, and the values it espouses, can be both promoted and critiqued by teachers and students as they explore issues of ecosocial justice.

The classroom is currently a very important place for practice, so it here that the principles of the Earth charter and ecofeminist pedagogy must be practiced before branching out into the wider local and global community. The call for democratic societies could start here, with practices that promote *power with* relationships between teachers and students. The Earth Charter call to eradicate poverty also starts here. An ecofeminist classroom would allow students to meet their bodily needs for nutrition, rest and waste removal, and provide food for hungry students who are faced with poverty in their home life. My mom used to tell me “charity begins at home,” meaning that one should not ignore the injustice in front of your face while concentrating on global problems in far away places. Place-based education, with its commitment to helping students know and love their local social and ecological environments, would be a good place for ecofeminist teachers to look for advice when it comes to building connections with both human and more-than-human local communities.

It is important that the Ecosocial Justice 12 course live out the philosophical framework it is based on, not just talk about it and keep unjust structures, practices, and policies in place. This could include, for example, challenging assessment practices and regulations that make having a school garden very difficult. Ideas for assessment are discussed later in the chapter. Creating cross-disciplinary courses, and encouraging the formation of “mini-schools” where team-teaching across disciplines occurs, is one strategy for challenging the emphasis on separate disciplines. Those unjust structures, practices and policies that cannot be changed immediately due to the power of the status quo should be at the very least challenged and questioned.

### *Creating Space for Dialogue*

In chapter three the place of dialogue, as understood by Buber, was put forward as one way ecofeminist pedagogy might re-envision relationships between humans and between humans and the rest of nature. While according to Buber dialogue occurs through grace, he does suggest that there are some prerequisites or preparations that allow dialogue to occur. My interpretation of this notion, as it might be applied in a public school, is that teachers can intentionally create a space where dialogue could occur. There is no guarantee that dialogue will occur, even with careful and mindful preparation, but without any such preparation dialogue is unlikely to occur. Creating this space is therefore a necessary but not sufficient requirement for dialogue. How might I go about creating such a space for dialogue?

It is unlikely that a teacher could create a space for dialogue if they are not themselves prepared in heart and mind to other beings with open arms. Near the

beginning of chapter three I argued that teachers need to examine their world-view and how that affects their relationships with people and more-than-human nature. This obviously needs to occur before I can hope to engage in dialogue with a student, or help students prepare to dialogue with each other and the rest of nature. First I need to acknowledge the intrinsic value and autonomy of other living beings, while remembering how we are all interdependent. Blenkinsop (2004) suggests that a part of creating the space where dialogue can occur is creating opportunities for students to grow in their understanding of the world and relationships. What kinds of opportunities could help this occur?

Activities that build community between students, with teachers, and with the wider human community, and that allow for connection with more-than-human nature seem like obvious places to start. One example of such an activity would be starting a school garden as a class project, bringing in knowledgeable members of the community, and deciding as a class how to best use the fruits of our labour. Members of the community could include experts on which plants are best to grow in our location, people knowledgeable about the healing properties of certain plants (perhaps from a First Nations perspective), and those good at gardening in general. This would provide opportunities for teamwork, building community as a class and with the wider community, and to connect with more-than-human nature. Bringing in First Nations members of the community, who have knowledge about how to live harmoniously with nature, could also help students overcome stereotypes about First Nations people, and

help combat racism, as well as learn important knowledge that is at risk of being lost.<sup>34</sup>

There are quite a few bureaucratic obstacles to having a school garden, so taking time to understand why that is might be the case, and learning how to overcome such obstacles would be part of this project.

SJ 12 calls for students to understand the causes of poverty. An ecosocial analysis could be expanded to include a wider exploration of the causes of poverty, including the links between the animal-agricultural industrial complex and the social and ecological effects on third world countries, especially concerning the status of women and children (Farhana, 2004). One specific example within this larger issue is how much food stock (corn, soy, and other grains) is being used to feed animals grown for human consumption, contributing to the world food crisis (Holt-Gimenez, 2008). This issue could be brought down to a local level, where students could act on their knowledge, mitigating the often unavoidable feelings of overwhelming powerlessness in the face of such large-scale global problems. Having students work with the local food bank to promote vegetarian cooking to food bank patrons might be one way to combine concern for the environment with concern for the human experience of poverty. Students could hold demonstrations for patrons while they wait in line, providing something to eat as well as an easy cooking lesson. They could even talk a bit about how eating more vegetarian can save money, and

---

<sup>34</sup> One possible concern with the involvement of First Nations community members is that they will be giving to us with their gift of knowledge, but what will we then give back? If we just take their knowledge, however good our intentions, such action could be seen as just another form of colonialism. Also, it may be that instead of intentionally growing healing plants, a First Nations person might prefer to teach us how to find, harvest, and use such plants growing wild.



help the environment.<sup>35</sup> Perhaps creating a cookbook to accompany the demonstration would be one way to take this a step further, allowing for even more creativity and learning.

These two project suggestions link social justice with issues of ecological sustainability, providing an ecosocial perspective. They also have potential to show the links between global and local concerns while providing students with the chance to be involved in making a difference, and being part of a movement for change. There is a lot of background work that can be done leading up to projects such as these, where students examine why things like poverty, racism and environmental destruction occur and how root metaphors have nurtured the beliefs that underlie injustice. Consciousness-raising, dialogue, and taking action all interweave together to nurture the development of embodied knowledge – knowledge that is holistic and experiential. This in turn could help create spaces for dialogue, in a form of positive feedback.

### *Assessment*

A whole thesis on assessment from an ecofeminist perspective could be written. Legally, teachers must assess and give a grade. How to do that in an equitable, ecosocially just, and enlightened manner is a very important conversation. Given that “elite groups have more power to dominate the agenda for public schooling and more

---

<sup>35</sup> Recipes could be chosen based on their ease of preparation, low cost, and high health return. Eating vegetarian can be expensive in some cases, so focusing on the lower cost foods like lentils and other beans might be best. Although it could be argued that people living in poverty should not be burdened with saving the environment, I wonder if it might be empowering for the most powerless people in society to feel they can make a difference, however small, and at the same time save money and improve their health. Perhaps, to take this project even further, some of the regular patrons could work with the students to cook the food and make the presentations if they desired.

authority to determine what counts as 'official knowledge' (Apple, 1993) and what is assessed" (Kelly & Brandes, 2008, p. 50) the ecofeminist pedagogical theory of oppression and commitment to ecosocial justice asks educators to critique assessment policies and practices. The "official knowledge" set out by elites is anthropocentric, ethnocentric, and androcentric. The choices teachers make about assessment are inescapably political, and since assessment is a part of education that both administrators and the public are interested in, it may be risky for teachers to practice more equitable forms of assessment. But it is even more morally and philosophically risky to not find ways to assess equitably and/or to completely re-envision the whole concept of assessment. Anti-oppressive and critical pedagogy have not taken up the problem of assessment in any detailed way despite its importance to any pedagogical approach (Kelly et. al., 2008). In many cases assessment drives pedagogy, especially when teachers are pressured to "teach to the exam." Assessment practices epitomize *power over* relations between teacher and student, and it is here that students' relative powerlessness seems most evident. One way to break this pattern is to involve students in the pedagogical process, including assessment. Asking students to discuss where assessment fits into the workings of a logic of domination, and how as a class we could do things differently, would be an important consciousness-raising and democratic process that nurtures *power with* interactions. Ecofeminist pedagogy demands that assessment practices be challenged and transformed into a meaningful educational experience that is supportive of ecosocial justice. A place to start is perhaps with the question, "Is this particular assessment practice compatible with ecosocial justice, or does it reinforce the

logic of domination?” Keep those that are closer to ecosocial justice, and avoid those that reflect the logic of domination. Avoid, for example, standardized testing and turn to things like individualized portfolios and projects that are community based.

In my mind assessment, as it is understood in the current educational model, is a significant barrier to the practice of ecofeminist pedagogy. Assessment, as it is currently envisioned, requires an I-IT relationship between teacher and student as the teacher is asked to objectively judge the work of students. This situation makes dialogue difficult, and keeps in place *power over* relationships. Ecofeminist pedagogy should probably avoid trying to gain recognition and legitimacy by claiming that it helps students improve their grades on standardized tests (something both environmental education and anti-oppression education have done). Why would I want to work towards helping students succeed in a system that promotes social injustice and ecological disaster? On the other hand, one argument offered for helping students succeed in the current educational model is that success at school means increased chance of economic stability upon graduation. For those students who come from marginalized populations, I can see how increased access to economic stability through education would be a key consideration. Therefore, if I say that I am working for social justice, I am responsible to help them succeed in school as that is their key to equal opportunity. Teaching through an ecofeminist framework should also give students skills to help them achieve social capital and economic stability while nurturing ecosocially just behaviour. This could include helping them acquire the ability to see the tools of the oppressor, understand how to use these when necessary by negotiating the system, and potentially escape disadvantage and

oppression. It could also include showing how different future careers help or hinder the goals of ecosocial justice. In terms of assessment practices, finding a mix where the student can succeed in the current system without at the same time being oppressed by it is quite a challenge.

Within the confines of the SJ12 course the students and I can democratically arrive at assessment practices they feel are fair and helpful to their learning, with the final grades being decided collaboratively. Blenkinsop (2005) suggests that teachers push, support, and challenge students in whatever direction seems to be most helpful to the student, while simultaneously acknowledging that the student is autonomous and so responds out of their own free will. Taking this approach flies in the face of current assessment practices, which use standardized assessment practices that treat each student the same: as homogeneous objects instead of heterogeneous subjects. My hope is that as I gain more experience as a teacher, and learn more from students, that the assessment practices I engage in with students will help them grow as people as well as learn important skills needed for both social and economic success within an ecologically sustainable framework. These assessment practices will also challenge the status quo in education around assessment, and provide alternative models for other teachers and students to engage with.

The IRP for SJ12 makes suggestions for assessment of the PLOs, using words such as assess, defend, describe, identify, analyze, and explain. All of the achievement indicators use terms such as these, except for the one that requires them to devise, defend, and implement a social justice project. It is difficult to assess, in the way education

currently conceives of assessment, things like feelings or experiences. Yet these are the things that may be more likely to bring about changes in thinking and behaviour in regards to ecosocial justice. The goals and aims of the SJ12 course really do not fit with the way assessment is currently done, yet the IRP retains the assessment language of other courses offered in secondary schools. There is a disjunction between the goals and general spirit of SJ12 and the assumptions around expected assessment practices. While whole books could be written on how assessment needs to be rethought in light of ecosocial justice, for now I offer a couple strategies for educators caught in this bind.

Portfolios are one example of an assessment practice that could be used to challenge the status quo (although they could also be used to support it). While the idea of portfolio might conjure up pictures of a paper product, in an ecofeminist pedagogical framework a portfolio need not be made all of paper and/or written artifacts. There is room for alternative oral, technological, or visual artifacts. A possible overarching question that each portfolio might address is “How does this portfolio demonstrate a student's contribution to the flourishing of people and more-than-human nature?” Or perhaps, “How does this portfolio demonstrate a student's emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and bodily knowledge and experience of ecosocial justice?”

Quest High School in Humble, Texas is an alternative school that does education very differently (Cushman, 2000). No grades are given out. Students are given expectations or tasks to complete. They are either mastered or have a deficiency. If a student is experiencing the latter, they are given as many chances as they need to master the expectation. These expectations are based on the legal requirements for graduation,

but each student has an individualized plan and learns in a multidisciplinary fashion, including experiential learning and service learning opportunities. To graduate, each student prepares an extensive portfolio and takes the standardized tests required of all students in Texas. They also have to present a kind of thesis to their teachers, fellow students, parents, and community members. This kind of assessment is supported by the philosophy, policies, and structure of the school. Implementing a total assessment program like this would be very difficult within the confines of the regular school system, which is what teachers of the SJ12 course currently find themselves dealing with. The notion of mastery intrigues me. I can see this working for the usual subjects in school, but can one master ecosocial justice? Perhaps one could master a level of understanding in regards to the concepts taught in SJ12, but because most of the ideas in SJ12 are learned over a lifetime, mastery is not really the goal of this course. The use of experiential and service learning is an easier fit for SJ12, as is the idea of portfolios and a version of thesis defence.

### ***Ecological Design and Education***

The design of school buildings is thought to have little impact on learning, but in reality they reflect a hidden curriculum that influences the learning process (Orr, 2002). For example, the wasteful use of energy communicates that energy is cheap and abundant. As with other animals, humans navigate their environment through their senses. For humans, what we see, we believe. If all students see in their days at school are institutional buildings made with the intention of processing as many products (graduates) as possible with no concern for the environmental cost, then no matter how

much teachers might talk about ecological sustainability, the real message students get is that we do not prioritize it. This is an example of the media being the message (McLuhan, 1965 in Steen, 2003). These buildings do not communicate care for either humans or the rest of nature. It is a case of actions speaking louder than words. Students receive the message that learning only happens inside a square room with four walls, away from any contact with more-than-human nature (Louve, 2005). It is, one could say, sensory deprivation to educate students in these buildings. Further, scientific studies have shown that humans do better when they are in regular contact with sunlight, animals, trees, flowers, flowing water, birds and natural processes (Orr, 2002). Buildings that reflect ecological design theory not only benefit the more-than-human world, they also benefit humans. Current school design also seems to be based on keeping control of students and not promoting the development of community or health.

Ecological design theory is understood as “any form of design that minimizes environmentally destructive impacts by integrating itself with living processes” (Van der Ryn and Cowan, p. 33, 2007). Basically, sustainability and design are intimately connected. This is about more than buildings; it is about design in general from the molecular to global scale. In education, this could include things like textbooks, classroom materials, and the physical building itself. Van der Ryn and Cowan (2007) suggest that design problems can be solved only if sanitation engineers talk to wetland biologists and farmers to ecologists. Ecological design theory calls for a commitment to interdisciplinary collaboration and considering the linking of scales, from the molecular to the global. In education this might translate into integrating what is traditionally

considered science education with other disciplines. Personally, I would like to see the SJ12 course content integrated with studies on ecology and other disciplines, so that students can investigate the connections between social justice and ecological sustainability from a molecular to global scale. The debate over fish farming could lend itself to this sort of investigation, with a considering of fish biology, politics, First Nations culture, and the local and global impacts of fish farming on humans and the rest of nature. The Green Belt movement in Kenya, mentioned earlier in this chapter, could also lend itself to such an investigation. Students might study the ecology of why trees are so important to an ecosystem and the living things in it, including humans. These examples provide opportunities for students to consider how ecological design theory can be used to live more ecologically sustainable lives, while simultaneously taking care of basic human needs. They could see how integrating their lives with living processes might look, and create their own ideas about how this might be enacted in their own lives and communities.

As many environmentally destructive impacts are caused by the material results of the logic of domination in action, addressing issues such as sexism and racism and their interaction with how we design living spaces, would be an important part of coming to understand and apply ecological design theory. Advocates of environmental justice, which often addresses how marginalized groups of people often bear the brunt of unhealthy environmental practices, could be key players in promoting a form of ecological design theory that also addresses social injustices. In education, the effects of buildings on the holistic health of students and teachers is an important consideration.



Ecological design theory proposes that we first reduce the rate at which things are getting worse, but also change the structure of the larger system (Van der Ryn & Cowan, 2007). The same could be said for change in education, where we first stop doing destructive things (or at least minimize it as much as possible), and then proceed to do good as discussed in chapter one. Orr (2002) proposes that the larger issue with ecological design theory is whether or not it will only produce a set of design skills that act as band-aids applied to a flawed system, or whether it will eventually help to transform the larger culture. I will return to this later, as it is an important question to ask of ecofeminist pedagogy as well.

While simply getting out of the classroom and into direct contact with more-than-human nature is very important, as humans we still chose to live and work in dwellings that provide shelter from the elements. The same is true for education. The trick is to make those dwellings as close being a part of natural processes as possible. Advocating for new schools to be designed according to ecological design principles (and renovate old schools as well) is one way to do this. But if teachers are working in buildings not designed this way, which is the case most of the time, then what can they do to lessen the sensory deprivation and separation from the more-than-human world, as well as integrate what they have with natural processes? To be sure, this is a stop-gap measure, but something needs to be done while we work for a different future. As mentioned earlier, studies have shown that humans do well when exposed to more-than-human nature, so bringing this into the classroom is one way to apply ecological design principles. This could be done by bringing in a fountain, having plants and animals in the class, and

creating links to the world outside the four walls through open windows and indoor gardens. Composting programs, and indoor and outdoor gardens, are one way to integrate the life of students with natural processes. Emphasizing reducing and reusing over simply recycling is another way this could be done (use both sides of the paper for goodness sake!).

Bigger change would be to get involved in having the school become more energy efficient through the installation of solar panels or geothermal energy, renovating old schools or building new schools that are designed using ecological principles, and/or creating programs where more of the curriculum is linked to spending time outside of buildings and out in the community. There are also relatively simple and inexpensive things such as getting rid of electronic sounding bells and buzzers, or replacing them with sounds friendlier to the human ear (animal noises? Bells used in churches and other religious places? Music that students enjoy?). There are many examples of all these ideas in other school districts in British Columbia, Canada, and around the world. Earl Marriott Secondary in Surrey, B.C. uses music instead of bells for some of their transitions. Cochrane High School in Alberta saw teachers and students work together to raise \$47,000 to have solar panels installed, providing all the needed electrical power for the school. Denyse Skipper, a Grade 12 student, says that "We're trying to do something no high school has done to this extent. It's a new era in the creation of energy within schools" (Monchuck, 2005). This example of students being a big part of changing over an old school to one that has less environmental impact can provide hope to other students and teachers who are looking to work for change in their own schools. More

recently and closer to home, Telus World of Science and the B.C. Ministry of Education have created the “Green Games” which profile environmentally friendly projects that schools are engaging in around the province. Students and teachers could go to the website and see what others are doing in order to gain inspiration and ideas ([www.bcgreengames.ca](http://www.bcgreengames.ca)). Ecological design theory and its implications might seem overwhelming at first, but by providing examples of how it has been done while providing opportunities for students to see their own ideas come to fruition might just start to strengthen a growing movement which sees humans living in harmony with natural processes.

### *Summary*

The SJ 12 course is one place where an ecofeminist teacher can create a base-camp for change in the current educational system in British Columbia. It is a good place to start because it already deals with one side of ecosocial justice, whereas other courses rarely address issues of social or ecological justice. Because SJ12 is just one course, embedded in a larger system of education, an ecofeminist teacher also aims for change at all levels, across the landscape of schooling. Creating spaces for dialogue, challenging assessment practices and finding other ways to assess students, using documents like the Earth Charter as a framework, turning to ecological design theory, and challenging the inside/outside divide are just a few of the ways educators can work for ecosocial justice in education.

## Conclusion

In chapter one I argued that environmental education and anti-oppression and critical pedagogy have not come close to reaching their goals, and that more time is not going to change that because there are some fundamental problems with the approaches of these frameworks. I have suggested ecofeminism as an alternative framework: one that has the potential to avoid the problems these other approaches have met with. First, there is the advantage of being able to analyze the successes and short falls of environmental education and anti-oppression and critical pedagogy because they have already been implemented in education. It may very well be that in the future, after ecofeminism has had its chance to influence education, another approach will come along and show how ecofeminism went wrong despite the good intentions of ecofeminist educators. But for now there are no successes or shortfalls to analyze because it has not been implemented in education in any real, noticeable way. Ecofeminist pedagogy has not yet been disciplined or co-opted by the dominant discourses in education. How to keep that from happening is a key concern for me, but one there is not room to address in this thesis. Ironically, it could be that ecofeminism will have to avoid becoming too popular, or else the status quo might see a need to co-opt it before it can really mount a true challenge. One way to avoid becoming too noticeable as a distinct movement is to work closely with other movements committed to ecological and/or social justice, such as place-based,

experiential, eco-justice, global, and humane education. As with ecological design theory, ecofeminist educators need to keep asking if their actions will eventually lead to larger systems change or if it is only a band-aid, first-order change. Sometimes a band-aid solution is needed to stop or slow down the negative results of human action, but there must also be action to changing the situation that brought about the need for a band-aid in the first place. I do not have a list of what counts as a band-aid and what will lead to systems change, but I hope that as I engage with the ideas of this thesis, collaborate with other educators and community members, and work with students that experience will teach me what works when it comes to changing a system. The only clue as to what might count as a band-aid approach might be to consider where environmental education and education for social justice have not been effective in bringing about system change. Some of these reasons were considered in chapter one. Basically, integrating too closely with the existing system may not be the best way to bring about system change.

The second reason for using ecofeminism as a framework is that it links social and ecological justice, addressing human and ecological concerns about survival and flourishing, where environmental education focused only on ecological concerns and critical and anti-oppression pedagogy focus only on social justice concerns. As I have argued in previous chapters, social and ecological justice must be linked if we hope to see them succeed. Thirdly, ecofeminist pedagogy questions the root metaphors of western society and in doing so looks for deeper social and philosophical causes for our alienation from nature and each other. Fourthly, it offers a perspective on gender that is more complete and holistic than anti-oppression and feminist pedagogy have offered thus far.

Gender is so closely linked to the logic of domination in our society, and with our relationships with each other and more-than-human nature, that to not put gender at the centre of education is to turn a blind eye to the elephant in the room. Kelly offers this insight: “There are many structures of domination – nation over nation, class over class, race over race, humans over nature. But domination of women by men is a constant feature within every other aspect of oppression...It is the basis of the systems of politics that have brought the world to its present, extreme state. It is the pattern that connects acts of individual rape with the ecological rape of our planet” (1997, p. 115). If we want education to be a part of societal change that brings about ecosocial justice and relationships based on flourishing, the links between the domination of women and nature, and between gender, race, and class, must be addressed.

Critical pedagogy and anti-oppression pedagogy provide important critical perspectives in terms of social justice. Despite this strength, these movements have not addressed the links between social injustice and ecological destruction. This weakens the efforts at educational change undertaken by educators who turn to critical and anti-oppression pedagogy. Fortunately there seems to be a growing awareness that linking social justice and ecological sustainability is important, as evidenced in recent publications by critical theorists. In this thesis I attempted to show that there are places of convergence between ecofeminism and critical and anti-oppression pedagogy, in the hope of encouraging conversations with educators focused on social justice.

I have offered dialogue, consciousness-raising, getting outside, embodied knowing, and ecological design theory as possible strategies for nurturing ecosocial

justice in an educational context. The Earth Charter provides a framework and call to action within an ecosocial justice perspective. Dialogue attempts to transform I-It relationships into I-Thou relationships while acknowledging the interdependence and autonomy of all living things. This dialogue nurtures intimacy with and understanding of others, with the hope that this leads to respect for the right of beings to flourish in ways that do not harm others. Intertwined with dialogue is consciousness-raising, which asks teachers and students to take a deep look at their world-views, and the material consequences of these views on themselves, other humans, and the rest of nature. It also heightens awareness of how the logic of domination works against notions of ecosocial justice, and how this can be challenged individually and communally. Embodied knowing and getting outside both aim to integrate human emotions, intellect and body while making meaningful connections with other humans and more-than-human nature. Dialogue with each other and more-than-human nature might very well be easier when joined with embodied knowing and direct experience with the rest of nature. Ecological design theory helps us to see the links between different scales and how we design things, spaces and processes affects the environment. When all of these are combined with the perspective of the Earth Charter, it is hoped that students and teachers will be inspired and motivated to live their lives in ways that do the least harm to other humans and the rest of nature.

It remains to be seen what impact an ecofeminist pedagogy can have on this process of societal change, but I am hopeful that it will have an impact as time goes on: Hopefully sooner than later. Starting with the SJ 12 course has helped to get me thinking

about how ecofeminism might look in schools as they currently stand. In reality, I likely will not be teaching SJ12 in the near future, but can take the basic concepts of dialogue, consciousness-raising, and embodied knowing into other classes along with an ecofeminist commitment to showing the connections between social and ecological justice in an interdisciplinary framework. I can work on creating those ripples of change in the pond of education through challenging current notions of assessment, questioning the inside/outside divide and the tendency to believe that real learning occurs indoors, and through using the Earth Charter as a foundational framework document. David Orr (1994) has said that we are in need of an educational perestroika. I intend to be a part of that movement.



# Bibliography

## *Works Cited*

- Abrams, D. (1996). *The spell of the sensuous: perception and language in a more-than-human world*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Adkins, V. (1999). Buber and the Dialectic of Teaching. *Journal of Educational Thought*, 33(2), 175-181.
- Apple, M. (1993). *Official knowledge: democratic education in a conservative age*. New York: Routledge.
- Apple, M (2004). *Ideology and Curriculum: Third Edition*. New York: Routledge.
- Ashton, E. & Watson, B. (1998). Values Education: A fresh look at procedural neutrality. *Educational Studies*, 24(2), 183-194.
- Bai, H. (2001). Challenge for Education: Learning to Value the World Intrinsically. *Encounter: Education for Meaning and Social Justice*, 14(1), 1-13.
- Bai, H. (2006). Philosophy for Education: Towards Human Agency. *Paideusis*, 15(1), 7-19.
- B.C. Ministry of Education. (2008). *Environmental Learning and Experience: An Interdisciplinary Guide for Teachers*. Accessed September 10, 2008 at [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/environment\\_ed/environ\\_learning\\_exper.pdf](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/environment_ed/environ_learning_exper.pdf)
- B.C. Ministry of Education. (2008). *Integrated Resource Package for Social Justice 12*. [http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/irp\\_ss.htm](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/irp_ss.htm). Accessed November 28, 2008.
- Bell, L. (2007) In Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, Pat Griffin (Eds.), *Teaching for diversity and social justice* (pp. 1-14). New York: Routledge, 2007.
- Bell, A. & Russell, C. (2000). Beyond Human, beyond Words: Anthropocentrism, Critical Pedagogy, and the Poststructuralist Turn. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 25(3), 188-203.
- Betcha, K. (1998). *Mother Earth, Brother Bear: Discerning Metaphors to Live by in Environmental Education*. Thesis, Master of Arts at Simon Fraser University.
- Blenkinsop, S. (2004). Martin Buber's "Education": Imitating God, the Developmental Relationalist. *Philosophy of Education Yearbook*, 79-87.

- Blenkinsop, S. (2005). Martin Buber: Educating for Relationship. *Ethics, Place and Environment*, 8(3), 285-307.
- Blenkinsop, S. & Beeman, C. (2008). The Earth Charter, a Radical Document: A Pedagogical Response. *In Factis Pax*, 2(1), 69-87.
- Bowers, C.A. (1995). *Educating for an ecologically sustainable culture: rethinking moral education, creativity, intelligence, and other modern orthodoxies*. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press.
- Bowers, C.A. (2001). *Educating for Eco-Justice and Community*. London: The University of Georgia Press.
- Bowers, C.A. (2004). Comments on David Gruenewald's "A Foucauldian Analysis of Environmental Education." *Curriculum Inquiry*, 34(2), 223-232.
- Buber, M. (1965). *Between Man and Man*. (Ronald Gregor, Trans.). London: Collins. Original work published in 1947.
- Buffington, N. (1993). When Teachers Aren't Nice: bell hooks and Feminist Pedagogy. *Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (44<sup>th</sup>, San Diego, CA, March 31-April 3, 1993)*. Accessed online September 5, 2008.
- Calliste, A. & Dei, S.J. (2000). Introduction. In Agnes Calliste and George J. Sefa Dei (Eds.), *Anti-Racist Feminism Critical Race and Gender Studies* (pp. 1-18). Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.
- Capeheart, L. & Milovanovic, D. (2007). *Social Justice: Theories, Issues, and Movements*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Chapman, (2004). Sustainability and Our Cultural Myths. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*, 9, 92-108.
- Cook-Sather, A. (2002). Authorizing Students' Perspectives: Toward Trust, Dialogue, and Change in Education. *Educational Researcher*, 31(3), 3-14.
- Corcoran, P. (2004). What if? The Educational Possibilities of the Earth Charter. *Educational Studies*, 36(1), 108-117.
- Corren, M. (2008).  
<http://communities.canada.com/vancouver/blogs/reportcard/archive/2008/11/16/social-justice-12-controversy-continues.aspx>. Accessed November 27, 2008.
- Cotton, D. (2006). Teaching controversial environmental issues: neutrality and balance in the reality of the classroom. *Educational Research*, 48(2), 223-241.
- Cuomo, C. (2001). Still Fooling with Mother Nature. *Hypatia*, 16(3), 149-156.

- Cushman, K. (2000). You Get to Just Drop Everything and Learn. In *Reinventing High School: Six Journeys of Change. An In-depth Look at Six High Schools That Are Transforming the Way We Think About Secondary Schooling* (pp. 125-149). Boston: Jobs For the Future.
- Darder, A., Baltodano, M., & Torres, R (2003). *The critical pedagogy reader*. New York : RoutledgeFalmer.
- Dei, G.S. (1996). *Anti-racism education: theory and practice*. Halifax, N.S.: Fernwood Publications
- Dei, G.S & Calliste, A. (2000). Introduction. In A. Calliste & J.S. Dei (Eds.), *Anti-racist Feminism: Critical Race and Gender Studies* (pp. 1-18). Halifax: Fernwood Publishing Co.
- Eisler, R. (2000). *Tomorrow's Children: A Blueprint for Partnership Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Everden, N. (1993). *The Natural Alien: Humankind and Environment*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Farhana, B. (2004). Nayakrishi movement: reinstatement of women in agriculture. *Canadian Woman Studies*, 23(1), 135-142.
- Fawcett, L., Bell, A.C., & Russell, C.L. (2002). Guiding our environmental praxis: Teaching for social and environmental justice. In W. Leal Filho (Ed.), *Teaching Sustainability at Universities: Towards Curricular Greening*. New York: Peter Lang (pp. 223-228).
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Froese-Germain, B. (2006). Educating Boys: Tempering Rhetoric with Research. *McGill Journal of Education*. 41(2), 145-155.
- Furman, G. & Gruenewald, D. (2004). Expanding the Landscape of Social Justice: A Critical Ecological Analysis. *Educational Administration Quarterly*. 40(1), 47-76.
- Gadotti, M. (2003). Pedagogy of the Earth and Culture of Sustainability. *Ontario Institute for Studies in Education International Conference 17-19 October 2003*.
- Gardner, C.V., & Riley, J.E. (2007). Breaking Boundaries: Ecofeminism in the Classroom. *Radical Teacher*, 78, 24-33.
- Ghosh, R. & Abdi, A. (2004). *Education and the politics of difference: Canadian perspectives*. Toronto: Canadian Scholar's Press.
- Gore, J. (2002). *Some certainties in the uncertain world of classroom practice: An outline of a theory of power relations in pedagogy*. Paper at the Annual Meeting of the Australian Association for Research in Education, Brisbane, December 2-5, 2002.

- Greenwood, D. (2008). A critical pedagogy of place: from gridlock to parallax. *Environmental Education Research*, 14(3), 336-348.
- Gruenewald, D. (2003). The Best of Both Worlds: A Critical Pedagogy of Place. *Educational Researcher*, 32(4), 3-12.
- Gruenewald, D. (2004). A Foucauldian Analysis of Environmental Education: Toward the Socioecological Challenge of the Earth Charter. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 43(1), 71-107.
- Gruenewald, D. (2006). Place-based education: Grounding culturally-responsive teaching in geographical diversity. *Democracy and Education*, 16 (2), 24-32.
- Guenther, R. (2008). School District's Attitude "Patronizing." Retrieved September 25, 2008, from [http://www.bclocalnews.com/fraser\\_valley/abbynews/opinion/letters/29412704.html](http://www.bclocalnews.com/fraser_valley/abbynews/opinion/letters/29412704.html)
- Hallen, P. (2000). Ecofeminism Goes Bush. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*, 5 (Spring), 150-166.
- Haluza-Delay, R. (2007). Environmental Justice in Canada. *Local Environment*, 12(6), 557-563.
- Harding, S. (1998). *Is Science Multicultural? Postcolonialism, Feminisms, and Epistemologies*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Hargraves, S. (1999). Peace Education: Politics in the Classroom? In Roland Case & Penney Clark (Eds.), *The Canadian Anthology of Social Studies: Issues and Strategies for Teachers* (pp. 109-121). Vancouver: Pacific Educational Press.
- Holt-Gimenez, E. (2008). *Policy Brief No. 16: The World Food Crisis – What's behind it and what we can do about it*. Accessed November 15, 2008 at [www.foodfirst.org](http://www.foodfirst.org).
- hooks, bell. (1989). *Talking Back: thinking feminist, thinking black*. Boston: Sound End Press.
- Hornsby, B. (1986). The Way It Is. On *The Way It Is*, CD. United States of America: RCA Records.
- Houde, L. & Bullis, C. (1999). Ecofeminist Pedagogy – An Exploratory Case. *Ethics and the Environment*, 4(2), 143-174.
- Howell, N. (1997). Ecofeminism: What One Needs to Know. *Zygon*, 32(2), 231-241.
- Humes, B. (2008). Moving Toward a Liberatory Pedagogy for all Species: Mapping the Need for Dialogue Between Humane and Anti-Oppressive Education. *Green Theory & Praxis: The Journal of Ecopedagogy*, 4(1), pp. 65-85. Retrieved November 2, 2008, from <http://greentheoryandpraxis.ecopedagogy.org/index.php/journal>

- Jucker, R. (2002). *Our Common Illiteracy: Education as if the Earth and People Mattered*. London: Peter Lang Publishing Inc.
- Kahn, R. (2009). Towards Ecopedagogy: Weaving a Broad-based Pedagogy of Liberation for Animals, Nature, and the Oppressed People of the Earth. In Antonia Darder, Marta Pi Baltodano, & Rodolfo D. Torres (Eds.), *The Critical Pedagogy Reader, Second Edition* (pp. 522-540). New York: Routledge.
- Kahn, R. & Humes, B. (2008). *Marching Out From Ultima Thule: Critical Counterstories of Emancipatory Educators Working at the Intersection of Human Rights, Animal Rights, and Planetary Sustainability*. Retrieved November 10, 2008, from [www.Freire.mcgill.ca/content/draft-new-essay-Canadian-journal-environmentaleducation](http://www.Freire.mcgill.ca/content/draft-new-essay-Canadian-journal-environmentaleducation).
- Kelly, D & Brandes, G. (2008). Equitable Classroom Assessment: Promoting Self-Development and Self-Determination. *Interchange*, 39(1), 49-79.
- Kelly, P. (1997). Women and Power. In Karen Warren (Ed.), *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*, (pp. 112-119). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- King, Y. (1989). The Ecology of Feminism and the Feminism of Ecology. In Judith Plant (Ed.), *Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism* (pp.18-28). Philadelphia: New Society.
- Kreisberg, S. (1992). *Transforming Power: Domination, Empowerment, and Education*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Kumashiro, K. (2000). Toward a theory of Anti-oppressive Education. *Review of Educational Research*, 70(1), 25-53.
- Kumashiro, K. (2002). Against Repetition: Addressing Resistance to Anti-Oppressive Change in the Practices of Learning, Teaching, Supervising, and Researching. *Harvard Educational Review*, 72(1), 67-92.
- Kumashiro, K. (2004). Uncertain Beginnings: Learning to Teach Paradoxically. *Theory into Practice*, 43(2), 111-115
- Kurth-Schai, R. (1997). Ecofeminism and Children. In Karen Warren (Ed.) *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*, (pp. 193-211). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32(3), 465-491.
- Larson, L. (2005). The Necessity of Feminist Pedagogy in a Climate of Political Backlash. *Equity & Excellence In Education*, 38(2), 135-144.
- Leppanen, K. (2004). At Peace With Earth – Connecting Ecological Destruction and Patriarchal Civilization. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 13(1), 37-47.

- Li, H. (2007). Ecofeminism as a Pedagogical Project: Women, Nature, and Education. *Educational Theory*, 57(3), 351-368.
- Lorde, A. (1984). *Sister outsider: essays and speeches*. Trumansburg: Crossing Press
- Louve, R. (2005). *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill.
- Lund, D. (2006). Rocking the racism boat: school-based activists speak out on denial and avoidance. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 9(2), 203-221.
- Lynch, J. (1992). *Education for Citizenship in a Multicultural Society*. London: Cassell.
- Masson, J. & McCarthy, S. (1995). *When Elephants Weep: The Emotional Lives of Animals*. New York: Delacorte Press.
- McLaren, P. (2007). *Life in Schools: An Introduction to Critical Pedagogy in the Foundations of Education*, 5<sup>th</sup> Ed. Boston: Pearson.
- McLaren, P. & Houston, D. (2004). Revolutionary Ecologies: Ecosocialism and Critical Pedagogy. *Educational Studies*, 36(1), 27-44.
- McMahon, B (2007). Educational administrators' conceptions of whiteness, anti-racism and social justice. *Journal of Educational Administration*. 45(6), 684-696
- Merchant, C. (2005). *Radical Ecology: The Search for a Livable World*. New York: Routledge.
- Merton, L. & Dater, A. (Directors/Producers). (2008). *Taking Root: The Vision of Wangari Maathai* [Motion picture]. United States: Marlboro Productions.
- Mies, M. & Shiva, V. (1993). *Ecofeminism*. London: Zed Books.
- Monchuck, J. (2005). *Solar project of Alberta teens a green beacon to other schools*. www. pej.org. Accessed February 2, 2009.
- Muszynski, A. (1991). What is Patriarchy? In Jesse Vorst (Ed.), *Race, Class, Gender: Bonds and Barriers*. (pp. 64-87). Toronto: Garamond Press.
- Orr, D. (1994). *Earth in Mind: On education, environment, and the human prospect*. Washington, DC: Island Press.
- Orr, D. (2002). *The Nature of Design: Ecology, Culture, and Human Intention*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- O'Sullivan, E. (1999). *Transformative learning: educational vision for the 21st century*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Perumal, J. (2008). Student Resistance and teacher authority: the demands and dynamics of collaborative learning. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 40(3), 381-398.

- Pert, C. (1997). *Molecules of Emotion: The Science Behind Mind-Body Medicine*. New York: Touchstone.
- Plant, J. (1997). Learning to Live with Differences: The Challenge of Ecofeminist Community. Women and Power. In Karen Warren (Ed.), *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature* (pp. 120-139). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Plumwood, V. (1991). Nature, Self and Gender: Feminism, Environmental Philosophy and the Critique of Rationalism. *Hypatia* 6 (1), 3-27.
- Plumwood, V. (1993). *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*. London: Routledge.
- Plumwood, V. (1996). Androcentrism and Anthropocentrism: Parallels and Politics. *Ethics and the Environment*, 1(2), 119-152.
- Plumwood, V. (2002). *Environmental culture: the ecological crisis of reason*. New York: Routledge.
- Pye, R. (1993). *The Thunder Tree: Lessons from an Urban Wilderness*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Rasmussen, D. (2001). Qallunology: A Pedagogy for the Oppressor. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 25(2), 105-116.
- Roberts, P. (1999). Beyond Buber: Dialogue, Education, and Politics. *Journal of Educational Thought*, 33(2), 183-189.
- Ruether, R. (1996). Introduction. In R. Ruether (Ed.), *Women Healing Earth: Third World Women on Ecology, Feminism, and Religion* (pp. 1-15). New York: Orbis Books.
- Ruether, R. (2005). *Integrating ecofeminism, globalization, and world religions*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Russell, C. (2005). "Whoever does not write is written": The role of "nature" in post-post approaches to environmental education research. *Environmental Education Research*, 11(5), 433-443.
- Russell, C. & Bell, A. (1996). A Politicized Ethic of Care: Environmental Education from an Ecofeminist Perspective. In Karen Warren (Ed.) *Women's Voices in Experiential Education* (pp. 172-181). Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co.
- Russell, C., Bell, A. & Fawcett, L. (2000). Navigating the waters of Canadian Environmental Education. In Tara Goldstein & David Selby (Eds.), *Weaving connections: educating for peace, social and environmental justice* (pp. 196-215). Toronto: Sumach Press.
- Sandilands, C. (1999). *The Good-Natured Feminist: Ecofeminism and the Quest for Democracy*. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press.

- Selby, D. (1995). *Earthkind: A Teacher's Handbook on Humane Education*. Staffordshire: Trentham Books.
- Shaikh, S.S. (2000). Conceptualizing linked social and ecological injustice. *Environments*, 28(2), 75-86.
- Shiva, V. (1989). *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development*. London: Zed Books.
- Shiva, V. (2005). *Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability, and Peace*. Cambridge: South End Press.
- Smandych, R. & Lee, G. (1995). Women, Colonization and Resistance: Elements of an Amerindian Autohistorical Approach to the Study of Law and Colonialism. *Native Studies Review*, 10(1), 21-46.
- Smith, A. (1998). Ecofeminism through an Anticolonial Framework. In R. Ruether (Ed.), *Women Healing Earth: Third World Women on Ecology, Feminism, and Religion*. (pp. 21-37). New York: Orbis Books.
- Smith, M. K. (2000). Martin Buber on Education. *The encyclopedia of informal education*, [www.infed.org/thinkers/et-buber.htm](http://www.infed.org/thinkers/et-buber.htm). Accessed December 6, 2008.
- Sobel, D. (2008). *Childhood and Nature: Design Principles for Educators*. Portland: Stenhouse Publishers.
- Steen, S. (2003). Bastions of Mechanism, Castles Built on Sand: A Critique of Schooling From an Ecological Perspective. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*, 8, 191-203.
- Stevenson, R. (2007). Schooling and environmental education: contradictions in purpose and practice. *Environmental Education Research*, 13(2), 139-153.
- Sturgeon, N. (1997). *Ecofeminist Natures: Race, Gender, Feminist Theory, and Political Action*. New York: Routledge.
- Sydee, J. & Beder, S. (2001). Ecofeminism and Globalism: A Critical Appraisal. *Democracy and Nature*, 7(2), 281-302.
- Taylor, D. (1997). Women of Color, Environmental Justice, and Ecofeminism. In Karen Warren (Ed.), *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature* (pp. 38-81). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Van Der Wyn, S. & Cowan, S. (2007). *Ecological Design*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press.
- Warren, K. (1993). A Feminist Philosophical Perspective on Ecofeminist Spiritualities. In Carol J. Adams (Ed.), *Ecofeminism and the Sacred* (pp. 119-132). New York: Continuum.



- Warren, K. (2000). *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective on What it is and Why it Matters*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Wenden, L. (2004). Introduction: Integrating Education for Social and Ecological Peace – the Educational Context. In Anita L. Wenden (Ed.), *Educating for a Culture of Social and Ecological Peace* (pp. 1-29). New York: State University of New York Press.
- Weil, Z. (1993). Ecofeminist Education: Adolescence, Activism, and Spirituality. In Carol J. Adams (Ed.), *Ecofeminism and the Sacred* (pp. 311-319). New York: Continuum.
- Weiler, K. (2009). Feminist Analysis of Gender and Schooling. In Antonia Darder, Marta Pi Baltodano, & Rodolfo D. Torres (Eds.), *The Critical Pedagogy Reader, Second Edition* (pp. 217-239). New York: Routledge.
- Wolfe, C. (2003). *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourses of Species, and Posthumanist Theory*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Yaron, K. (2000). Martin Buber. *Prospects: the quarterly review of comparative education*, XXIII (½), 135-146.

#### ***Internet Sources Without Authors***

- [http://www.21stcenturyschools.com/What\\_is\\_Critical\\_Pedagogy.htm](http://www.21stcenturyschools.com/What_is_Critical_Pedagogy.htm). Retrieved November 14, 2008
- Earth Charter. (2000). Retrieved November 1, 2008 from [www.earthcharter.org](http://www.earthcharter.org). (<http://ecopedagogy.org/index-1.html>). Accessed November 20, 2008.
- <http://www.commondreams.org/headline/2008/09/04-7>. Accessed January 31, 2009.
- [www.bcgreengames.ca](http://www.bcgreengames.ca). Accessed February 7, 2009.